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**Mobile people, immobile structures:
A study of internal migrants in India and
access to social protection**

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Doctoral Thesis

PhD in Migration Studies

Department of Geography

University of Sussex

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

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UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN MIGRATION STUDIES

MOBILE PEOPLE, IMMOBILE STRUCTURES: A STUDY OF INTERNAL MIGRANT
ACCESS TO STATE SOCIAL PROTECTION IN INDIA

This thesis compares the experiences of internal migrants engaged in low-skilled and unskilled labour, with their local non-migrant counterparts in urban India to explore patterns and structures of access to state social protection. While Indians are constitutionally permitted to work and settle anywhere within the country, migrants face a range of barriers to accessing state social protection, in term of policy and implementation. The thesis uses the example of the Public Distribution System (PDS) - a universal food subsidy scheme and India's largest social protection programme - and takes into account the role of governance to explore how social protection access is experienced by diverse types of labour migrants, with local labourers living in the same city.

The thesis is based on evidence gathered over nine months through mainly qualitative methods (semi-structured interviews and observation, supplemented by a sampling survey) in two cities: Ahmedabad and Nashik, representing the states of Gujarat and Maharashtra respectively. A final round of supplementary key informant interviews was conducted in Delhi.

The empirical findings show that both migrants and local labourers face a range of significant barriers to access, though to varying degrees. However, a strong dichotomy between their experiences is not observed. Instead these complex and diverse experiences can be represented as a broad and overlapping 'spectrum' of vulnerabilities: where local labourers face relatively fewer barriers, and migrants – varied in terms of spatial and temporal factors – face distinctly intense barriers. The findings also highlight that, while individual state context does not have a strong effect on barriers to accessing the PDS, divergences between constitutional law, government policy and implementation across India are influential in structuring the experiences of precariousness among labour migrants.

Finally, the thesis presents evidence on how all poor, urban labourers deploy multiple strategies to overcome barriers to access. Migrant agency however is displayed in distinct forms. The findings illustrate how labour migrants, regardless of temporal or spatial factors, actively maintain 'multi-locational' linkages between places of destination and origin to overcome access barriers.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAY	Antyodaya Anna Yojana (see glossary)
APL	Above Poverty Line
BPL	Below Poverty Line
JNNURM	Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission
KII	Key Informant Interview
MNREGA / MNREGS	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act / Scheme
NMC	Nashik Municipal Corporation
NFSA	National Food Security Act
NSS	National Sample Survey
PDS	Public Distribution System
RtF	Right to Food
SC	Scheduled Caste
ST	Scheduled Tribe
UID	Unique Identity

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

<i>Aadhaar card</i>	identity card under the UID scheme
<i>Adivasi</i>	tribal caste
<i>anganwadi</i>	crèche or day-care centre for infants
<i>Antyodaya Anna Yojana</i>	category of PDS ration card for most vulnerable groups - usually includes widows and people with disabilities
<i>bhaiya lok</i>	discriminatory term used for inter-state migrants from UP and Bihar
<i>Block</i>	district sub-division in Indian administrative system
<i>chola</i>	open fire used for cooking
<i>dhakka</i>	pushback, to push or block
<i>dukaan / dukaandar</i>	(ration) shop/shopkeeper
<i>Gram Panchayat</i>	village council
<i>kacha</i>	construction made from temporary materials
<i>kariyar</i>	high-skilled labourer
<i>kharcha</i>	daily expenses provided by contractors to labourers in advance as a loan
<i>maddan card</i>	voter card - document needed for voting in local and national elections
<i>naka</i>	roadside junction where labourers gather to find work
<i>'nega sevak'</i>	urban community leader (Maharashtra only)
<i>pachan patra</i>	documents/paperwork
<i>pukka</i>	construction made from permanent robust materials (more expensive than <i>kacha</i>)
<i>sarpanch</i>	village council leader
<i>thekedar</i>	contractor or sub-contractor of labour

1. INTRODUCTION

Migration (and settlement) anywhere within India is constitutionally permitted for national citizens without restriction,¹ yet labour migrants moving from rural to urban areas face a “hostile policy environment” (Deshingkar and Farrington, 2009: 25). The characteristics attributed to this environment include: implicit and explicit barriers to formal social protection programmes that are biased toward sedentary populations; exclusionary patterns of policy implementation, and schemes which actively discourage movement and settlement in urban areas (Deshingkar and Farrington, 2009; Kundu, 2014; Bhagat, 2017). India’s urban population increased to 377 million in 2011 due in large part to internal migration, and the rapid pace of urbanisation has resulted in significant regional inequalities (Bhagat, 2011; Census of India, 2011). The social exclusion of groups such as labour migrants is therefore a crucial issue in discussions of social protection and efforts to address inequalities.

This research aims to improve our understanding of internal migrants’ access to formal social protection in urban areas, through an empirical comparison of labour migrants with their non-migrant counterparts (belonging to the same socio-economic categories, living in the same cities and engaging in the same labour sectors) in accessing the Public Distribution System (PDS) - a universal food subsidy scheme and India’s largest social protection programme. This thesis presents evidence on labour migrants and their non-migrant,² or local, counterparts in two cities located in western India: Nashik, in the state of Maharashtra, and Ahmedabad, in the neighbouring state of Gujarat. The migrants are typically involved in semi-, low or unskilled labour in the urban informal sector (Breman, 1996; Srivastava and Sasikumar, 2003).

¹ Constitution of India (1950) Article 19. Available here:
https://india.gov.in/sites/upload_files/npi/files/coi_part_full.pdf

² Henceforth in this thesis I will mainly use the term ‘local labourer’ to denote non-migrant research participants. The terms are used for ease of reference in the discussion of findings rather than to reinforce normative assumptions which serve to ‘other’ or exclude communities. ‘Native place’ is also commonly used in Indian-English vernacular to describe one’s place of birth and will be used in this sense in the thesis.

Access to state resources such as social protection, can be considered integral to an overall livelihood ‘package’ which goes beyond economic income to include multiple sources of support for poor and vulnerable groups (Carney, 1998; de Haas, 2008). The composite of disadvantages or ‘precarities’ faced specifically by labour migrants has been described in multiple literatures ranging from development and labour studies to geography (Waite, 2009; Standing, 2011; Lewis *et al.*, 2014; Buckley *et al.*, 2017) and exclusion from social protection can exacerbate such disadvantages (Sabates-Wheeler and Waite, 2003; Srivastava and Sasikumar, 2003). While migrants are locked out of social protection access due to a set of implicit, and explicit barriers, the evidence from Nashik and Ahmedabad shows a complex set of agency-based factors that come into play when they seek to overcome such barriers.

This thesis draws from three thematic (rather than disciplinarily-bound) groups of literature to interpret and further develop my empirical insights into the structural barriers faced by labour migrants and the ways in which they navigate access structures. The thesis seeks to link contemporary theorisations of vulnerability and precariousness of migrant labour with those on governance in order to understand how access to social protection is shaped by the state. To understand the role of the state in producing “lesser” “citizenship outcomes” (Abbas, 2016: 150) for internal migrants compared with sedentary citizens, I invoke the scholarship on Indian governance in relation to social inequality either developed during, or reflecting upon, the recent tenure of Congress-led³ government (see: Chatterjee, 2004; Corbridge *et al.*, 2005; Jayal, 2009; Berenschot, 2010; Ruparelia, 2013; Aiyar and Walton, 2014; Deshpande *et al.*, 2017).

In order to understand the modalities and limitations of migrant agency I also engage with empirically-grounded debates on the impact of migrant labour on livelihoods in India (see: Rogaly *et al.*, 2002; Mosse *et al.*, 2002; Breman, 2004; Deshingkar and Farrington, 2009; Srivastava and Sutradhar, 2016); and the dense scholarship on vulnerability and precariousness among

³ The Indian National Congress party in India led a coalition of centre-left parties from 2004-2014 known as the United Progressive Alliance (UPA). This was the government in office during my fieldwork.

labour migrants, which continues to evolve (see: Kabeer, 2007; Waite, 2009; Benedict, 2010; Buckley, 2012; Paret and Gleeson, 2016).⁴ Finally, I touch upon the debates surrounding the role of social protection itself – and whether they alleviate the ‘hostile policy environment’ faced by migrants – to understand the limitations and opportunities of access structures for programmes such as the Public Distribution System (PDS) in addressing vulnerabilities faced by labour migrants.

This thesis proposes that barriers to social protection can be attributed in part to the divergences between India’s constitutional rights and policies, and their implementation at local government level. India’s federal system of governance gives rise to politically diverse states⁵ which can lead to heterogenous outcomes of national policies – including those related to social protection - across individual states (Chopra, 2015; Deshpande *et al.*, 2017; Tillin and Pereira, 2017). In addition to comparing labour migrants with their non-migrant counterparts, this thesis also seeks to contribute to understandings of the role of governance context at the sub-national level in creating a “hostile policy environment” for migrants (Deshingkar and Farrington, 2009). To this end, I focus on urban migrant destinations in two sub-national states to try and compare the role of each governance context - including the gap between policy and implementation - in shaping access conditions and experiences for labour migrants and their non-migrant counterparts.

The relatively wealthy states of Gujarat and Maharashtra are two major migrant-receiving states in India, reflecting the sharp regional inequalities across the country as depicted in Figure 1.1 (Bhagat and Mohanty, 2009). While both states are popular destinations for internal migrants (ranked as the second and third highest recipients of net migration in India)⁶ and characterised by

⁴ It should be noted that both literatures referred to in this paragraph implicitly or explicitly contribute to evidence and theories on the vulnerabilities and/or precariousness faced by labour migrants.

⁵ The outcomes of centrally-set social policies in federal India have been highly heterogenous across different states in India. The literature has attributed this to a plurality of political party systems at the state level, many of which have launched their own social programmes or individual iterations of federalised programmes to differing levels of success (Tillin and Pereira, 2017). At the sub-national state level, the political context, degree of corruption and clientelism are among key factors cited in the literature for bringing about diverse policy outcomes (Chopra, 2015; Deshpande *et al.*, 2017; Tillin and Pereira, 2017).

⁶ According to Census 2001 data on migration (see D Tables) Maharashtra is ranked as the second highest recipient

extensive industrial development, rapid urbanisation and high growth; they have shown mixed trajectories in terms of making this growth inclusive through expenditure, and attention on social protection⁷ (Deshpande *et al.*, 2017). In addition, each state contrasts in terms of socio-political attitudes toward migrants from elsewhere in India (Weiner, 1978; Rajan *et al.*, 2011; Bhagat, 2015).

In terms of broader research objectives, this thesis explores the interplay of sedentary policies and migrant dynamics within a shared citizenship regime, against a context of legislative developments intended to improve lives for vulnerable groups yet perpetuating the exclusion of migrants (Deshingkar and Farrington, 2009; MacAuslan, 2011; Abbas, 2016). The research sits within wider discussions of labour migration and welfare; migrant access and inclusion; governance and accountability and the nature of rights-based citizenship. The findings also speak to contemporary trends of digitalisation in India across federalised access structures (Masiero, 2015), and highlight the importance of the role of governance as well as technological advancements in achieving social inclusion objectives.

With this thesis, I aim to contribute to understandings of spatial, as well as socio-economic impacts on citizenship by invoking contemporary theories of vulnerability and precariousness, social protection and state accountability. The thesis compares migrant and non-migrant experiences in their urban destinations, rather than focusing on migration outcomes in their rural source contexts. In doing so, this work aims to illuminate the relatively understudied area of internal migration (within the contemporary migration literature). The global literature on

of net migration and Gujarat is the third highest. See:

http://censusindia.gov.in/Data_Products/Data_Highlights/Data_Highlights_link/data_highlights_D1D2D3.pdf

⁷ A hallmark of India's federalised system was the Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS) mechanism of centre-state fund transfers. Prior to the Modi government (from 2014 onward), subsidies for welfare and social protection spending were disbursed from central government to sub-national states through CSS. However, the "proliferation" of centrally-sponsored schemes (CSS) (Deshpande *et al.*, 2017: 91) led to concerns around the misuse of funds in public expenditure (Rao, 2015). Some of the most important concerns around CSS are linked to the need for matched funding required by states, which can effectively limit their policy and fiscal autonomy. The CSS were controversial due to their discretionary nature (initiated either by central ministries or requested by individual states) among other factors and at the time of fieldwork, were undergoing a series of enquiries and investigations. See: 'Report of the Committee on Restructuring of Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS)', last updated in November 2014. Available here: http://planningcommission.gov.in/reports/genrep/index.php?repts=report_css.htm (Accessed May 2015)

migration has been critiqued for its false dichotomisation of internal and international migration (King *et al.*, 2008) despite the fact that some of the earliest and most influential scholarship on migration dealt only with internal migration. While classical models of labour migration focused on internal migration (sometimes known as ‘domestic migration’ or ‘population distribution’) (see: Ravenstein, 1885; Harris and Todaro, 1970; Banerjee, 1983), migration in contemporary discourse normatively refers to international migration.

Overall, I seek to address limitations in the literature on internal migration in India (Abbas, 2016), by linking existing work on the vulnerability and precariousness of labour migrants – recent developments of which have primarily tended to focus on the global North (Buckley *et al.*, 2017) - with the literature on governance and inequality to illustrate how citizenship is contested even *within* national regimes. As the evidence presented in this thesis shows, labour migrants within India are a diverse population sharing many socio-economic intersections with their local counterparts, but also experiencing a range of nuanced and distinct barriers depending on the type of migration and labour they undertake. Concomitantly, the range of strategies and opportunities to actively overcome barriers is linked to the type of migration and labour undertaken and how this intersects with social identities and economic capabilities. The role of the state, in enacting restrictive access structures, where social entitlements to state resources are denied or require negotiation, further adds to the vulnerabilities of all labour migrants.

1.1. Research questions and analytical framework

This thesis is based on three core research questions:

1. How do labour migrant experiences fare against their non-migrant counterparts in terms of access to the Public Distribution System?
2. What are the structures and patterns of social protection access for different types of labour migrants, and how are they affected?

3. a) How do labour migrants and non-migrants respond to such structures and patterns of access? b) How can the state learn from these responses to improve access for migrants?

In order to answer these questions, the research was based on a comparative design: looking at the experiences of migrants and non-migrants. By focusing on two migrant-receiving and rapidly urbanising cities, I was able to examine the role of governance context in shaping experiences of local and labour migrants in trying to access state entitlements. The findings were drawn from multiple methods including (in order of importance): semi-structured interviews and survey; key informant interviews (KIIs) and observations. The research universe consisted mainly of adult, working-age inter-state and intra-state labour migrants, and a small component of local labourers, to enable a comparison of experiences in accessing the Public Distribution System (PDS). Both groups engage in low- and un-skilled forms of labour, belong to scheduled caste (SC) and scheduled tribe (ST) caste⁸ groups and earned average wages below the poverty line (BPL).⁹ Key informant and mapping interviews were also held with additional stakeholders such as civil society actors working on migrant access and policy actors at national, state and district levels.

The first two research questions are preoccupied with the role of the state in mediating Public Distribution System (PDS) access for migrants. The comparison with local labourers – those who have not moved from their place of birth - provides a counterfactual for how labour migrants experience access structures in each of the field sites. In seeking to answer the research questions, I identify two overarching levels of structural barriers related to governance in my empirical findings.

⁸ The caste system refers to India's system of stratifying society according to social, ethnic, cultural and economic markers thought to have originated in ancient India and enduring into the post-colonial era, after being institutionalised under British colonisation. Post-independence India sought to address class divisions generated by the caste system by formally registering or 'scheduling' disadvantaged caste and tribal group identities to facilitate positive discrimination and public representation. These groups are historically marginalised, and face deeply entrenched structural and social discrimination. The listing of scheduled caste (SC) and scheduled tribal (ST) groups falls under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Social Justice. A full list of scheduled groups can be found here: <http://socialjustice.nic.in/UserView/index?mid=76750>

⁹ Urban BPL average wage rates were taken as a guide for each respective state: Maharashtra. See: <http://mahafod.gov.in/website/english/PDS.aspx> and Gujarat criteria of social needs programmes taken as a guide. See: <http://www.magujarat.com/documents/About%20MA%20Yojana%20English.pdf>

- Barriers at the level of design (structural)
- Barriers at the level of implementation (structural and social)

Migrants and local labourers face both types of barriers to access but to different degrees. While migrants are locked out from access to social protection and state resources by barriers of design and implementation, their sedentary counterparts tend to mainly experience the latter type of barriers. One of the main aspects of PDS design affects only migrants - the need for proof of local fixed residence to apply for access to the PDS. The second category of barriers represents the “imperfect implementation” (Saxena and Farrington, 2009: 12) that characterises many programmes in India, particularly those on poverty alleviation. Barriers of implementation can be attributed to ‘informal’ rules of governance according to North’s theorisation of institutions (1990) whereas the barriers of design can be seen as ‘formal constraints’ (ibid). I argue that labour migrants face the worst of both forms of barriers and thereby are subject to intensified forms of vulnerability and precariousness (Sabates-Wheeler and Waite, 2003; Lewis et al., 2014).

The everyday experiences of barriers of implementation faced by both the migrants and local labourers are represented in my findings as ‘*dhakkas*.’ *Dhakka* is a Hindi word literally translated to ‘push’ or ‘pushback’ and used colloquially by the labourers I engaged with to signify obstacles or hostile resistance from individuals, such as local bureaucrats or providers of PDS resources, and broader institutions that represented power. *Dhakkas* represent discretionary, corrupt and inefficient behaviours, that often divert from policy design. Though often characterised by *dhakkas*, everyday encounters between the state, informal agents and poor and vulnerable citizens can also substitute formal instruments of civic engagement and entitlement (such as PDS access) for those who otherwise lack awareness or formal access (Corbridge *et al.*, 2005). Barriers to PDS access represent divergences between rights, laws, policies; and the ways in which they are enacted – including those represented by *dhakkas*. However, the findings suggest that local labourers are relatively more empowered to identify, voice and pursue informal, if not formal, paths of overcoming barriers, than labour migrants. Among such paths of redress are the use of

social and financial capital,¹⁰ typically more accessible when embedded within a local place and community.

The thesis also explores whether conditions of access are further shaped by diverse governance contexts in migrant-receiving states, to understand the specific role of governance in terms of creating “hostile” policy environments (Deshingkar and Farrington, 2009). I selected two states, broadly similar in terms of in-migration patterns and labour demand, but governed by different political parties (at the time of fieldwork) with contrasting outlooks on migration. The expectation was that the state of Maharashtra, home to prominent anti-migrant political movements, would be characterised by openly hostile conditions for migrants, whereas the state of Gujarat with its less explicitly anti-migrant environment and openly neoliberal drive toward growth at the expense of labour rights and welfare, would generate contrasting results in terms of migrant experiences.

My empirical findings show that migrants can experience different social protection outcomes in terms of PDS access in their places of destination, compared with their home states. This finding emphasises how the lack of portable access to state social protections such as the PDS puts migrants at a specific disadvantage (Sabates-Wheeler and MacAuslan, 2007; MacAuslan, 2011). However, differences between PDS access in each place of destination (Maharashtra and Gujarat) were highly nuanced and do not necessarily fall neatly along binary lines that are defined by state boundaries. At the city level, specific social and economic factors, which will be explained further in the forthcoming chapters, affected the daily experiences of migrants and local labourers. However, labour migrants face multiple barriers to state resources in both Gujarat and Maharashtra, thus highlighting the specificities of migrant disadvantage compared to their local counterparts, but not significantly in terms of state context. In developed, relatively wealthy migrant-receiving states such as Maharashtra and Gujarat, despite political and social differences,

¹⁰ Social capital is used here broadly in accordance to definitions developed by Bordieu (1986) and Putnam (2000): access to resources accrued through membership and belonging to certain social groups. It refers to “features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit” (Putnam, 1995: 3).

the overall access outcomes remain broadly similar for labour migrants. Overall, the findings show that though there are highly nuanced and varied experiences of PDS access among migrants, these variations are more closely linked to factors such as their duration of migration, type of migration, and even within such groups, social identities of caste, religion, ethnicity and gender, than the specific contexts of advanced, industrialised federal states in Western India.

The experience of labour migrants themselves is not uniform or straightforward, and they are not a homogenous group (Waite, 2009). The “varieties of unfreedom” experienced across different types of labourers are acknowledged in the literature (O’Neill, 2011; Barrientos *et al.*, 2013) and resonate with my empirical findings. Experiences and outcomes depend on multiple factors including temporal and spatial status (length of time as a migrant, linkage to place of origin, place and distance of origin); identity (caste, gender, religion) and type of labour (sector, duration, contract or casual) as well as the governance context. Likewise, the range of strategies available to respond to such barriers are dependent upon multiple factors. Here I invoke Katz (2004)’s ‘disaggregate’ framework of agency and respond to calls made in the literature to take a more variegated and nuanced approach to labour agency (Carswell and de Neve, 2013). Katz (2004) describes a gradation of strategies, starting with small-scale ‘resilience’ to ‘reworking’ to redistribute structural challenges and ending with resistance, which directly challenges capitalist regimes. The framework is useful in helping to unpack the diverse types of agency that can be deployed among labourers – both migrant and sedentary.

1.1.1 Characteristics of migrants and local labourers

The findings of this thesis are framed by the results of an initial sampling survey of 376 participants (see Appendix Three for breakdown of survey participants). From this surveyed sample, I purposively selected 53 participants – representing migrant and local labourers - for in-depth semi-structured interviews. Table 1.1 presents the most common characteristics of labour migrants compared with local labourers, drawn from survey findings aggregated across both

states. Useful observations about the different socio-economic backgrounds and outcomes of the two categories of labourers can be made based on this set of basic attributes. However, it does not necessarily illustrate the more nuanced and intersecting conditions of vulnerabilities faced by each group as drawn from the qualitative findings, introduced in the following sub-section.

Table 1.1 Typical characteristics of local and migrant labourers

Type of Characteristic	Migrant	Labourer
<i>Gender</i>	Male (76%)	Male (64%)
<i>Age</i>	18-30 years (52.2%)	31-45 years (45.3%)
<i>Religion</i>	Hindu (80.1%) Muslim (15.3%)	Hindu (65.3%) Muslim (26.7%)
<i>Caste</i>	Scheduled Caste (SC) (27.2%)	Scheduled Tribe (ST) (24%) and Other Backward Caste (OBC) (24%)
<i>Marital Status</i>	Married (77.4%)	Married (69.3%)
<i>Literacy</i>	Illiterate (40.5%)	Drop-out from secondary – (46.7%) ¹¹
<i>Average monthly income</i>	More than INR 5000 (44.5%)	INR 2000-35000 per month (26.7%) ¹²
<i>Average days of work per month¹³</i>	>25 days (42.2%)	>25 days (37.3%)
<i>Ration card possession</i>	83.4%	74.7%
<i>Housing</i>	Rent (43.5%) ¹⁴	Own home (62.7%)

Table 1.1 shows that while both local and migrant labourers show characteristics of disadvantage and social exclusion, there is a higher proportion of Scheduled Caste (SC) and illiterate labourers within the migrant group. Regardless of duration of time in the place of destination, migrants are

¹¹ Compared with the migrant sample, 29.3% of the local labourers reported themselves as illiterate

¹² Unlike the migrant sample, the distribution of average monthly income was fairly evenly distributed across three income brackets for the sample of local labourers (aggregate of both Nashik and Ahmedabad). The second most common income bracket was '<2000 INR' (22.7%) and the third most common was 'more than 5000 INR' (20%). See Appendix 2 for the different income brackets.

¹³ For both local and migrant labourers there is some variation in the distribution of reported days of work for the remainder of the sample. See Appendices 4 and 5.

¹⁴ Notably, the second most commonly reported type of housing was also very high. 38.9% of the aggregate migrant sample reported living in 'free' on-site accommodation, such as a labour camp on a construction site.

less likely to own property in terms of housing (though this may not be the case in their place of origin). Interestingly however, a greater number of migrants reported higher average monthly wages than their local counterparts. This is in line with claims in the literature that labour migrants are preferred by employers for relatively higher-paid but precarious and unstable forms of labour (Deshingkar and Start, 2009; Waite, 2009; Anderson, 2010; Breman, 2013). The qualitative findings show how multiple forms of vulnerability and precariousness can offset economic income for labourers, and labour migrants specifically. We also see that ration card possession is high among both groups – in fact it is higher among the migrant group than reported by the local group. This highlights that ration card allocation may be high among labourers regardless of migrant status but does not necessarily illustrate portability or quality of access. Most of the labour migrants (77 percent) are married – though this does not necessarily have a bearing on whether they migrated alone or as a family. Overall, the importance of the qualitative findings in building upon these attributes is highlighted here. They reveal the multiple and complex forms of structural barriers and daily encounters, or *dhakkas*, that affect access conditions and outcomes in ways that go beyond the attributes based on survey findings.

Table 1.2 Typical characteristics of migrants by field-site

Type of migrant characteristic	Nashik	Ahmedabad
<i>Gender</i>	Male	Male
<i>Age</i>	18-30 years	18- 30 years
<i>Religion</i>	Hindu (80.9%) Muslim (10.6%)	Hindu (79.4%) Muslim (19.4%)
<i>Income</i>	More than INR 5000 (66%)	More than INR 5000 (77%)
<i>Ration Card¹⁵</i>	85%	81.3%
<i>Literacy</i>	Illiterate (41%)	Illiterate (40%)
<i>Type of migration</i>	Inter-state (44%)	Inter-state (72.5)
<i>Frequency of visits</i>	Twice per year (37.6%)	Twice per year (32.5%)
<i>Duration of migration</i>	Long-term (10 years or more) (39.7%)	Long-term (10 years or more) (38%)
<i>Housing</i>	Rent (45%)	Rent (41.9%)

We can see from Table 1.2 that the findings for migrant characteristics in both cities are broadly similar. The more nuanced differences in their experiences are shown in the qualitative findings. There is a slightly more diverse religious composition in the city of Ahmedabad which reflects the city's local demography. There is also a larger proportion of higher-earning labour migrants in Ahmedabad which aligns with the size and more developed status of the city compared with Nashik. Overall, the migrant labourers are mainly between the age of 18-30 years, male and belong to SC and ST categories. In terms of temporal status, the highest proportions are long-term migrants (10 years or more) or relatively recent migrants (2-4 years). Most migrants in both states are inter-state, based on the Indian Census definition of comparing place of birth with place of destination. The migrants are predominantly rural to urban migrants, and the second highest proportion of migrants come from cities (see Appendix Five). The main reason for migration reported in both states was for livelihood (59 percent), and the second most popular reason cited

¹⁵ The question regarding ration cards in the survey asked whether migrants possessed a ration card *either* in their place of destination or origin. The qualitative interviews ascertain whether the migrants had a ration card in their place of destination or not.

was marriage (11.7 percent). In terms of frequency of visits home, the migrants most commonly return home twice per year in both states. At the aggregate level, migrants mostly return home twice per year (28.2 percent), and then once per annual quarter (16 percent). Most of the migrants are family migrants (of households between three and five members) (43.2%) – this correlates with the higher number of medium and long-term, presumably settled migrants. The second highest group are lone migrants (28.2%). Overall, the data shows that migrants maintain linkages with their place of origin through regular visits regardless of duration of migration, commonly move as household or alone, and both cities receive a high number of inter-state migrants.

1.1.2. Spectrum of vulnerability

While the findings – from both the survey and interviews – suggest that all poor urban labourers are vulnerable and face barriers to accessing the PDS (representative of state resources and social protection), a subtle gradient of distinct types of vulnerability can be observed. This thesis focuses on vulnerability and precariousness primarily through the lens of governance and state-generated structural barriers, rather than taking on a detailed investigation into the specific relations involved within labour itself – for example the relations between contractors, employers and labourers. This lens is used to assess the degree of vulnerability and precariousness as experienced by different types of labourers. The evidence is presented accordingly as a broad heuristic spectrum consisting of three overlapping categories of labourers.

1. The first category consists of labour migrants working on construction sites and brick kilns – referred to here as ‘precarious sites’ of labour;
2. The second category can broadly be defined as ‘*naka*’ workers, typically long-term migrants engaged in casual or daily labour;
3. The final category of labourers refers to those who are ‘non-migrant’ or ‘local’ citizens from either Nashik or Ahmedabad.

This ‘spectrum’ is a loose framework for mapping out the findings and analysing the highly nuanced differences observed even *within* each ‘stage’ of the spectrum linked to intersecting

social identities and relations, but it helps us to understand the diversity of labour migrant experiences, and how they compare with local labourers. Each loose assemblage of research participants represents multiple and intersecting forms of vulnerability and precariousness – according to factors such as labour conditions, economic deprivation and social discrimination. For example, labour migrants may receive lower wages than their local counterparts but are more likely to find stable work in urban settings (Bremar, 2013). The main criterion which influenced my organisation of evidence along the spectrum is access to the state. As the empirical findings detail, this indicator of vulnerability is by no means definitive and can be redressed in various ways. However, state access can reveal important insights into the relationship between different forms of vulnerabilities and how they are perpetuated or resolved by the state. Finally, I present evidence on the different strategies and levels of agency adopted by all groups, in particular those of labour migrants in seeking to overcome barriers to access.

The ‘spectrum’ starts with labour migrants working in brick kilns and large-scale construction sites, engaged in precarious forms of labour (Barrientos *et al.*, 2013; Betancourt *et al.*, 2013; Srivastava and Sutradhar, 2016). These migrants are typically employed collectively by local labour contractors, or ‘*thekedars*’¹⁶ in their home villages or towns either before migrating or upon arrival at their place of destination, for contracts of a certain duration. They are predominately lone male inter-state migrants, but a significant proportion of family migration is also observed (mostly intra-state). While all the groups observed in my fieldwork can be considered as part of the ‘precariat’ (as described by Standing, 2011) – this group of migrant workers can be considered among the *most* vulnerable due to the risks, relations and spatiality of such labour. Their lives are precarious in existential terms (Giddens, 1991; Ettlinger, 2007) in terms of uncertainty and risk, both of which characterise poor and vulnerable groups generally (Chambers, 1989; Choudhuri, 2003). However, their environments are also precarious in a literal and physical sense: as

¹⁶ Hindi word for labour contractor, sometimes used colloquially to also refer to sub-contractor. Further detail on the role of the thekedar will emerge in the empirical findings (Chapters 4-7). Also known as known as *mukkadams*, *maistries*, *sardars* or *jamadars* in different parts of India (Zeitlin *et al.*, 2014: 14).

Betancourt *et al.* observe on a Delhi construction site, “precariously-situated construction materials were ever-present” (2013: 5). The construction sites and brick kilns I observed presented multiple health and safety hazards for labourers and their families who were living there. I acknowledge the well-evidenced distinctions between construction and brick-kiln workers, the latter often facing risks of what Breman (2010) calls “neo-bondage” and unfree labour, and the former tending to come from relatively well-resourced backgrounds (see: Breman, 2007; Pattnaik, 2009; Thorat and Jones, 2011). However, among my research participants, the empirics of these groups of labourers were the most synergistic. My observations showed these sites of labour were typically isolated from urban infrastructures and represent a conflation of work and residence therefore posing an omniscient sense of precariousness for this category of labour migrants.

The migrants working in these precarious sites of labour are compelled to move for livelihood purposes and receive a relatively higher wage than they would ‘back home’ – though among construction workers the wages vary widely according to skill, gender and regional background. In light of this, many accept the trade-off that state entitlements, such as the ration card, will not figure in their urban lives. Despite requiring social protection and food security, lack of access to the PDS comprises just one aspect of a range of barriers faced by such groups.

The barriers faced by this first group include a lack of access to basic healthcare, intensified in the hazardous and acutely resource-poor environments of construction site camps and brick kiln sites. In addition, my findings show that in some cases, access to education and child-care facilities are unavailable or restricted for those migrants compelled to bring their children with them, thus perpetuating potential risks of inter-generational vulnerabilities in migrant families (Prusty and Keshri, 2015). The spatialisation of this type of labour isolates migrant groups from urban resources and spaces where they can try to procure entitlements or develop social capital (Bordieu and Wacquant, 1992; Putnam, 2000). The isolated settings also compound the vulnerabilities of women and children, who tend to be less empowered to mobilise and build awareness of their broader surroundings.

Many of these migrants are from northern and eastern states such as Uttar Pradesh (UP) and Bihar – two of India’s poorest states with historically limited options for rural or urban livelihoods (McDowell and de Haan, 1997; de Haan, 2004; Keshri and Bhagat, 2012).¹⁷ Members of these groups explained that barriers to accessing the PDS do not only thwart food security, but also enact legal security and identity-based barriers for migrants who lack documentation. For example, both lone and family migrants from West Bengal articulated the heightened importance of ration cards – usually above other documents such as the Aadhaar card - to prove their national identities in the face of discrimination from authorities who confuse them with so-called ‘illegal’ migrants crossing porous borders with the neighbouring country of Bangladesh (Sadiq, 2008; Abbas, 2016).

This group of labour migrants also reveals a sharp distinction in terms of the two states represented by the field-sites. At the time of my fieldwork, Nashik was rapidly urbanising, and it was relatively easier to overcome gatekeepers to construction sites which were rapidly proliferating at the time, through links with civil society organisations. As a relatively ‘established’ city, Ahmedabad was more difficult to navigate in terms of gatekeepers and access to construction sites, implying construction workers here are more isolated not only from access to public resources but also support from civil society organisations.

The second group of labour migrants – loosely categorised as casual or day labourers - occupy a middle space on the ‘spectrum’ and consist mainly of long-term and settled migrants. These migrants are both inter-state and intra-state. Many from the latter group originate from the most marginalised groups including Scheduled Tribe (ST) groups (also known as *Adivasis*) in both Maharashtra and Gujarat. These migrants gather and seek work at ‘*nakas*’ – roadside junctions where contractors employ labourers on daily or short-term bases, typically in semi- and unskilled

¹⁷ See Figure 1.1 for main internal migration flows and corridors within India. Historically, census data has shown that inter-state labour migrants typically flow from northern and eastern states to Maharashtra and Gujarat (Bhagat and Mohanty, 2009).

labour. They often jostle directly alongside their local counterparts to seek work. Migrant *naka* workers tend to live in urban slum settlements (on reclaimed private or public land), sharing spaces and resources (or limitations of) with local populations.

Migrants in this second category are typically engaged in casual rather than contracted labour which potentially poses a specific form of temporal vulnerability. While the importance of temporality in shaping experiences of precariousness and enabling migrants to develop agency has been acknowledged for short-term migrants (Rogaly and Thieme, 2012), the long-term migrants I observed were paradoxically engaged in casual, short-term and in some cases, sporadic labour over prolonged durations. The findings also suggest that labourers engaged in casualised relationships had relatively more agency to mobilise access – by formal or informal means – to social entitlements and other resources. Strategies were also available to this group beyond sites of labour to improve their socio-economic standing. Over time, *naka* migrants can accumulate both skills and thus wages; and social capital by forging local social networks within and beyond the neighbourhoods in which they settle. The findings show that this group of migrants face ‘*dhakkas*’ even when seeking to follow official routes to accessing the PDS. However, learning from previous experiences of *dhakkas* either in their places of origin or in the city, and maintaining a lack of distrust in the state, many migrants pursue informal routes – such as informal agents – or draw upon their native social networks to overcome barriers to the PDS.

The final category presented in my analysis consists of local labourers who can be positioned at the lowest end of the ‘spectrum.’ While the urban poor overall face both design and implementation barriers to the PDS, my evidence suggest that the latter form of barriers are more relevant. Overall, local participants are more readily able to identify and articulate state-specific grievances. They tend to be relatively empowered in terms of awareness and access to social and financial capital compared with migrants and can navigate both informal and formal routes of access. Access to social capital differs along lines of caste and gender, with certain SC and ST

communities facing limitations in their social networks. Wages in semi-skilled and unskilled sectors also tend to be segmented according to gender, and less explicitly, caste lines, so these categories of identity also play an important role in shaping access to entitlement outcomes. In addition to caste, religion is also a prominent factor in erecting barriers to access. Religious identity seems to be more pronounced in the context of Ahmedabad than in Nashik, where ongoing tensions between Hindu and Muslim communities have resulted in widespread violence and the ghettoisation of certain communities. The same issues of identity also apply to labour migrants adding to the ‘hyper-precariousness’ (Lewis *et al.*, 2014) of their situation.

Local labourers face certain barriers of design. The PDS entitlement itself is designed in a way that is biased against children and women. It is assigned at the household rather than individual level and my findings show that it typically does not register female heads of household (such as widows or divorcees), or new family members by marriage or birth such as daughters-in-law or children. This design can therefore compound traditional patrilineal biases, for example in terms of provision of nutrition, against such household members (Dancer *et al.*, 2008; Chinnakali *et al.*, 2014). Though there is an official process to update ration cards to include new household members, several participants recounted experiences of *dhakkas* when seeking to follow this process.

In terms of barriers of implementation, local labourers experience *dhakkas* mostly in the form of misallocation or non-allocation of entitlements. For example, many households considered themselves as ‘below poverty line’ (BPL)¹⁸ according to their income - corroborated by my observations of their household, families and (lack of) assets - but were allocated ‘above poverty line’ (APL) entitlements and thus barred from adequate food rations. In response, local labourers can draw from their social networks to pursue informal routes to access – using agents in the informal sector – to procure ration cards or black-market provisions.

¹⁸ Socio-economic classification used in India for social protection targeting at the time of fieldwork. Those who are allocated as ‘below poverty line’ (BPL) households are entitled to a greater amount of rations.

Finally, the local labourers observed are typically engaged in casual and often unreliable forms of employment in a competitive setting. Local labourers often indirectly, and sometimes explicitly, articulated nativist sentiments. In their perceptions the burdens they faced in terms of resources (such as PDS rations) and labour demand was attributed to migration. Migrants themselves are viewed as barriers to access by local communities, in line with the extant literature which highlight 'nativist' movements as driven by very presence of migrants themselves, rather than an endogenous aspect of local communities (Weiner, 1978).

Overall the findings show that though there are highly nuanced and varied experiences among migrants and local labourers; a strong dichotomy does not exist between the two groups. Both migrants and local labourers who are poor face a range of barriers in accessing the PDS, and government resources overall. However, my findings confirm that different sets of access conditions exist for migrants and local labourers, and migrants face a set of challenges that are distinct from their local counterparts. Labour migrants are not a homogenous category and nuanced differential experiences exist depending on duration of migration, type of migration, and even within such groups, social identities of caste, religion, ethnicity and gender. The barriers enacted in access structures can be attributed to contextual factors within local and national governance systems. This thesis examines the spectrum of experiences among the urban poor, delineating the specific vulnerabilities faced by labour migrants when accessing the PDS, and how these have been shaped by the governance context at local and sub-national levels.

Importantly, the findings also show that in addition to time spent away from 'home' and space travelled, the defining criteria of migration itself should be broadened to encompass the linkages between place of origin and destination. According to my findings from Nashik and Ahmedabad, multiple linkages between the place of destination and origin - kinship, economic, identity and emotional - are maintained by migrants but this does not necessarily correlate with length of time, type of migrant or distance travelled. The term 'multi-locational' has been used in the literature

to describe seasonal migrant livelihoods (Deshingkar and Farrington, 2009; Rogaly and Thieme, 2012) and can be applied to my findings to describe strategies to overcome barriers to access and resources.

Another notable contribution of the findings highlights the instrumental importance of ration cards beyond their official function. Ration cards serve multiple social and economic functions for citizens from socio-economically disadvantaged groups. The cards can help to address limitations in terms of rights linked to citizenship, experienced specifically among inter-state migrants, and to a lesser extent, intra-state migrant and local labourers (Jayal, 2009; Abbas, 2016). The combination of contemporary security concerns arising from recent terrorist attacks and historical prejudices against so-called ‘illegal’ international migrants from neighbouring countries such as Bangladesh (Sadiq, 2008) creates precarious conditions for migrants who are constantly subject to requests for citizenship verification by hostile authorities. In such cases, the value represented by ration cards is linked to identity, security and access to a range of social entitlements and services (such as financial services and mobile phone sim card purchases), that extend beyond their official remit of enabling access to food subsidies.

1.2 Background to internal migration in India

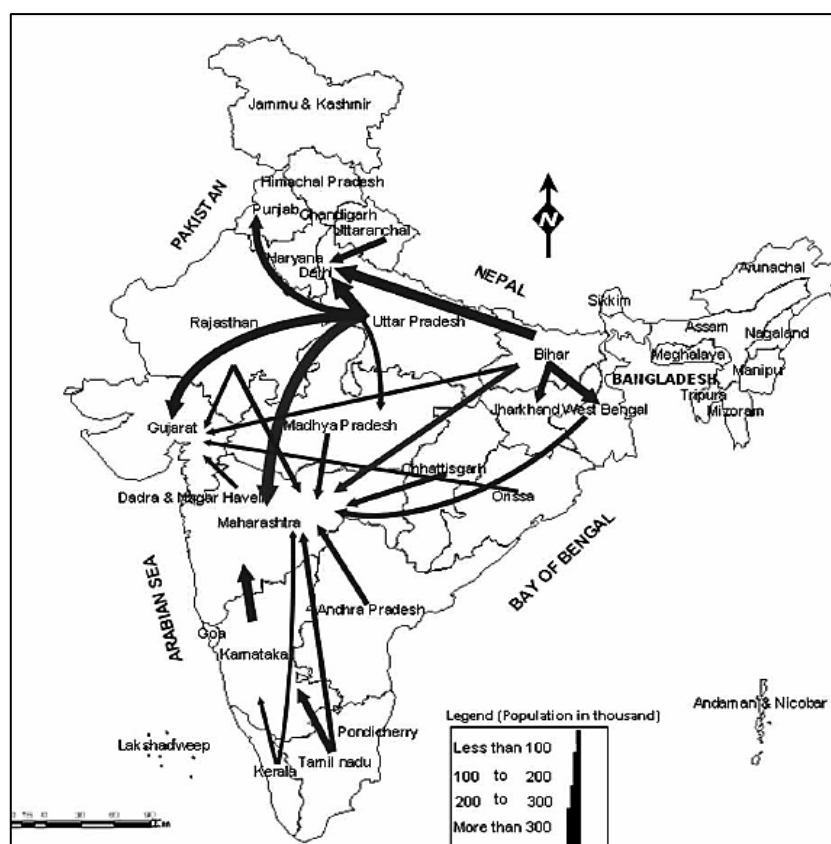
The Census of India (2001) defines an individual migrant as “a person who has moved from one politically defined area to another similar area. In the Indian context, these areas are generally a village in rural and a town in urban.”¹⁹ Migration is measured using information on last place of fixed residence and movement since place of birth. Data from the latest India census in 2011 on internal migration was not released at the time of writing this thesis, however the urbanisation data indicates an increase of 91 million in the urban population and this is projected to continue.²⁰ India’s urban population now stands at 377 million, of which a significant proportion are migrants

¹⁹ Source: <http://censusindia.gov.in/Metadata/Metada.htm>

²⁰ See: Kundu (2011) and Guin and Das (2015) for debates on the nature of Indian urbanisation trends.

(Bhagat, 2011; Census of India, 2011). The urban share of India's population grew from 27.7 percent in 2001 to 31.1 percent in 2011 (Bhagat, 2011; Census of India, 2011). In 2001, the share of Gujarat's population living in cities was 76 percent, and same figure for Maharashtra stood at 80 percent (Bhagat and Mohanty, 2009). This growth is attributed to both a rise in rural-urban and urban-urban migration, and an increase in the number of towns and cities (Bhagat, 2011). National Sample Survey (NSS) data also confirms urban growth: the share of migrants in the urban population increased from 33 percent in 1999-2000, to 35 percent in 2007-2008 (NSSO, 2007-2008). Figure 1.1 depicts major net migration flows between states in India, based on 2001 Census data. The map depicts significant flows from northern and eastern states into the western states of Maharashtra and Gujarat. The main flows of migration depicted here represent sharp regional inequalities in India, with many migration corridors reflecting movements from the poorest to richest regions.

Figure 1.1 Map of main internal migration flows in India



Source: Bhagat and Mohanty (2009) based on 2001 Census data

Internal migration in India is “multi-patterned” (Shah, 2010: 1) and internal migrants can be categorised along multiple temporal, spatial and directional lines.

1. Temporal: short-term, long-term, lifetime (settled), circular/seasonal
2. Returns: coping strategy or accumulation of assets
3. Distance: short-distance, intra-state, inter-state, long-distance²¹
4. Direction: rural-urban (r-u); rural-rural (r-r), urban-urban (u-u)

The temporal and spatial categories intersect as those migrants who travel short-distances can move on a seasonal or circular basis, though such types of mobility are difficult to measure using macro-scale instruments such as the population census. The population census is limited in terms of data captured on short-term and seasonal migrants (Srivastava and Sasikumar, 2003). It is not well-designed to collect data on migration related to temporary employment, or secondary reasons for migration, such as marriage (ibid). The available data on urban growth also obscures information on short-term, seasonal or circular migration. The labour migrants I observed are predominately rural to urban migrants, and in the case of older migrant individuals and/or households, there are some urban to urban migrants. They are also predominantly categorised as Scheduled Tribes (ST) and Scheduled Castes (SC).

The NSS are large-scale sample household surveys conducted every five years. The format was adapted in the 55th Round (1999-2000) to capture estimates of short-term migration. For the first time, migrants who stayed away for 2-6 months of work were considered in the survey. However, this still fails to fully capture the scale of short-term mobility as seasonal migration cycles can vary from a few weeks to a few months (7-9 months) and can occur more than once per annum (Srivastava, 2011). Data on migration have important policy implications. The design of a census design and interpretation of its results can influence policy attitudes and responses at the central and state levels. The popular ‘distress migration’ narrative for example, does not recognise the

²¹ It should be noted that cross-border/inter-state migration does not necessarily mean long-distance e.g. migrants living close to state borders such as Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh can move short-distances or on a seasonal basis

volume of short-term or circular migrants and thus ignores the potential value of migration as a livelihood strategy (Deshingkar and Start, 2003).

Some studies have established that the poorest of the poor do not tend to migrate (Skeldon, 2008; Keshri and Bhagat, 2012). Certain types of migration patterns – temporary, seasonal and short-term – have been observed however, as typical of those belonging to the “lowest expenditure quintiles, rural areas and STs” (Keshri and Bhagat, 2012: 82). From the outset, such migrant flows are dominated by poor and vulnerable demographic groups: scheduled caste and so-called ‘backward caste’ members, landless individuals and households and those suffering multiple social and economic deprivations (Srivastava, 2011; Kusuma *et al.*, 2014). They are often employed in the informal economy engaging in precarious labour (Bremar, 1996; Srivastava and Sasikumar, 2003). Those compelled to migrate also face risks in the form of job search hazards, lack of information about the labour market at places of destination, and possible exploitation from labour contractors. Whilst the Indian government has passed a plethora of labour laws designed to protect workers, recognition of the specific needs of migrants have been minimal and virtually ignored by employers (Bremar, 1996; Lerche, 2012; Pattenden, 2012). The absence of access to social protections for socio-economically deprived labour migrants already operating in a void of legal protection can further exacerbate their precariousness.

In terms of overall population distribution strategies, unlike China’s *hukou*²² system where rural to urban migrants face explicit exclusion from social protection (Chan and Zang, 1999), India has not pursued explicit movement controls and the freedom to move is a constitutional right. At the sub-national level however, this is contradicted by implementation practices that diverge from policy design, exclusionary urban development policies, described in Chapter Two, and access structures to social entitlements that are biased against migrants. Though historical and projected

²² A strict government registration system in mainland China where rural to urban migrants are denied access to state social benefits and services in cities, though this has loosened since the early 2000s. See: Wilczak, J. (2017) ‘Making the countryside more like the countryside? Rural planning and metropolitan visions in post-quake Chengdu’ *Geoforum* 78:110-118

to increase in the wake of rapid urbanisation (Census of India, 2001; Bhagat, 2011), migration within India continues to be a contested rather than accepted phenomenon. ‘Distress migration’ was a term commonly used in the Indian literature (and in some African contexts) to explain migration by the poor as a response to ecological or economic shocks (Reddy, 1990, Mukherji, 2001) and continues to prevail in media and policy narratives. Internal migration is generally viewed as problematic and in need of reduction (Keshri and Bhagat, 2012). The pessimistic “distress migration” narrative (Mukherji, 2001; 2006) is both an attribute and outcome of the “hostile policy environment” for migrants (Deshingkar and Farrington, 2009). The work of Mukherji (2001) depicts internal migration outcomes as ‘distress’ and ‘urban decay’ and migrants are considered a source of potential crime and burden in urban areas.

Despite the lack of data available on seasonal and short-term migration, which has prohibited the development of micro-level studies observing migration patterns on a granular scale (Keshri and Bhagat, 2012), a rich vein of qualitative studies exists (including Breman, 1996; Mosse *et al.*, 2002; Rogaly *et al.*, 2002; de Haan, 2002; Parry, 2003; Shah, 2006; Waite, 2006; Deshingkar *et al.*, 2008). Building on the ‘new economics of migration’ approach, this body of qualitative studies suggest that migration has long been part of the “livelihood portfolio” for poor people in India (Mosse *et al.*, 1997; de Haan and Rogaly, 2002; Deshingkar *et al.*, 2008). A set of studies by Anh (2003) on internal migration in Bangladesh, China, Vietnam and the Philippines found that migration offered a route out of poverty and was also a driver of economic growth.

These more ‘optimistic’ narratives counter the distress migration argument with empirical evidence that internal migration in India can serve as a livelihood strategy both for those who migrate, and their families left behind, offering a pathway to the accumulation of income and assets (Mosse *et al.*, 1997; Deshingkar and Start, 2003; Mitra, 2010). Taking this existing evidence as a starting point, this thesis presents findings on experiences of labour migrants in their urban contexts and provides further insights into the growing literature looking at citizenship and

social protection outcomes for urban migrants (Mitra, 2010; Routray, 2014; Abbas, 2016).

1.3 The Public Distribution System

The PDS, officially established in 1947²³, is arguably India's oldest and largest social protection programme and a fixture of its expanding "welfare architecture" (Mehta, 2010). The nationwide programme provides subsidised (below market price) food and cooking fuel to guarantee food security²⁴ for poor and vulnerable households and also supports farmers through high procurement prices (Mooij, 1998). The PDS has never been a static programme and iteratively vacillated between universal and targeted coverage, a focus on pro-poor or pro-market mechanisms and private and public distributors. The programme's scope has continually changed to reflect India's shifting economy (Prasad, 1981; Mooij, 1998). The programme evolved into its recent form (relevant at the time of fieldwork) in 1997, as a targeted food security programme focusing on vulnerable populations and has evolved even further in this direction under the 2013 National Food Security Act (NFSA).

PDS access is stratified according to socio-economic categories that vary across sub-national states but broadly correspond with 'above poverty line' (APL) and 'below poverty line' (BPL). Many states also include an access band for the most economically and socially vulnerable groups (including widows and those with disabilities) referred to as the 'Antyodaya Anna Yojana' (AAY) category. Once distributed, the subsidies are sold at retail points run by agencies which are not necessarily state-owned but expected to serve public goods; working in parallel with the free market (Prasad, 1981). Documents, referred to as 'ration cards', are used by PDS claimants to signify and procure household entitlements. At the time of fieldwork under the Targeted PDS system, BPL and AAY households were entitled to 35kg of grains and APL households were

²³ The original iteration of the PDS emerged during World War Two when pre-Independence India faced acute food shortages and initiated a system of public food distribution under a specific Food Department. See: <http://dfpd.nic.in/history.htm>

²⁴ Food security is defined as a situation when "all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life" (World Food Summit, 1996). See: <http://www.fao.org/forestry/13128-0e6f36f27e0091055bec28ebe830f46b3.pdf>

entitled to 15kg in both Maharashtra and Gujarat.²⁵ A wide variety of prices and amounts are reported by the local labourer participants in both of the states, and also by labour migrants in relation to their states of origin. This suggests the diversity of PDS allocations across different states (Khera, 2011) and also among households; as well as hinting at divergent perceptions and experiences of discretionary patterns of PDS access among vulnerable groups.

Despite India's shift to 'lower middle income' status,²⁶ the country continues to perform poorly in nutrition indicators particularly among children and is currently ranked 97th of 118 countries in the Global Hunger Index (von Grebmer *et al.*, 2016). The wide variations across the country in nutrition rates (Cavatorta *et al.*, 2015) - with many migrant-sending states faring the worst - potentially reflects variations in PDS implementation and access (Bhalotra, 2002). While the PDS is flawed in terms of operational efficiency (Saxena, 2011), some studies have established the importance of the programme's potential to ensure resource distribution in times of crisis, resolve food insecurity and reduce the vulnerability of poor households (Bhalotra, 2002; Jha *et al.*, 2009). Social protection programmes such as the PDS can reduce vulnerability by alleviating income poverty, but this does not necessarily guarantee against other forms of vulnerability such as the risk of malnutrition (Gaiha and Imai, 2009). Taking on a multidimensional view of poverty, Jha *et al.* (2009) argue that nutrition and healthcare deprivation should also be integrated along with economic development into resource transfers, as part of a comprehensive approach.

This comprehensive approach was taken up by the national 'Right to Food'²⁷ (RtF) advocacy movement, a grassroots network of activists calling for food security and access to nutrition under both constitutional and international human rights laws. Among RtF's specific calls was one to enhance the role of the PDS in guaranteeing food security for India's poor and vulnerable

²⁵ Sources: <http://mahafood.gov.in/website/english/PDS.aspx> and <http://www.prsindia.org/administrator/uploads/general/1388728622~~TPDS%20Thematic%20Note.pdf>

²⁶ See: World Bank Country and Lending Groups: <https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519-world-bank-country-and-lending-groups>

²⁷ See: <http://www.righttofoodcampaign.in/> [originally accessed in 2013]

households, and they eventually mobilised legislative reform in the shape of the NFSA. The PDS is now a targeted scheme under law, where households are entitled to a specific amount of subsidised food and cooking fuel depending on their socio-economic category.²⁸ However, labour migrants continue to be excluded and remain at a disadvantage when it comes to accessing the PDS.²⁹ This furthers the ‘hostile policy environment’ surrounding labour migrants in India, even in the context of judicial reform to overcome social exclusion.

Migrants face a double-pronged barrier when it comes to accessing the PDS: one in the programme design which stipulates the need for proof of local fixed address to initially apply for a ration card. The second is in terms of implementation: where access to the subsidies in any given location is tethered to a fixed rather than temporary proof of address, as observed in MacAuslan’s study on migrant access to the PDS in Delhi (2011). Quotas for food subsidies are often time-bound which tends to preclude those on the move (MacAuslan, 2011). Additionally, the ration card is used as a general proof of identity, so migrants effectively lack recognised documents proving identity at their place of destination. As my findings show, barriers to access to the PDS are not only experienced by mobile populations. Both the urban poor who are sedentary, and in some cases the migrants in their ‘native’ locations recount challenging access conditions, further highlighting extant evidence on flawed PDS targeting systems (Balhotra, 2002).

The programme’s overhaul in 2014 (following the NFSA) was partly driven by its reputation for being poorly managed and prone to corruption and resource leakages – the misallocation of ration cards being one example, where subsidies are diverted to “unintended beneficiaries” (Saxena, 2011: 44).³⁰ Many households are allocated the wrong category of ration card (Besley *et al.*, 2007;

²⁸ See: <http://dfpd.nic.in/nfsa-act.htm>

²⁹ A provision for enabling portable access to the PDS, to include migrants, was included in the original proposal for a Food Security Bill by RtF but this did not make it through to final legislation. Some prominent RtF advocates support the ‘distress migration’ narrative calling for more efforts to stem rural to urban migration (based on field interviews with RtF activists, Delhi, 2014). Also see: Khera, R. ‘Employment Guarantee and migration,’ *The Hindu*, 13 July 2006: <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-opinion/employment-guarantee-and-migration/article18464170.ece>

³⁰ According to an evaluation from now disbanded Planning Commission: approximately 42% of subsidised grains reach their target group (Planning Commission, 2005). See:

Dreze and Khera, 2010). A World Bank study found the actual welfare impact of the PDS on the poor was minimal in many states, though certain states such as Tamil Nadu are exceptions. The minimal impact was attributed to poor participation and poor targeting of intended beneficiaries (Radhakrishna *et al.*, 1997). Furthermore, at the level of implementation, a whole range of complex interactions exist between multiple actors, leading to a proliferation of barriers to access for the poor and vulnerable, particularly migrants (MacAuslan and Sabates-Wheeler, 2007; MacAuslan, 2011).

In terms of how the PDS actually works in practice, it is a “huge machine” of a programme (Landy, 2017: 113): managed jointly by central and state levels of government and enabling the internal allocation of food resources across the country. The dynamics and challenges linked to its operation mirror those of India’s federalised governance system itself. As a nationwide programme that is designed centrally, implemented sub-nationally and administered locally; access outcomes are differentiated along socio-economic and spatial axes lines. The spatial axis does not only refer to the programme’s urban bias (Mooij, 1998) but also in its favouring of sedentary over mobile populations. A deeper examination of how the PDS works illuminates both the vertical and horizontal lines of accountability between centre and state authorities; and the scope for bureaucrats and front-line agents to manipulate implementation processes,. These labyrinthine and populous processes of implementation are depicted in Appendix One.

At the central level, the national Food Corporation of India (FCI) procures grains from producers at a ‘minimum support price’ and then allocates the grains according to estimated regional need (Tritah, 2003). The task of distributing the subsidised food is delegated to individual states and implemented through a network of licenced local Fair Price Shops (FPS), known locally in Hindi as ‘*dukaans*’ (shopkeepers are referred to as ‘*dukandaars*’). Individual states are also responsible for classifying families according to socio-economic category and keeping FPS accountable – “an

additional burden” on state-level bureaucracy.³¹ The ‘double-pronged’ barriers faced by migrants are illustrated in a Delhi-based case study by MacAuslan (2011). MacAuslan’s findings on the exclusionary attributes of this access system include:

- Requirement for proof of permanent residence
- Fixed quotas for poor and non-poor due to non-continuous deadlines for application
- The necessity to reapply for a ration card with every change across FPS jurisdictions

Despite its flaws, the PDS has remained a tool of political capital - the provision of food serving as a potent form of capturing votes in a large and unequal electorate (Mooij, 1998). The political relevance of the PDS is also marked in the RtF movement which culminated in legalising food security rights. Civil society groups were mobilised to pressure the government to take responsibility for national food security with a reformed and accountable PDS. Whilst the PDS has been subject to debates regarding universal and targeted social protection programmes and more recently, whether it would be more efficient to replace with cash transfers,³² it remains a powerful political tool though not yet one that has been able to provide for migrants on a national scale.

1.4 Governance in India

The federalised, and increasingly decentralised, system of India’s government can result in heterogenous processes and outcomes of national programmes such as the PDS across its 29 states (Mundle, 2012; Chopra, 2015; Deshpande *et al.*, 2017). The federal system also fractures access to social protections for migrants who cross administrative boundaries. As part of democratic reform under the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments in 1992, India introduced a three-tier decentralised government. New institutions were established to ensure the representation of historically marginalised groups such as Scheduled Caste and Scheduled

³¹ Reference from key informant interview with state level official in Gujarat’s Food and Civil Supplies Department (April, 2014).

³² S.M Ghosh and I. Qadeer ‘Look before you dismantle’ The Indian Express, August 16th, 2016.
<http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/look-before-you-dismantle/>

Tribes, and women overall. Village councils (*gram panchayats*) and ‘urban local bodies’ (ULBs) were set up to enable more direct citizen representation in governance (Norris, 2008).

However, this stratified form of government has opened up space for ‘unruly practices’ (Fraser, 1989; Gore, 1993, cited in Kabeer, 2000; Pellissery, 2010) where implementation factors affecting PDS access in general, such as corruption, political opportunism and accountability systems also vary from state to state. While the PDS has received criticism for corruption and inefficiency often at the cost of those most in need, certain states such as Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and recently, Chhattisgarh exemplify ‘model’ states with successful PDS operations and outcomes in terms of rooting out corruption, installing efficient distribution mechanisms and broadening coverage (Kattamuri, 2011; Tillin, Saxena and Sisodia 2015; Landy, 2017).

In this thesis I present evidence of a system of institutional barriers experienced by migrants and local labourers in accessing social protection programmes, and on the ways in which they deploy strategies to mitigate or overcome these barriers. I attribute these barriers to ‘policy dissonances’ – the external and internal conceptual and behavioural paradoxes that characterise multiple dimensions of Indian governance, including policies that concern internal migration. At the local level, these dissonances are represented by discretionary practices such as rent-seeking, social discrimination and patronage, though they operate within, and in relation to, institutional bounds (North, 1990; Gore, 1993; Kabeer, 2000). For example, barriers of implementation are mediated by local bureaucrats who can display their own subjectivities and either engage, mediate, yield (to bribery, nepotism and rent) or resist in encounters with the poor, and those with specific disadvantages, such as recent labour migrants. These behaviours create barriers and deny the very citizens targeted by social protection programmes. These divergences or ‘policy dissonances’ between programme design and the way they are implemented adversely affect both local and migrant labourers in distinct ways.

Divergences between policy and implementation have adversely affected (or led to the neglect of) labour migrants in numerous ways. Whilst migrant labour was recognised by national legislation in the Inter-State Migrant Workmen Act (1979),³³ there is little evidence that employers abide by the regulations. Evidence from a study on labour migrants from Jharkhand to West Bengal shows such legislation is largely unobserved and migrants are thus unprotected (Rogaly *et al.*, 2002). Migrants are delinked from access to social protection due in part to a dichotomy in governance attitudes. Policies are fractured along one stance that promotes social protection and improved targeting of the poor, and another stance which either disfavours or neglects migrants and their social protection needs. Both policy patterns can overlap to compound the vulnerability of poor migrants.

Regarding national policies for internal migrants, the findings from a key informant interview (KII) with a member of the Indian Cabinet Secretariat,³⁴ show that both structural and political barriers prevent “portability of rights” (and access) for migrants overall. According to the Cabinet Secretariat representative, the government’s official aims regarding migration (at the time of fieldwork), at least in rhetoric, both adhere to and contradict conceptions of a “hostile policy environment” for migrants. They stated aims are to a) prevent distress migration, b) relieve said distress for those who do migrate and c) “implement systems and technology to enable the portability of rights.” (KII with Cabinet representative, New Delhi, 2014).

The latter point reflects national moves toward ‘e-governance’ and digitalisation of programme infrastructures in India (Sarkar, 2014; Masiero, 2016). In 2009, the national Unique Identification (UID) programme - known as “Aadhaar” – was launched with the promise to facilitate portable and universal identification for all citizens, thus not only eliminating errors of exclusion and

³³ The Inter-state Migrant Workmen Act (1979) stipulates: licencing and registration of migrant workers, advance payments and timely payments in accordance with the national minimum wage. Further information can be found here: <http://clc.gov.in/clc/clcold/Acts/shtm/ismw.php>

³⁴ The Union Cabinet is a small executive decision-making body assigned by Indian Constitution, led by the Prime Minister.

inclusion but potentially improving access for migrants (Nilekani, 2008; Zelazny, 2012). In other words, the Aadhaar card was based on two principles which promised benefits for poor, working migrants. Such promises of inclusion clashed with the programme's other rationale of national surveillance and rooting out terrorists and so-called illegal immigrants from neighbouring countries (Sadiq, 2008; Khera, 2011; 2017). Aadhaar is the most explicit example of India's increasingly "biopolitical" (Corbridge *et al.* 2005) approach – literally combining individual biology and state-sanctioned identity through linking biometric data such as fingerprints and retina scans with an identity number.

The unfolding of the Aadhaar programme since 2009 has been ridden with controversy and political, legal and operational challenges with no clear transformation of migrant rights yet evident (Ramanathan, 2010; Khera, 2011; 2017). Though the programme was in its incipient stage during the fieldwork for this thesis, it looms large in the research context and is referenced in descriptions of the findings. The evidence on federal governance in this thesis also speaks to wider contemporary debates on India's heterogeneous social policy outcomes across different states, and the role of 'e-governance' in attempting to further integrate, rather than spatially differentiate, governance outcomes (Sinha, 2015).

The Aadhaar programme trajectory is a striking and notorious example of the gap between policy intentions and outcomes, even before the change of government in 2014. At the time of fieldwork, both public and political responses were mixed, and the level of uptake to the new centrally mandated programme varied from state to state. Khera (2011) warned that linking the Aadhaar to programmes such as the PDS did not safeguard against operational flaws and exclusionary outcomes. While some sub-national examples of concomitant technologised innovations have been launched - including the Centralised Online Real-time Electronic (CORE) PDS in Chhattisgarh, (Kattamuri, 2011) and electronic benefits transfer (EBT) initiative in Andhra Pradesh as well as recent e-governance innovations in Kerala (Masiero, 2017), they exclude inter-

state migrants. Portability and universality of access therefore remain a gap in national social protection.

In my interview with the Cabinet Secretariat (CS) representative in New Delhi, contemporary census measures for counting migrants were referred to as a “nightmare.” Existing legislation such as the Inter-state Migrant Workmen Act (1979) was deemed outdated and unworkable, as it proved impractical for employers to follow the requirement of individually registering each labour migrant. The CS representative epitomised the main challenges regarding migration governance in the following statement:

“Everyone recognises the problems linked with migration, but the Inter-state Act is not implementable. The focus should not just be on labour laws and enforcement, but on welfare. A methodology has to happen in order to enforce a law. The fact is we all need migrant labour – and any anti-migrant political attitudes for example, the Shiv Sena³⁵ are simply ‘political posturing’”

According to the CS representative, the state’s incapability to fully capture accurate numbers on migrants inhibited the development of any meaningful policy framework for internal migrants and improving access. Other challenges mentioned were the lack of political will at the individual state level to initiate and develop inter-state migrant access frameworks and the lack of inter-state dispute resolution mechanisms, further discouraging migrant-supportive policies.

It should be noted that this research endeavour was conceived and designed in 2013, and the fieldwork was conducted in late 2013 through to the summer of 2014. The summer of 2014 also marked a crux in recent Indian political history - the landslide victory of Narendra Modi, leader of the Bharatiya Janata Party³⁶ (BJP), after decades of Congress-led government. The BJP government had been critical of flagship welfare programmes such as the Mahatma Gandhi

³⁵ A far-right anti-migrant political party founded in Maharashtra in the 1960s

³⁶ A major national party in government at the time of writing. The party has been closely associated with Hindu nationalist groups and their agendas.

National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MNREGS) and their initial period of government generated concerns over the retrenchment of India's decentralised welfare system (Tillin and Pereira, 2017). Such developments have changed the governance landscape and therefore, the findings of this research should therefore be considered within its specific pre-Modi time-frame.

1.5 Introduction to field-sites

The first four months of fieldwork were conducted in the city of Nashik, located in the state of Maharashtra (MH) - one of the highest migrant-receiving states in India. According to the 2001 Census,³⁷ the state receives India's second highest level of net migration (2.3 million), and data from the latest Census show its level of urbanisation exceeds 42 percent (Census of India, 2001; Bhagat, 2011; Census of India, 2011). The state appears to have a contradictory stance on migrants. On the one hand the local and dominant political party, Shiv Sena, is based on hostility toward inter-state migrants, however the state also has an active civil society and trade union sector which indirectly supports labourers including labour migrants.³⁸

The second site where I conducted a further four months of fieldwork was the city of Ahmedabad, in Gujarat (GJ). The state of Gujarat was ranked third highest among the top states for net migration according to the 2001 Census (0.68 million).³⁹ The latest data indicates an increase of over 30 percent in the rate of urbanisation (Bhagat, 2011). Gujarat overall shows a higher than national average level of urbanisation - one of only 15 states to go against the nationwide trend of decreased urbanisation in the period 2001-2011 (ibid). Unlike Maharashtra, Gujarat is characterised by high seasonal and temporary migration⁴⁰ (Jayaraman, 1979; Mosse *et al.*, 2005; Bhagat, 2012). Gujarat hosts an active labour organisation movement and civil society (Spodek,

³⁷ Drawn from 2011 Census Migration D Tables available here:

http://censusindia.gov.in/Data_Products/Data_Highlights/Data_Highlights_link/data_highlights_D1D2D3.pdf

³⁸ Based on fieldwork observations and key informant interviews (2013)

³⁹ Drawn from 2001 Census D Migration Tables

⁴⁰ Based on 64th National Sample Survey 2007-08, unit level data as cited in Bhagat (2012). According to this data the rate of temporary and seasonal migration per 1000 in Gujarat was 23.2% versus 7.7% in Maharashtra.

2011). Whilst the political context of Gujarat has not been overtly hostile to internal migration compared with Maharashtra, social tensions have mainly manifested among religious identity groups. In economic terms, neoliberal development rather than social protection for unorganised workers has been a state priority.⁴¹

In addition to the shared characteristics described earlier in this chapter, at the state level there is also a broad case for comparing MH and GJ in terms of demographic composition and state interventions for migrants. Using broadly similar approaches, both state governments have attempted to improve inclusion for migrants through what I describe as ‘responsive policies’ specifically with regard to the PDS, though to limited success. Both Gujarat and Maharashtra governments established state-wide ‘temporary ration card’ schemes, motivated by the plight of deprived tribal migrants driven in large numbers by drought and deforestation. In Gujarat, the ‘roaming ration card’ scheme was introduced in 2003 for intra-state migrants, though it concluded in 2004 due to challenges in implementation. In Maharashtra, the Temporary Ration Card (TRC) scheme was introduced, after a state-level Right to Food committee (RtF) ruling in 2001. However, awareness about the scheme amongst local officials, let alone eligible labour migrants was limited and the programme was poorly implemented.⁴²

The two states share broadly similar characteristics in comparison with the rest of India. Their origin stories are entwined (unified as one territory in the immediate aftermath of Independence but then splitting to become the contemporary states of Maharashtra and Gujarat in 1960)⁴³ and fraternal motifs linking the two states have been invoked in media and political narratives.⁴⁴ Both states are seen as pursuing similar paths of development though in differing political contexts.

⁴¹ Based on key informant interviews with local trade unions, labour organisers and the state government representatives

⁴² Information on these responsive strategies drawn from key informant interviews with municipal and state-level officials in both field sites.

⁴³ For further information on the Maha Gujarat movement see: Bobbio, T. (2012) Making Gujarat Vibrant: Hindutva, development and the rise of sub-nationalism in India, *Third World Quarterly*, 33:4, 657-672

⁴⁴ The Indian Express. ‘Gujarat polls: Maharashtra, Gujarat brothers, says CM Devendra Fadnavis’ 28th November 2017. Available at: <http://indianexpress.com/elections/gujarat-assembly-elections-2017/gujarat-polls-maharashtra-gujarat-brothers-says-cm-devendra-fadnavis-4957791/>

Gujarat was under the direct influence of religious-nationalist (BJP) politics, while regionalist (Shiv Sena) politics have been historically popular in the case of Maharashtra (though at the time of fieldwork a Congress government was in place at state level).⁴⁵ Though broadly similar, Table 1.3 below captures the main characteristics of each state and how they contrast with each other. While Maharashtra is larger in population size and receives more migrants overall, Gujarat reported higher economic growth. Conversely Gujarat also performs lower in terms of human development (non-economic) indicators and the high rate of intra-state temporary migration, highly represented by ST or *Adivasi* groups (Mosse *et al.*, 2002) hints at stark rural-urban differentials within the state. While sectarian politics prevail in both states, in Maharashtra the divisions are more explicitly anti-migrant and ‘nativist’ (Weiner, 1978) whereas in Gujarat, religious, rather than regionalist, divisions are sharper and have resulted in widespread organised violence (Desai, 2010).

Both states host active forms of civil society or non-state sectors which have mobilised both state and market actors to engage in social and worker protection reforms, but efforts have been curtailed by widespread practices of political patronage, rent-seeking and corruption (Berenschot, 2010; Deshpande *et al.*, 2017). In Maharashtra, an active trade union sector helped mobilise the state to enact sub-national mechanisms to support labourers in the informal economy, however these largely failed due to lack of political will, funds and accountability, and remained “political vehicles” rather than transformative initiatives (Deshpande *et al.*, 2017: 101). In Gujarat, a vibrant NGO sector developed in the legacy of Gandhian anti-colonial resistance projects and in response to state negligence in the wake of social and ecological disasters (specifically: a series of periodic religious riots starting in the 1960s and continuing through to the present day; and the 2001 earthquake in Gujarat) (Spodek, 2011).⁴⁶ Practices such as patronage, ‘political mediation’, state-sponsored discrimination and corporate malpractices are widespread in the state (Mahadevia,

⁴⁵ Shiv Sena was not the ruling party in Maharashtra at the time of my fieldwork but is a dominant local party and was the fourth biggest majority in the state legislative assembly in the 2009-2014 period (during my fieldwork).

⁴⁶ This point is also corroborated in findings drawn from key informant interviews (KIIs) with NGOs in Ahmedabad.

2002; Berenschot, 2010). This contrast between the state's advanced developmental trajectory and its failures of accountability is captured by Kohli's descriptor of the Gujarati state as "omnipresent, but feeble" (1990: 6, as cited in Berenschot, 2010). Chatterjee's indictment of the state's failure to protect victims of religious pogroms and organised violence (2004) also highlights failures of state-citizens relations.

In understanding the economic and political contexts of these states, we can see how policy dissonances – reflected in divergent economic interests, political motives and social concerns – as well as between policy rhetoric and implementation (or the lack of) work to continue the exclusion of labour migrants, and labourers overall from state protections at both central and sub-national levels. Widespread networks of patronage in both states also help explain barriers of implementation related to the PDS. The contextualisation of each field-site can also illuminate the processes behind the failure of efforts to improve access structures for labour migrants through responsive policies.

Table 1.3: Summary of state-level characteristics of field-sites

	Gujarat	Maharashtra
Population ⁴⁷	60,383,628	11,23,72,972
Population growth rate 2001-2011 ⁴⁸	19.17%	15.99%
Urban population ⁴⁹	42.6% (increased from 37.4% in 2001)	45.23% (increased from 42.43% in 2001)
Net State Domestic Product (NSDP) growth ⁵⁰	16.27 %	14.22%
Human Development Index (HDI) ranking within India ⁵¹	10 th	5 th
Net migration ⁵²	0.6 million	2.3 million
Rate of temporary and seasonal migration ⁵³	23.2%	7.7%
Responsive migrant policies	Roaming ration card scheme	Temporary Ration Card scheme
Political party (at time of fieldwork)	BJP	Indian National Congress (coalition)
Main industry ⁵⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Petrochemicals and chemicals • Pharmaceuticals • Gems and jewellery • Producer and exporter of cotton 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IT and electronics • Sugarcane • Cotton and textiles • Chemicals • Machinery • Metals • Transport

⁴⁷ Data source for Gujarat: <http://www.gujaratindia.com/state-profile/demography.htm>

Data source for Maharashtra: http://censusindia.gov.in/2011-prov-results/data_files/maharashtra/maha_at_aglance.pdf

⁴⁸ Data source for GJ: <http://www.gujaratindia.com/state-profile/demography.htm>

Data source for MH: http://censusindia.gov.in/2011-prov-results/data_files/maharashtra/maha_at_aglance.pdf

⁴⁹ Data source for GJ: <http://www.gujaratindia.com/state-profile/demography.htm>

Data source for MH: http://censusindia.gov.in/2011-prov-results/data_files/maharashtra/maha_at_aglance.pdf

⁵⁰ NSDP data for 2013-2014. Niti Aayog - National Institute for Transforming India (replacement for central government Planning Commission): <http://niti.gov.in/content/nsdp-current-prices-percent-growth-2004-05-2014-15>

⁵¹ From an index constructed by Mukherjee *et al* (2014) based on UN HDI indicators. Available at: http://www.nipfp.org.in/media/medialibrary/2014/06/WP_2014_139.pdf

⁵² Census of India:

http://censusindia.gov.in/Data_Products/Data_Highlights/Data_Highlights_link/data_highlights_D1D2D3.pdf

⁵³ 64th National Sample Survey 2007-08, unit level data, as cited in Bhagat (2012)

⁵⁴ Source for GJ: Official Gujarat State Portal. <http://www.gujaratindia.com/>

Source for MH: Official website of Government of Maharashtra. <https://www.maharashtra.gov.in/1125/Home>

At city level, both cities are beneficiaries of funding from the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) which was launched in 2005. The JNNURM intended to improve urban infrastructure and enable social inclusion in cities. However, the programme has failed in some ways to deliver in terms of social inclusion objectives and attempts to reduce urban poverty were largely “cosmetic” (Kundu, 2014: 615). This failed to address inequalities generated by previous urban programmes aiming to ‘beautify’ cities by clearing slums and indirectly targeting migrants unwelcomed by urban residents, despite their role in constructing such cities (YUVA, 2010; Kundu, A., 2014; Kundu, D., 2014). Table 1.4 below depicts available data on the demographics and industry at city level for Nashik and Ahmedabad; followed by a detailed summary of each field-site city.

Table 1.4: Summary of characteristics of each city field-site

	Ahmedabad	Nashik
Population ⁵⁵	5,577,940	1,486,053
Population Growth Rate 2001-2011 ⁵⁶	24.79%	37.95%
Main industry ⁵⁷	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction • Denim • Gems and jewellery • Engineering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manufacturing • Textiles • IT • Wine production

⁵⁵ Source for both columns: Census of India A Tables for Class 1 (populations of 100,000 and above) - A -4 Towns And Urban Agglomerations Classified By Population Size Class In 2011 With Variation Since 1901. Available at: <http://www.censusindia.gov.in/2011census/PCA/A4.html>

⁵⁶ Ibid

⁵⁷ Source for Ahmedabad. Amdavad Municipal Corporation: <https://ahmedabadcity.gov.in/portal/index.jsp>
Source for Nashik: Nashik Municipal Corporation. <http://nashikcorporation.in/>

1.5.1 Introduction to Ahmedabad

The city of Ahmedabad, located in its eponymously named district in north-central Gujarat, reported a population of 6.35 million⁵⁸ in the latest census (2011). Ahmedabad is India's fifth largest city, and seventh largest metropolitan area (Census of India, 2011). The daily wage market for migrants in Ahmedabad (as reported in my findings) was similar to that of Nashik's – approximately Rs, 300 per day for unskilled/semi-skilled labour (in many cases Rs, 200 for women in the same sector). Migrants in Ahmedabad work predominantly in the construction, brick kiln, engineering and gem industries (Hirway *et al.*, 2014). As a populous 'megacity', Ahmedabad is larger than Nashik and hosts an established civil society.

A 'roaming ration card' system had been introduced in 2003 at the state-level for intra-state migrants, but to little success, as discussed in Chapter Seven. According to an interview with a Gujarat state representative, the main reason for failure was the lack of technology involved. Information systems were managed on a district-wide basis and not shared with municipal administrations, therefore when a beneficiary moved internally within the state, authorities were not equipped to sufficiently verify identity (KII with Gujarat state official, May 2014).

Any account of relationships between migrants and local communities within Ahmedabad must consider the intersections between religion, caste and class identity in the population. Ahmedabad has become a "patchwork of Hindu and Muslim localities with borders" (Desai, 2010: 111). The metaphor is appropriate in terms of the city's core industries of textile production, in particular cotton and later, denim. In the first half of the 20th century, Ahmedabad (then under British colonial rule) was known as the 'Manchester of India.' Attracting migrants initially from surrounding rural areas and eventually inter-state migrants from elsewhere in the country, Ahmedabad became an industrial (and labour migration) hub (Desai, 2010). Work and housing was initially organised along caste and religious lines eventually leading to a segregation of

⁵⁸ Also see: <http://moud.gov.in/cms/number-of-cities--towns-by-city-size-class.php>

Hindus along so-called low and upper caste lines, and Muslims. These divisions became reified in the geographical landscape, with the city's Sabarmati River physically dividing working-class areas consisting of Muslim and 'low'-caste Hindu labourers and more prosperous middle-class areas dominated by 'upper'-caste Hindu communities (Desai, 2010). Desai (2010) argues this reconfiguration of the urban landscape; resource allocation and commercial and industrial centres was the result of intersecting religious and class tensions. The city is notorious as a site of recurring and organised violence between Hindu and Muslim groups. Large-scale riots took place in the 1960s, 1980s and most significantly in terms of human loss, scale and international attention, in 2002.

The tensions between class, religion and caste revolve around the city's industrial dynamics. As Breman argues, the unfolding of communal violence which has come to dominate the city's reputation, represents the "changing political economy" of the city (2002:1), when the closure of textile mills replaced worker solidarity with growing communal tensions. According to Mahadevia (2002), existing exclusions rooted in the industrial sector were "expanded and deepened" under neoliberalism and these tensions were exploited by Hindu nationalist movements and led to the systematic targeting of Muslims (Desai, 2010: 104). The communal violence has resulted in a profound segregation of housing and businesses in the city (Desai, 2010).

Government intervention, or lack of, in local communal violence has been controversial.⁵⁹ Chief Minister at the time, Narendra Modi, was internationally criticised for his lack of response in the immediate aftermath of the 2002 violence, let alone a pursuit for justice. The most visceral manifestation of government neglect and urban tensions in Ahmedabad is the area of Juhapura – one of my fieldwork sites where many Muslim communities have been 'ghettoised', and as my

⁵⁹ The following news articles (international and domestic) represent examples of tenor of feeling at the time and after a decade: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-13170914>; <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/no-guilty-feeling-about-gujarat-riots-says-modi/article4908704.ece>

survey and interview findings showed, now attracts Muslim inter-state migrants in the city.

1.5.2 Introduction to Nashik

Just under 500 kilometres from Ahmedabad lies the city of Nashik. At district level, Nashik shows one of the highest growth rates in the state (22.3%) (Census of India, 2011).⁶⁰ The metropolitan population stands at 1,56 million (ibid).⁶¹ While it is at a different demographic level to Ahmedabad, Table 1.4 shows that they are still broadly comparable in the sense that both cities have undergone rapid urbanisation and Nashik continues to do so. Nashik lies 200 kilometres from the state's major cities, Mumbai and Pune and is Maharashtra's fourth largest industrial city.⁶² The city is home to national and international industries including Glaxo, Bosch, and Mahindra (Nashik Municipal Cooperation, 2017). Nashik is ranked in the country's top ten cities with regard to growth rate (Lakshmana, 2014). The consultancy group McKinsey identified it as one of 49 'high performing metropolitan clusters' across India in terms of infrastructure (McKinsey Global Institute, 2016).

The city is located on the banks of the holy Godavari River, and is known as a religious site. In 2015 the city hosted the 'Kumbh Mela' - a large-scale Hindu festival - and in preparation, scaled up its logistical and transportation infrastructure at the time of my fieldwork, to cope with the thousands of expected visitors.⁶³ The surrounding district of Nashik city is highly fertile, producing mainly onions, grapes and strawberries, and has recently gained attention for cultivating India's largest wine production industry⁶⁴ - providing a sharp element of contrast with the 'dry city' of Ahmedabad. The city's landscape is marked by the onset of a booming construction industry and rapid urbanisation, which has increased in-migration (Borhade. 2007; Bhamare, 2016). The rapid development in the city centre was visceral - with the arrival of major

⁶⁰ http://censusindia.gov.in/2011-prov-results/data_files/maharashtra/maha_at_aglance.pdf

⁶¹ Also see: Government of India, Ministry of Urban and Housing Affairs: <http://moud.gov.in/cms/number-of-cities--towns-by-city-size-class.php>

⁶² Press Information Bureau, Mumbai (Government of India)
<http://pibmumbai.gov.in/scripts/detail.asp?releaseId=E2011IS3>

⁶³ See: <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/kumbh-mela-begins-in-nashik/article7422578.ece>

⁶⁴ This section also supplemented by own fieldnotes derived from KIIs during fieldwork

superstores, shopping malls and cinema complexes all within the time-frame of my fieldwork.

A 'Maharashtra Social Watch' report conducted by the NGO, YUVA, provided an overview of the implementation of accountability mechanisms across Maharashtra with a focus on Nashik. The report identified Nashik as a site of the "urbanisation of poverty" (YUVA, 2010: 7) and showed that the city specifically gave low priority to improving slums and addressing urban poverty. Instead the Nashik Municipal Corporation (NMC) favoured increased construction and regulation of land use - both moves which effectively increase demands for migrant labour and inhibit spaces for them to live in. The YUVA report findings also revealed that anti slum-formation policies had been pursued in favour of preserving public gardens. The focus on land use and expansion reveals "ambitions of fast-paced urbanisation" (YUVA, 2010: 32). This series of clashes with JNNURM objectives and declared urban policies of urban poverty alleviation and facilitating 'inclusive' cities, reveals the ubiquity of internal conflicts within Nashik governance.

As a smaller and 'newer' city compared with Ahmedabad, there is a smaller ethnographic and sociological literature on Nashik. The media has reported on how social tensions across Maharashtra as a result of Shiv Sena politics, growth and urbanisation, have played out in Nashik against the background of its status as a conservative and religious (largely Hindu) city. The ratio of the major religions in the city is higher than that of Ahmedabad - 85.21 percent of the Nashik's population reported themselves as Hindu whereas 8.9 percent reported themselves as Muslims (Census of India, 2011). Ahmedabad in comparison has a slightly more diverse mix of mainstream religions: Hindus make up 81.56 percent, Muslims, 13.51 percent and Jains make up 3.62 percent (Census of India, 2011).

Shiv Sena historically has a stronghold in cities such as Mumbai and Pune, but nativist politics came to the fore in Nashik in 2008 leading to targeted attacks against inter-state migrants from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh (UP), primarily working in the auto-rickshaw industry. The events were

a repercussion of violent riots between splinter factions of the BJP and a local political party in UP. The party faction leader Raj Thackeray fomented violence against northern migrants in Maharashtra, deploying nativist rhetoric. Following Thackeray's arrest on the charge of giving provocation to riot, northern migrants in Nashik were violently and systematically targeted. Migrants from Bihar and UP fled the city *en masse*. According to railway officials, the largest (outgoing) train passenger traffic was observed since the Kumbh Mela of 2003. A district official reported 15,000 migrant workers left the city in the aftermath of the violence and this led to the temporary closure of several key industrial sites.⁶⁵ Such tensions contrast with attempts to promote migrant inclusion in Nashik, primarily led by local NGOs in partnership with the NMC, and at the state level across Maharashtra.

1.6 Outline of chapters

Following this introductory chapter, the thesis provides a review of the literature, a discussion of relevant theories and a proposed framework for the empirical findings. The second part of the thesis is based on the analysis of empirical findings, starting with a discussion of the research methods and fieldwork before delving into the empirical findings. The conclusion forms the final part of this thesis, summarising the empirical findings from Nashik and Ahmedabad to answer the initial research questions and drawing the main comparisons between migrants and local labourers.

- Review of literature and theoretical framework

Informed by the research questions, this chapter reviews three thematic and overlapping groups of literature and assesses their contributions and limitations in relation to this thesis. Following the literature review, I outline two sets of theory: on structure and agency for labour migrants, as

⁶⁵ For further information see: 'Nashik's economy suffers as migrants flee'

<https://www.ndtv.com/video/news/news/nashik-s-economy-suffers-as-migrants-flee-23841>

'Nearly 10,000 North Indians flee from Nashik'

<http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-nearly-10000-north-indians-flee-from-nashik-1150680> [Accessed August 2017)

framed by the literature on precariousness and dominant narratives in India; and on governance and institutions to inform my conceptual framework on the ways in which structural barriers impact access conditions for labour migrants.

- Empirical section

First, I detail the methodology used to answer the research questions. The subsequent three chapters address the first two research questions. The chapters present the findings according to three categories of labourers, as represented in the ‘spectrum’ and how they experience barriers to accessing the PDS; and whether these groups experience them distinctly from each other. The fourth chapter presents evidence in response to the final research question: how are labour migrants and non-migrants responding to such structures and patterns of access? How can states learn from these responses? It focuses on the various strategies used by both local labourers and migrants, and the linkages maintained by migrants with their places of origin to help overcome barriers to access. The chapter also references how the states of Maharashtra and Gujarat adopted strategies to try and reduce barriers to access.

- Conclusion

This chapter returns to the main research questions and draws from the empirical findings to consolidate the answers to these questions. The chapter will then compare the findings on access for different types of migrants, compared with their local counterparts and reflect on the findings regarding governance context in each field-site. The chapter concludes with considerations for research going forward.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The overall scholarship on internal migration is limited in comparison to that of international migration (King *et al.*, 2012). Further to this, enquiries into the linkages between migration and either citizenship or precariousness (or both) tend to prioritise international over internal migration (Rogaly and Thieme, 2012; Abbas, 2016). I aim to address these gaps by enriching understandings of internal migrants in India, and how they experience and navigate ‘hostile’ policies and barriers to social protection. The evidence from my fieldwork illustrates how migrants experience, and try to overcome, barriers to access in diverse ways connected with their demographic profiles; and in nuanced and distinct ways from their non-migrant counterparts. More broadly, my research also presents the impact of access structures on citizenship outcomes for migrants and highlights the role of the state in both enacting and mediating barriers to access.

In this chapter, I engage with three thematic and inter-connected groups of literature. I first investigate theoretical debates on vulnerability and precariousness (and their distinctions) in relation to labour migrants and then review extant evidence from India that illustrates diverse forms of vulnerability and precariousness, in order to further understand the experiences, behaviours and conditions of labour migrants that emerge in my findings and to identify the limitations in this area. This approach encompasses ‘horizontal social relations’ and state-citizen relations to understand both vulnerability and precariousness, and the ways in which labourers use agency to respond to structural causes of this vulnerability (Carswell and de Neve, 2013).

Second, I draw upon the literature specifically covering governance in India, which is often “not easily captured” in Western ontologies (Berenschot, 2010: 883) (though this scholarship is influenced by Foucauldian ideas of governmentality and other Western thinkers). I engage with this literature to help interpret and frame my findings on the role of the state, specifically in urban contexts, in determining access for labour migrants, and how this compares with local labourers. Finally, I will review the debates surrounding social protection and access structures to further

contextualise the empirical evidence I present on patterns of access to the PDS among labourers, both migrant and local.

2.1. Vulnerability and precariousness

Low-income labourers in India can be characterised by both vulnerability and precariousness. The early literature on vulnerability stems from attempts to broaden definitions of poverty beyond material deprivation and economic terms to include factors such as isolation and marginalisation; social stigma; powerlessness and physical weakness. This expansion of terms is realised in Sen's 'capabilities' framework which outlines a series of 'functionings': for example, being nourished and sheltered, and more complex capabilities, such as participating in civic life, which enable the freedom to function in substantive ways (Sen, 2003). The approach acknowledges multiple dimensions of identity which may be susceptible to marginalisation and exclusion that are not necessarily mitigated by financial income. For example, a woman living in a non-poor household may still lack 'functioning' in terms of health access, and capabilities in terms of expressing voice and agency (Ghosh, 1998). Vulnerability can be linked to the number of available strategies to adapt and minimise risk (Chambers 1989; Heyer, 2012). The provision of state social protection – such as the PDS – can help mitigate against vulnerability in its multiple forms, beyond economic poverty.

Kabeer (2000) uses a 'social exclusion' approach to examine the institutionalisation of vulnerability. The "hybrid" of social and economic disadvantage experienced among vulnerable communities results in 'bivalent collectivities' (Fraser, 1997, as cited in Kabeer, 2000: 85) - a term which can be applied to labour migrants. The term conflates disadvantage that is both social and economic and when institutionalised, can lead to systematic social and economic exclusion. Jayal also speaks of the "multiple and mutually compounding forms of disadvantage" that encompass social factors such as caste and gender, and economic factors which are bound up with deprivations in the Indian context (2009: 370). Contemporary iterations of this debate are focused

on the idea of intersectionality – where multiple aspects of social identity and experience are examined in order to fully understand vulnerability and power dynamics (Crenshaw, 1991; Hancock, 2013).

The terms ‘vulnerability’ and ‘precariousness’ (or ‘precarity’) have been used interchangeably in the labour and migration literatures to describe processes of poverty, exclusion and conditions of risk and uncertainty (Waite, 2009; Anderson, 2010; Ori and Sargeant, 2013). A subtle distinction can be drawn between the broader “structural production” and political and institutional context acknowledged in conceptions of precarity versus the relatively “individualised” focus of vulnerability (Waite 2009: 421). While preoccupations with illegality in the recent and Euro-centric precariousness literature (Anderson, 2010; Paret and Gleeson, 2016) do not necessarily hold in the case of internal migration in India, precariousness provides a useful framework for understanding the lives and contexts of labour migrants, in conjunction with understandings of risk and uncertainty developed in the vulnerability scholarship and Kabeer’s work which bridges the two areas in many ways. I draw from both literatures (themselves entwined and overlapping) to acknowledge the broader structural processes that influence conditions and experiences of labour migrants, but also to understand the ways in which they navigate, cope with or resist such barriers (Katz, 2004; Carswell and de Neve, 2013).

Influential in the precariousness scholarship has been Standing’s work on contemporary labour regimes and ‘the precariat’ (2011). The ‘precariat’ describes an international group whose experiences are distinct from ‘proletarian’ styles of labour relations; their lives and labour are characterised by uncertainty and instability as a result of failings from both state and capital (Standing, 2011). Neoliberal policies of globalisation and flexible labour are identified as the drivers of increased and systematic insecurity for workers. While this offers a useful starting point for understanding contemporary labour regimes and resonates with much of the existing evidence on international labour migration, there are limitations in the ‘precariat’ project as a blueprint for

all low-income labourers and it falls short of recognising the full range of implications caused by the conflation of migration and precarious labour. No connection is made between Standing's critique of 'denizenship' in China's *hukou* system and the Indian state, though the latter is indicted for providing a "parallel social protection system" for overseas migrants in Gulf states while ignoring the poorest populations who remain home (Standing, 2011: 130). In addition, temporal subjectivities of the precariat as understood by Standing, where the precariat are defined by a denial of long-term future aspirations do not align with my findings on the teleological aspirations of labour migrants working in precarious sectors, across all age ranges.

Lewis *et al.* (2014) unpack the term further to argue that precariousness should be measured on a spectrum. Lewis *et al.* (2014) link precarious labour to the 'stratified citizenship' of labour migrants, both mediated by and resulting in 'hyper-precarity' in the contexts of globalisation and neoliberalism. This refers to the confluence of precarities resulting from both "neoliberal labour markets and highly restrictive immigration regimes" (ibid: 3), broadening out Srivastava and Sasikumar's (2003) observation of the 'double disadvantage' faced by labour migrants and recognition of 'migrant-intensified' vulnerabilities in the social protection literature (Sabates-Wheeler and Waite, 2003). Kabeer's use of 'bivalent collectivities' (Fraser, 1997) is a useful appendage to these ideas to describe the collective aspects of compound precarities. Precariousness for migrants is also dynamic, as they become more or less vulnerable at different stages of the migration process depending on temporal and spatial factors (Lewis *et al.*, 2014). Paret and Gleeson also acknowledge the multiple precarities of labour migrants which wield "intersecting and mutually reinforcing" effects (2016: 287), originating from both state hostilities (such as deportation and criminalisation) and negligence (such as the failure to recognise the need for social services).

Both the precariousness and vulnerability literatures acknowledge the space for agency, in various forms ranging from coping to resistance (Coe and Jordhus-Lier, 2010; Paret and Gleeson, 2016).

The decision-making of poor households in risk-management and income diversification, for example through migration, is covered in the economic and vulnerability literature (Chambers, 1989; Taylor, 1999; Choudhury, 2003). Paret and Gleeson assert that “honest” (2016: 278) accounts of precariousness among labour migrants must also account for moments of agency and struggle in the face of structural conditions and constraints – a rich body of evidence for which exists in the literature on India (Rogaly *et al.*, 2002; 2004; Mosse *et al.*, 2002; Deshingkar *et al.*, 2008).

2.1.1 Diverse evidence from the field

I turn now to empirical evidence from India and assess how paradigms of vulnerability and precariousness apply to examples from India. Breman’s work on labour migration in southern Gujarat started in the 1960s (see: Breman, 1978; 1996) and illustrates in detail the precariousness of migrants working in specific rural and urban sectors such as sugar-cane cutting, or diamond cutting. Breman’s scholarship traces labour market transitions from systems of bondage and patronage to modes of capitalist production and increased informalisation, in response to globalised market demand (1978; 1996). The exploitative recruitment conditions of labourers who are compelled to move due to economic and social deprivation are highlighted, as well as their continued experience of vulnerabilities in places of destination. According to Breman’s analysis, structural forces displace scope for agency among exploited labour migrant ‘gangs’ (2013). More recently, Breman argues that informalised labour conditions constitute a deliberate state strategy in India, explaining why conditions of precariousness persist for labour migrants in the contemporary age of urbanisation (2013). The confluence of informalised labour structures and the vacuum of legal protection for labourers is cited as a major factor perpetuating employers’ preference for migrant workers as a “cheap and flexible labour source” (Deshingkar and Start, 2009: 261; Breman, 2013). Breman paints a stark picture of the urban milieus in which migrants exist, skewing images of ‘urban jungles’ to present cities as untamed hotbeds of exploitation, suffering and violence in which labour migrants both experience and participate (Bremen, 2013:

65).

Mukherji's (2001; 2006) highly subjective accounts of 'low quality' urban migration also illustrates the squalid conditions and severe lack of resources experienced by migrants working in "low grade and low waged" sectors, 'eking' out "wretched socio-economic conditions" (2001: 3). The conclusions are drawn from rigid interpretations of econometric modelling of data, and do not allow for the nuances and complexities of motivations behind migration, nor do they adequately account for underlying structural conditions which create such "wretched" conditions in cities. Such accounts, presented in a vacuum of structural factors and empirical understandings of migrant lives and decisions, fuel 'distress migration' narratives which dominate Indian media and policy discourse, and civil society attitudes⁶⁶ on labour migration within India.

In 'distress' narratives, driven by 'migration pessimists' - as referred to by de Haas (2008) - migrants end up in worse situations in their destinations and are seen as a source of crime, social ills and burden in cities. Mainstream public attitudes towards migrants are not helped by limited census data on short-term and seasonal migration and the failure to recognise this as a possible source of poverty alleviation (Srivastava and Sasikumar, 2003). Focusing on the degradation effects of urban migration and slum creation in urban environments obscures the livelihood potential of migration (Deshingkar and Start, 2000; Shah, 2010). Distress narratives also fail to accept urbanisation as an inclusive project or pathway for 'right to the city' based on the constitutional right for Indian citizens to work and live anywhere in the country (Balbo, 2008; Bhagat, 2011).

Anti-migrant norms are also reinforced by the lack of effective policy frameworks to address the precarities experienced by labourers overall, and 'hyper-precarity' experienced in labour migration (Breman, 1996; Srivastava and Sasikumar, 2003). Despite India's various labour laws,

⁶⁶ See Section 1.3 in Chapter 1 on exclusion of migrants from right to food movement and other social policies

employers eschew the cost and burden of compliance in favour of the informal economy and casualised labour (Bremar, 2013). Contractors or ‘middlemen’ are the main channel of informal labour recruitment thus enabling employers and contractors to sidestep legislations and exploit labourers. In doing so, informal employers deny the potential for improved livelihoods (Bremar, 1996; Mitra, 2010). Positive government interventions, for example, reservations for scheduled castes and tribes, are restricted to the formal economy thus excluding migrant workers engaged in the informal economy (Bremar, 1996). The role of the state in actively, or indirectly, maintaining conditions that impose and perpetuate vulnerability, is highlighted here and precariousness is a useful way of accounting for these broader structural factors shaping labour migrant experiences.

The experiences of labour migrants are not solely restricted to ‘distress’ and uniform precariousness: they are highly diverse, and the degrees and characteristics of precariousness and types of vulnerability themselves are variegated (see: Deshingkar and Start, 2003; Mosse *et al.*, 2005; Waite, 2009). In India, the labour migrant population is heterogeneous, and their motives can be mapped out on a continuum ranging from survival to subsistence to accumulation of assets (Deshingkar and Start, 2003). The poorest of migrants, often moving within rural areas and on temporary bases (Harriss-White, 1992; Bhagat, 2012) are vulnerable to debt-migration cycles, where earnings from migration are used to pay off debts incurred either at the place of origin or destination. In the narrowest sense this can be considered an example of agency - a strategy of survival to prevent a further backslide into poverty (Deshingkar and Start, 2003). Migrants who are relatively new to the process have little or no skills, limited knowledge about the urban labour market and are more vulnerable to search hazards and the risk of being cheated by employers and middlemen but can become resilient to these risks over time (Srivastava and Sasikumar, 2003). Migration can become an accumulative livelihood strategy in both rural and urban contexts (Deshingkar and Start, 2003; Mitra, 2010). Social factors such as caste, regional background or tribal status can either exacerbate vulnerabilities or elicit opportunities, for example caste-specific

trades and skills can be utilised to find job stability and networks. These social markers can sometimes be negotiated and manipulated in the process of migration to help migrants gain social leverage in labour relations in their new contexts (de Haan, 2004; Rogaly *et al.*, 2004).

De Haan draws from field research in Bihar to illustrate how migration has historically been utilised as a strategy for diversifying livelihoods (2002). The evidence highlights the role of remittances from migrants on poor households. Remittances, which have dominated debates on ‘migration and development’ can be used not only as informal social protection to diversify risks and increase investment capital but can also generate multiplier effects in places of migrant origin (Oberai and Singh, 1980; Kapur, 2004). In India, the domestic remittance market is significant (Thorat and Jones, 2011), estimated to be worth USD 10 billion in the year 2007-08 (Tumbe, 2011); 60 percent of these consisted of inter-state transfers and 80 percent were directed towards rural households (*ibid*). These estimates support the argument that migration can serve as a livelihood option for poor and vulnerable groups and that this option can be maximised in the absence of hostile policy barriers.

Mosse *et al.* (2002) describe diverse outcomes for labour migrants and acknowledge both the roles of structure and agency in these outcomes (2002: 60). While some migrants are forced to move, Mosse’s *et al.*’s (2002) study of *Adivasi* migrant movement in western India shows that these movements originate from a complex set of motives including debt-management and social dependencies as well as limited options for rural livelihoods (bought on by crop failure or drought). In other cases, predominately among lone male migrants who originate from households with relative food security, migration can generate opportunities to “save, accumulate capital and invest in assets” (2002: 60).

Rogaly *et al.*, (2002) provide an illuminating account of the relationship between state and market structures and migrant agency in constructing and mediating outcomes of ‘welfare’ (in the holistic

sense of wellbeing) and its opposite, 'illfare.' Migrants can make some choices in the market regarding labour and can use their remittances to reduce poverty in their home villages though they remain excluded in terms of state policies and market conditions (ibid). Interestingly however, Rogaly *et al.*, (2001) observe instances of positive state influence, contrasting with prevailing evidence on the "hostile policy environment" (Deshingkar and Farrington, 2009: 25) which labourers face. In the case of West Bengal (at the time of Rogaly *et al.*'s study), many local level institutions were populated with elected representatives of the state's ruling party, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI-M) who "positively influenced" (2002: 102) income flows for labour migrants by ensuring wage disputes were settled in favour of labourers, paid timely and as per agreements. The combination of party politics and state governance created conditions for a 'subjective state' (North, 1990; Kabeer, 2000) that favoured labour migrants, highlighting the prominence of state influence in shaping and mediating precariousness experienced by labour migrants.

Much of the literature on migration patterns within India seek to understand the outcomes of migration. The overall consensus confirms that the initial socio-economic backgrounds of migrants influence their eventual migration outcomes (de Haan, 2002; Mosse *et al.*, 2002; Deshingkar and Start, 2003; Deshingkar *et al.*, 2008; Thorat and Jones, 2011; Pattenden, 2012). Household migrants seems to fare less well than lone male migrants (female-headed households are generally more vulnerable from the outset) (Deshingkar *et al.*, 2008; Pattanaik, 2009; Thorat and Jones, 2011). In construction work, evidence from Pattanaik in Chhattisgarh (2009), Thorat and Jones (2011) and Pattenden (2012) shows that relatively well-resourced migrants (in terms of land and assets) are more likely to engage in construction work and in many cases, receive higher wages with which to exercise agency that goes beyond survival and coping strategies. My findings also suggest that the destination, scale of construction site and skill level of workers in this sector also significantly influence migration outcomes.

As the premise of this thesis illustrates, and as confirmed in the literature (Deshingkar and Farrington, 2009; Rogaly *et al.*, 2002; Heyer, 2012; Pattenden, 2012) social protection is difficult to access for labour migrants, including those working on construction sites. While there is evidence to show that such migrants are not among the most socio-economically vulnerable labour migrants (Pattanik, 2009; Srivastava and Sutradhar, 2016), they still earn low wages (generally under the poverty line in my findings) differentiated according to skill level and gender; and work in hazardous and unprotected settings - all compounded by the absence, or ‘hostilities’ of the state. This is illustrated in the evidence I present on their lack of access to the PDS in urban contexts, in either a continuation of similar experiences faced in their home locations, or in contrast (in which case the ‘double disadvantage’ faced exclusively by labour migrants is even more pronounced).

In a broader sense, my findings also highlight state failures in terms of implementing existing federal and state laws to protect labourers, including specific legislations for construction workers⁶⁷ and offering adequate healthcare services (Rogaly *et al.*, 2002, Unnithan, 2004). Lack of access to healthcare overall is a significant failure of the state in addressing the needs of disadvantaged communities, and particularly in precarious sites of labour (Mobile Crèches, 2008 (and KIIs with Mobile Crèches, 2014); Pattenden, 2012; Betancourt *et al.*, 2013). These are among the main governance factors which increase the vulnerabilities and precariousness faced by migrants in this sector (Pattenden, 2012; Betancourt *et al.*, 2013). The evidence gathered in this thesis also emphasises the physical precariousness involved in certain forms of migrant labour and how this intensifies individual risks and vulnerabilities. Invoking the concept of precariousness offers a useful and pluralist way of configuring and situating multiple factors related to vulnerability within their broader structural context.

The need to make nuanced and variegated observations of the “varieties of unfreedom”

⁶⁷ For example, the Maharashtra Construction and Other Workers Welfare Board. See: <https://mahakamgar.maharashtra.gov.in/worker.htm>

(Barrientos *et al.*, 2013: 1038) involved in the most precarious forms of labour has been advocated by scholars in response to the ILO's (2005) previously limited conception of 'forced labour' (Lewis *et al.*, 2014). As a result, more open interpretations of exploitative labour describe brick kiln work in India as a form of 'forced' or 'unfree' labour where migrants enter into contracts that potentially lock them into debt, and highly precarious and dangerous forms of labour (Bremar, 2007; Lerche, 2007; ILO, 2009; Anti-Slavery International, 2015). That these groups are among the most precarious, in terms of risk; physical hazard; modes of recruitment; income and access to the state, is not contested here. However, in addition to active and highly necessary civil society movements against the worst forms of exploitation in brick kilns, it should be acknowledged that a "range of possible outcomes" exist in such labour settings (Morgan and Olsen, 2015: 184). For example, Shah's (2006) account of young migrant workers in Jharkand illustrate how brick kilns can present opportunities for 'temporary freedom' – which resonated with my findings of young male brick kiln workers from Rajasthan. The situation in brick kiln sites, differed for household and lone migrants, and according to socio-economic, generational and regional backgrounds, as well as age and gender – this internal diversity recurs throughout each assemblage of labourers in my 'spectrum' of analysis.

Overall, the theoretical and empirical literature on vulnerability and precariousness offer useful ways to consider my evidence on the diverse range of experiences represented by the research participants. While variations in outcomes and drivers of labour migration are underscored throughout the literature, my findings offer an additional dimension of analysis with the comparison against local labourers, contributing further to existing insights into migrant and local labourer access to livelihoods and social networks in urban slums. The inclusion of local labourers serves to both illustrate whether they represent a counterfactual experience for labour migrants in accessing the PDS, and probes existing insights into the temporal and spatial variations in experiences of precariousness and vulnerability among labour migrants.

2.2. A 'hostile policy environment' - the governance context

The role of the state is a recurrent theme in the literatures covered in the previous section. The state is presented either in collusion with markets or political parties (Mooij, 1998; Rogaly *et al.*, 2002; Breman, 2013) or prone to manipulation and mediation through rent-seeking and corruption among local bureaucrats (North, 1990; Kabeer, 2000; Deshingkar and Farrington, 2009). The urgent need for social protection (Heyer, 2012) and legal regulation (Breman, 1996; 2013; Rogaly *et al.*, 2002) is highlighted in the empirical experiences of labour migrants across different states in India.

The term governance as used in this thesis refers to “the prevailing patterns by which public power is exercised in a given social context” (Jenkins, 2002: 485). This is a sweeping term that expands further when used to describe the vast territory and population ‘governed’ – though to mixed extents – in India. India’s diverse and complex federal governance system. embodies both the attributes of a democratic system and variations in terms of accountability, political commitments and administration at the different levels of government (Sadanandan, 2012; Chopra, 2015). This results in unequal outcomes, adversely affecting the poor and marginalised, and affects migrants when they move across different states. The work of North (1990) is useful for understanding the tension between “culturally derived” informal rules and formal rules (ibid: 45) prevalent throughout Indian governance, that can create barriers for poor and marginalised communities in accessing the state. In this chapter I engage with the literature on two specific aspects of governance in India that enact ‘formal’ and ‘informal’ rules for labour migrants and the urban poor overall – state-citizen interactions among the poor, and urban governance – in order to see how they are or can potentially be, linked with understandings of internal migration.

2.2.1 Unequal citizens and partial sightings of the state

The interface between the state and citizens belonging to poor and vulnerable groups in India has been explored by Corbridge *et al.* (2005) in an influential work among the “rich recent research

literature on the processes through which the poor engage with the state in rural India” (Pur and Moore, 2010: 620). The study draws from relevant literatures exploring everyday encounters or “sightings” of state representatives, which substitute formal instruments of civic engagement and entitlements (such as identity documents, ration cards, BPL status, voter registration) for poor and marginalised citizens. Corbridge *et al.* (2005) reverse Scott’s (1998) gaze *through* the eyes of the state (to understand forms of government control) *toward* the state to understand how different people ‘see’ the state. The ocular tropes convey both limited access where the poor are afforded brief and periodic ‘glimpses’ of power structures; and when considered as a purposeful verb, ‘sightings’ can embody opportunities for agency and accountability within narrow remits. The ‘sighting’ metaphor can also be used as a way to understand the ways in which poor and vulnerable communities, such as labour migrants, can navigate and perceive the state.

Corbridge *et al.* (2005) draw from Foucault’s meta-framework of governmentality (1978) and ‘biopolitics’ - referring to the ways in which the state maintains order and control by assembling bodies of knowledge about their subjects - and apply it to the case of the rural poor. The authors also build on Chatterjee’s (2004) work in this vein - highlighting how governmental classification of populations (for example counting specific types of migrants in the census) has changed the character of government to administrative rather than political, and the resulting proliferation of groups require multiple forms of governance. While Corbridge *et al.* (2005) are primarily concerned with the rural poor, the question of how different members of the poor view the state can be useful in examining the “lesser citizenship status” of urban labour migrants (Abbas, 2016: 150). According to the logic of the literatures reviewed so far, if the poor have only partial sightings of the state, labour migrants would have even smaller sightings. The evidence I present shows that these encounters depend on the type of labour migration – those in the most precarious and remotely situated forms of labour (in the first group on the spectrum) ‘see’ the state in Nashik and Ahmedabad less than those who have settled in their respective cities for longer. Sightings of the state do not typically translate to access however, as described in the recursive accounts of

dhakkas – experienced by both local and labour migrants.

Based on my empirical findings, I interpret ‘seeing the state’ in two ways: referring to physical and intentioned encounters with the state to lobby for access or resolve barriers to access to the PDS and other entitlements; and second as (mis)perceptions of the state and its functions that develop in the imaginations of groups such as labour migrants, precisely because they cannot and do not ‘see’ the state. This is most clearly represented in the distorted and indirect flow of information between the state and the poor, who are often illiterate (also due to structural barriers), and in the widespread confusion among labourers regarding formal and informal routes of accountability and access, heightened for new migrants who may not speak local languages.

To further understand the state-citizen relations among the poor and vulnerable, including labour migrants, I now turn to processes driving unequal citizenship outcomes for migrants as explored in Abbas (2016)’s analysis of citizenship among internal migrants within India. Abbas (2016) explores the divergence between India’s constitutional right (under Article 19) for citizens to move, work and settle anywhere within national borders, and citizenship outcomes. Her study examines how legality, identity and access – contestations of citizenship usually associated with international migrants - are compromised by state policies and processes of implementation which result in differential ‘citizenship outcomes’ for migrants. Abbas undertakes a regional analysis of citizenship in India – contending that differential citizenship outcomes arise in different sub-national locations. Taking into account wider regional developments in South Asia during the 1970s and 1980s, Abbas (2016) attributes the dilution of Article 19 to “anti-immigration agitation” (2016: 158) concerning refugees and displaced persons driven by conflict and famine in neighbouring countries of Bangladesh (formed in 1971) and Sri Lanka. Given the shared ethno-linguistic characteristics of these international migrants with Indian citizens, policies targeting international migrants blur the distinction with certain communities of internal migrants, increasing the latter’s vulnerability in legalistic terms (Sadiq, 2008; Abbas, 2016).

The quality of citizenship experienced by internal migrants is also explored by Jayal (2009) who refers to the need for ‘substantive citizenship’ to address vulnerabilities arising from the intersection of both class and identity-based inequalities. Various groups are burdened with both social and economic deprivations in spite of legal and social protections and platforms for voice and accountability (Jayal, 2009) - "migrants are required as workers not citizens" (Breman, 2013: 82). They are alienated upon arrival in cities both officially and socially (Breman, 2013). Furthering these negations of citizenship, migrants also often face barriers to the most direct form of civic participation – voting in elections (Carswell and de Neve, 2014). Postal voting in India is only available to a privileged few such as military personnel (Kumar, 2010; Abbas, 2016) and voting rights, as with the PDS, are attached to fixed and local proof of residence.

The dual function of the ration card as an identity document as well as a social entitlement emerged in my findings from Nashik and Ahmedabad. Documents form a conduit through which “citizenship outcomes” (Abbas, 2016) can play out. Citizenship in India is formally determined in one of four ways: birth, descent, registration or naturalisation all of which are evidenced through documents (Citizenship Act, 1995, as cited in Gauba and Singh, 2017). My findings showed that migrant precariousness was positioned in relation to how scarce their ‘bundle of documents’ (*pachan patra*) was, among other factors. This is linked to ‘numerical citizenship’ (Routray, 2014) - based on the idea that number of years at a place of destination is commensurate to access to entitlements and documents: as one’s *pachan patra* accumulates, the more ‘substantive’ one’s citizenship becomes. Documents are necessary in the process of becoming a ‘person’ in the eyes of the state (Sadiq, 2008: 81), resonating with Scott’s conceptions of measuring populations (1998) and Foucauldian ideas of biopolitics cited in Corbridge *et al.* (2005).

Documents in India are bound up with citizenship – in the sense that they ‘prove’ it but also in the sense that citizenship rights are not fully realised when state entitlements are denied. For

example, the ration card is linked with access that is legally guaranteed to all citizens. Ration cards are also informally used as other forms of identification, although this is not authorised by the central government (MacAuslan, 2011) and thus the lack of access to ration cards can signify a loss of political voice for migrants as well as deprivation of entitlements. Given the context of India's vaunted democracy – precisely because it is “unlikely” as a large, populous and highly diverse nation (Sen, 1999: 6) – the negation of citizenship outcomes for labour migrants within India underscores the weakness of prevailing governance systems. This warrants further analyses of exclusion, vulnerability and precariousness to consider the role of governance. The framework of ‘sightings’ developed by Corbridge *et al.* helps explain the limited access available to labour migrants who are poor and vulnerable and how core citizenship rights are denied in both formal and informal platforms.

Applications of citizenship studies and governance theory to the situation of internal migrants is limited however (Abbas, 2016), and this area remains under-theorised in the overall internal migration scholarship in India (and beyond). By presenting evidence on access conditions, this thesis contributes to insights on aspects of legality and identity among internal migrants (Sadiq, 2008; Routray, 2014; Abbas, 2016). These insights also highlight that dichotomies between citizens and ‘non-citizens’ in the precariousness literature do not always hold - instead a citizenship outcomes can be conceptualised as a continuum. “Unequal citizenship” (Jayal, 2009) experienced by labour migrants contest ‘formal’ models of citizenship (see: Holston and Appadurai, 1996) related to homogenous nationalism in the sense described by Weber or Andersen (1946; 1991). The divisions invoked in Jayal's ideas of citizenship and Abbas's evidence of citizenship outcomes show how governance processes fracture citizenship between sedentary and internal migrant populations. The literatures on citizenship signify how a lack of access to the PDS is perpetuated and magnified by the lack of civic capability to formally address state grievances beyond encounters, *dhakkas* and sightings.

2.2.2 Urban governance

In this sub-section, I briefly outline the evidence on direct and indirect ways in which the state - in ‘collusion’ with the market (Bremar, 2013) - and other social actors, serves to exclude labour migrants from their ‘right to the city’ (Harvey, 2003; Balbo, 2008; Bhagat, 2011). These practices of exclusionary urbanisation (Kundu and Saraswati, 2012) mutually reinforce ‘distress migration’ narratives, subvert the outcomes of welfare and social protection policies and further fracture and spatialise Indian citizenship. The literature reviewed in this section serves to contextualise and explain certain patterns and structures of access in the cities of Nashik and Ahmedabad that emerged in my findings.

The vulnerabilities faced by labour migrants in the cities of Nashik and Ahmedabad, including those related to access structures, are shaped by the ongoing project of urbanisation taking place across India’s cities. Cities have become domains of overt capitalist accumulation, investment and interests (Bremar, 2013; Bhagat, 2017); and spaces to project utopian visions (Datta, A. 2015). However, they remain exclusionary spaces for labour migrants, despite their direct role in constructing such spaces (Bhagat, 2017) – yet another iteration of policies that exacerbate migrant vulnerabilities.

Economic, gender-based, ethnic, religious and nativist or regionalist tensions are brought to the fore in contexts of urban diversity. As shown by historic and contemporary social tensions in Ahmedabad – referenced in Chapter One – competition for space, resources and labour markets in proximate spaces can exacerbate existing tensions, particularly in the absence of equal access to the state. Certain risks linked to urban life and to migration are compounded in city contexts to create further ‘hyper-precariousness’ for urban migrants (Lewis *et al.*, 2014). For example, the transportation risks faced by migrants have been described in Rogaly *et al.*’s (2002) account of migrants in West Bengal and these are heightened and (further) gendered in city contexts, further exacerbating risks for migrant women (Tacoli and Satterthwaite 2013; Bhagat, 2017).

Unlike explicitly divided urban environments - such as China's *hukou* system - mechanisms of urban exclusion in India are implicit and masked by policy discourse and rhetoric. The Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) was launched in 2005⁶⁸ with the intention of improving urban infrastructure, addressing urban poverty and enabling social inclusion in cities (both Ahmedabad and Nashik are beneficiaries of JNNURM funding). However, the programme objectives and implementation resulted in increasing the vulnerability of those living on informal settlements, where migrants typically reside, despite their role in constructing such cities (Kundu and Saraswati, 2012) and positive impacts on urban poverty are yet to be seen (Mitra, 2010). On the other hand, both the governments of Gujarat and Maharashtra have attempted to improve inclusion for migrants, specifically with regard to the PDS, though to limited success, as detailed further in Chapter Seven.

Direct actions against migrants, though masked under the rhetoric of 'urban improvement', include urban planning programmes which mandate slum clearance in mega cities such as Delhi, through its 'Master Plans' and in Mumbai, designed to deter migrants, and in accordance with the interests of elites in the very land on which such slums are constructed (Deshingkar and Grimm, 2005; Kundu, 2014). Mega-cities such as Mumbai and Delhi have historically used urban renewal programmes as part of a set of indirect measures against rural-urban migration, officially attributed to efforts to improve infrastructure and encourage foreign investment (Kundu, 2014). Overall, these strategies serve to exclude migrants from their 'right to the city' (Harvey, 2003): sharing in the economic growth and employment prospects of cities despite the contribution of migrant labour to such levels of growth (Kundu, A., 2014; Kundu, D., 2014).

Many city planners and politicians see migrants as a threat (Burra, 2005). Migrants are seen to lack capacity for paying for amenities or municipal taxes, thereby creating a perceived burden on the finances of receiving cities (Satterthwaite 2008; UN Habitat, 2008). Narratives surrounding

⁶⁸ See: Government of India, JNNURM: <http://jnnurmmis.nic.in/>

urban migrants also link them with problems of law and order, regard them as threats to local and national security and the source of outbreak of epidemics and incidence of disease such as HIV/AIDS (Ellerman, 2003). Middle-class urban communities tend to want to “keep the poor out” and this typically targets poor labour migrants living in slum settlements (Weiner, 1978: 277). Policies of “exclusionary urban growth” designed to ‘screen’ out poorer migrants thus exacerbate rural-urban inequalities as well as intra-urban divisions (Kundu and Saraswati, 2012: 226).

Inaction can be interpreted as a form of anti-migrant bias in urban governance and is observed in urban policies regarding employment and housing for migrants. Mitra’s (2010) findings on well-being among urban migrants in four cities across India shows that the rural bias of state poverty programmes, such as the promotion of the MNREGS, needs to be recalibrated to include urban sites in order to address the lack of access to formal employment, and consequently social mobility, faced by urban migrants.

In terms of more subtle and small-scale anti-migrant urban actions, access structures in urban contexts – already inaccessible to the local urban poor as shown in my findings – are even more restrictive for poor migrants. MacAuslan’s study in 2011 of PDS access in Delhi invokes the concepts of ‘rules’ and ‘queues’ to illustrate barriers of design and implementation respectively – exacerbated in a context of intense competition over resources in a densely populated locale. Even for those in possession of a ration card, food subsidy quotas were highly restricted and time-bound, thus putting labourers and labour migrants at a disadvantage. Ration cards were initially denied to residents of informal slum settlements until reforms in the early 1990s changed this (MacAuslan, 2011), further highlighting historic anti-migrant attitudes embedded within urban social protection targeting. ‘Queues’ (that delay and potentially bar access) are also enacted by discretionary state actors (North, 1990; Kabeer, 2000) in Mumbai, as illustrated in the case of a neighbourhood predominately inhabited by inter-state migrants, where linguistic and

discriminatory tactics were deployed by officials to avoid accurate BPL ration card designations for eligible migrant households (Abbas, 2016).

Hostilities toward migrants also stem from ‘horizontal’ social discrimination (Carswell and de Neve, 2013) as well as institutional and policy structures. In parallel to barriers of governance, tensions between migrants and ‘native’ populations emerge out of either a lack of access to social mobility or spatial mobility (Weiner, 1978: 293; Rajan *et al.*, 2011). The tensions can also stoke political movements such as Shiv Sena in Maharashtra, including in Nashik, as mentioned in Chapter One. Political parties such as Shiv Sena, promote “sons of the soil” ideologies which foment occasional violence against migrants and foster nativist attitudes among local electorates (Bhagat, 2017). The conditions often necessary for the phenomenon of ‘nativism’ – systematic and targeted discrimination of migrants and a concerted political effort to stem in-migration – are outlined in Weiner’s seminal 1978 work on internal migrant social dynamics in India. Nativist theory remains relevant in illustrating how state context can influence inter-relationships between migrants and locals. Weiner describes how the existence of perceived cultural difference with migrants (arising from matters as small as food preference, through to religion); immobility of a ‘native’ population and local employment rates and labour markets are crucial factors in determining the level of nativism in a given state. For example, in areas with high out-migration such as Punjab, a higher tolerance for in-migration is observed (Weiner, 1978). Competitive urban labour markets where labour demand has been unable to absorb an increasingly educated local labour supply can foster resentment among urban local – often middle-class - ‘native’ communities (*ibid*).

The large literature on slum politics and movements led by civil society – or ‘political society’ as Chatterjee (2004) refers to it – offers rich insights into agency among the urban poor (Acharya and Parikh, 2002; Sassen, 2006; Kundu, 2011; Datta, 2016) and while a detailed analysis falls beyond the scope of this thesis, these should be acknowledged as an important feature of agency

exercised in urban governance contexts. Elite capture driven by middle-class groups in urban contexts at the cost of slum communities has been observed in multiple Indian states (Harris, 2010; Chattopadhyay, 2015; Mehta, 2016). As a result, the urban poor are forced to rely upon ‘mediation’ through and with local officials and political leaders to gain access to entitlements and services (Berenschot, 2010; Chattopadhyay, 2015). For example, a study of housing struggles among the urban poor and migrants in Delhi shows how they are forced to engage in “subversions of urban legalities” in order to consolidate urban citizenship – enacting “small public actions” to access protection measures (Mahadevia, 2010: 52-53).

The evidence on direct and indirect biases against urban migrants from both state and societal sources contextualises the findings I draw from Ahmedabad and Nashik on migrant-local relations. Nativist tensions among local labourers come into play when considering resource limitations represented by the ‘black market’ for grains and fuel in the absence of PDS access for migrants. While there are various contributing factors behind this market dynamic, the *perception* of local residents – central to fuelling nativist feelings – influences how migrant communities are ‘received’ in local contexts regardless of their duration of stay, according to my empirical findings. The state-led biases against urban migrants further exacerbate and mediate the barriers to access faced by migrants, though in many cases the vulnerabilities generated by these power biases formed a continuity from the rural source locations of such migrants. This finding, as contextualised in the urban exclusion literature, highlights the importance of understanding the role of regional background in shaping migrant experiences, and the spatial (rural or urban) specificities of particular barriers to access (Lewis et al., 2014).

2.3 Social protection for the poor and migrants

While the legislation and design of formal social protections such as the PDS implies a strong state commitment to addressing vulnerabilities and precariousness among marginalised citizens, the quality of implementation is distorted by practices of corruption such as patronage, rent-

seeking and social discrimination at the local level of government (Corbridge et al., 2005; Abbas, Kabeer, 2010, Ruparelia, 2013; Deshpande et al., 2017) In the case of India, the divergences between policy design and implementation that occur within and between different levels of government administration hamper implementation outcomes, and personalises institutional processes that structure access. This is illustrated in the case of the ‘rights-based approach’ (RBA) which was undertaken by the previous UPA Indian government to improve social protections. This section first briefly outlines the debates on social protection before reviewing the literature on the RBA and concludes by linking these debates with the evidence presented in this thesis.

Social protection emerged as a widespread ‘corrective’ for the aggregate impact of failed neoliberal policies: economic crises, structural adjustment policies and the processes of globalisation. Critics of the international rise of “neoliberal orthodoxy” (Harvey, 2005: 29) argue that greater economic openness has exposed vulnerable groups to greater economic risks (Rodrik, 1997; Barrientos and Hulme, 2008; Tillin and Duckett, 2017). In response, a similarly rapid rise of both discourse and policy on social protection was seen on developing country agendas. In this final part of the literature review section, I engage with debates on social protection – a thematic area which intersects with both governance and ideas of vulnerability and precariousness.

In India, a series of neoliberal economic reforms was launched in the early 1990s to remedy the “Hindu rate of growth.”⁶⁹ While this led to unprecedented economic growth, the subsequent retrenchment of social subsidies⁷⁰ harmed the most poor and vulnerable groups and triggered an increase in absolute poverty (Ghosh, 1998). Ironically, the reversal of policies which protect labourers from exploitation, was counterbalanced with an expansion of India’s ‘welfare architecture’ (Mehta, 2010) in the 1990s and 2000s (Barrientos and Hulme, 2008; Heyer 2012).

⁶⁹ Term coined by K.N. Raj to describe India's slow annual economic growth rate which stagnated at around 3.5% between the 1950s and 1980s and was attributed to Nehru’s socialist style planned economy

⁷⁰ Indian government opened up economy to foreign markets and borrowed structural adjustment loans from the IMF upon condition of cutting costs on social policies.

Existing state interventions in social protection such as the PDS were transformed from universal to targeted programmes. In 1995, the Indian government introduced the National Social Assistance Programme (NASP) – a portfolio of social protection programmes financed wholly at the central level, with state-level supplements (Pellissery, 2010).

Social protection can be defined as a set of risks, needs or rights that reflect various development agendas (Barrientos and Hulme, 2008). The development of social protection frameworks can include an assessment of risk and vulnerability; reliability of incomes and the capacity to absorb shocks (Deshingkar and Farrington, 2009). When applied to the case of poor labour migrants in India, all three measures would indicate their eligibility for formal social protections. The World Bank defines social protection as a set of risk management strategies designed to protect the poor from economic volatility, so they are free to ‘invest and accumulate’ (Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler, 2004: 1). In this view, social protection is embedded within a social risk management framework (‘SRM’) (Holzmann and Jorgensen, 2000).

The work of Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler (2004) challenges these prior conceptions of social protection embedded within neoliberal systems and advocate a shift from the World Bank’s limited ‘social safety nets’ approach to a socially ‘transformative’ and holistic approach. This marks a discursive evolution in social protection reflecting broader changes in expanding definitions of poverty to include multidimensional criteria. Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler (2004) favour an inclusive ‘transformative’ approach which focuses on social aspects such as education and health, in addition to economic safety nets, highlighting the need to address both economic and social vulnerabilities which require extending beyond resource transfers.

As part of this transformative approach, social protection can extend beyond risk-management strategies: as preventative, promotive, protective and transformative programmes, all of which may overlap (Devereux, 2013). The PDS can be described as both a protective and preventative

form of social protection – preventing food insecurity and protecting from risks of further deprivation. In line with this holistic approach to ‘transformative’ social protection, Devereux (2013) highlights the discursive impacts of using language such as ‘beneficiary’ and ‘client’ to describe the recipients of social protection, rendering them as either passive or commodified. The term ‘claimant’ is identified as more accurate as it explicitly specifies the function of governments in providing social protections to citizens. The language of ‘claimant’ emphasises the enforceability and accountability structures of social protections not only in terms of access but in terms of service delivery (ibid).

In India, Pellissery’s 2010 case study on access to National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) benefits in Maharashtrian villages exposes the “process deficits” involved in implementing social protection policies. High barriers to access for the poor overall, and even more so for migrants, are in place: a triple pre-requisite system is used for determining beneficiary access (the need for proof of age, *residence* and income or property). As awareness of bureaucratic procedures - both formal and informal - can be limited among the poor and vulnerable (Corbridge *et al.*, 2005), brokers are often used to obtain such certificates and documents of proof (Pellissery, 2010). In response to specific disadvantages faced by migrants, of the type described by Pellissery (2010) and MacAuslan (2011); social protection can be tailored to address migrant needs by making access and rights portable across administrative borders (Sabates-Wheeler and Feldman, 2011: 21).

The literatures covered thus far confirm labour migrants can be viewed as a vulnerable group - characterised by a set of risks and deprivations that both compel them to move in the first place and are compounded by movement. In addition to ‘hyper-precarity’ generated by exploitative labour regimes (Lewis *et al.*, 2014), migrants are also excluded, or limited, from access to social protection programmes. As a result, migrants often experience a greater or distinct set of vulnerabilities than their non-migrant counterparts (Sabates-Wheeler and Waite, 2003). This

creates a 'double disadvantage' – they are poor and further disadvantaged by exclusion from social protections available to those in the same socio-economic demographic but with a 'fixed place of residence' (Srivastava and Sasikumar, 2003; MacAuslan, 2011). As migrants are often directly or indirectly excluded from social protection regimes, their engagement with the state tends to be strategic or negotiable rather than based on a straightforward articulation of citizens' rights and entitlements.

2.3.1 Rights based approach

The rights-based approach (RBA) to social protection has become prominent in recent development agendas (Barrientos and Hulme, 2008), and frames social and state entitlements as human rights. The early to mid-2000s marked a burgeoning rights-based movement within India's social policy landscape. These include including the Right to Information in 2005; Right to Employment, enabled under the landmark Mahatma Gandhi Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA) in 2005 and the culmination of the Right to Food movement in 2013. Indeed, the rights-based approach to policy-making became popular across international development academics and advocates (Cornwall and Nyamu-Musembi, 2004; Barrientos and Hulme, 2008). The approach was considered effective in identifying and highlighting challenges faced specifically by vulnerable groups (Kabeer, 2000). The 'Right to Food' (RtF) campaign in India which culminated in the National Food Security Act to guarantee universal food security, placed emphasis on vulnerable groups and the need to maintain the PDS as a food distribution instrument. RtF is an example of taking a rights-based approach to legalising social protection.

India's vast set of constitutional rights alone, as well as the RBA, proved to be insufficient however against a system lacking accountability. The RBA overreached in its attempt to exceed the role of the welfare state in transforming the "everyday workings of the state" (Aiyar and Walton, 2014: 56) and state-citizen interactions, ultimately introducing further bureaucracy and incitements for rent-seeking behaviour thereby undermining its very purpose (Ruparelia, 2013).

The implementation of the RBA was in part sabotaged by a largely resistant and inactive ‘front-line’ bureaucracy who ran on a “different logic” (Aiyar and Walton, 2014: 6).

The rights-based movement surrounding the PDS typifies the challenges of its implementation as outlined by Aiyar and Walton (2014). Criteria for inclusion and exclusion, formed the crux of the RtF movement. The identification of claimants entails a process that is technical, complex and divisive (both in politics and the literature), which can serve to create further opportunities for discretionary governance (Besley *et al.*, 2012; Aiyar and Walton, 2014). Examples of effective FSA (and PDS) implementation are seen however, in individual sub-national cases rather than as a matter of national standards. Innovations in PDS access, including easing barriers for intra-state migrants, have occurred in individual states such as Andhra Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. In Chhattisgarh, a state-level Food Security Bill was passed and introduced specific rights as part of a broader state reform programme (Kattamuri, 2011) and was catalysed in large part by “reformist bureaucrats” (Aiyar and Walton, 2014: 39). These cases of effectiveness show the bulk of “real action” in rights-based policy reforms and transformation of state-citizen relations (including those of migrants albeit only at the intra-state level) take place at the sub-national level rather than through national laws and programmes (Aiyar and Walton, 2014: 48). State-level programmes that depart from national norms highlight the role of state-level policy actors in influencing rights and rules for citizens.

Two main insights can be drawn from the literature on social protection, and specifically on the RBA trajectory in India. The first is that even socially-mobilised reform that is both substantive and institutionalised continues to exclude the distinct and intensified vulnerabilities of migrants (Sabates-Wheeler and Waite, 2003). Having outlined the ‘transformative’ potential of social protection systems and the promising direction in which Indian social policy was heading – though still in thrall to neoliberal systems which arguably invoke the need for such programmes – the continued exclusion of migrant rights emphasises the role, and will, of the state in

perpetuating inequalities and exclusion. That migrants are excluded from social protection regimes is acknowledged in the labour migration and precariousness literature (Sabates-Wheeler and Waite, 2003); however, when concerted, legitimated – and widely celebrated – efforts in India also fall short of internal migrant rights, it underscores the deeply entrenched and widespread nature of access barriers. The second insight is into the processes behind policy dissonance illustrated in the RBA trajectory where centrally-set policy intentions were both mobilised and distorted by the subjectivities of individual actors – ‘reformist bureaucrats’ representing the former and ‘unruly’ practitioners motivated by self-gain, the latter (Aiyar and Walton, 2014). Sub-national variations in how some of the key RBA programmes (such as the PDS and MNREGS) have performed also highlight how policy implementation is internally varied and subjective according to political, regional and bureaucratic contexts.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

In this section, I engage further with theories connected to the themes covered in the literature review in order to interpret, understand and frame my evidence. I draw upon two main bodies of theory through which my research questions can be answered and understood. First, I look at the relevant work on structure and agency, developed by Giddens (1984); and revisited by Jessop (2001), Katz (2004), Coe and Jordhus-Lier (2010) and de Haas (2011). I then engage with theories of governance and institutions to interpret and develop the findings on governance context and to further understand the processes behind the structural barriers to access that migrants contend with.

2.4.1. Degrees of structure and agency in internal migration

In this thesis I present evidence of a system of institutional barriers experienced by migrants, and local labourers, in accessing social protection programmes, and on the ways in which they deploy strategies to mitigate or overcome these barriers. Some of the barriers are more rigid and deeply embedded within structures – institutions, legal systems, market forces, social and labour relations (de Haas, 2011) – than others, and each can be approached, survived, negotiated or resisted in

different ways and to different degrees – examples of which are presented in Chapter Seven. In the face of barriers of design, and implementation as represented in *dhakkas* and practices of corruption and rent-seeking, labourers and labour migrants occupy unequal positions in the power balance but as the literature – and my empirical evidence – illustrates, migrants can wield agency in different ways. This relationship between structure and agency can be considered the core of tensions between calls for “social order” and individual “autonomy” that characterise the “meta problem of modern governance” (Dubnik and Yang, 2009: 22).

Giddens attempts to resolve these ‘tensions’ by conceptualising structure and agency as mutually reciprocal interactions – a process described as ‘structuration’ (1984). Giddens argues that structural changes are induced by repeated acts of agency, and social structures are generated through repeated acts of agents (ibid). This framework acknowledges structures embedded within society and institutions, but also that they are subject to change when people ignore, replace and reproduce actions. Giddens theorises structure as dualistic - both a product and medium of social actions (ibid). While limitations to this dichotomous framework have been observed (cf. Jessop, 2001; Bakewell, 2010), it provides a helpful entryway into understanding the link between behavioural and institutional processes that take place between vulnerable groups, such as migrants and the state. As discussed in the preceding section, the literature acknowledges that most “migration may index neither transforming social mobility, nor the erosion of rural ways of living” (Mosse *et al.*, 2002: 3026). Instead, a ‘middle ground’ approach can be more effective for understanding empirics. My findings show that migrant lives involve a set of decisions that enable livelihoods, and depending on the set of barriers faced, can lead to differential outcomes.

Useful approaches to acknowledging these differential outcomes and modes of both structure and agency are developed in the work of Jessop (2001) and Katz (2004), as cited in Coe and Jordhus-Lier (2010). Jessop (2001) expands Giddens’ binary approach to propose that structure and agency are dialectically related. Structures are selective and ‘strategic’ and these same

characteristics - though applied in different ways – are taken on in actions which are ‘oriented’ within existing structures. This offers a useful way of conceptualising the relationship between the strategies undertaken by migrants to overcome barriers (Jessop, 2001:1223). As de Haas puts it, “structures can simultaneously constrain and facilitate agency” and both aspects can represent “negative and positive freedoms” for individuals and communities (2011: 22). For example, the decision to migrate within India itself can be seen as a form of agency – a freedom (facilitated by structures represented by constitutional law) that can become negative or restrictive once a migrant enters into segmented or exploitative labour markets (de Haas, 2011). Likewise, the access structures represented by the PDS can sometimes carve out spaces for mediation and opportunity allowing for labour migrants, and the urban poor overall, to strategically navigate the ‘maze’ of barriers to access.

Coe and Jordhus-Lier (2010) look to Katz’s (2004) continuum of differential forms of agency, contingent upon the structural constraints within which they operate. Katz’s framework distinguishes between ‘resilience’ – small-scale coping strategies that do not change social relations; ‘reworking’ strategies to leverage better terms of work or living conditions (they ‘recalibrate’ and ‘redistribute’ structural imbalances rather than undo them) and finally resistance – rare in contemporary labour regimes – which represents direct challenges to capitalist regimes and attempts to regain control over means of production (Katz, 2004). This framework is a valuable tool for understanding and analysing the different degrees to which labour migrants and their local counterparts exercise agency (Carswell and de Neve, 2013). As the empirical findings presented in Chapter Seven show, local labourers and long-term migrants are more likely to engage in or attempt practices of ‘reworking’, for example by using collective voice and agency to demand access from government officials or strategically employing agents to circumvent barriers. Certain sectors are also predilected towards taking industrial action - such as the brick kiln labourers observed in Ahmedabad, where participants hinted at adopting these types of strategies to ensure fair and timely pay. The majority of strategies undertaken by labour migrants

can be categorised as ‘resilience’ and coping strategies, also described in several empirical accounts of Indian internal migration (for example: Rogaly *et al.*, 2002; Deshingkar and Start, 2003; Mosse *et al.*, 2005).

Agency is expressed in the multi-locational trajectories of migrants and responsive sub-national policies – such as the temporary ration cards schemes in my field-sites, hint at the “the limited but real capacity of individuals to overcome constraints and potentially reshape the structural context” (de Haas, 2008: 34). Migration, and migrants, have historically been defined in restrictive terms and generally remain so in contemporary state apparatus for measuring migration in India (Srivastava and Sasikumar, 2003). While empirical evidence shows that multi-locational livelihoods are practiced by seasonal and short-term and among certain long-distance migrants (Deshingkar and Farrington, 2009; Rogaly and Thieme, 2012), and the discourse has evolved beyond focus on linear migration patterns to include more fluid understandings of mobility and transnational forms of international movement; the Indian state is still restricted in its definition of migration, as explained in Chapter One.

Existing instruments of measurement also fail to capture the reciprocities of migrant spaces (places of origin and destination) and this is replicated in the failure of policies such as those governing the PDS to make entitlements portable across spaces. Evidence in the literature eliminates the ‘false dichotomies’ of rural versus urban livelihoods (Mosse *et al.*, 2002). The reciprocal social and economic effects of rural and urban migration is observed in Mosse *et al.* (2002)’s account of Adivasi rural to urban migrants in Gujarat, whereby social networks and structures, such as rural hierarchies of power, to some extent determine decisions to migrate and these in turn influence dynamics within households at source locations. My own findings also show how migrants, across the continuum of temporalities (long-term as well as short-term) strategically maintain ongoing and reciprocal linkages between their places of origin and destination. These linkage-based strategies themselves range from ‘resilience’ to ‘reworking’

strategies (Katz, 2004).

In the way that sites of (urban) destination are contested spaces for migrants – due to nativist resentments and unsettled “overlapping” identities, the idea of native ‘home’ also becomes complicated for migrants over time, and as they travel over long distances (Parry, 2003). The idea of home as a fluid and multi-locational entity is presented in the empirical migration literature (Ahmed, 1999; Walsh, 2006; Brickell and Datta, 2011). However, while these theoretical frames can be applied to the empirical practices of migrants in my research sample, their psychological and aspirational narratives convey fixed and readily familiar notions of home as anchored in their place of origin, signified in the tethering of identity documents exclusively to the ‘home’ (such as village of birth, family household or parental home) rather than to mobile individuals.

2.4.2 Institutionalised hostilities – ‘dhakkas’, mediation and unruly practices as governance

Following on from theorisations of structure and agency I turn now to institutional manifestations of both. According to my observations, the ‘hostile’ governance context in India can be characterised by the gaps between constitutional laws, policy and implementation. These gaps are ‘process deficits’ (Pellissery, 2010) and allow for “unruly practices” (Fraser, 1989; Gore, 1993) which ultimately work against the poor and vulnerable, and particularly for migrants. The gaps can be especially apparent in the migration sector as represented in various international contexts (Czaika and de Haas, 2013). The strong association between ‘policy gaps’ and migration is explored by Czaika and de Haas (2013) who construct a typology of such gaps: discursive, implementation and efficacy – representing a “wide gulf” (Czaika and de Haas, 2013: 494) between discourse, policy and practice. This ‘gulf’ becomes configured as a fractal of gaps across multiple layers of the Indian state bureaucracy and policy-making machinery. The mixed intentions, interests and “discursive” commitments among state, (sedentary) citizens and market actors regarding migration represent these policy gaps.

In this sub-section, I seek to further develop theories that explain and exemplify the gaps between legislation, policy and implementation within India and how they affect access structures for labour migrants, and fracture identity and citizenship between migrant and sedentary populations in India. As mentioned in the preceding chapters, highly diverse political pluralism is characteristic of India's federalised and increasingly decentralised system of governance (Norris, 2008; Mundle, 2012; Chopra, 2015; Deshpande *et al.*, 2017). It can contribute, and in some cases, be instrumental to institutional processes such as patronage that perpetuate social exclusion and vulnerability (Sadanandan, 2012; Deshpande *et al.*, 2017) while in some cases the availability of agents and mediation opportunities can also help open spaces for agency among certain migrants and members of the urban poor.

The policy gaps are most apparent in the paradox of excluding internal migrants who are citizens and share the same national origins as policy makers and 'anti-migrant' elites – from national regimes. Policy dissonances in governance of labour migrants in India are reified at different levels and in various forms. This starts with the contradiction between constitutional rights for Indian citizens in system of liberal democracy and policies concerning migrants; to dissonances between policy rhetoric and drives (including the use of technology) toward social inclusion and universal access to programmes and the continued exclusion of migrants, by viewing labour migration as a disruption external to policy interventions rather than as a 'normal' livelihood activity (Deshingkar and Start, 2009); to imbalances between policy apparatus and legal frameworks available for international labour migrants in the Gulf (Standing, 2011) and those for internal migrants (Sasikumar and Srivastava, 2003). These dissonances give rise to hostile processes of implementation (or mis-implementation) of policies such as '*dhakkas*' and other informal rules practiced by local bureaucrats that run counter to central government logic or are manipulated by political patronage and other rent-seeking actors (North, 1990; Farrington and Deshingkar, 2009; Aiyar and Walton, 2014). A matrix of dissonances arising from both structure and agency (among different actors) adversely impacts poor and vulnerable communities overall

and can harm labour migrants in distinct ways, due to the contradictory citizenship status they inhabit.

The different ways in which policy ‘gaps’ can affect the lives, conditions and outcomes of labour migrants can be understood by focusing on encounters between the state and citizens and how they blur boundaries, as explored by Corbridge *et al.* (2005) and Berenschot (2010). Corbridge *et al.* (2005) explore the everyday encounters or ‘sightings’ between the poor and local government officials which substitute formal instruments of civic engagement and entitlements for those who not only lack awareness or formal access but must navigate these structures as a migrant experiencing ‘unequal citizenship.’ Migrants, and the urban poor in general, are compelled to navigate patterns of access due to disproportionate encounters with ‘state scarcity’ - as referred to by Corbridge *et al.* (2005). These state ‘scarcities’ can be attributed to social (and political) hostility toward migrants according to Weiner’s analysis of migrant and identity politics (1978). The delivery of public goods therefore becomes skewed toward those in power and can limit access to resources. The poor, as a result, are subject to the whim and discrimination of elite local groups (Weiner, 1978; Corbridge *et al.*, 2005). As disempowered and ‘non’ substantive citizens (to invert Jayal’s term, 2005), they become a ‘nuisance’ and experience *dhakkas* on a continual basis in their sightings of the state.

Focusing on the social exclusion of certain groups can help identify both the processes behind exclusion and specific challenges faced by vulnerable groups. Kabeer argues this approach prioritises the role of social interaction in producing disadvantages rather than the “anonymous” processes of marginalisation or impoverishment (2000: 84). Patterns of inclusion and exclusion are created not only by institutional mechanisms but by the individual actors they are populated with (Kabeer, 2000). As Mehta argues, “[l]ike states, institutions are not homogenous entities: they are composed of conflicting views and interests vying for the distribution of power and allocation of resources within institutions” (2005: 45). Institutions perpetuate social exclusion

through practices of policy dissonance: resources are allocated through various mechanisms, such as the PDS, which systematically deny particular groups of people “resources and recognition which would allow them to participate fully in the life of that society” (Kabeer, 2000: 86).

These practices take place in the gap between rules and their implementation across all institutional domains (North, 1990). The gap provides a space for social determination processes which serve to deny or limit access to those entitled either through corrupt agency, information asymmetries, technical incompetence or lack of capacity, or through operational errors. This gap is also present between entitlements and access when it comes to social protection programmes. Schemes can be derailed not only by flawed design but by the processes of implementing access structures. According to Corbridge *et al.* “[i]nconsistencies are bound to open up between the ‘vision’ and the ‘reality’ of state interventions and this creates a space for actors other than bureaucrats” (2005: 193). The ‘unruly practices’ which such spaces accommodate are exemplified in the widespread use of actors who both circumvent and substitute for the state, to enable informal access for the urban poor, including migrants, where formal access is denied. These practices of mediation become normalised and embedded within practices of governance to the extent they are more efficient than formal ‘rules’ (North, 1990; Berenschot, 2010).

Normative understandings of patronage as ‘aberrations’ from Weberian standards of bureaucracy have been unpacked and problematised in the literature (Berenschot, 2010; Hicken, 2011; Piliavsky, 2014). Berenschot (2010) argues that in different contexts, such practices are crucial norms that enable the day-to-day functioning of local administrations in their contexts. The poor and vulnerable are given *de facto* access and ‘sightings’ of the state in these very spaces of ‘policy’. Accounts of barriers and *dhakkas* from state officials in my findings resonate with those described in Berenschot’s ethnography of public service delivery in urban Gujarat, which contends that political mediation is both a norm for the poor and tool for empowerment. Berenschot writes of the poor facing “often long queues, the procedures are complicated, the

officials demand ‘speed-money’ to process a request, and people are often told to come back the next day” (2010:889). In the absence of formal options and ‘sightings of the state’, the study cites the primacy of agents, who are referred to as ‘roadside bureaucrats’ (Berenschot, 2010) for the urban poor. These mediating actors are better placed to perform administrative functions as they within ‘sight’ of the poor and often embedded within community networks (ibid.).

Berenschot (2010) identifies three forms of mediation crucial in enabling and empowering poor communities to overcome barriers to accessing formal rights and entitlements: brokering information, political patronage and “particularisation” where formal entitlements are procured through bribes. While all the first and third forms are present in my empirical findings, only allusions are made to the second implying this has more resonance for non-migrant communities. Though often characterised by *dhakkas*, these everyday encounters between the state, informal agents and poor and vulnerable citizens substitute formal instruments of civic engagement and entitlement (such as identity documents, ration cards, BPL status, voter registration) for those who otherwise lack awareness or formal access (Corbridge *et al.*, 2005).

In summary, linking theorisations of institutional aberrations – interpreted as policy dissonance in my findings - and structuration can be a useful way of understanding Indian governance. Indian institutions and structures tend to be influenced by subjective and cultural dynamics (North, 1990; Kabeer, 2000) that shape and determine social actions and dynamics. Such properties make it possible for similar social practices to exist on a broader scale and become systematic (Giddens, 1984; Jessop, 2001). Considering the reciprocal relations between structure and agency is a helpful way of explaining iterations of experiences of the state among the poor overall, and particularly for labour migrants. Their labour experiences and patterns of access to social programmes such as the PDS are structured by the state but these same spaces of experience also enable strategic responses to barriers to viable livelihoods (by way of migration) and to state resources, through a diversity of strategies to mitigate and overcome barriers (Katz, 2004;

Carswell and de Neve, 2013). The role of governance is therefore highly influential in shaping patterns and structures of access to the PDS for both local and, even more restrictively, for labour migrants.

3. METHODOLOGY

To answer the research questions behind this thesis, a mix of predominantly qualitative methods were used across three field sites, supplemented by one quantitative method. This mixed approach to sampling and data collection was adopted to address the lack of robust official data on internal migration in my main field-sites, particularly that of seasonal and short-distance migration. Labourers working in the informal economy and are not typically registered by a state entity thus making it difficult to obtain official data on the number of migrant workers at any given place. Using both survey and interview methods allowed me to try and understand the socio-economic status of participants as I could not gain access to updated municipal level socio-economic data, and migrants are usually not included in such data. In place of official information in this area, I used survey methods to develop a sampling frame, from which I purposively selected participants for my qualitative research.

The findings were gathered over a period of nine months (2013-2014) of fieldwork in two primary research sites. The first site was the city of Nashik in Maharashtra state, and second, the city of Ahmedabad in the neighbouring state of Gujarat. A brief phase of research took place in an appending third site: India's capital city of New Delhi. Four months were spent at each of the key sites and one month in New Delhi. The research design followed a comparative template to assess the similarities and differences between the experiences of migrant and local labourers. The research also aimed to account for the governance context of each main field-site. The methods are based on a sequential multi-method design with an emphasis on qualitative methods in both data collection and analysis. The specific data collection methods consisted of (in order of importance): semi-structured interviews; survey for sampling frame; key informant interviews and observation. I used NVIVO software to identify the main themes in the qualitative research, and SPSS software to produce frequency tables based on the survey data.

This chapter will start by outlining the rationale behind the methodological approach undertaken and explain how it is linked with the overall research purpose. The next section will detail the research methods used and the research sites themselves, before turning to a discussion of reflexivity and the ethics involved in fieldwork, particularly in reference to studying post-colonial contexts and groups that are historically marginalised and poor in India. With these reflections in mind, the chapter concludes with a reflection on the specific experiences and challenges involved in the fieldwork itself and how these may have further shaped the final outcomes and findings.

3.1 Multiple methods – a rationale

The methodology took guidance from previous empirical research on migrants, labourers and the poor in India and spanning a range of disciplines including (Breman, 1996; Mosse *et al.*, 2002; Rogaly *et al.*, 2002; Shah, 2006; Deshingkar *et al.*, 2008). Though taking different disciplinary approaches, these studies are all either mixed-method or qualitative, richly detailed and capture data on migrant lives at both origin and destination despite the practical difficulties in tracking migrant lives. For the sampling survey design, I drew from existing official tools of data collection such as the Indian Census and the socio-economic components of the National Family Health Survey (NFHS).⁷¹

An initial consideration when preparing my research design was the lack of robust data on migration overall (international and national), which has been critiqued throughout the decades (Skeldon, 2012; Beauchemin, 2014). The data on internal migration is even weaker, particularly in many Asian countries (Deshingkar and Grimm, 2005). In addition, it is difficult for typical survey methods to capture the “complex, multifaceted, and often contradictory lives of migrants” (Bose, 2012: 608), echoing Massey’s conceptualisation of migration as a process rather than a quantitatively observable event (1987). Breman’s fieldwork on labour migrants in Gujarat

⁷¹ National Family Health Survey, India: <http://rchiips.org/nfhs/>

informed his observation that the “migrant scale is fluid rather than fixed” (2013: 67) and thus difficult to capture using conventional survey measures. In light of this, I designed a composite methodology consisting of data collection and participant selection methods that gather both nuanced and basic data regarding migrant experiences

My research design was guided by both ethnographic methods and the rubric of ‘ethnosurveys’, pioneered by Massey (1987) which have become more prevalent in developing countries (Riosmena, 2016). The tools were developed to address gaps in existing data on migration, as well as gaps in the data collection methods themselves. Ethnosurveys seek to address the challenge in measuring a complex process involving “ambiguous” socially constructed geographical concepts such as settlement, residence and a ‘sense of place.’ (Massey, 1987: 1498). Ethnosurveys bring together quantitative and qualitative approaches. I adopted this approach to some extent in my own research design, in developing my sampling frame to identify migrants who would be relevant to my research. I took note of how representative multi-site sampling was used to select sites according to specific criteria to enable comparisons between different cluster groups.

For the data collection itself, I drew inspiration from ethnographic work in post-colonial country contexts. Interviews and observations are powerful tools for gathering detailed information on the “complex agency of actors” (Mosse 2005: 6). It is also deemed as a way of constantly re-evaluating both prior assumptions at the outset, and research findings at the end of the process. An iterative approach was taken in my interviews in order to understand processes, behaviours, experiences and ideas as far as possible from the research participants’ perspectives. The importance of “building up relationships rather than making a single visit, and spending time in ordinary conversation and interaction” (Shaw, 2007: 188) informed my approach to interviews. It was necessary to build trust with the research community and develop a close understanding of livelihoods, social networks, a sense of place for migrants and where possible, everyday ‘sightings

of the state' (Corbridge *et al.*, 2005).

In order to fully address my research questions, I also spoke with institutional actors in order to conduct an analysis of structural barriers and gain further insights into the “operation of rules and distribution of resources” as well with migrants (and local labourers) themselves to understand their “strategic” actions (Bakewell, 2010: 1697). This approach is influenced by Giddens’ theory of structuration (Goss and Lindquist, 1995). Interviews with ‘key informants’ (KIs) such as policy makers also helped address the challenge in gathering data on labourers working in the informal economy: a lack of access to official data due to the lack of compliance with official regulations, and in some cases, the lack of regulation. As labourers operated in the ‘shadow’ of informal economy, my research relied upon observation and self-reporting. The literature on migrant workers in the region served as a guide as did the KIIs in order to help corroborate and provide context and broad perspective to largely self-reported individual data, for example average daily incomes in a given sector. KIIs with policy actors also enabled me to gather data on policy histories and further insights into the main factors behind the failure of responsive governance strategies such as the temporary ration card scheme launched in Maharashtra.

Holy (1984) describes the ‘observing participant’ which shaped my approach to observations of spatial and institutional environments and social interactions between my participants. Holy’s description contrasts with the ‘participant observer’ type, who attempts to ‘blend in’ with the field setting and community and thus eliminates overtly self-referential actions such as asking questions and conducting interviews. Holy highlights that participation in any form is a medium for data collection methods rather than an intrinsic method (*ibid*). Both positionings can be regarded as paradoxical in the sense that researchers are always observers by default: the desire to yield data, however open-ended, gives precedence to the ‘observational’ aspect of the practice.

Overall, for the purpose of this research, to understand the lives of diverse types of migrants in

the informal economy: a survey-based preliminary sampling frame was considered the most appropriate way to guide the selection of participants for the qualitative research based on in-depth interview and observation techniques designed to try and capture the ‘complex lives’ of migrants. At the time of fieldwork (2013-2014), there was no relevant sample frame to guide the selection process. The most recent population census at the time of writing was published in 2011 but the specific disaggregation of migrant data had not yet been released. The most recent disaggregated data on migrants available at the time was therefore from 2001. In light of this gap, a survey was designed to try and capture demographic, residential and socio-economic data on participants. As migrants are not self-evident individuals, the survey was used as a sampling tool for the qualitative component – the first phase in a sequential and explanatory design – but also a source of basic data from which some broad inferences could be made regarding each sample as shown in Appendix Three. Overall, by being “multi-positioned and multi-sited” (Mosse, 2005), and as open as possible, I sought to design research methods that could be flexed to address the different research questions in this project. I aimed to design a study which allows for a composite analysis of the interaction between the state and poor migrants by using multiple but linked methods.

3.2. Description of fieldwork methods

The research universe consisted of a sample of migrants, non-migrants and local government officials. At the end of the fieldwork I had surveyed a total of 376 participants (see Appendix Three for cluster breakdown) and from this surveyed sample, I purposively selected 53 participants with whom I conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews. This was supplemented with eight key informant interviews with ‘policy actors’ in Nashik, Ahmedabad and New Delhi and informal interviews with NGOs. In Nashik, I surveyed 178 participants (21 percent of whom were non-migrants) and I interviewed 29 participants (8 of whom were non-migrants). In Ahmedabad, I surveyed 198 participants (19 percent of whom were non-migrants) and I interviewed 24 participants (6 of whom were non-migrants). The interviews were held with both

households (represented as one survey participant) and individuals.

All the participants were sampled according to their poverty status in accordance with labourer status, income and vulnerability. The criteria were based on state-wise urban BPL wage rates and listing of assets, amenities, caste status and household size. In addition, the skill level of labour, daily wage rates and number of days' work per month on average was taken into account. The impact of PDS access was compared between the following types of migrants: inter-state and intra-state, individual and family and short-term/seasonal and long-term. While the final sample proved to be highly diverse and not all groups are directly comparable, the core of the sample enables a comparison while the diversity of migrants illustrate various scenarios in which migrant workers can find themselves, and situations regarding access structures. I supplemented this study with 'elite' and key informant interviews with district, state and central level government representatives regarding PDS policy, and with NGOs, academics and organisations working with migrants.

3.2.1 Sampling and Site Selection

In this section, I describe the iterative process of sampling and site selection in each of the main field sites, as related to the contextual and structural factors of each site. While I presented my rationale for site selection based on their shared characteristics in Chapter One; certain contextual details and temporal factors rendered my experience in each site unique, though I used broadly the same strategy. As with the data collection, the sampling and site selection process followed a multi-method framework. In order to strengthen the internal validity of my study, my research design included multiple sites of fieldwork - an approach used often in migration research (Massey, 1987). In the absence of an existing sample frame for the informal settlements I selected, I used a non-proportional stratified sampling strategy (Kemper *et al.*, 2002: 279), where the research population in both main field sites were separated into different strata according to locality (and migrant status) as illustrated in Appendix Three. The sampling strategy was two-

fold and combined both probabilistic and purposive sampling techniques. In the first phase, the individual localities formed the basis of clusters from which participants for the survey component were randomly selected, referred to as multi-state cluster sampling (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003). In the second phase, purposive selection was used to recruit interview participants to fit the following criteria:

- representative of the different types of migrant categories (both spatial and temporal);
- a representation of poverty status, in terms of wages and type of labour to ensure validity (engagement in formal labour; higher than BPL wages and ownership of pukka housing on private land were exclusion criteria);
- availability in terms of timing and location – the former involved both time of day when free from work and time of season for intra-state migrants, to determine whether they would be in the city or not. The latter involved risk assessments to determine whether it would be safe for myself and an assistant to visit (at certain times of day);
- consent from the participant themselves to participate in further, more in-depth research

The official data collection instruments for socio-economic and census information are described in Chapter One. These include the official ‘Below Poverty Line’ census, the methodology for which has changed over time and under each new government. The BPL census at the time of fieldwork was critiqued for various flaws including lack of data on migrants, and for being prone to error and corruption (Pellissery, 2010). The actual methods (scoring criteria) which are used to assign citizens below the poverty line (BPL) in India have also been critiqued either for the divisive or deprivational effects of inclusion and exclusion errors (Dreze and Khera, 2010, Besley *et al.*, 2007). As a result, the main concerns in dealing with poverty measures when researching communities working in the informal economy lay in authenticating self-reported data on incomes and other dimensions of poverty, such as educational status and health when conducting surveys in non-residential settings such as *nakas*. Wages in the informal labour market are subject to

change. I therefore used informal interviews with *thekedars* and local NGOs for reference, and labourers themselves for collective information on the so-called average wage market. The most common variant of response to questions about wage or number of days of employment was ‘It’s hard to say, it’s not fixed’, further highlighting the vulnerabilities faced by such labourers. Information on living conditions and the very fact that the participants were working or had migrated to work in precarious labour conditions such as construction sites and *nakas* were all taken into account as authentication and validity.

In the original research design, I intended to use the survey to capture migrants according to my original definition which excluded ‘settled’ migrants who had resided at their place of destination for ten years or longer. I intended to capture migrants who had moved (or circulated) to the place of destination less than a decade before. Those who were native-born and those who had lived and settled in Nashik or Ahmedabad would therefore be considered ‘non-migrants.’ In the field itself however, my initial findings unsettled these fixed definitions. Many migrants, particularly inter-state migrants, who had lived in Nashik and Ahmedabad for over ten years, still considered themselves as migrants and continued to split their time, households and assets between ‘home’ and the city. This led me to revise my definition to include all migrants (non-native born) participants within the migrant category.

I experienced similar complications when it came to defining non-migrants – some participants born in Ahmedabad or Nashik were generational migrants and considered themselves as belonging to the regional identity of their parents or even further back in their heritage. For example, many second, third or fourth generation migrants whose family had originally moved from Rajasthan to Ahmedabad considered themselves as Rajasthani, thus I had to rethink the way in which I explained my terms to participants. The definitional challenge generated interesting findings in terms of the way in which migration itself is conceptualised and these will be presented in the following empirical chapters.

In each city, I began the data collection process with a participant-led and key informant-assisted approach to identify locations where labourers – both migrant and non-migrant – were likely to be found. I used opportunistic and snowball methods here - respondents identified in these places were then in turn asked to recommend places where fellow labourers were likely to be found. I adopted the same snowball and opportunistic methods in the sampling phase – I encountered new potential participants such as a neighbour overhearing my conversation with an existing participant, an inquisitive passer-by interacting and engaging with us or someone who looks a particular way with an approachable stance. The type of sites approached were those where labourers (predominantly migrants) were likely to gather, following consultation with the local NGOs, academics and key informants and referencing previous literature on urban migration in India. These sites are listed in full in Appendix Three and mainly consist of: construction sites, slum settlements and *nakas*. The ‘*naka*’ was recommended as a prime location for identifying labour migrants, and their local counterparts. Labourers, usually residing in the vicinity or in adjacent slum settlements, usually gathered at *nakas* in the mornings to find work either directly from employers or through contractors and sub-contractors.

In Appendix 3, Tables 9.1 and 9.2 list the specific ‘cluster sites’ identified within each overall field-site. Below in Table 3.1, I include the broad characteristics of the qualitative research participants. Most of the interviews were conducted with households – both men and women – and sometimes with different generations of family members. The exceptions are noted in the final two columns.

Table 3.1: Aggregate characteristics of interviewed participants

Site	Migrants	Non-migrants	Female headed households	Lone migrants
Nashik	29	8	1 (Non-migrant)	4
Ahmedabad	24	6	2 (Non-migrant)	5
Total	53	14	3	7

3.2.2. Sampling survey

I conducted the survey at the sites selected via the process described in the previous sub-section: mainly construction sites and their adjacent labour camps; *nakas* dispersed throughout each city and slum settlements. In addition, I also surveyed labourers working in small-scale enterprises, such as a garments warehouse in Ahmedabad, where low-skilled labourers (both local and migrant) are employed. The main purpose of the survey was to provide a sampling frame for qualitative interviews by dividing the sample into migrant and non-migrant categories. The questions were closed but with some elements of ‘openness’ for example, the ‘other’ category was included in many of the questions to cover any missed categories or aspects in the survey design.

The survey was a structured questionnaire designed to capture data on both migrants and non-migrants, with specific questions to filter out migrants determined by duration of stay at the place of destination, linkages with the place of origin, as well as distance and reason for migration. The survey template used in each research site is shown in Appendix Two. Questions on socio-economic background formed the second part of the survey. Here the questions were guided by multidimensional definitions of poverty which also incorporated vulnerability and thus included questions on stability of income, household size, food security and assets and amenities to gain as full as understanding as possible of the socio-economic situation of the participants.

While the nature of the selection process is broadly purposive – where migrants, and a smaller sample of migrants in the same socio-economic category were specifically targeted – once the

parameters within these migrant status and socio-economic categories were set, the proportion of participants selected by gender, specific migrant category and household type were not purposively selected, so there is a randomised aspect within the sample. The original aim in the research design was for migrants to constitute roughly 60 percent of the sample and non-migrants for 40 percent. The final sample however in Nashik was approximately 21 percent non-migrants, and 79 percent migrants. In Ahmedabad, the final split was approximately 25 percent non-migrants, and 75 percent migrants. The larger sample of participants classified as ‘migrants’ is highly heterogeneous in terms of household type and category of migrant (temporal, distance travelled and nature of migration) and also includes long-term or ‘permanent’ migrants.

The gender composition in the findings is a result of both research design and the mix of research sites. The male bias can be attributed to sampling techniques – the most balanced gender ratio is found in the local population and this is because the survey was conducted on a door-to-door household basis in addition to the site of employment. While many women were encountered and observed in the construction sites and in certain *nakas*, they occupied specific spaces and were not forthcoming during the survey period. With the above criteria in mind, it was decided that aiming for a specific gender-based quota in the sample would be a difficult undertaking and further complicate the sample-identification process. The sample consisted of individuals encountered mainly at construction sites and *nakas* where the proportion of male labourers was higher than that of women. When the questionnaire was conducted in slum settings, it was more common to encounter women participants.

The demographic data was kept minimal for ease of analysis and the second section serves as filtering tool for categorising those who are migrants and those who would be categorised as ‘non-migrants.’ Questions 7-13 would thus not be asked to those who reported themselves as local-born and bought up in the place of destination. Questions on the frequency of visits home; the length of time spent at the place of origin, and the reason for the visit were included in order to

assess the degree of linkage the place of origin and account for whether the migrant was seasonal, circular or settled. Finally, census-style questions on spatial aspects such as last place of residence and place of birth were included in the ‘residential status’ section of the survey.

Finally, the ‘poverty assessment’ section of the survey included questions on income, assets and educational status, in accordance with multi-dimensional definitions of poverty. Questions on shelter, access to basic amenities, ownership of durable assets were included in addition to questions on income in terms of both average quantity (per household) as well as frequency and stability of income – particularly relevant in the informal sector. Questions on ration card ownership – directly related to the main research questions - were included in this section. Questions related to previous experiences or alternative residences such as previous income and documentation status also included options for migrant-status participants. Due to the self-reported nature of the instrument, several questions were included broadly to capture and confirm the same kinds of data.

3.2.3 Qualitative research methods

The next component of my data collection process was based on the semi-structured interview method. This was the most important component of the entire data collection process and provides the main source of data for developing this thesis. A set of open-ended questions were prepared in advance but served mainly as a guideline, the main structure being the time-frame. Many participants could only offer an hour of their time on any given day and thus interviews took place over multiple visits. The survey findings from both sites provided a highly diverse sample of migrants and non-migrants and I purposively selected participants to interview according to poverty level and to provide a balance in terms of migrant type, labour sector and gender. However, the logistical reality of availability and access to participants also affected the final sample of those interviewed.

In Nashik, I interviewed 29 participants over a period of three months and in Ahmedabad I conducted semi-structured interviews with 24 participants over the same length of time. During each survey in the initial period I explained to participants that they may be selected for a longer interview and asked if they were willing to share contact details. I also had between two and three hours per day, at mornings and lunchtimes, to conduct the survey when the labourers themselves had availability and when my interpreters were available. This meant I was required to visit the selected sites multiple times for rounds of surveys and I was able to build up familiarity with participant communities to prepare for the interview sessions.

The interviews themselves took place in various sites, both at work and at home and in three instances, a public place (a tea stall), depending on the time agreed by the participant. For example, migrant construction workers lived on-site, and the interviews could be conducted at the place of work or in very close proximity. Most of the interviews with local communities, and long-term migrants took place in their homes in slum settlements. If it was a working day, interviews took place in the late afternoon or evening, and if the participant was not working, the interviews would take place in the daytime.

While the single participants (representing a household if they were living in one) who had answered the survey questions were the point of contact, often during the interview process the household would participate as a whole – both husbands and wives, teenaged or adult children, or elders. Neighbours and extended family members who may be in vicinity would also participate at some points in the interview. Overall interviews were a fluid process, with participants from the household drifting in and out, sometimes the female head of household would procure refreshments while we continued talking with her husband or sometimes one spouse or household member would have to leave for work and we would continue the interview with those remaining.

In each case the interview process began with a reintroduction of ourselves (myself and the

interpreter), an explanation of the research purpose and request for consent to the interview and data collection process (as per the ethical review guidelines). The interviews were mainly open-ended and conversational with a question guide serving as tool for ensuring key information was covered. The questions were designed to capture the “complex, multifaceted” lives of the participants, particularly migrants (Bose, 2012). Though each interview was different in content and nature, there was a broad pattern of themes discussed and questions asked. They usually started with reiterative questions on demographic and socio-economic characteristics to reinforce the data captured in surveys. In the case of migrants, participants were asked to describe their experiences and motivations for moving, and what their relationships are with both the places of destination and origin, this included information on household breakdown and family history. Finally, questions relating to access structures and how they were perceived, navigated and understood by participants, in relation to the ration card. More general questions about the experience with the PDS and state representatives were discussed and the experience with documents and in the case of migrants, mobility. The interviews were also an opportunity to try and identify whether migrants experienced any discrimination in the city, and how local communities felt about migrants.

Observational techniques, both on specific visits and during interviews and surveys, and also in passing, ran throughout the course of the fieldwork, documented on a daily basis in fieldnotes though they were not a significant part of the research design. This element of the research design is almost entirely open-ended. I borrowed from the anthropological epistemology and formed part of what can be referred to as an ‘institutional ethnography.’ I reflect upon my positionality in the following section but highlight here my aim in this part of the qualitative component was to take upon an outsider role, external of the phenomena I was observing in order to maintain distance. However, an explanation of my presence and at least a broad sketch of my purpose as an observer were required in order to gain access. This may have resulted in ‘front-stage’ behaviour (Goffman, 1955) particularly from officials accustomed to ‘performing’ for inspectorial and hierarchical staff.

This form of reactivity – my influence as an observer on the events and behaviour of those being observed would ideally have been mitigated over time however due to access challenges and time constraints, my main observation exercises took place on one-off visits.

3.3. Positionality, reflexivity and responsibility

The way in which researchers position themselves spatially and socially is a crucial consideration, in social research (Harris, 2003; Sultana, 2007). The very terms used to describe those who are researched - ‘informant’, ‘subject’, ‘respondent’ or ‘participant’ – signify the range of positions researchers can take and how they align with different theoretical approaches, and shapes both the process of data collection and the analyses of findings. I adopt the term ‘participant’ to reflect the qualitative engagement with lives and experiences of the labour migrant and local labourers and to highlight the constructivist approach of the research. Another consideration is reflexivity – recognising and reflecting on how one’s own identity and positionality can affect the research process itself (see: Giddens, 1984; Bordieu and Waquant, 1992).

Carling *et al.* (2014) offer a useful framework for research on migration which addresses both considerations. The framework eschews the relational construction of so-called ‘insider/outside’ divides in migration research. It is premised on the argument that meanings that can be mutually assigned by both researcher and participant are complicated by the various types of affinities that can occur between and within migrant or diaspora groups, in both origin and destination countries. Positionalities can transition across a continuum in migration research rather than lock into static binaries of insider versus outsider. In the case of social science, there is no “well-established notion” of what a researcher “does” (Carling *et al.*, 2014: 36) therefore leaving interpretation wide open to the ‘inventory’ of social categories research participants are familiar with. While many of the empirical examples underpinning Carling *et al.*’s framework are not relevant to my fieldwork experience – the idea of insider/outsider positions is complicated by the fact I am observing internal rather than international migration - it is a useful starting point for engaging in

reflexivity in my research context.

Positionality is also important for understanding power relations and ethics of social research that takes place among historically disadvantaged communities in post-colonial contexts such as India. While qualitative processes can allow for the development of a relationship between participant and researcher in order to strengthen validity and recognise the “power gradients” (Scheyvens and Leslie, 2000) as far as possible, the literature cautions against an overly close tightening of the relationship or distance. Mosse (2005) highlights the potential for unintended consequences which bear significant ethical considerations when working with poor and vulnerable communities. When exposing grievances - for example, experiences of barriers to accessing the PDS - there is a danger of raising expectations among research subjects which have not been accounted for in planning and cannot be met when conducting field research (Corbridge *et al.*, 2005). Whilst conducting village studies in eastern India, Corbridge *et al.* discovered the time and complexity of in-depth questionnaires which can levy a “tax” on the participants (Corbridge *et al.*, 2005: 226) and thus create expectations for payment of some form or whether ‘something’ can be done to meet a positive or tangible end (Ferguson, 1994). Questions arise surrounding the researcher’s social responsibility in such contexts where it becomes “virtually impossible to sustain long-term participant observation in the absence of making a practical contribution” (Grammig, 2002; and Harper, 2002, as cited in Mosse, 2005: 12). With this in mind, I endeavoured to design my research in a way that would alleviate time constraints for the research participants.

Considerations of power and positionality in research were also articulated in a formal ethical review of my research design, approved by the University of Sussex Ethics Committee prior to my fieldwork. I designed the research with the review requirements and literature above in mind - the locations of observations were recorded in detail in order to enable similar, if not replicable, approaches to data-collection methods. A process for acquiring written (and in the case of illiterate

or semi-literate participants: recorded oral) consent for participation, recording and dissemination of appropriate findings, was incorporated as a compulsory component in all aspects of the field research methodology. I targeted only adult members in my sampling frame and I worked with local translators and in the initial phases, local NGOs, to develop the most appropriate and clear ways to convey fully my research purposes to participants.

3.3.1 Diasporic reflexivities – insider and outsider roles

I turn now to an interrogation of my own identity and positionality as a researcher and reflexively engage with how this may have shaped my insider and outsider positions. Importantly, my use of interpreters in the field is also explored to consider how this may have impacted research positionality and helped construct my relations with participants. I am a British South Asian born and raised in the UK; a Muslim by heritage and geographically I identify myself foremost as a Londoner – though throughout my life I have lived in various international locations. My mother is from Murshidabad, in the state of West Bengal, India. My father hailed from Bangladesh. While they shared a religion, language and many typical Bengali cultural traits; they descend from different countries with a complex and entwined, yet tense, relationship. My parents arrived in the post-war wave of Commonwealth migration to the UK and settled there permanently, eventually naturalising as British citizens. My extended family is dispersed across both countries, as well as in Western countries. As the child of international migrants who arrived in the place of destination for separate reasons, my linkage with ‘place of (generational) origin’ is complex and more tenuous than those of my research participants.

Debates surrounding the “power gradients” between researchers from the global North and the post-colonial contexts they research (Schuyvens and Leslie, 2000) are complicated when diasporic identity comes into play, particularly in my case where the internal social divisions and variations within India let alone between the two countries of my parents’ origin, obfuscate any representative affinities that could potentially be yielded through diasporic identity. The duality

(or plurality) of identities shared by those of multiple nationalities is to some extent captured by Juluri: we “share the burden and privilege of certain kinds of colonized and racialized subjectivities that allow us to speak as both insiders and outsiders, as transnational intellectuals and as representatives of specific national and/or local constituencies” (1998: 86). While I cannot claim to comfortably “speak as both insider and outsider” in fieldwork interactions, Juluri’s elimination of binary divisions aptly captures some of the complexities involved in diasporic research in post-colonial contexts. My own ‘multiple identities’ are borne as much out of my heritage as growing up in an ethnically diverse community in London and eventually living and working in various international settings, which served to shape my positionality in certain ways that were amenable to my ‘insiderness’ but in others placed me firmly as an outsider. The blurring of insider/outside boundaries among diasporic members researching in the field is examined in depth by Henry (2003) and Sultana (2007), whose experiences of eliciting multiple questionings and confusion over their diasporic identity among research participants align closely with some aspects of my own fieldwork experiences.

The malleability of identities (Crenshaw, 1991; Levitt, 2009) is as dependent on the participant as well as the context, and the ways I was pulled between insider and outsider identities were often beyond my control. I could downplay or exaggerate certain aspects of my identity according to the situation, such as my student status, and though pragmatic, this potentially raises ethical concerns. Gender, age and ethnicity are generally (more) static identities that were interpreted, and harnessed, in different ways. In addition, another layer of relational constructions with participants was generated by my interpreters who would bring their own set of identity markers. For example, my religious identity was more a point of interest in Ahmedabad than in Nashik, and together with my Muslim interpreter, I emphasised this part of my identity, peppering my conversations with traditional Islamic (Arabic) greetings and phrases and using Muslim social and cultural codes in my engagement with Muslim participants, particularly in areas such as Juhapura (referenced in Chapter One). On the other hand, as somewhat identifiable Muslim

women – my Ahmedabad interpreter, Nusrat⁷² and I both have Arabic names and Nusrat sometimes wore a hijab – I was warned of the risks in areas of historically Hindu areas where ethnic tensions and violence were rife. This perceived threat was generated not by my own experience in the locality itself but by warnings from Nusrat and other well-intentioned informants and contacts.

In the field, I was an outsider in terms of my citizenship and the Western (British) culture I belong to and in terms of being an ‘urbanite’ growing up in a cosmopolitan and ethnically diverse part of London. The Indian Bengali culture itself is also vastly different to that of Gujarat’s or Maharashtra’s. Particular social markers linked with Britishness and the Bengali identity were often affixed when speaking with key informants, community members and elites. Most importantly, my need for an interpreter in many situations immediately placed, and continually reinforced, my identity in the outsider category. Henry’s accounts of conducting fieldwork in India as a member of the diaspora and the ‘double consciousness’ it involves resonate closely with my own experiences of positionality among research participants (2003: 235).

In addition to language; my posture, clothing style, accent and way of speaking singled me out as an outsider; a Westerner, or even an ‘urbanite’ from cosmopolitan Mumbai or Delhi. However, my ‘insiderness’ was enabled by access to a wealth of cultural and social capital in India thanks to a widespread network of contacts from different diaspora groups originating in India, as well as my familiarity with the country. Cultural competence – the shared interpretation of codes and behavioural norms of a given cultural context - can serve as a “subtle but powerful marker of positioning” and according to Carling *et al.*, can draw outsiders across the divide (2014: 47). I shared some cultural competence in terms of my identity and ethnicity, previous experience and access to social capital. Such markers included food preference, acknowledgement of festivals and awareness of cultural norms regarding wedding festivities and clothing aesthetics. I also

⁷² As per ethical guidelines, throughout this thesis all names of research participants and assistants have been changed to protect confidentiality.

gained ‘insider’ appeal when I came across migrants from West Bengal as not only were we able to speak directly without the use of an interpreter, I was able to reference cultural markers and develop affinities with my participants.

3.3.2. *Gender and class*

In terms of gender, I was seen as ‘less threatening’ in certain situations but in others, the gendered risks for myself may have been heightened. The interpreters who assisted me throughout the course of the fieldwork inflected my gendered positionality in various ways – subtly pulling me either ‘inside’ or ‘outside’. In terms of gender, I could clearly see the difference between using a male and female interpreter in the different field sites. Working with a man enabled easier access to typically male-dominant areas such as certain areas of construction sites and ‘*nakas*.’ The perceived hierarchy of male authority in many communities also eased encounters with certain gatekeepers such as construction site owners, security guards, and labour contractors in *nakas*, but did not guarantee the building of trust necessary to conducting interviews. Yet gender perceptions would sometimes affect how I was seen when working with a male interpreter: an unmarried Western woman with a male colleague. This is not to subscribe to dominant narratives of innate and “stringent” gender segregation in contemporary Indian society and work, but rather an observance of the norm of maintaining “real or decorous distance” between men and women (Altorki and Fawzi E-Solh, 1988: 5). Working with an experienced woman interpreter allowed access to both men and women however, as I saw in my fieldwork, including to those in particularly sheltered and marginalised positions. For example, we developed a close relationship with a pregnant woman in Ahmedabad who was engaged in piece-rate garments work from home. Her condition (in accordance with social norms) and employment reinforced the domestic bounds of her daily routines, but through our engagement and congenial relationship we were also able to develop a close relationship with her husband and neighbours.

In addition to these social dynamics, my research practices were further complicated by the issue

of caste. Whilst I was somewhat ‘neutral’ in the aspect of caste (though not of class), due to my status first as a Western outsider and second, when divulged, as a Muslim, the status of my interpreters was an influence on my positionality. In total I used three interpreters in all of the same field sites, working officially in that capacity (being made ‘official’ through remuneration) – two Hindu interpreters in Nashik, and one Muslim interpreter in Ahmedabad. One of the local interpreters I used in Nashik, was Roshni, an English teacher in her fifties. Roshni belonged to the Brahmin caste and in our own conversations, it seemed to be an important part of her identity. Whilst, as instructed, she did not volunteer this aspect of her identity when we worked in the field, in one case she answered a direct question about her caste status by a participant and the attitude of the participant shifted perceptibly from one of congeniality to deference. In the cases of the other Hindu interpreter, caste identity, when divulged, served as a key to ‘insiderness’ with certain participants. The multiple social identity markers represented by the different interpreters I used further enriched my insights into how social interactions and experiences can be filtered through different categories of gender, class and religion among my participants.

3.4. Reflections on fieldwork process

I turn now to the empirical ways in which my positionality and the externalities of the research process itself may have influenced the findings and I address any impacts this may have had on validity. I argue that employing multi-method and multi-sited approach enabled me to address such concerns and facilitated an iterative learning process. I start with the experience of researching in each primary field-site, Nashik and Ahmedabad before concluding with overall reflections concerning the fieldwork.

3.4.1 Reflections on Nashik

Objectively, Nashik as a research site can be seen as a challenge for an outsider hoping to conduct qualitative research. Though rapid urbanisation was one of the criteria for selecting the city, the outskirts of the city were still viscerally in the process of development from a peri-urban status

and it lacked a large civil society or prior research presence. Subjectively however, there were many benefits: I had direct professional contacts based in or linked to the city who could assist me in the process of mapping and research. While the overall civil society presence in Nashik is marginal and hard to access, one of the organisations that exist there is the Disha Foundation. This is a local NGO founded by an academic and works specifically with seasonal migrants and became known to me through academic contacts.

At the time of fieldwork, the Disha Foundation had been established for 11 years and at its headquarters employed between 10 and 15 members of staff. The NGO ran and had concluded several projects and programmes including those focused on Aadhaar card enrolment and temporary ration cards for migrants, both within the city and in rural areas of the surrounding district. Disha Foundation had also forged strong links with the city's District Collector at the time of my fieldwork. For the initial two months of my fieldwork, I resided in an annex of the NGOs office based in the outskirts of the city. Five members of the team took turns to assist me in the initial phase of mapping and site selection, piloting and developing the survey. In addition to providing shelter and transport, they were crucial informants in my research, providing local knowledge of the city and suggesting potential research sites.

The Disha Foundation introduced me to six of the 15 cluster sites listed in Appendix Three. They ran or had concluded interventions in four of these sites, potentially introducing issues of bias. The remaining sites were identified through snowball techniques and upon the advice of local informants. The identification of sites was iterative and continued beyond my introductory phase with the Disha Foundation. As the initial sites became saturated, new sites were identified and as my confidence and familiarity with Nashik grew, I was able to identify sites independently. I gathered information on *nakas*, informal slum settlements where local labourers might live, and smaller construction sites from the participants I engaged with in my first round of visits. I encountered local labourers at the *nakas* who were able to point me to nearby slum settlements

where they lived.

In the sites selected through the NGO, the participants were familiar to the NGO and initially selected deterministically rather than randomly. The participants themselves may also have been conditioned through their sensitisation to particular issues and aspects that NGO project engagement would involve – such as selectively sharing information regarding socio-economic status in order to benefit from a programme. The risk of saturation is already present when a community has been researched or approached by NGOs regularly and I proceeded to map sites independently after the initial four sites were introduced to me as I became more familiar with the city. After my initial phase with assistance from the NGO, I employed two interpreters – varying in skill, experience and professionalism - who also acted as local assistants and advised me of locations they knew which might be suitable for the study.

The social context and institutional infrastructure of Nashik posed particular logistical challenges at the time of fieldwork: initially I could not find a suitable interpreter once my introductory phase with the NGO had ended. As a developing city with many peri-urban parts, there are few Westerners and expatriates integrated into the city, thus highlighting my ‘outsiderness’ further creating implications in terms of reflexivity and risk. There were occasions where I was made to feel unsafe or the risky underside of the city revealed itself to me. Travelling with a contractor on the way to a research site where he asked probing questions about my personal life and invited me to dinner (though introduced to me via known contacts and in the day time hours) was one such incident that prevented me from making a return visit to that particular site.

3.4.2 Reflections on Ahmedabad

My positionality as a researcher had evolved by the time I arrived in Ahmedabad, since I had accumulated confidence, experience and practical awareness of empirical issues. The sequential research design allowed me to reflexively and iteratively develop my methodological approach,

whilst still maintaining a consistency of practices, sampling and data collection strategies across both field-sites. In Ahmedabad, I lacked the initial support from a direct NGO contact that I benefitted from in Nashik, with the Disha Foundation. I therefore gathered a set of initial contacts working with local NGOs in the city through my existing social capital (a dimension of my ‘insiderness’) - a network of personal and professional contacts, and from reaching out directly to organisations and individuals. Through this process I was able to procure a reliable and experienced interpreter who had previously worked with NGOs and was familiar with working in low-income communities in Ahmedabad.

In the process of independently reaching out to a range of contacts in Ahmedabad, I was able to conduct a series of KIIs with local activists, NGOS and academics. I initiated my mapping process by meeting with the largest local NGOs working directly with migrants, the urban poor and food security in the city: the local branch of Rajasthan-based NGO Aajeevika Bureau, PRAYAS and the Human Development and Research Centre. My timing in Ahmedabad was also fortuitous as it coincided with the fifth annual Convention on the Right to Food, held approximately 26 kilometres away from the city of Ahmedabad. I was able to attend the convention and liaise further with local activists and NGOs working on the issue of PDS access, including the issue of food security for brick kiln labourers (a group dominated if not entirely populated by seasonal migrants).

I adopted a strategy similar to the one used in Nashik and targeted construction sites, *nakas* and slum settlements for recruiting participants. In this case, I had access to a more diverse network of informants to initiate and guide the fieldwork process as well for providing contextual information. I forged links with the PRAYAS Centre for Labour Research and Action, focused on labour rights in the informal economy (‘unorganised economy’ in Indian parlance) - many of whom are migrants. Similarly to the Disha Foundation in Nashik, PRAYAS helped me gain a foothold in the local context and introduced me to three sites (of a total of 15 cluster sites). Several

staff members from the organisation took turns to assist me in the initial site selection and snowballing process. The organisation introduced me to two brick kiln sites close to the city, in one of which they had links with labour migrants. The NGO also advised of other potential areas and research sites in the city. In addition to these two sites, the NGO also introduced me to a large construction site, ‘Site Two’⁷³, where they were attempting to forge links with the labourers but had not been able to officially launch an intervention. The other 12 cluster sites were selected through a combination of my interpreter’s local knowledge and prior experience, direct observation while travelling through the city and snowballing at *nakas* with local informants.

In some ways my access to data and participants was made easier than in Nashik due to an established civil society presence in the city, and my personal situation was in relatively more comfortable terms of logistics, due to Ahmedabad’s relatively more developed status. However, during my time in Ahmedabad, the threat of potential risks (or at least the lurking sense of them) were generated by a mix of well-intentioned cautions and fear-mongering shared by key informants and personal contacts. This was perhaps heightened in the tense pre-election period of spring 2014. I was advised by one contact that I should hide my Muslim identity when seeking accommodation and when speaking in everyday circumstances. Though this sense of threat was unsubstantiated by any direct empirical experiences in my own fieldwork, it is important to reflexively acknowledge the influence it may have had in further highlighting specific social and cultural issues in the city of Ahmedabad.

3.4.3. Fieldwork considerations and challenges

Overall in both sites I consulted local NGOs and organisations to help identify my sampling sites, seek, or act as, interpreters during the initial scoping phase and to establish a foothold in the local ‘field’ context. While there were variations in the degree of access and level of independence I had in each site these are explained by the iterative and sequential nature of the fieldwork and

⁷³ Corporate names have been changed in accordance with research ethics and to protect anonymity

highlight the differing contextual factors in each site. The sampling process was also characterised to some degree by opportunism (though by and large within purposive limits). By this I mean I tried not to ignore any opportunities to engage with migrant communities when I came across them due to time and logistical constraints and not knowing if such a chance arise again. The most significant example of this is the community of brick kiln workers I engaged with over four months in Ahmedabad. The specific precarities of brick kiln workers, often categorised as ‘bonded labourers’ (ILO, 2009; Bremen, 2010) are the subject of various literatures and advocacy movements. They are distinct from other semi-skilled and unskilled labourers represented in my fieldwork. The research design allowed for a heterogeneity of participant categories in order to understand the different degrees to which migrants interact with access structures, and enables comparison with other types of migrants, outside of geographical contexts.

The gender breakdown of my sample is uneven, with more male participants in both the migrant and non-migrant categories. This can be attributed to both the sampling strategy and empirics. A more gender-balanced picture emerges in the qualitative phase where most interviews were held in the household or place of residence (attached to the place of work in the case of the construction sites and brick kilns). Overall, the proportion of female participants is higher among the non-migrant category which can be attributed to the relative ease of accessing women in their homes rather than at labour sites or labour markets. At certain *nakas*, the women would be outnumbered by men and usually concentrated in one area of the *naka* to avoid hassle and verbal abuse from men. Those who were willing to speak with us at *nakas* were mainly engaged in domestic work, such as cleaning, and some in the construction sector as helpers and unskilled workers. The lack of trust and confidence was visible, compared with the male participants at *nakas*.

Access to male participants was generally easier in construction sites and brick kilns. The women and girls typically migrated as households, and usually volunteered the male members of their families for survey and interview while they cooked, conducted chores or served refreshments.

Women contributed in the surveys and interviews in such settings, but the primary participants' name was recorded hence the bias toward male participants in the quantitative phase. In these cases, I relied more heavily upon direct observations and unstructured and brief engagements gathered over time in order to improve my understanding of the gendered dynamics in spaces of labour and domesticity. The findings broadly fit with the macro-level data on a high number of male migrants and family migrants, and smaller number of female lone migrants (Bhagat, 2012) – the latter category of participant, usually widows or separated from their husbands, were observed in the local labourer category.

As mentioned in Chapter One, the fieldwork took place in the months leading up to a historically significant national election, of particular relevance in the state of Gujarat as its Chief Minister was running for national government. I kept in mind, when discussing attitudes, experiences and wishes regarding the state and social programmes, the politicking and electioneering activities of local leaders particularly in large slums which often serve as 'vote banks' (Chatterjee, 2004; Boo, 2012). Another consideration relates to information and awareness. Though lack of awareness on policies is identified as a major theme in my qualitative findings (among both bureaucrats and communities), I myself as researcher was also limited by a lack of awareness regarding programmes and recent changes in government programmes – both official and unofficial. The mix of methods and key informant interviews helped to counter such shortcomings by allowing me to draw from a diverse range of institutional and individual sources.

The implications involved in constructing selfhood (Reissman, 1990) are particularly resonant in analysing self-reported narratives. This lends itself to the constructivist nature of the enquiry as well as the methods themselves. Omission and exaggeration are also significant considerations in self-reported findings where participants can exaggerate or underline their deprivations as far as possible to gain attention, a platform for their voice to be heard or at best inclusion into whatever scheme would be possible. In such cases, participants would be tempted to omit particular assets

or modify income amounts for sympathy or attention. In situations where I first approached a slum settlement space and spoke with participants (pre-arranged with them individually at their place of work), attraction would be generated through gossip and hearsay. The mention of ration cards as the subject of my research would then mutate into new stories of how my interpreter and I came from an agency – either government or charity – providing ration cards for the community. Passers-by and neighbours would gather and, in most cases, enrich the interviews I conducted, with additional insights and anecdotes. The informal ‘participants’ would also act as additional interpreters, explaining or clarifying certain terms that may not be familiar or providing practical information – such as the address of a local ration shop, both providing a sense of the wider community context and amplifying the findings. However, in certain cases, such ‘participants’ would disrupt or distort the interview process, compromising the validity of the process but at the same providing a new insight into the ways in which community members’ lives are entwined.

In order to mitigate the spread of misinformation among communities that I researched, it proved an effective strategy to use multiple methods and visits, and in some cases, corroboration with gatekeepers and other community members to ensure clarity of information. The most important strategy was taking time to explain clearly what my purpose and identity as a researcher was to avoid confusion; and to be precise about what I could and could not offer, taking cues from Mosse’s findings on ethnographic work with disadvantaged communities in India (2005). Accounting for these potential challenges to validity and process can help reveal some of the complexities involved in the empirical findings and also enable understandings of how local and labour migrants position themselves when confronted with (perceived) elites.

4. BARRIERS TO ACCESS IN SITES OF PRECARIOUS LABOUR

In this chapter, I present the evidence regarding the loose category of labour migrants at the higher end of the ‘spectrum’ I introduce in Chapter One. This category consists of generally semi- and unskilled labour labourers working in precarious sites of labour such as construction sites and brick kilns. These sites represent precariousness in multiple ways: in a bodily sense in terms of physical injury hazards and the risk of poor health outcomes; in terms of lack of state protection either through enforced laws or programmes like the PDS; their remoteness (in terms of connectivity) from city centres, and resources and services; and also at an individual level, they are sites of labour that is precarious in an existential sense (Giddens, 1991; Ettlinger, 2007).

Overall, the labourers, both migrant and local, across the spectrum based on my findings, face two important types of barriers to the PDS. As outlined in Chapter One, the first type of barrier is mainly structural and operates at the level of programme design. The second, more insidious, type of barrier operates at the level of implementation and can be characterised as both social and structural. In the process of implementation, policies set at central or state level are manipulated by local arbiters to deny access to social protection claimants. These gatekeepers include local governance actors and their co-opted agents both official (Fair Price Shop owners, or ‘*dukandaars*’), and unofficial (brokers and agents). Both migrants and local communities described repeated encounters with hostile or indifferent gatekeepers revealing how barriers exist even for those with official access, such as a valid ration card. However, as migrants are vulnerable to both barriers, they face a ‘double disadvantage.’ This initial empirical chapter focuses on labour migrants in Ahmedabad and Nashik that experience barriers in some of the most intensive forms, and thus can be considered among the most vulnerable groups in my overall sample of participants.

Table 4.1: Typical characteristics of migrants in precarious sites

Characteristic	Migrants - Precarious sites of labour
<i>Age</i>	18-30 years (70%)
<i>Gender</i>	Male (78%) Female (21.9%)
<i>Religion</i>	Hindu (83.3%) Muslim (14.6%)
<i>Migrant duration</i>	Less than 1 year (39.6%) 1-4 years (36.5%)
<i>Frequency of visits</i>	4 times a year (80%)
<i>Type of migrant</i>	Inter-state (66.7%)
<i>Reason for migration</i>	Livelihood (55%) Family (24%)
<i>Marital Status</i>	Married (70.8%) Single (24%)
<i>Education</i>	Dropout from primary school (26%) Illiterate (22.9%)
<i>Average income per month</i>	More than INR 5000 (67%)
<i>Average days of work per month</i>	25 days plus (65%)
<i>Ration card possession</i>	Yes (74%)

As Table 4.1 shows, the migrants in precarious sites are typically in the youngest age bracket; male; Hindu and recent arrivals in the city (less than one year, or 1-4 years). Among the groups of migrants represented on my ‘spectrum’ of findings – the highest proportion of recent migrants (in the city for less than one year) are found in this category: working in construction sites and brick kilns. They typically earn in the highest income bracket, are predominantly inter-state migrants and in terms of education, mainly illiterate or have completed up to primary school education. Migrants in ‘precarious sites’ usually have their place of work and residence conflated, and such labourers are usually bound to seasonal contracts. In the case of brick kilns, payment is linked to specific productivity targets. These conditions of contract labour mean the work is comparatively ‘stable’ in terms of availability and in this sense the nature of precariousness is different compared with more casualised forms of labour where the number of days available is not reliable.

4.1. Barriers by design and implementation

The design of the PDS is exclusionary and prone to a multitude of operational flaws. Targeting

errors arise from flawed BPL census measures as well as discretionary implementation behaviours thus creating “maps of inclusion and exclusion” (Corbridge *et al.*, 2005: 27). The PDS targets households rather than individuals, typically obscuring the “stories” and needs of women who typically head households (ibid). As observed in Nashik and Ahmedabad, gendered and exclusionary design flaws are compounded by implementation barriers which affect processes for recording household additions, either through marriage or birth. Despite recurring debates on whether social protection approaches are best targeted or universal, the findings show both can yield unintended exclusionary results (Dreze and Khera, 2010; de Haan, 2011).

The barriers of design also lock out migrants due to the need for proof of local residence (MacAuslan, 2011). When labour migrants arrive at their destination they require numerous documents to prove their identity in the absence of a fixed place of address. The same rule generally applies for other rights, benefits and resources including voting in elections; enrolling children in schools and proving nationality. Despite the introduction of nationwide programme innovations intended to improve the portability of social protection, such as the Aadhaar card and state-wide initiatives introduced in Gujarat and Maharashtra, barriers of design continue to exclude migrants.

The migrants described in this chapter include inter-state, and intra-state migrants (the latter typically hailing from drought-stricken regions in western Gujarat and central Maharashtra). They are compelled to move for livelihood purposes and receive a relatively higher wage than they would ‘back home.’ In light of this, many seem resigned to the fact that state entitlements, such as the ration card, will not figure in their urban lives. Instead, those who have rural ration cards strategically retain them for use by sedentary household members such as children and elder relatives. Despite being among those in need of social protection, a lack of access to the PDS constitutes just one of a range of barriers faced by such vulnerable groups. In certain precarious circumstances, the boundaries between labour relations and social networks are blurred, where

thekedars (with whom most labourers interact in place of direct relations with employers) are referred to as family members. *Thekedars* are often part of local networks from the place of origin and embedded deeply within community or family networks (Gupta, 2003). The nature of such labour relations becomes more informalised and consequently the bargaining power of labourers can become inversely weaker. Wages become conflated with debts accrued by taking advance loans, and become blurred in the language of the labourers themselves, highlighting a deficit of awareness among such groups, who are usually illiterate.

The labourers in this category work and live in acutely resource-poor settings, hazardous conditions and in many cases, lack basic infrastructure such as sewage systems. The locations of the most vulnerable among these workers are in large sprawling microcosms of precariousness, remote from the resources and infrastructure available in city centres. Most significantly, their vulnerabilities include a lack of access to basic healthcare, potentially intensifying the long-term effects of poor or inadequate nutrition in the absence of PDS access. Other services such as education and child-care facilities can be limited for household migrants despite legal stipulations to provide on-site crèche facilities for construction workers (Betancourt *et al.*, 2013). The nature of labour isolates migrant groups from developed urban resources, infrastructure and spaces where they can try to procure entitlements, even those such as the state-wide mobile ration schemes established in Gujarat and Maharashtra. The isolated settings also compound the vulnerabilities of women and children, who tend to be less empowered to be mobile and build awareness of their broader surroundings.

A large proportion of construction workers on the sites I observed were inter-state migrants, a finding that aligns with evidence from elsewhere in India (Mitra, 2010; Hirway *et al.*, 2014). Among large concentrations of inter-state migrants, experiences of security and identity-based barriers due to a lack of valid documentation are common, reported mostly by lone male migrants the northern and eastern states of UP, Bihar and West Bengal. For example, both lone and family

migrants from West Bengal articulated the heightened importance of ration cards and similar documents to prove their national identities in the face of discrimination from authorities' hostile to Bangladeshi so-called 'illegal' migrants (described by Sadiq, 2008; Abbas, 2016). In the context of Maharashtra's nativist politics, and recent violence targeting Muslim migrants from the UP and Bihar in Nashik, these barriers illustrate nuanced differences with the type of social tensions that pervade Ahmedabad, no less ridden with social hostilities but less overtly nativist and anti-migrant.

Opportunistic methods allowed me to observe migrant workers in brick kiln sites on the outskirts of the city in Ahmedabad. Brick kilns in India have been named as sites of 'modern-day slavery' and debt-bondage (ILO, 2009; Breman, 2010), experienced mainly by inter-state migrant workers. Wages in this sector are low and often do not provide accumulative livelihood options. Working conditions are highly hazardous and isolated from urban services and resources but a diversity of experiences, and vulnerabilities, can be observed. Labourers were situated along regional lines, similar to the layout of labour in construction sites and *nakas*. The experiences of migrant brick-kiln workers varied according their state of origin, social identities and generational forms of labour – all themselves interconnected factors. As such, the strategies and level of agency deployed to overcome deeply entrenched barriers and access resources were linked to these factors.

4.1.1 Relations in precarious sites of labour

Construction is the second biggest industrial sector in India after agriculture, employing 50 million in the year 2011-2012 (Soundararajan, 2013, cited in Srivastava and Sutradhar, 2016). According to trade union estimates cited by Betancourt *et al.* (2013), there are 40 million inter-state migrants working in the construction sector. Labour is often procured by *thekedars* on a seasonal or long-term basis. Many of the construction projects observed in Ahmedabad and Nashik run for multiple years, thus labourers are contracted for as long as twelve months. In some

cases, as with younger and unskilled migrants, there are advance payment agreements where expenses (*kharcha*) are paid instead of wages to help pay off the debt accrued by the advance. Construction workers borrow advance loans from their *thekedars* or family members to finance their initial move. The high wage differential is not the only factor instigating both individual and household migrants to enter construction work, but for many, it offers a viable, relatively stable temporary livelihood option in the absence of such options in drought-stricken villages. As described in Chapter One, the extant literature suggests that migrants in construction are relatively less poor and vulnerable than other groups of labour migrants – many are small-holders and will have had access to assets, often sold to fund the initial migration (Pattenden, 2012) and wages in this sector are relatively high. These findings hold in my own observations of construction workers but various forms of vulnerability beyond economic terms are highlighted, and also show that different levels of skills afford differentiated wages. Among the youngest and lowest-skilled migrant workers (the latter predominately from tribal groups), wages are low and comparable with other forms of migrant labour in the informal sector. In addition, many small-holders could not derive crops for subsistence or accumulation from their land due to drought or lack of access to irrigation systems.

In the brick kiln sector, my observations showed that contractual arrangements are usually based on a hefty advance payment, paid off through labour. Receiving *kharcha* instead of regular wages is sometimes practiced and operates as a modality for deceiving labourers out of the wages they are entitled to in this sector (based on interviews with labour organisation, PRAYAS). Overall, the brick kiln sector in South Asia has been labelled as a model of debt bondage (ILO, 2009), often inter-generational and is considered among the most vulnerable and precarious forms of labour, along all axes of definition. My findings however show a spectrum experiences of vulnerability and barriers faced by migrants working in the brick kilns.

The following sections in this chapter will delve into the findings drawn from interviews and

surveys with migrants, and observations of their environments. The evidence gathered illustrates experiences with various types of barriers, within specific labour-market and spatial settings in Nashik and Ahmedabad. Starting off with construction workers in Nashik, and then Ahmedabad, the chapter then presents the findings from two brick kiln sites in Ahmedabad. The chapter concludes by comparing the experiences of migrants in this ‘precarious sites of labour’ category in each city, examining how a confluence of factors interact with institutional barriers situates these migrants at the higher end of my spectrum-based assemblage of empirical findings.

4.2. Locked out from the city in Site One, Nashik

In Nashik, the construction workers I engaged with were overwhelmingly recent migrant workers (44% of the sample) who had arrived in the previous 12 months. Most of the migrant workers were inter-state migrants (57% of the subset) and predominantly worked over 20 days in an average. They were paid the highest and second highest bracket of daily wages (55% and 34% respectively). As an expanding city, construction sites, on individual, small and large scales were a common sight across Nashik I visited a handful of micro-scale construction sites across Nashik but the main construction site I observed in Nashik was ‘Site One’⁷⁴.

The sites observed in Nashik were members of the Confederation of Real Estate Developers’ Associations of India (CREDAI) board – an industrial group whose aims include ensuring minimum standards of health and safety on private construction sites.⁷⁵ They are also subject to both state and federal laws on the protection of construction workers’ welfare, namely the Maharashtra Building and Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Rules, established in 2007, under the national Building and Other Construction Workers Act (1996).⁷⁶ However various contraventions of such laws and principles were both directly observed and reported by participants. This suggests migrant workers on

⁷⁴ Place names have been changed to protect anonymity of research participants

⁷⁵ See: <https://credai.org/>

⁷⁶ See: <https://maitri.mahaonline.gov.in/pdf/building-and-other-construction-workers-act-1996.pdf>

construction sites in Maharashtra face a specific range of disadvantages in that they lack effective protection both at state and federal levels.

Site One is a mega-sized residential development project owned by a local construction company. The construction site is based in the south-west of Nashik city in a rapidly developing area at the time of my visit in 2013. The development had been launched in December 2011 and according to the proposal, was projected to cover 59,522 square metres and cost over Rs, 82 *crores*⁷⁷ resulting in a building of 287 flats.⁷⁸ The planning permission documents stipulated that all sanitary and hygienic measures for construction workers should be in place before work commenced. The provision also required housing for construction workers to be provided onsite with adequate amenities and facilities such as infrastructure for cooking, toilets; safe drinking water; healthcare and crèche facilities, as stated in the State of Maharashtra environmental clearance for the project. However, empirical observations and findings from interviews and surveys showed divergences from these stipulations.

The migrant construction workers at Site One reside in a 'labour camp'. The camp is adjacent to the construction site itself and at the time of my visit consisted of approximately over 500 resident workers. The workers were predominantly inter-state migrants mainly from UP, Bihar and West Bengal, and intra-state migrants from drought-stricken regions in Maharashtra such as Beed and Washim. They represent a mix of both household migrants and lone male migrants. The migrants were typically engaged in fixed-contract labour arrangement lasting approximately twelve months. However, the reported wages varied, possibly depending on individual contracted agreements.

In my initial visits, the site appeared to represent a microcosm of a select few resources, provided mainly by local NGO, the Disha Foundation. The site was officially overseen by two safety

⁷⁷ A crore represents '10 million' in the Indian numbering system

⁷⁸ Derived from local publicly available planning documents pertaining to Site 1

officers and at the time of my observation, the NGO had provided support in terms of an on-site crèche (*anganwadi*) for labourers' children and safety training and medical service interventions. Disha Foundation also mentioned they had covered the medical costs of workers who sustained injuries on site, at the time of my visit. However, without strong corporate backing from the construction company itself and state commitment, these interventions were limited and occasional. The *anganwadi* itself, a vital resource in the 'community' of the construction site faced difficulties in accessing resources and in sustainability.

Figure 4.1: Site One construction site, labourer camp (Credit: Nabeela Ahmed, October 2013)



The camp appears to be organised in a series of rows of cramped shelters constructed from canvas and corrugated metal, as depicted in Figure 4.1. Water and sanitation facilities were not visible on my multiple visits over four months. The rows seem to be arranged in terms of migrants' origin, so there was a row of inter-state migrants from Bihar, and those who were from Maharashtra would be located in different rows in a separate part of the camp. I observed that the migrants from within Maharashtra were generally located near the front of the campsite, closest

to the construction work itself, the *anganwadi* and the main road outside of Site One. The lanes where mostly lone male migrants lived were relatively more cramped and less sanitary. Lone male migrants would band together to share shelter (and living costs) in the way a family household would. The *anganwadi* was roughly 20 square metres across and made from corrugated metal and would also occasionally serve as a meeting place and medical clinic. The lanes provide an important source of informal ‘protection’ and were seen to encourage a sense of communality at the ‘intra-lane’ level that evokes the descriptions of similar construction sites in Delhi (Betancourt *et al.*, 2013).

Nima⁷⁹ is one of the inhabitants of the Site One site. She and her husband Atif migrated to Nashik from their hometown of Garri in Bihar and they had no access to rations in both Bihar, and in Nashik. Their son of around ten years of age had migrated with them whilst their younger daughter remained at home with Nima’s mother; an example of the ‘split household’ migration that seems to be common among migrants from Northern states (de Haan, 2004). At the time of our meeting, Nima and her husband had been in Site One for approximately seven months. Prior to this they were based in Mumbai where Atif engaged in construction work. The household lacked a ration card due to a combination of family dynamics and institutional barriers. Nima’s mother-in-law passed on the family ration card to her side of the family – her brothers – rather than her children, after becoming widowed. As a result, Atif and Nima’s names were absent from the ration card linked to their Bihar home. Though they were eager to acquire a ration card in Nashik, they were not sure of the procedures.

“Household costs are much more without the ration card, [but] there is no-one to ask about the ration card here - after we came here we never asked about it. [...] In the village, my ration card name is cancelled. I left it and did not try because I am always away from the village and don't have time to go through all this. I have not asked how to get it here in Nashik but in Bihar I know you have to go the *gram panchayat* to get the ration card [...] In Bihar, the cost of food is much less, but the standard of living here is higher” (Atif, Bihar).

⁷⁹ As mentioned in Chapter Three, all names of research participants and assistants in this thesis have been changed to protect anonymity and in line with research ethics.

When probed about what was meant about the ‘standard of living’ Atif explained the wages were higher than in his home town. Atif seemed aware of the processes involved in Bihar and did not explain why he had not made enquiries in Nashik, though he seemed to have at least a vague idea of the location of the relevant municipal offices – known locally as the ‘CBS’ (central bus stand) court’ (due to the Nashik Municipal Corporation’s proximity to the CBS). The trade-off he accepts between higher wages and higher food prices appears to be common among rural-urban migrants (Varshney, 1995).

Nima’s and Atif’s son attended the *anganwadi* along with the youngest daughter of Reema and her husband. Reema is in her early thirties when we met, and originates from West Bengal. With her husband, she first moved to Goa for construction work and eventually to Nashik. Reema claimed she and her husband have acquired separate ration cards linked to their home in West Bengal, but only possessed a photocopy - or ‘xerox’ as it is colloquially known - version with them in Nashik. The ration card’s main use in Nashik is as proof of identity when necessary, for example when opening a bank account. Like Nima and Atif, Reema was cognisant but accepting of the food price differential in Nashik, despite the lack of access to rations. “I buy my groceries from the open market - what can I do? It’s more expensive but we have to eat.” Overall, Reema displayed a resigned attitude to the lack of ration card in Nashik and claimed not to know where the ‘CBS court’ was, or indeed much of her surroundings beyond Site One.

Aasif is a lone male migrant from Bihar and had been based in Nashik for two years when we met. His wife and baby daughter live in his home village. Aasif was previously based in Mumbai, and prior to that in Khandala, a hill station in the Pune district. His situation, like many others at Site One, aligns with the stereotypical Bihari migrant profile as outlined by de Haan: “a single male migrant who has left his family behind to take care of his generally small property” (2004: 205). Though Aasif’s wife and child had previously lived with him in a rental home when he was in Mumbai, he could not maintain the additional living costs and rent in Nashik and they returned

home. Aasif claimed the rent and maintenance costs of keeping his wife and family with him added a further Rs, 4000-5000 to his monthly expenditure - money that would go further in Bihar when sent as remittances.

For Aasif, it appears that rent is more of a financial concern than food, even without access to a ration card. The difference in food costs between his home in Bihar and Nashik was approximately Rs, 8 per kilogram of rice according to Aasif's estimates. Though some of Aasif's natal family members from home used a ration card, some family members' names, including his own, are not on the card. Aasif described various barriers to access in his home village - including those posed by a corrupt and nepotistic *gram panchayat* (village council) leader or '*sarpanch*' and lack of knowledge among his family members of how to correctly acquire or update a ration card. His wife and family relied upon his remittances for help with household costs including food expenditure.

Zaarib, a lone male migrant from West Bengal, first left his home town in 2004 and had been based in Nashik (at the Site One site) for one year. Zaarib's wife and young children also remained in his home village. The ration card linked to his native household was being used by his widowed and non-working mother and the rations were distributed amongst the labourers who worked on her small-hold. Previously Zaarib was based Dombivli, Mumbai for five years. Like Reema, Zaarib also displayed an air of resignation regarding the lack of ration card access in Nashik. He purchased food from the open market, which was considered expensive but there was "no other option." Zaarib recounted other barriers by design experienced by inter-state migrants working in construction in lacking a ration card.

"If we apply for a ration card we have to submit documents: electricity bill, light bill, room number, residential permit address. There is no fixed address, so I did not apply for ration card. We asked the local people [about what the requirements were]. We have not approached any agent, or office basically. Even when we apply for the mobile sim card, we have to give all the documents and proof and

therefore for ration card we will need to do this.”

According to what Zaarib had heard from fellow labourers, it would cost between Rs, 200-400 to access a ration card - though in actuality it is a free entitlement - from an agent. In place of a ration card, Zaarib relied upon his *maddan* card as proof of identity – a document of heightened value for migrants, particularly from West Bengal who often are suspected of being ‘illegal’ Bangladeshi immigrants (Sadiq, 2008; Abbas, 2016).

“We have an election card here only whenever we migrate to a place, when we arrive, people always ask, are you from Bangladesh or India? In these cases, the identity card - the election card - is very necessary.” (Zaarib)

Migrants from West Bengal commonly face extensive questioning and screening from hostile authorities. Others in the same ‘West Bengal’ lane at Site One echoed the tensions expressed by Zaarib experienced at the hands of authorities. Initially they were reticent in speaking about their place of origin and what documents they owned, but eventually revealed this was due to an ongoing sense of fear and insecurity.

In a separate lane on the other side of the camp, a similar lack of awareness regarding how to acquire a ration card in Nashik was displayed by those who are from within Maharashtra. The state-wide temporary ration card (TRC) project, introduced in Chapter One, was unheard of among inter-district migrants such as Kavita and Manish. They hailed from Washim, a drought-stricken region of Maharashtra and first arrived three years ago with their three young children. According to Kavita, they never left the Site One grounds when in Nashik, apart from occasional visits to the Civil Hospital, a local government hospital in the city centre. Though the hospital is actually located close to the NMC offices (which deals with ration card processing) this was not known to Kavita and Manish. Kavita explained they were able to employ strategies to overcome barriers to using the ration card in Nashik. They strategically maintained their original ration card

in their native household, managed by Manish's parents – “it is better for the elders to make use of it” (Kavita). This way the couple could diversify household income, mitigate overall household costs and address their elder household members' needs while earning for themselves in Nashik.

Barriers to ration access are faced both in migrant places of origin as well as in Nashik. When describing the situation in her home village, Kavita described how their local *dukandaar* in their home village withholds items they are entitled to such as sugar and lentils. This exemplifies barriers to ration amounts even at the front-line of PDS implementation. Overall, experiences of ration card access among inter-state migrants interviewed were mixed and many reported issues of institutional barriers to accessing actual PDS subsidies, rather than the ration card. Migrants from Bihar reported institutional barriers such as problems with corruption within their local *gram panchayats* and lack of access to representatives. In these circumstances, bribes are paid to procure ration cards that accurately reflect needs according to socio-economic category - a form of sabotage where households may have been granted the wrong ration cards and asked to pay bribes in order to correct this. As Atif explained: “The *sarpanch* and other leaders [at the block level] they scratch our names [from entitlement lists] and give it to someone else when we try and get the ration card.” Atif's wife, Nima, also detailed the bribery demanded by agents acting on behalf of *gram panchayat* representatives and posing local barriers to access for Nima's 'native' household. Whilst labourers such as Nima and Atif have limited access to social networks in Nashik that go beyond Site One, they possess similarly low social capital in their hometown, at least with regard to accessing social entitlements.

Barriers to PDS access can also exist within households. Institutional processes can exclude married women i.e. 'daughters-in-law', from inter-generational household ration cards. Parents and ration card holders can confer ration card rights at their discretion. In the case of Nima, her mother-in-law decided to leave her ration cards with her brothers (Atif's uncles) rather than her children. However, it is a different case for her fellow campsite resident, Reema from West

Bengal, who claimed her household had access to two ration cards, both her husband's and the card inherited from her own parents. In my fieldwork it was unusual to hear such open and confident declarations of owning duplicate ration cards and suggests there are varying levels of awareness regarding formal rules.

The use of agents to acquire ration cards signifies institutional failings and barriers in 'native' contexts for migrants (as well as strategic agency on the part of migrants, as discussed in Chapter Seven). Bhaskar, a labourer from Washim conflated reference to agents and brokers with government officials in order to procure a ration card in his home village. He explained how he acquired his ration card for a nominal fee (Rs, 50) from a local 'dealer' and also referred to him as a government official in the same conversation. This conflation represents the blurring of state and non-state lines in the perception of the poor, and is exploited by those in relative power. Such misrepresentations of the state are "actively produced through current patterns of social exclusion" (Corbridge *et al.*, 2005: 112).

Though some hostilities were faced by ration card holders in terms of treatment by 'semi-institutional' actors such as *dukandaars* and in terms of the management of rations themselves; most of the Site One workers interviewed reported favourable experiences with *dukandaars* in their native towns. They were described as generally cooperative and explained transparently when supplies of grains fell short. Rehaan is 25 years old and unmarried at the time of our meeting. He hailed from the Purnia district in Bihar and previously worked in Mumbai before migrating to Nashik. While he expressed an urgent need for the ration card, Rehaan stated he does not know how to acquire one in Nashik – though he is familiar with the process in his home town. Though Rehaan visits home at regular intervals, he stated the journey is too long to transport grains from his home household rations. Rehaan described an informal arrangement between his family and their local *dukandaar* in the interim period before they managed to acquire a ration card. The arrangement allowed them to pay half the rate of goods and provide only a thumbprint (signature

used by illiterate individuals) as a proxy for a ration card. The *dukandaar* was familiar with all community members and recognised Rehaan's family were in need. Such networks and informal avenues are not accessible to Rehaan in Nashik however. He claimed he lacks the knowledge of the location and processes necessary to obtain a local ration card.

Other barriers related to the lack of ration card are directly linked to the migrants' status as 'outsiders.' My interviews with local labourers and relatively long-term migrants showed the option of purchasing groceries on credit in times of difficulty. This was also considered a 'lifeline' for temporary migrants who are paid in an untimely manner, as was also observed among construction workers based in Delhi (Betancourt *et al.*, 2013). However, this option is not immediately available to temporary construction workers when they arrive. Networks and relationships tend to need time to develop and become concrete. As a result, barriers are temporarily posed to both the open market as well as ration subsidies for migrants in their initial work period, increasing their vulnerabilities

“We have to face so many problems because we are outsiders, we don't know where to go for hospital, we had no information on the Civil Hospital at first [local government hospital] so we had to visit the private one for illness. We even face problems when we don't have money to purchase food or groceries, we ask the *dukandaar* if we can buy on credit, and only as we come to know him we gain trust, so we can buy on credit, but we cannot buy in the first place when we arrive.” (Bhaskar, from Washim, Maharashtra)

The migrants also face a lack of mobility, particularly along gendered lines, beyond the construction and camp site. Opportunities to venture into central Nashik seemed limited to healthcare visits. In family-based households, men usually took charge of shopping duties and any household expenditures overall. Being spatially restricted – either through time and work commitments, or lack of knowledge or readiness to explore a new area – also limits access to facilities and services as well social networks, beyond the individual lanes and life of the construction site. Though local NGO interventions such as those of the Disha Foundation

provided some on-site services, 'sightings' of the government remained minimal, if at all. A lack of awareness regarding the location of administrative offices in town, or where to even enquire about ration card procedures recurred throughout the findings from Site One.

As mentioned above, hospital visits appear to be the most common destination for the labourers and their families in Nashik, outside of Site One. The city's District Collector (DC) at the time of my fieldwork highlighted health as one of the "main social issues" facing labour migrants and their families in the city. Though the state of Maharashtra had set up health camps for labour migrants, the DC noted there was low take-up among the migrants themselves, particularly for nomadic tribes, as they were reluctant to use them (KII with DC, Nashik, February 2014). Consistent with findings on the urban poor overall (Rogaly *et al.*, 2004; Unnithan, 2004, Pattenden, 2012), private medical care tends to be accessed over public facilities, plunging labourers into debt for longer-term and more costly treatments. Injuries are a common occurrence on the construction site, and in response, the local NGO provided training sessions and interventions in healthcare targeting three main areas: maternal health, infectious disease and occupational safety.

My own observation of a malarial check-up and treatment session for Site One inhabitants found it had attracted a small crowd of people who gathered in the relatively small space of the *anganwadi*. However, the crowd seemed to represent only a small fraction of a workforce with an estimated 500 members (not including their families). The NGO themselves reported a relatively low response rate. I also observed an occupational safety training session in another local construction site employing mainly inter-state migrants, however uptake was difficult to measure and monitor during my time in Nashik without spending time, and exposing myself to risks, in the midst of the construction site itself.

Direct observations at both sites showed most construction workers lacked safety helmets and

harnesses - shiny new versions of which were used in the training demonstrations. The Disha Foundation also helped to cover the medical costs of one injured labour at the time of my visit – for which medical costs are usually exorbitant (field interview with Disha Foundation, Nashik, 2013). The toilet and WASH (water and sanitation health) facilities were not clearly visible in my observations of the camp site and it was implied that both men and women were required to go to a distant location behind the camp site with poor sewage facilities. At a collective meeting organised by the local NGO to celebrate National Children’s Day in November 2013, there were recurring complaints about the lack of WASH facilities from the labourers. Many families, including mothers, attended the meeting. However, it was only men who spoke out, both obscuring the narratives of women who are likely even more vulnerable in poor WASH conditions (Datta, 2016) and also using their relative male agency to highlight a sensitive and neglected issue ‘on behalf’ of some of the most vulnerable inhabitants of Site One.

In terms of barriers to healthcare, Aasif described his experience of going into further debt after paying for treatment while living in Mumbai (before he migrated to Nashik) – he would not have been admitted to the local hospital otherwise, though suffering from a fever and almost unconscious at the time. To gain access, he drew from his local social network - an engineer working on the same Mumbai construction site he was in. The engineer who knew someone in the hospital who was able to finally admit Aasif despite initial protests that he would not survive. As Aasif mused, official procedures are irrelevant: “Wherever I can pay, I can get the service. If I have money, I will get service quickly.” A combination of financial and social capital enabled Aasif to overcome barriers to treating serious illness – resources that are not immediately available to many of the labour migrants in Site One.

Another migrant from Bihar, Nima, faced a double fee-barrier in accessing treatment. She explained she paid a nominal fee to the Site One *anganwadi* teacher, Maya (who is literate), to write her medical complaints – about her eyes in this case – to take to a local private doctor.

Bhaskar, an intra-state migrant from Washim described having to pay Rs, 1200 for treating his cataracts in a private hospital. He explained he was not aware of where the local public hospital was in Nashik, nor of any state-wide health facilities for migrants at the time and sought treatment in the only place he was aware of. As Zaarib, from West Bengal explained – and as the existing literature corroborates - problems related to healthcare for migrants are common in all urban migrant destinations and not specific to Nashik.

The ration card is not only necessary for accessing the PDS but, as conveyed in the literature, has been regarded as a historically important proof of identity, necessary for social entitlements, securing work and housing (MacAuslan, 2011; Routray, 2014). While none of the labourers interviewed at Site One had their original ration cards with them, some mentioned possessing ‘xerox’ copies of their original ration cards to serve as proof of identity, most commonly used for securing sim cards for mobile phones or in the presence of police authorities. Photocopies of other documents such as the ‘*maddan*’ card – the official document necessary to cast votes in elections - are used in Nashik to purchase sim cards and open bank accounts. Voter cards are also linked to a fixed place of residence; however, they are less difficult to acquire than the ration card (Sadiq, 2008). They are also granted at the individual level and therefore in this sense more portable, their use and location only affecting the individual holder.

According to my findings and the literature, a ration card application cannot be made without proof of identity and local residence, in other words documents are needed for further documents. Site One covers all light and electricity bills therefore migrants lack available proof of residence to procure documents for accessing entitlements. This is one factor in explaining why many labourers opted for private health services which do not tend to require proof of identity. Migrants who lacked birth certificates to enrol their children in local schools, relied upon the *anganwadi* which accepted children of all ages to at the very least, occupy their children. The knowledge and management of documents seems to be gendered among migrants and their families - where the

male head of the household usually manages and procures a household bundle of documents. The limited knowledge of where documents are located even within domestic household contexts represents yet another barrier to utilising such documents for access.

The labourers in Site One seemed mostly self-contained within the residential camp in the local area – and women seem to experience limited spatial mobility to an even greater degree according to my findings. The immobilities of Site One labourers limited opportunities to develop wider social networks beyond the camp lanes and available institutions at the site. The *anganwadi* provided a rare space for parents, particularly mothers to engage with each other as well as with the teacher, Maya, and representatives from the local NGO and other visiting agencies. Maya was regularly in touch with parents in the camp often acted as a *de facto* ‘community’ liaison between the labourers and agencies who came to visit – she often acted as a proxy fulfilling requirements missed by *thekedars* or the site owners. Fellow workers or ‘neighbours’ in each camp lane also provided financial support in times of need as well as distributing knowledge to address gaps among migrants of different temporal categories and levels of experience at Site One.

4.3 Construction and corruption in Ahmedabad

The ‘mega-city’ of Ahmedabad has observed a ‘construction boom’ fuelled by both public and private sector-led large-scale construction and infrastructure projects (Hirway *et al.*, 2014). The public-private mix is also characterised by collusion between the state and private construction companies and corrupt practices, such as rigging open bidding processes to contract select construction companies (Dayal and Agarwal, 2005). Such practices hint at the opaque nature of the industry and extent to which outsider access is prohibited. Compared with the growing (at the time of my fieldwork) city of Nashik where relatively less rigid systems of gatekeeping were in place – gaining direct access to migrant construction workers in Ahmedabad was difficult, particularly in the large-scale sites. Access was impeded by relatively impenetrable and elaborate gatekeeper systems in place. Findings from interviews with local labour organisation, PRAYAS,

confirmed that this impenetrability also characterised access patterns for civil society organisations. As a result, the amount of construction workers in my sample of participants in Ahmedabad was smaller in comparison with Nashik – 19 percent of the city sample overall.

The large-scale construction sites that were akin to Site One, were not accessible for multiple on-site visits which in-depth interview processes require. However, I was granted permission to make a visit and was able to conduct a survey on 25 labourers and make observations, if not interview, migrant workers in Site 2, a large-scale construction site comparable with Site One. The survey findings show that the construction workers were mostly inter-state (76 percent of all the construction workers in the sample) and over half (61 percent) made an average monthly income in the highest bracket. However, compared with Nashik, there was more variation in number of days worked on average per month, even among those working and living on construction sites.

Site 2 is based in the north-west edge of Ahmedabad and owned by the Adani Realty group – an infrastructure and development conglomerate with offices across India and Dubai, and with close ties to the Modi government. Media reports have critiqued the close relationship and lack of accountability involved in the group's work in Ahmedabad.⁸⁰ At the time of my visit, the project aimed to develop four areas of luxury apartments within an 'integrated township' model spanning over 600 acres. The Adani Group is registered in the Gujarat chapter of CREDAI, and the housing development appears to be registered under legal real estate regulations (under CREDAI) and implicitly, covered by state laws regarding worker safety on the site. In keeping with the impenetrability experienced with in-person gatekeepers, desk research on the Adani Group's construction sites in Ahmedabad yielded limited contextual information on regulatory protocols and commitments of the development project. The motto of the Site 2 housing development is 'The Good Life' though this jars strikingly with my field observations of the conditions in which

⁸⁰ See: Megha Bahree 'Indian Billionaire Gautam Adani Finds A Savior In The Modi Govt' *Forbes* 17 July 2014 <https://www.forbes.com/sites/meghabahree/2014/07/17/adani-finds-a-savior-in-the-modi-govt/#2089b8bb639f> [Accessed August 2017].

labour migrants lived on the site, and from their accounts given during the survey process. Lack of access to state social protections among labour migrants was intensified by working in what seemed like a regulatory void – thus making the labourers’ existence ‘hyper-precarious’ through lack of legal and social protection.

The under-payment or non-payment of wages corresponding with the obligations of contracts emerged in the findings from the participants themselves and from interviews with a local union branch for construction workers, *Majoor Adhikar Manch*. Most of the construction workers surveyed lacked ration cards in their places of origin and none had access in Ahmedabad. My own observations of where the labour migrants lived in Site 2, revealed bleak living conditions with no visible WASH facilities; infants and children left behind in empty camp shelters located on the margins of a vast space, far from the construction itself, while their parents worked for long hours without a break. Some children showed signs of malnutrition, and the living spaces – temporary shanties and tents - were cramped and barely ventilated, made even more difficult during searing summer temperatures in the city. The conditions in Site 2 stand in stark contrast with those of Site One in Nashik. Though residents at the Site One labour camp are also deprived, live and work in precarious conditions and the site itself is relatively smaller, there are some semblance of facilities provided by civil society organisations and access is made comparatively easier due to the smaller and less remote layout of the labour camp.

The construction industry is also active in Juhapura, in the western zone of Ahmedabad. The area became a major destination for Muslim refugees following religious violence in the city, and particularly after the 2002 riots. My field observations showed that Muslim inter-state migrants also tended to settle and find work in this part of the city. As a result of the rapid ‘ghettoisation’ in the city (Breman, 2003; Roy, 2006; Mahadevia *et al.*, 2014), both land and property prices underwent sharp inflation and subsequently an unauthorised and rapid construction boom took place (Mahadevia *et al.*, 2014). The Iqbal construction site is one such example. It is a micro-

scale construction site in Juhapura consisting of the construction of three apartment blocks on a dusty square of land that is most likely not authorised for residential development, according to conversations with the workers on the site.

One of the labourers I encountered there was Mohan, an 18-year-old construction worker, who had moved from Madhya Pradesh (MP) to Ahmedabad. His parents and grandparents worked in agriculture and after dropping out of secondary school, he moved to join his uncle and aunt who have been settled in the city “for several years.” Mohan is a young, male lone migrant who did not seem to fare well in terms of wages – possibly due to his teenaged status - and networks despite having existing family links in the city. Social networks and inter-generational family patterns played a significant role in Mohan’s move to Ahmedabad. He initially moved due to financial need, following a generational pattern of moving to the city to find work. Mohan’s relative – an uncle by marriage – was first brought to Ahmedabad as a labourer by his father, who had previously travelled to the city to find work. Eventually in turn, this uncle brought Mohan to the city upon his dropping out of secondary school. Mohan shared his plans to return to the village and bring his younger brother back with him to Ahmedabad. Mohan’s uncle undertook the role of *thekedar* and sought work for him and covered initial expenses. As the eldest son, Mohan felt compelled to find work in the city in order to help his parents and sends remittances back to his parents in MP. However, he felt isolated from his nuclear family: “I feel bad being alone and so far away from my parents” (Mohan).

Despite access to family networks in the city, Mohan was eventually forced to live alone due to family strife with his uncle’s wife. Mohan explained how his uncle introduced him to another migrant whom he calls “Danesh bhai” (*bhai* translates to ‘brother’) working on the Iqbal site, and originating from the same village in MP. Though it is not made explicit, Danesh also appears to fulfil a *thekedar* role for Mohan, providing him with labour and granting him *kharcha* to cover daily costs though it is not clear whether he is paid fair and timely wages. Food for Mohan was

occasionally provided on-site, and the wage was dependent on how many hours were completed in a day. Mohan also relied on networks to remit money to his parents in MP and described how he took an advance from 'Danesh bhai' to visit his family and this comes out of his wages.

At the time of our interview, Mohan expressed that he saw no need for a ration card in Ahmedabad, as his food costs were supported to some extent by Danesh. Despite the family rift, his aunt (whose house he left earlier) continued to procure kerosene for him on the 'black market', so Mohan could still make use of his existing family networks. Mohan kept his existing documents - a school leaving certificate - in his native village and stated he had no need for documents in Ahmedabad as he used a private hospital when needed and acquired a sim card in a fellow labourer's name. He faced wage barriers, as a relatively new entrant to the local labour market. Not only did Mohan's 'outsider' status render lower wages, but his youth and lack of experience at this stage also seemed to weaken his bargaining power.

"I have no clear plan for the future as to whether I'll settle here. I earn Rs, 300 per day but I do double the work, this is because I am new I am not paid on a daily basis or on a monthly basis like that. We get less if don't do double time. Those who worked here a long time get Rs, 450 per day. Right now, I am unskilled, but I will learn a skill and become a *karigar* [skilled worker]. My contractor only deals with those from UP and MP and not with locals."

Mohan clearly recognised that there is an upward trajectory and his wage bargaining power would increase as his skills developed. Mohan hinted at social isolation, despite his initial arrival in the city being enabled by social contacts who conflate the role of family members and *thekedars*, and the presence of relatives in the city: "My neighbours are local, but I am new, so I don't talk to anyone." Despite the presence of Mohan's family members in the city, his strongest link appeared to be with Danesh. Mohan depended upon him for work and wages, and sometimes even for food, and thus is the most important source of support. On the other hand, family strife – for example with Mohan's aunt who originally took him in – illustrates that assumed guarantees of social support networks can be disrupted and easily lead to new forms of precariousness such as

isolation.

4.4 Brick Kiln Workers - “we come here for survival...not to become wealthier”

Brick kiln workers are predominately migrants, and engage in a structured form of labour, in some cases labelled as a contemporary form of bonded labour or ‘neo-bondage’ (Bremar, 2010). The characteristics of this form of ‘bondage’ according to Bremar include restrictive brokerage systems and the risk of debt, though in contemporary forms they last for a season rather than lifelong timeframes, as per traditional forms of bonded labour. By procuring advance loans from brokers, brick kilns are usually tethered to one broker and one place of work for the entire working season and unfree to leave without incurring debts. The remuneration system in brick kiln labour is based on daily productivity targets – up to 15,000 bricks per day on large kilns - and failure to meet such targets can risk plunging labourers and their families into further debt. The brokerage systems in place among brick kiln workers are complex and “ambiguous” but can broadly be categorised as relations between labourers and ‘broker-brokers’ – those with elite standing in their community whose sole and specific livelihood is derived from brokerage; and ‘worker-brokers’ – less clear positions which blur the roles of labourer and broker. The latter are often deeply embedded within communities and family networks and positioned in relatively less hierarchical relationships with labourers (Gupta. 2003; Bhukuth, 2006).

Family or household units of brick kiln workers are paid a *kharcha* to cover food and living costs. There are various exploitative practices endogenous to the payment and negotiation of *kharcha* and usually stark differences between the cost of living in Ahmedabad and that in the migrants’ places of origin. Brick kiln workers face a highly specific set of vulnerabilities and an in-depth exploration of their experiences of barriers, both to fair labour outcomes and protections, go beyond the scope of this thesis. The opportunistic approach to sampling allowed me to capture some experiences through observation and interview and enable a presentation of a spectrum of vulnerabilities where brick kiln workers occupy an unambiguous position at the highest end. For

those migrants who work in brick kilns as household units, the risks of debt incurred by payment of *kharcha*, and lack of PDS access can pose risks to nutrition and food security. Situated on the outskirts of the city on terrains that are contingent yet disconnected from urban resources and infrastructures, the spatiality of brick kiln labour also intensifies labour migrants access-related vulnerabilities.

During my fieldwork in Ahmedabad, I visited two sites on the outskirts of Ahmedabad – Bavla, on the northern outskirts of the city, and Uvarsad, which lies on the south-western outer corner of the city. Bricks in Indian kilns are typically produced on a seasonal basis, starting in the late autumn and running through until the summer, thus making it a livelihood option for seasonal migrant workers seeking non-farm employment during off-seasons. Companies, and their contractors, prefer the employment of household or family units to keep costs down and boost efficiency due to the multi-task nature of the labour.

Figure 4.2: Uvarsad brick kiln site, Ahmedabad (Photo credit: Nabeela Ahmed, February 2014)



According to my observations and interviews, there are five main categories involved in producing bricks. In addition to gender, the labour is segmented according to level of skill, and in some cases, even place of origin: brick moulding, typically unskilled and involves patting the bricks into shape and arranging them, usually involves women and any children on-site. Heavy manual labour is involved in the next two categories: loading and unloading bricks to set up the kiln. The last two categories are the transportation of bricks and managing the coal fires used to bake the bricks. The latter is the most dangerous of the tasks involved in the kiln and on the sites I visited, usually undertaken by men from Uttar Pradesh as a result of generational traditions and the accumulation of skills that evolved from the fact that inter-state migrants could not bring transportation carts with them for loading and unloading work. In the summer months during Ahmedabad's scorching desert heat, the brick kiln work is made even more challenging, and access to adequate water and food is listed as a difficulty by participants. The participants generally spoke of long hours and are paid per set quantity of bricks; each family or group member take on shifts in turn.

The labour conducted on brick kilns sites are mainly divided along gendered lines (Singh, 2005). While women are visible throughout the brick kilns, engaging in all stages of the process except maintaining the kiln fires (considered the most dangerous job on site), they did not come forward for interview or conversation during my time in the field. I observed young girl children engaging in household chores and serving us tea and informally interacted with some of the female labourers though they did not consent to interview, implying a particularly conservative or restrictive environment for women on the sites. Women of all ages were seen engaged in the labour itself mostly in the moulding, and transportation work using wheelbarrows.

Ashwani is from Chhattisgarh, in his early twenties and with 13 members of his natal family, and his *thekedar*. He engaged in seasonal labour at the Bavla brick kiln. He was active in helping to organise his fellow labourers' bargaining for wage conditions and generally seemed politically

and institutionally aware. Ashwani represents the second generation in his family to engage in brick kiln labour and they are just one family among “half the village” back home who migrate seasonally for brick kiln labour in places as far as Punjab and Nepal. Ashwani and all his adult siblings dropped out of school, though at varying levels. The highest educated member of the household reached Class Eight (secondary school). Ashwani’s grandparents were farmers, but his father entered brick kiln labour, initially in UP before diversifying to other areas.

“Before Chhattisgarh become a state,⁸¹ we were very far from the centre of MP [Madhya Pradesh] and behind the rest of the state. After separating from MP, we are finally getting benefits from the government, it’s only a little but we are getting something at least. In Chhattisgarh, it is mainly rural work and now is not the season for that – it is seasonal work.”

Though the state of Chhattisgarh pursued inclusion policies by expanding access to the PDS within the state (Tillin, Saxena and Sisodia, 2015) – as mentioned in Ashwani’s reference to ‘benefits’ – the need for adequate livelihoods still drives inter-state labour migration. Many labourers engaged in this sector are afflicted by debt, often inter-generational and driven by rural deficits (in the form of landlessness or drought). Ashwani’s family arrived in Ahmedabad through a *thekedar* and despite the limited opportunities to save and the strenuous conditions entailed by working long hours on a hot brick kiln in the desert state of Ahmedabad, he justified the move. Ashwani’s family are in debt to a local moneylender in their home village and thus compelled to migrate seasonally for brick kiln work, where they are guaranteed to find regular paid work for the entire family. As Ashwani explained: “If someone feels they can’t work, it’s okay because another family member will take over. We come here for survival, for food and not to become wealthier, we do not save anything.”

The household are paid a *kharcha* of Rs. 64,000 for thirteen people, however they remain in debt to moneylenders, as money is borrowed to cover costs for the off-season. Interest is charged at 10

⁸¹ The state was formed in 2000 after partitioning from the central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh.

percent by the moneylenders. The *thekedar* explained he does not have land in the village and did not seem to be in an explicitly hierarchical position to the other labourers – a ‘worker-broker’ as per Gupta’s definition (2003). Instead, he was referred to as one of the ‘family’ - further exemplifying blurred boundaries between labour and social relations. He explained how at the end of each season, they earn between Rs, 10,000 and Rs, 14,000 to take home and use as buffer during times when there is little to be made from agricultural work and in times of monsoon. A heuristic value of ten percent is named by the *thekedar* as the typical proportion of labourers’ earnings paid off him, to cover the cost of advances.

Despite the poor socio-economic conditions and lack of livelihood opportunities experienced by families such as Ashwani’s in Chhattisgarh; the (relatively) robust governance system, regarding the PDS helps to alleviate food security needs. According to Ashwani and his family, the separation of MP and Chhattisgarh allowed for the new state government to improve social policies and programmes (though ultimately this was not enough to prevent Ashwani’s family from continuing to engage in precarious labour). In Ashwani’s household, they possess three ration cards: one in his name, one his parents name and another in his brother’s name. A range of socio-economic status levels are also distributed within the family – Ashwani’s parents receiving an ‘AAY’ card and Ashwani a BPL card. The food items are heavily subsidised by the Chhattisgarh government: at the time of our interview, rice was being sold for as low as Rs, 1 per kilogram, along with lentils, sugar and wheat for similarly low prices. According to Ashwani the nominal cost of rice was to attract poor voters in the upcoming elections – an example of the role of non-market forces in modulating access.

Without this buffer of accessible rations in Ahmedabad, food expenses for Ashwani’s migrant household were significant. At the time of our interview, it cost an average of Rs, 8,000 more to feed the household of 13 members than it did in Chhattisgarh. The family explained that though the ration card did not cover their required food consumption and increased their vulnerability in

the place of destination, the subsidy prevented them from falling into further debt.

“In the village, we get rice from the ration card so it’s about 35kg per month. We do a partnership of agriculture where we store a portion of rice during the monsoon and therefore only have very little and have to rely on ration card...it costs so much more here.” (Ashwani)

However, Ashwani’s family continue to make use of their ration card. The youngest son in the family stays behind during the labour season to attend school and manages the rations. Money is sent back to him whilst the family are away. Ashwani remits the money from his earnings at the brick kiln through a community member who returns regularly to the village during seasonal labour.

I observed immediate distinctions among the Chhattisgarhi brick kiln workers and other inter-state labourers: they seemed more accepting of their identity as seasonal brick-kiln labourers. They described the government culture in Chhattisgarh as comparatively more socially inclusive than most states, and generally they seemed more attuned to specific state protections and forms of industrial action, Ashwani and his fellow Chhattisgarhi workers contrasted with the brick kiln workers I engaged with in Uvarsad. Ashwani’s grievances seemed to be focused on unfair payment conditions which could be improved through protest and collective action. In comparison, migrant workers in Uvarsad from Rajasthan seemed to view engagement in this form of labour as temporary and thus its concomitant precarities would be resolved eventually through entering alternative labour markets. Pratul and Kamal, two young brothers from the Durgapur district in Rajasthan mentioned plans to leave brick kiln labour and aspirations to work in less precarious sectors.

Pratul and Kamal worked in the Uvarsad brick kiln. They were both aged between 18 and 21 years at the time of our meeting and represent the second generation in their family to engage in brick kiln labour. Their landowner grandparents engaged in agricultural work, producing two

crops per annum and owned assets such as tractors. However, years of drought compelled them to sell their land and their children (and grandchildren) to seek seasonal labour elsewhere. The brothers described an ‘exodus’ from their drought-stricken village to seek urban livelihoods including brick kiln labour in Gujarat. Despite food in Ahmedabad costing a large proportion of their salary from brick kiln work, Pratul explained it was their only option as they had only harvested one crop per year in recent seasons. During the off-season, migrating for brick kiln work was considered the best option to cover both regular and extraneous costs such as “occasions and funerals and weddings and so on”. Pratul indicated the current state of instability in his life and stated that he does not aspire to work in brick kilns in the future.

Pratul and his brother were both members of a trade union branch in Ahmedabad. They described the collective vulnerabilities faced by brick kiln labourers, and the action supported by *thekedars* to overcome exploitation and negotiate labour and wage terms with employers – casting brokerage relations in a positive rather than exploitative light. Pratul insisted on the harmony between all the labourers from different states and localities and how they employ agency in the face of the particular labour structures dominating brick kiln work.

“When we feel exploited, we gather together [according to skill level] to demand a higher wage. When they [employers] go for price, we negotiate through the trade union with the employer. They sometimes agree, but if they do not, we have to hold a strike for one day or as much as one week and the *thekedar* supports us in this. I don’t like having to pay fees to the trade union but at least when we are engaged in a strike, this covers our expenses.” (Pratul).

The brothers arrived at Uvarsad brick kiln through a *thekedar* who advanced them a loan. They gave the bulk of the cash to their parents and plan to work at the kiln for the entire season to pay off the debt (incurred by the advance loan). For the brothers, their entire *kharcha* was expended every week on groceries. They procure flour from a mill which charges an extra fee of Rs, 2 per kilogram therefore adding to the expense – one they do not face in their home village. When asked to identify the main problems they faced in Ahmedabad, the brothers discuss the expense of

buying fuel and food, higher compared to the price of such goods in their home village. In terms of access to services and social protections in their place of origin, owning land can work against households as described by Pratul. He described how his family were rejected by their *sarpanch* (local leader) back in the village for a BPL ration card based on the fact they own some land. The land was not arable and struck by drought, however this did not factor in the sarpanch's decision.

A younger brother of Pratul's and Kamal's had been educated up to secondary school level. He kept account of the number of bricks made and how much they are owed. At the end of the labour season, with the help of their literate younger brother, Pratul and Kamal negotiated any errors or shortfalls in their wage amounts with their *thekedar*. The brothers did not have documents with them: they use a borrowed sim card for the time they are in Ahmedabad. If they fell ill, they used a private hospital and provided the address details for the brick kiln owner himself who they claim also pays the bill for hospital and insurance cover. Compensation for injuries was not provided, although this had not yet affected the brothers. As Pratul observed: "Almost all the people around here are illiterate, and they work on the basis of trust. They don't have any certificates or paperwork," reflecting the workers' vulnerability to exploitation and misinformation.

The case of the young male Rajasthani migrants exhibits various examples of agency and relatively effective livelihood strategies – from the collective bargaining, through to assistance from social networks (for example, their literate brother) in directly negotiating the accuracy of payment records. They are drawn from a relatively higher socio-economic standing than many labourers involved in brick kiln labour in terms of owning land and enjoying relatively 'free' *thekedar* relations. They face a continuity of barriers however, to accessing state resources to alleviate vulnerabilities caused by crop failure and drought from their home context through to their experiences in Ahmedabad. In this case, the labour migration process appears to serve as a strategy to overcome barriers to access in Pratul and Kamal's rural source context.

4.5 Summary

The findings discussed in this chapter illustrate a range of vulnerabilities and precarious experiences associated with labour migrants who work on construction and brick kiln sites, including their lack of access to state resources. Though these industrial sectors are some of the main drivers behind ‘India Shining’ - an optimistic BJP electoral slogan focused on growth and development – the labourers working in these sectors are beset with multiple precarities. The labourers are predominately interstate and intra-state migrants from socio-economically vulnerable backgrounds; the work itself is highly hazardous; the labour relations are precarious (characteristics can include fragmented employer relations; risk of debt; untimely and mis-paid wages, long hours and limited or no freedom to exit contracts); the sites of labour are remote from urban resources and infrastructure such as adequate healthcare, and workers are denied both legal protection (such as compensation for worksite injury) and social protection from the state. The latter includes a lack of access to the PDS and other state resources which exacerbate the range of other precarities listed here. The extent to which these precarities can affect labour migrants is linked to factors such as their regional background (e.g. state of origin); social and economic standing; age and level of skill, and whether they are a lone or household migrants. In both Nashik and Ahmedabad, the migrant workers in this first category on my ‘spectrum’ of evidence represent a diversity of these factors.

At Site One in Nashik, the migrants are spatially and physically divided on the camp sites, mainly in accordance with regional background. The layout represents the differences between them in terms of the specificity of barriers faced as well as the strategies available to help cope with or ‘rework’ such barriers (Katz, 2004). The intra-state migrants have certain advantages over inter-state migrants in terms of overcoming barriers to access, such as proximity to their places of origin to gather and utilise resources not available in Nashik, and slightly less precarious living conditions on the labour camp-site itself. Inter-state migrants from states such as West Bengal face regionalist hostilities and generally tend to live in slightly less well-maintained conditions

on the same site. While lone male migrants from states such as UP and Bihar often originate from slightly better-off economic backgrounds, and higher-skilled labourers are paid relatively high wages, their experiences at Site One itself are marked by multiple deprivations. Despite slight internal variations, the deprived conditions of the labour camp overall at Site One and at Site 2 in Ahmedabad affect workers universally, many of whom are expected to work and live on the sites for at least 12 months. A lack of WASH facilities; cramped living conditions; poor health and safety conditions and lack of access to health services and programmes such as the PDS can pose both high economic costs that limit the potential for accumulating wages (e.g. incurred through medical costs and purchasing food on the open market) and risks to overall wellbeing for the labourers and their families. Women and children in particular were faced with the most intense forms of vulnerability in these sites, lacking appropriate WASH, nutrition, education and health facilities and cut off from access to the rest of the city; social networks and mobility in general. These conditions of deprivation also characterised the living conditions on labour camps at the Site 2 construction site in Ahmedabad.

Going beyond access to the PDS and state resources, certain migrants also face other forms of state hostilities. The issue of barriers fuelled by social discrimination based on identity groups and politics is pertinent when it comes to internal migrants in Maharashtra (Weiner, 1979) and is conspicuously absent from my findings, particularly in Nashik given its recent anti-migrant tensions and the broader historical context of Maharashtra. Apart from the male migrants from West Bengal describing general risks of discrimination, the inter-state migrants did not share any incidences of hostility based on their regional background among other labourers or employers on the construction sites. The intra-state migrants were comparatively more open about the difficulties they faced as ‘outsiders’ (as Bhaskar from Washim put it). This may be a collective strategic undertaking by inter-state migrants aware of Maharashtra’s notorious anti-migrant politics (Weiner, 1978; KII with academic at IIPS, 2013). It may also mark a profound lack of trust or security - they may not have felt safe in sharing such experiences with another ‘outsider.’

Instead, all the participants were open about the hostilities they faced at the hands of the state and institutional representatives, either in the places of origin or destination.

The situation of the brick kiln workers shows how PDS access can become irrelevant in schemes where *kharcha* is involved – the labour contracts can absorb food costs and the need for subsidies, though these same contractual conditions can subject labourers to the risk of exploitative practices and prolonged debt, adding further layers of vulnerability to those generally linked to seasonal migrant work (Breman, 1996; Srivastava and Saikumar, 2003). According to my interviews with both the labour migrants and key informants working in local trade organisations, industrial action is relatively pronounced in the brick kiln labour sector in Ahmedabad. There appears to be greater solidarity amongst workers than in construction sectors, where more fragmented *thekedar* relations can exist (KII with PRAYAS, Ahmedabad, May 2013). Brick kiln labour is inherently precarious in terms of the physical risk and hardship involved, and the traditional practices of recruitment and payment are potentially exploitative, but my findings suggest that when conditions of debt and employment bondage are absent, it is viewed by labourers as a way of preventing a further descent into poverty during the off-seasons in rural areas (Bhukuth, 2006).

Nuanced differences can be observed between different types of labourers found on particular brick kiln sites – resonating with the ‘varieties of unfreedoms’ represented in the literature (O’Neill, 2011). The variety of tasks on a brick kiln site, occupied by particular migrant ‘types’ hints at the highly nuanced multiplicity of labour experiences and outcomes that may arise. The Chhattisgarhi family at the Bawla site come from an economically deprived background and are afflicted with debt, but also share positive experiences of sub-national governance and quality access to the PDS in terms of coverage and the subsidies themselves. This sharpens the access (and food security) differentials between Ahmedabad and their home state and emphasises the ‘hyper-precariousness’ associated with migration (Lewis *et al.*, 2014). In the case of the young Rajasthani brothers in the Uvarsad brick kiln, the labour is not considered as a permanent state of

precariousness and provides an important but temporary livelihood option in the face of agricultural and financial troubles in their home village. The brothers' home state of Rajasthan is afflicted with governance issues when it comes to the PDS (Khera, 2008) and this is directly experienced in the denial of their own family's access. The move to Ahmedabad therefore represents a continuity of vulnerabilities in terms of access rather than the rupture experienced by Ashwani and his family.

Overall, the main defining characteristic of this first 'category' of empirics is the remoteness – physically and in terms of 'sighting' the state – of the brick kiln and construction sites, creating conditions and contexts of precariousness. Migrants, already disoriented and disconnected from familiar places and networks, work and live in sites that are remote from infrastructure, resources, services and beyond 'sightings' of the state. The 'remoteness' from the state – and concomitant entitlements such as the PDS – according to my findings are in some cases a continuity of such experiences of 'state scarcity' (Corbridge *et al.*, 2005) in the migrants' places of origin. All the labour migrants are generally poor and vulnerable, and marginalised from access to elites and power in their local communities. However, the governance context of their 'native' states can influence their access to state provisions and resources. For example, this is illustrated in the differentials between PDS access experienced by Ashwani in rural Chhattisgarh and that of Nima and Atif in their Bihari home town of Garri. Corbridge *et al.* (2005) describe the ways in which rural communities rely upon a combination of panchayat level officials and leaders and 'economic actors' or agents for access to resources, but access to these sorts of power brokers were not available to Nima and Atif even in their local context. When considered together with the family discrimination faced at the hands of Atif's mother (in denying the ration card entitlements to them), a range of precarities at the place of origin are experienced and, in many ways, emphasised as a migrant in Nashik.

In addition to the remoteness, the sites of labour described in this chapter are also precarious due

to the health risks endogenous to construction and brick kiln labour (Bremen, 2010; Pattenden, 2012). The health risks faced by migrants in these precarious sites of labour are largely ignored by policymakers (Borhade, 2007). Migrants face barriers in accessing healthcare in their place of destination - both in terms of awareness and cost – a situation also commonly reported in the literature (Pattenden, 2012; Betancourt *et al.*, 2013; Srivastava and Sutradhar, 2016). As the findings in this chapter illustrate, in some cases, certain documents are necessary for accessing public medical care, which may push migrant workers' preference toward private facilities further adding to financial burdens in the city.

In terms of the governance context – both cities (and the state governments they fall under) display policy dissonances in multiple ways as illustrated in this chapter. Though they can receive relatively high wages in accordance with skill and gender (compared with brick kiln labour, for example), construction workers face a range of barriers to state and other resources. The specific 'responsive' strategies devised by the governments of Gujarat and Maharashtra at the time of my fieldwork excluded inter-state migrants – the majority of workers on these precarious sites of labour. While workers in the 'unorganised sector' overall, and specifically construction workers are supposed to be protected under specific state and national policies, my findings show they tend to exist in regulatory vacuums. However, this seems more pronounced in Ahmedabad than in Nashik, due in some part to the latter's relative openness to civil society assistance and less established status as an industrial centre. However, the 'hostile policy environment' characterises both cities when considering the protection of industrial interests in the construction sectors, collusion with the government and commitment – whether rhetorical or substantive – to worker conditions (such as the Unorganised Workers Act in 2008) and other laws pertaining to construction workers at federal and state level.

In Maharashtra, the movement to protect vulnerable workers such as those on construction and brick kiln sites was spearheaded by NGOs (Deshpande *et al.*, 2017) and this is corroborated in my

findings from KIIs and the NGO, Disha Foundation. In Gujarat, neoliberal priorities appear to be more overt. State strategies did not apply to migrants in construction and brick kiln work and they fall prey to both market forces and 'state scarcities.' In the 'best-case' scenarios, civil society organisation address gaps in services and protection. However, as shown in the case of Site One, without sustained institutional backing from both the state and the construction companies themselves, interventions fail to become embedded within such sites and are prone to resistance from site owners or even cancellation. In the case of Ahmedabad, due to a 'hostile environment' for construction workers shaped by large infrastructural as well as residential construction projects; high-cost real-estate investments and politically-backed development companies, the sites were even more isolated and impenetrable to outsider access – in the form of civil society organisations, labour protection and social protection programmes such as the PDS.

5. BARRIERS TO ACCESS FOR LONGER-TERM MIGRANTS: THE PARADOX OF INTEGRATION

This chapter focuses on migrants engaged in casual labour, mainly through gathering at *nakas* – roadside junctions where contractors employ labourers on daily or short-term bases. A paradox lies in the findings related to this second group of migrants: they have migrated on a medium-term or long-term basis (generally more than five or ten years) but are predominately engaged in casual labour, usually sought on a daily basis at *nakas*. Most of the migrant ‘*naka* workers’ I observed had been settled in Nashik or Ahmedabad for a decade or more; the second highest proportion among my participants was constituted by those who had been settled for over five years.

Nakas are a prominent component of the “highly segmented casual labour market[s]” (Mosse *et al.*, 2005: 3026) characterising cities in western India. Migrant workers who are not recruited through *thekedars*, try to find casual work at *nakas*. According to my fieldwork, these migrants tended to be either inter-state or intra-state and often jostle directly alongside their local counterparts to find work, though many of the *nakas* observed were roughly segregated along ‘migrant’ and local lines. They also tend to live in slum settlements alongside local communities. Though this group of migrants are vulnerable in multiple ways, they can be situated in the middle of the ‘spectrum of vulnerability’ representing my overall sample and can be seen as facing a ‘median’ level of barriers.

This chapter will examine the vulnerabilities experienced by long-term and medium-term migrants who work at *nakas*, first in Nashik and then in Ahmedabad. In many ways, the vulnerabilities related to access are similar to those faced by the migrants depicted in the previous chapter. However long-term, or settled, migrants are deemed to have certain advantages according to established narratives of migrant integration (Portes and Zhou, 1993; Taylor 1999; de Haas, 2005) which posit that knowledge, financial stability and assimilation into local social networks

and state infrastructure are accumulated over time. While this held in some of my observations – particularly local knowledge and accumulation of social and communal ties – vulnerabilities persist in the form of economic deprivations structured by informalised labour and power distributions.

The proximity of migrants and their local counterparts in both labour markets and living spaces casts these migrant-specific barriers into sharp relief. In addition to structural barriers; other social aspects such as caste and religion can become more prominent aspects of identity in the eyes of local communities (as the sense of migrants' temporariness perceived by local residents is dulled over time). This can make long-term migrants relatively more vulnerable to social discrimination and nativist resentments from their neighbours, other labourers and even more intensely, exploitation at the hands of 'semi-institutional' actors represented by *dukandaars* and agents. The creation of 'black markets' for grains and cooking fuel represents economic barriers for poor migrants, and the adverse impact of unequal PDS access in urban locales. The competition within labour markets at *nakas* is therefore compounded by the competition for tangible resources.

This chapter will start with a description of the general profile of migrants observed in the 'median' category of vulnerability and the type of labour relations they enter into. The following sections then follow the format of the previous chapter – discussing the findings from naka worker in Nashik before turning to the findings from Ahmedabad, including observations of a local 'zonal' office of the AMC where several instances of '*dhakkas*' are demonstrated. A comparison of both places and between the different types of migrants observed in this category in relation to access, vulnerability and precariousness and governance context will be summarised at the end.

5.1 Barriers of implementation and innovation

This second group of migrants can be loosely labelled as relatively less vulnerable in terms of access to the PDS, though by no means do they escape the label of 'vulnerability' overall. The

typical profile of members of this category is based on medium-term and long-term migration (for five to ten years or longer) and engagement in casual work, usually day labour sought at *nakas*. While some *naka* workers are seasonal (Mosse *et al.*, 2005), the members in this category generally observe more linear migration patterns and represent both inter-state or intra-state migrants. Here, the characteristics differ slightly according to each city. An expansive translocal network of Rajasthani migrants exists in Ahmedabad and they constitute a large component of *naka* workers, and long-term migrants in the city. Many of the long-term seasonal migrants in both Nashik and Ahmedabad belong to tribal castes, driven by drought or deforestation to seek urban livelihoods (Udmale *et al.*, 2014; Deshingkar and Start, 2003). This group of long-term migrants also includes rural to urban migrants who have moved within their districts.

According to sedentary norms, both intra-state and long-term inter-state migrants who have been settled in their place of destination for ten years or more would face less intensive barriers to access. Over time, it is expected they develop awareness, social networks and financial stability. This is also facilitated through an official process where settled migrant households can delink their ration cards from their native places and apply for a new card in their city of destination. As shown empirically, some long-term migrants try to pursue these formal paths to access. However, such activities are commonly met with *dhakkas* and are susceptible to both barriers of design and implementation. Going beyond these policy norms, both Gujarat and Maharashtra governments established state-wide ‘temporary ration card’ schemes, particularly in response to the plight of deprived tribal migrants, driven in large numbers by drought and deforestation. Both state governments pioneered programmes to untether PDS access to fixed places of residence, however these have not succeeded. In fact, some governance innovations in the state of Gujarat have made conditions worse for migrants, as shown in the empirical findings. In these cases, barriers emerge from policy *re*-design, as well as from subjectivities in implementation – recasting the meaning of ‘policy dissonance’ where explicit intention to enable inclusivity result in diametrically opposite outcomes. Migrants are denied or delayed access due to error and incompetence despite

so-called ‘progressive’ technologies of governance. This is further evidenced in the impotency of the Aadhaar card in its initial promise to enable portable access to state resources.

5.2 Characteristics of *naka* workers and labour

At a typical *naka*, labourers are picked up by contractors for low-skilled or unskilled work in various sectors including construction, carpentry and painting usually on a daily, or sometimes longer, basis. In addition to these sectors, some contractors employ casual domestic workers – typically women – at the *nakas* I observed. The intermediaries, hired by construction sites and companies, represent informal and precarious labour relations, and are usually the main or only point of contact for labourers (Mukherjee *et al.*, 2009; Naraparaju, 2014). *Nakas* are typical of urban agglomerations (Naraparaju, 2014) and the locations of these daily labour ‘markets’ are distributed throughout the cities of Nashik and Ahmedabad. In general, a mix of both local and labour migrants are found at *nakas*. While the next chapter will delve into the experiences of local labourers, here the focus will be on the migrant workers who engage in *naka* work – a term that can be made synonymous with ‘casual’ or ‘day labour’. The migrant groups are predominately long-term or settled migrants, compared with the higher concentration of seasonal or more temporary migrants found at construction sites, and brick kilns.

Table 5.1: Typical characteristics of migrant naka workers

Characteristic	Migrants - naka workers
<i>Age</i>	18-30 years (44.7%) 31-45 years (38.7%)
<i>Gender</i>	Male (80.5%)
<i>Religion</i>	Hindu (84.7%) Muslim (10%)
<i>Migrant duration</i>	Long-term (53%) 5-9 years (21.3%)
<i>Frequency of visits</i>	2 times a year (34%) 4 times a year (30%)
<i>Type of migrant</i>	Inter-state (41.7%) Intra-state (31.3%)
<i>Reason for migration</i>	Livelihood (36.1%) Family (27.1%)
<i>Marital Status</i>	Married (76.4%) Single (16.2%)
<i>Education</i>	Up to primary school (29.3%) Illiterate (22.7%)
<i>Income</i>	More than INR 5000 (45%)
<i>Days of work</i>	25 days plus (21.8%) Less than 15 days (22.4%)
<i>Ration card</i>	Yes (60.6%)

While a significant proportion of migrants, usually from ST groups and within the given state, seek work at such *nakas* (Mosse *et al.*, 2005; Naraparaju, 2014), my findings show that *nakas* tend to be visited by a high proportion of long-term inter-state migrants. In both cities, the inter-state migrants predominately originate from the northern and eastern states of UP and Bihar. In the case of Ahmedabad, a high proportion of inter-state migrant groups are from Rajasthan (representing a mix of long-term, seasonal, household and lone migration). The findings show that such migrants tend to be long-term and relatively more settled into their place of destination, though many maintain strong linkages with their place of origin. These linkages serve to supplement gaps in resources experienced in the city, such as social and financial capital and state entitlements. Some migrants, usually household migrants, seek to follow official routes to access in their place of destination but still face *dhakkas*. However, many maintain distrust in the state, learning from their experiences of *dhakkas* in their places of origin, and either pursue informal routes – such as agents – or draw upon their native social networks through active linkages to overcome barriers.

Overall, *naka* workers represent 35.6 percent and 32 percent of my participant samples in Nashik and Ahmedabad respectively. While predominantly male, my observations showed significant numbers of woman also seek labour at *nakas*. Almost half of the sample of *naka* workers (41.7%) are inter-state migrants in both cities and each sample consists mostly of long-term migrants (more than 10 years) and medium-term migrants, making up the second largest proportion. The *nakas* in Ahmedabad are greater in number and larger in size, though there are significant *naka* markets of all sizes concentrated in the city of Nashik. In Nashik, where the construction industry was undergoing a boom at the time of my fieldwork, a greater number of short-term migrants was observed in *nakas* (represented by those who had arrived in the past four years). On the other hand, the sample representing Ahmedabad shows a larger proportion of long-term and settled migrants in *naka* work.

Overall, *naka* workers represent 35.6 percent and 32 percent of my participant samples in Nashik and Ahmedabad respectively. While predominantly male, my observations showed significant numbers of woman also seek labour at *nakas*. Almost half of the sample of *naka* workers (57%) are inter-state migrants in both cities and each sample consists mostly of long-term migrants (more than 10 years) and medium-term migrants, making up the second largest proportion. At the *nakas* I visited in Nashik and Ahmedabad, both local workers and migrants gathered to find casual labour. The *nakas* in Ahmedabad are greater in number and larger in size, though there are significant *naka* markets of all sizes concentrated in the city of Nashik. In Nashik, where the construction industry was undergoing a boom at the time of my fieldwork, a greater number of short-term migrants was observed in *nakas* (represented by those who had arrived in the past four years). On the other hand, the sample representing Ahmedabad shows a larger proportion of long-term and settled migrants in *naka* work.

Naka workers typically live in slum settlements in the city, sharing space and resources (or the lack of) with local populations. It is in these contexts where the reciprocal impacts of barriers faced by local and migrant populations become clear: for example, local communities blame the

diversion of subsidised rations to the black market on migrant demand, itself generated by the lack of access to the PDS. However, a significant finding was that migrant groups, particularly the longer-term and more settled migrants, did not vocalise any complaints or negative views on local populations. This was unexpected, particularly in Nashik given the city's history of nativist tensions and the context of migrant hostility across urban Maharashtra. Such views were more openly expressed by local communities, in both Ahmedabad and Nashik. This implies that longer-term migrants are likely to use strategies to help their integration (such as refraining from sharing experiences of hostility, or actively promoting social harmony) in the face of social as well as structural barriers in the city.

Figure 5.1: Akhbar Nagar Naka in Ahmedabad (Photo credit: Nabeela Ahmed, March, 2014)



Figure 5.1 depicts one of the larger *nakas* in the city of Ahmedabad, Akhbar Nagar. Here we can see the area within the *naka* where mostly women locate themselves, usually seeking unskilled labour in construction or in domestic work. Unlike Nashik where alcoholism (and open harassment of women) among male labourers is commonly seen in certain public areas and thus compels women to sequester themselves to certain parts of a given *naka*, we see a more mixed

scene in Ahmedabad.⁸²

Akhbar Nagar is an example of how *naka* workers organise themselves around the perimeter of a traffic circle or junction, where migrant and local workers cluster themselves broadly according to social and labour skill groups. For example, those from northern states such as Bihar and UP cluster around one point, with local communities, and intra-state migrants clustering elsewhere. These can be roughly aligned with level of skill, with the higher skilled labourers originating from certain caste groups in the local community or from northern states; and unskilled labourers usually found within intra-state and intra-district migrants, and among women overall. Wage differentials are mapped out according to skills rather than residential status according to my interviews. The labourers usually gathered by about 8.00 a.m. each working day and the crowds – usually between 300 and 500 at the smaller and medium sized *nakas* – usually dispersed by 10.00 a.m. Those who remain without work for the day are typically local labourers – a pattern also observed in research by Mosse *et al.* (1997).

5.3. *Naka* workers in Nashik

At the time of my fieldwork, Nashik was undergoing rapid urbanisation with growing *naka* markets across the city. My interview participants were drawn from samples gathered at four *nakas* that are listed in Annex Three: Peth, Rana Pratap, Gangapur and Sakal *nakas*, each varying in size, and distributed across strategic points throughout Nashik city. Many of the migrant workers attending *nakas* are from UP and Bihar, with some from Southern states such as Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh and others from further east (West Bengal) or west (Gujarat and Rajasthan). Traditional inter-state migrant flows into Maharashtra have concentrated in cities such as Mumbai and Pune (Census of India, 2001), and recent demand and urbanisation in Nashik has made it the third largest city in Maharashtra to attract migrants (Borhade, 2007). Each *naka* I

⁸² Ahmedabad is a dry state and alcoholism less commonly seen in public, though it does occur covertly according to field interviews and observations.

observed was at capacity, and large crowds would remain after contractors had left, signalling an oversupply of labour at the time of my fieldwork.

Many of the *nakas* I observed were adjacent to slum settlements where both migrant and local labourers lived. Interviews were usually conducted at the homes of the labourers in these settlements. In general, the settlements all consisted of low-quality infrastructures or inadequate access to resources such as water. Electricity was usually illegally tapped, and communities were heavily reliant on the will and whim of the local *nega sevak* (urban community leader) for access to entitlements or improved infrastructure. However, each settlement showed variations in terms of deprivation, with some families living in small but fully furnished *pukka*⁸³ households (though on illegally claimed land) and others crammed into small semi-pukka or *kacha* constructs.

The *nakas* themselves ranged in size with Gangapur *naka* being the smallest, and Rana Pratap and Peth *naka* attracting the largest crowds. I would usually arrive at around 8.30 a.m. to approach those who were still waiting or had been unsuccessful in procuring work for that day as they had more time and patience to engage in conversation. The crowds at Peth and Rana Pratap would still be significant at this time of the morning, suggesting the oversupply of labour at these points. Scenes of social disruption were common at the *nakas*, particularly at Peth, where men abusing alcohol would hassle their wives for money or generally exhibit disruptive behaviour within the crowds. Alcoholism is widespread among the poor in Maharashtra and the disruptive gendered impacts on households have been documented in the literature and by the Right to Food movement, which argued the PDS offers safeguards against household income being spent on substance abuse rather than on ensuring nutritional needs are met (Ghosh, 1998; Das *et al.*, 2006 field interview with RtF members, 2014).

⁸³ In South Asia, 'pukka' refers to solid or permanent housing constructions made of materials such as concrete and 'kacha' refers to temporary or vulnerable housing structures, typically made of materials such as corrugated tin or mud.

Long-term and settled migrants dominate the group of research participants in Nashik, in keeping with assertions in the literature (Mukherjee *et al.*, 2014) that *nakas* tend to be popular with long-term migrants. The type of barriers reported across the labourers I interacted with were similar – a lack of awareness and lack of access to governmental representatives. Those that possessed ration cards linked to their native households were either unaware or misinformed of the process of delinking their cards from their native locations. The experience of longer-settled migrants is represented in their establishment of local social (or non-state) networks and through their propensity toward using agents and middlemen in accessing the ration card and other services.

One of the first slum settlements I visited in Nashik was Siddharth Nagar, located in the Satpur area and has a population of approximately 1,115 (Bhamare, 2014) – it is centrally located and can be accessed easily from one of the main streets in the town centre. The slum settlement consists of a mix of pukka and semi-pukka housing and is mainly populated by local residents, and long-term migrants from rural parts of Nashik district. They are mainly casual workers who find work at several of the *nakas* nearby, including Pett, Sakal and Gangapur. Vanitram and Laxmi are an elderly married couple, rural to urban migrants, who hailed from a village in the Nashik district called Dindori and at the time of our meeting resided in Siddharth Nagar. Vanitram had been a labourer acquiring work at the local *naka* for most of his time in Nashik, and Laxmi had engaged in casual domestic work. They said they had been settled in Nashik for two decades, and in that period had shifted to a pukka house. Most of their children were grown and lived separately.

The couple described the barriers to the PDS that they faced – which can be categorised as those related to implementation. Their household was assigned an ‘APL’ ration card – despite the couple earning a combined income that fell under the BPL threshold. However, even in acquiring an APL card, they were faced with severe bottlenecks, delays and pushbacks – known as ‘*dhakkas*.’ Vanitram described multiple hurdles in the process of acquiring the card. The most

significant of these were administrative delays and limited access to information. Though they arrived in Nashik two decades before, they had only undergone the process of delinking themselves from their original ration card (from their village in Dindori) a few years prior to the time I visited them.

According to Vanitram, the easiest way of acquiring a card was through an agent – rather than directly from the state, “because if you have an agent, he does everything: he fills out the form, asks for the correct documents and gets the signature, and cancels your name in the village. I don’t have any idea how to do all this on my own.” However, a wait of two years was still required even with the supposed expedience of using an agent – indicating a collusion between officials and agents in prolonging the process and denying beneficiaries access.

On the other side of the slum, closer to the city centre, lived another elderly couple, Gopanalal and Ritu. They are urban-to-urban migrants; an elderly couple who initially migrated from the town of Sinnar (in Nashik district) to Thane (in the Mumbai Metropolitan area) “over 20 years ago”, and then to the city of Nashik in 1992. They head a household of five members, two of their children are working adults, and one attends school. Ritu formerly worked as a vegetable trader, though in her old age she can no longer bear the physical burden of carrying heavy loads. Gopanalal was working as a day labourer, mainly in construction, procuring work at the local *naka*. However, he had been out of work due to low labour demand for the previous three months – a community wide problem he claimed, due to the local sand-miners’ strike.⁸⁴ The entire household currently relies upon the salary of the eldest son, Ajay, who has recently taken on a low-paid temporary position at a local computer servicing company, despite his completion of further education. Their son’s new bride lived with her parents in her native village at the time of our meetings. Gopanalal claimed his daughter-in-law’s name was not on the household’s ration card and it would have been ‘an extra mouth to feed’ that is not subsidised but does not make it clear

⁸⁴ See: ‘Paucity of sand hits Nashik’s construction industry’ *Construction World*. May 2013.
<http://www.constructionworld.in/News/Paucity-of-sand-hits-Nashik-s-construction-industry/47921>

how long this arrangement will last.

Gopanal initially moved to Thane with his family to join his brother who had migrated there for work. After his brother left the city, and due to the lack of stable work opportunities Gopanal and Ritu decided to move again, to Nashik, though they never secured long-term or ‘permanent’ work. They seem well informed about the processes involved in obtaining a ration card in a new place of residence and describe clear barriers of implementation. During their time in Thane, the couple were granted an APL ration card linked to their fixed address which they returned to the local District Collector (DC) office before leaving permanently for Nashik city. The couple received an official receipt from the DC office as proof of their deleted ration card linked to their Thane address. This receipt was then shown to the local office at the NMC and yielded a new ration card linked to the couple’s Nashik address. Again, Gopanal and Ritu were given an APL card, though they petitioned for a BPL card which they felt they were eligible for. However, the Nashik officials denied the request without further investigating the realities of the household’s socio-economic circumstances and maintained the status given prior in Thane.

From experience and knowledge, the couple have developed a pragmatic approach to dealing with local officials and using agents. Though they have an awareness of the ‘official’ procedures having experienced them directly in Thane, they were also privy to the need to expedite the processes of local administrations in order to achieve an outcome.

“It is not possible to interact with ‘*burra lok*’ [high-status people], I went four or five times [to the local office] and each time they used to say, ‘come again another day’. I had to spend about Rs 5 every time I went to the office. In the end I just got fed up and paid an agent to get the ration card” (Ritu)

Another form of ‘*dhakka*’ was experienced through agents, encountered within the municipal office itself, blurring the distinction between official and unofficial modalities of access. According to the couple, it was not difficult to procure such services. When asked how they were

able to procure a ration card (even if it was not what they felt was the correct level of entitlement), Ritu and Gopanal explained that they knew the agent they used – a familiar member of their local network which safeguarded against the agent cheating or in their view, exploiting them. This appears to be an advantage compared with the struggles of their neighbourhood members, including fellow long-term migrants.

However, despite owning their own house and having a working son, the family faced challenges in managing household costs such as groceries and cooking fuel, particularly during the sand-miner strike. In addition, Gopanal found it increasingly difficult to work in old age. Laxmi explained she had to borrow money to help pay off the latest gas bill. In terms of the ration card, Ritu claimed the APL card in Thane enabled broader access to grains and fuels than the equivalent in Nashik. Their local ration shop in Nashik had stopped supplying sugar and certain cereals ‘a few years before’. They were forced to purchase the remainder of their household groceries from the open market which were double the price of subsidised grains at the time of my visit.

Gopanal described advice given by his *dukandaar* to approach the NMC directly for a BPL card but he claimed that he does not have the time to visit the office multiple times for what he predicts will be fruitless endeavours – from past experience he was aware the officials would not grant him the form. Despite awareness and experience, and in their view, eligibility, Gopanal and Ritu and their family were unable to procure a BPL card. They attributed this ultimately to their caste status. They stated they belong to the local Marathi caste, officially categorised as the OBC (Other Backward Caste) category rather than in any specific caste group where they felt they could build allies or undertake collective action with other members. As Ritu said, “We are neglected [by the state] because we are in the ‘other’ backward caste.”

Heena is a domestic worker, also in Siddharth Nagar and procuring work at the local *naka*. With her husband, not present whenever I visited the household, she moved from Khedgaon in rural

Nashik, more than ten years before. When she had been living as part of a joint family with her in-laws back in her village, Heena and her husband were on an APL ration card. They delinked their identities from this when they separated from the joint household to migrate, and acquired a new ration card when they arrived in Nashik. It emerged that Heena and her husband had to “run here and there and do a lot of work” to obtain the ration card but through an agent rather than through officials. Heena believed they have been misallocated an APL card, given their household circumstances but like Gopanal and Laxmi, she was unwilling to try to go the NMC office to change this having heard negative reports concerning routine *dhakkas* at the hands of officials. When asked about whether she thought the process would have been easier for those who are ‘proper Nashik’ – a colloquial way of referring to city locals - she said things are the same for everyone who is in need.

“It is difficult for everyone, for those who are proper Nashik too, the office treats them the same. When we go, they are like ‘come tomorrow’ or ‘come again the next day’ and they delay things but with an agent there is direct action.”

Heena and her family felt that the ration card entitlements could not adequately feed the whole household. Even though they had a ration card, they were unclear whether the subsidy actually made things easier for them even in times of stable and relatively high income. Heena’s eldest children were married and lived in separate households. The gendered structural barriers posed by the ration card design are exemplified by the situation of her eldest daughter.

“My daughter, with her joint family and in-laws, they have a ration card, but her name is not on it and they don't get enough food from the ration card. I have four brothers-in-law but I myself still cannot get a separate ration card.”

This indicates the barriers of design outlined in Chapter Four and consolidates existing gendered divisions of access within households among certain traditional (usually poor and vulnerable)

communities in India.

Swa Babar Nagar⁸⁵ is one of the largest slum settlements in terms of population size in Nashik with over 7.5 thousand residents, according to NMC records (cited in Bhamare, 2014). The Disha Foundation had previously completed interventions in the slum related to health and labour rights awareness, and the slum settlement has attracted news headlines for its deprivations in WASH infrastructure.⁸⁶ A greater mix of inter-state, as well as intra-state migrants, live in this slum settlement compared with Siddarth Nagar, and overall the sprawling settlement seems to be more difficult to access from the centre of town, and generally more deprived in terms of access to the city's resources and infrastructure.

Ramesh is a long-term migrant settled in Nashik. He is from the Akola district in northern Maharashtra. An intra-state migrant, he had been living in Nashik for approximately 30 years. Ramesh engaged in daily casual work as a semi-skilled mason. He claimed his ration card was still linked to his native village address where his mother and elder brother were based. Ramesh was living in Nashik with his wife - his four adult children were married and lived separately. In his home village, Ramesh's mother was the only recipient of the ration card subsidies. Ramesh claimed there are barriers to access in his home village and regarded efforts to address the issue with his local *sarpanch* as futile.

As for Nashik, Ramesh seemed equally disillusioned, hampered by the frustration of '*dhakkas*', corruption and also misinformation on matters such as the need to pay for a ration card. Ramesh explained that he was told fees would have to be paid on a quarterly basis, though in his direct experience, he found: "You don't get the ration card if you ask for it." Ramesh went on to vent his frustrations on the frequent *dhakkas* experienced by his community. In one of our interviews,

⁸⁵ Variations on spelling of this name found in the literature and media: Sai Babar and Sawr Babar

⁸⁶ See: 'Only toilet for women in Sai Baba Nagar slum has no door' DNA India. 9 February 2016.

<http://www.dnaindia.com/locality/mumbai-south-central/only-toilet-women-sai-baba-nagar-slum-has-no-door-84745>

his neighbours listened in on our conversation and seemed to agree with what he is saying. According to Ramesh, daily labourers are in an especially vulnerable position simply because they have no time to try and acquire access to their entitlements.

“I know where the court is and where the office is. But nobody pays attention. They do the rounds. I have been 2-3 times and there is no luck even if you go there. No-one will do anything [neighbours who are listening in on the interview chip in here to agree]. All the women go and do the housework jobs, come back, the men go and do masonry [labour] and come in the evening, get money, buy things, eat and next day again in the morning start working.”

Ramesh did not explicitly mention the use of agents and is it not clear whether this is an omission or due to misinformation. Instead he described paying large sums of money (as bribes) to local community leaders.

“We gave money to two or three people, to local leaders who come here and say they will get us a ration card for money and then they go away. I have given sometimes Rs 500, 2000 or even 4000 and they didn’t ask for light bill or documents or anything. We give [try] again and again because it’s very essential to get a ration card...it’s very difficult. Vegetables and so on are very costly.”

This suggests another route – blurring the lines between formal and informal – to access, not explicitly mentioned by other *naka* workers. Unlike Gopanalal and Laxmi whose neighbours used their *nega sevak* as an intermediary to gain access to officials, here they seem to be complicit within corrupt actions represented by both state and non-state actors such as agents.

Sumesh is a lone migrant in his early forties from UP who has been working in Nashik since he was 15 years old. However, his wife and two teenage daughters have always resided in his native village in UP. He returned there to get married and explained he visited home approximately every two months to spend time with his family. In Nashik, Sumesh lived in his sister’s household, where four members were working and contributed to the household income – his brother-in-law

was also a *naka* worker. Sumesh's sister and her family lacked a ration card in their household's name and Sumesh's marital family back home also lacked a ration card, though he insisted they were sufficiently provided for in terms of wheat and grain, from their own small-hold. Sumesh described the multiple setbacks he had faced in trying to access a local ration card in Nashik for himself and his sister's family.

“I went to the office what feels like twenty times and tried my level best and called the *nega sevak* and such community leaders ‘Dadaji, babaji’ [respectful honorifics] and everything, and pleaded with them but it was no use. In the office, I have asked agents, I have asked so many people, I don't know who they all are, but they don't help in any case. Somebody tells me to ask somebody else – they say come next month, come some other time. They pass me around and are shipping me between people [...] With whom can I quarrel? I can't keep fighting with these people at the court [NMC].”

The experiences here parallel those of the local labourers who petition for access in itself, or that which accurately reflects their status – as detailed in the next chapter. Though Sumesh resided in a fixed local address and did not own an existing ration card in his name, he was denied access through routine processes of rejection and dismissal with no accountability or explanation.

While Sumesh himself did not feel he urgently needed subsidised food, his sister required one for the household and for Sumesh, the ration card represents a gateway to other entitlements. He described barriers to obtaining other documents such as the passport where a birth certificate or school leaving certificate is required in lieu of or addition to a ration card. Sumesh was orphaned at a young age and did not know his exact date of birth. He is also illiterate and did not attend school and thus lacks a School Leaving Certificate. These deprivations are only multiplied by extension with further denial to access to social protection *and* aspirations for improved livelihood (such as overseas migration, which necessitates a passport). Sumesh was familiar with risks posed by the use of agents and had heard from fellow workers they ‘take your money and run off with it’ – so in his mind, this did not offer a feasible alternative for gaining access.

5.4. *Naka workers in Ahmedabad*

In Ahmedabad, my findings showed that in addition to ‘typical’ inter-state migrants from places such as Bihar and UP, a large proportion of *naka* workers originate from Rajasthan. Labour migration between Rajasthan and Gujarat forms one of the most popular migration corridors within India (Census of India, 2001, as cited in: Thorat and Jones, 2011). A history of tribal migration from southern Rajasthan, namely the Dungarpur and Udaipur districts, to Gujarat has been established, and Ahmedabad is a major destination (Thorat and Jones, 2011). The two states share a border and to an extent, cultural proximity, though there is a stark differential in terms of economic development and infrastructure as captured well by one migrant worker who tells us, “you can tell when you cross the state lines, the roads stop being bumpy and become smooth!”

Migrants from Rajasthan represent the span of the labour spectrum in Ahmedabad both in terms of skills and sector – including construction, niche trade sectors, brick kiln work and the security service sector (Aajeevika Bureau, 2007b). Such migrants were typically in their late twenties, married and left behind their marital families and visit home approximately three times a year according to a study focusing on migration corridors by Jones *et al.* (2011). A high rate of illiteracy was also observed among migrants from Southern Rajasthan. This ‘profile’ generally aligns with the Rajasthani migrants captured in my sample.

The other dominant group of migrants who seek work at *nakas* in Ahmedabad are tribal migrants – both intra-state and inter-state migrants. They originate from the borders of Rajasthan and MP as well as from the tribal belt of Gujarat – mainly the Panchmahal district. Such areas are afflicted by deforestation and land fragmentation thus compelling communities to seek work in urban locations. Mosse *et al.* (2005) track such migration patterns back to the 1960s, undertaken by those who do not migrate through contractors and instead seek work at *nakas*. They are typically illiterate and unskilled and paid the lowest wage ranges in the sector.

Similar to the lone male migrant experiences reported by those in contracted long-term

construction work, lone male migrant naka worker experiences in Ahmedabad seem particularistic with regards to patterns and attitudes toward access. I interviewed those who worked as daily labourers on construction sites. Such migrants are typically younger – not much older than 18 years – and unmarried; or they are in the mid-range of the age group (31-40 years) and have left their wives and families at their place of origin. The barriers they describe are more directly related to security – both social and structural such as mis-payment of wages and labour exploitation – rather than specifically related to the utility of ration cards.

Bhavin, from Udaipur, Rajasthan is a labour long-term migrant who lived near Vasana *naka*. When we met, he was aged 38 years. Bhavin initially moved to Ahmedabad to follow his elder brother, though he no longer maintained contact due to a long-standing argument. He lived with nine other local labourers in a rented house in a semi-informal settlement. Bhavin had been living and working in Ahmedabad for 24 years. His wife and two children remained in his village of origin and his parents were smallholders where they produced seasonal crops of chickpeas, rice and corn for subsistence rather than sale. However, chronic drought had led to frequent crop failure or otherwise meagre crop yields. The troubled livelihood options deterred Bhavin from returning ‘home’ despite the long separation from his family. In Udaipur, Bhavin’s family had a ration card and they were eligible to access rice but not wheat and occasionally sugar. However, the household were denied regular access to the subsidies, and at times were required to wait as long as two or three months for quota deliveries. Bhavin claimed his family’s illiteracy held them back from lodging complaints about their *dukandaar*’s malpractices.

For part of the year, the family were forced to make purchases from the open market and spend around Rs, 5000 on groceries – the average amount that was sent home by Bhavin each month (when he was paid on time). Bhavin used his salary, which he reported is an average of Rs, 10,000 per month, to help fund his family’s expenses. At home, Bhavin was not able to earn more than approximately Rs, 4-5000, whereas in the city of Ahmedabad he could earn more than double

this. Bhavin's wife could sporadically access a maximum of 10-12 days of work via the local MNREGA programme, but only earned Rs, 60 per day.⁸⁷ Bhavin lacked a ration card in Ahmedabad and was compelled to purchase kerosene from the 'black market' where he was charged Rs, 55 per litre and required on average of five litres per month.

Bhavin suffered a serious eye injury after being electrocuted while working at a local construction site. The injury initially incurred medical costs of Rs, 35,000 which were covered by the site owner. A follow-up operation costing Rs, 20,000 was not borne by the site owner, and the injury has had lasting effects. There are burn scars branded onto Bhavin's face and body and he suffered pain in hands and feet as well as permanent visual impairment in his injured eye. Bhavin appeared to have no knowledge about trade union representation or his rights to compensation and was never offered any by his employer at the time. Although Bhavin stated he still accessed on average 20-25 days of work per month, he could not go to a site alone and needed the support of other workers due to this eye injury.

On the younger end of the age spectrum is Rakesh, a 20-year-old migrant from Tilonia, Rajasthan. Like Mohan, described in Chapter Four, he is a young lone male migrant working in construction when we meet, though he is slightly older than Mohan, and seems to fare better in terms of wages and social capital. Though having been married as a child (in accordance with rural customs), Rakesh was not yet living with his wife and at the time of our meeting, untethered to familial financial and social responsibilities in the way Bhavin was. Rakesh had been in the city for five years and first arrived with a relative (his cousin's husband whom he calls brother-in-law or '*jija*') who also fulfils a *thekedar* role. Rakesh claimed he borrowed a loan from his parents to help fund the move rather than accept an advance from his *thekedar*. Rakesh's parents are small-holders and grow wheat and chickpeas both for sale and for their own consumption. Rakesh came from a household of ten members and was one of two brothers who have left the village to seek urban

⁸⁷ Despite the stipulation of the programme to offer 100 days guaranteed work at a fixed rate daily minimum wage of Rs, 133 in Rajasthan in 2013. More information can be found here: http://nrega.nic.in/nrega_statewise.pdf

work. Like Mohan, he also dropped out while in secondary school: “I was a layabout in the village, so my *jija* told me I should go with him to Ahmedabad and find work.” Though this suggests a level of agency rather than the typical rural ‘push’ factors to which urban labour migration is attributed (Mosse *et al.*, 2002; Deshingkar and Start, 2003), it also suggests limited opportunities for aspirational young people in large families.

Initially with the loan from his parents, Rakesh lived with his *jija* for two years and left when his cousin came to join them. Rakesh appeared to benefit from a social translocal networks made up of both friends and family members from his home village. He explained he could rely upon his *jija* to help with any problems while settling into Ahmedabad initially. Additionally, Rakesh was accompanied by two friends from his home village in his move to Ahmedabad but lives alone in a single dormitory-style room in a residential building near Vasana naka. One of the friends, Arun, joined us when I interviewed Rakesh and occasionally joined in the conversation.

In terms of food costs, Rakesh reports his biggest expense as drinking water - he spent Rs, 3-4000 per month for water access. He was self-reliant for domestic chores, using a small gas stove and processed grains for cooking. Without a ration card in Ahmedabad, Rakesh made all his purchases from the local market and purchased kerosene from the black market for Rs, 45 per litre. In the village it was Rs, 13 per litre, according to Arun. For Rakesh, the ration card was trumped by the importance of the election card in Rakesh’s case and it was indicated that the pre-election atmosphere (at the time of interview) emphasised the importance of voting to him. He did not indicate any specific need for food subsidies and shared problems that are more associated with a sense of isolation from his household and the burden of taking on domestic duties, than of financial hardship or specifically, lack of access to the PDS.

“Here we are getting proper money. In this building there are people from UP, Kerala and Rajasthan but I don’t know why there are only migrants living here. For those who are coming here are coming for employment and they are getting this type of room here.”

Arun joined the conversation, “90 percent people are helping us, and 10 percent are denying us access.” However, neither Rakesh nor Arun were willing to speak in detail of any specific experiences of discrimination against them as migrants in the workplace, in terms of wages or treatment.

“Yes [we face discrimination here] because we can’t get any voting card or sim card and we have to get it in another identity. We have problems. We cannot use our own ID cards and have to borrow from local people and sometimes they give us document or access and sometimes they deny it.” (Rakesh)

Instead we see here the focus is on general and ‘practical’ rather than existential burdens that were alluded to by Mohan on the Iqbal site – having to ask other people for favours - and bureaucratic ‘barriers’ that discriminate between migrants and local people. However, compared with Mohan, Rakesh seems less troubled by social isolation. The distance between home and the city, established migration corridor and relatively higher socio-economic standing seems to be factor into Rakesh’s relative confidence and access to support networks.

Drought and lack of arable land have driven many small landowners and agricultural labourers to the cities of Gujarat, including Ahmedabad for labour. Chitranjan and his wife, Purnita come from the Udaipur district in Rajasthan and lived with their two small children near Gurukul Naka, a common site for seeking daily wage labour. At the time of interview, they lived in a small, first floor apartment in a building owned by the local Rabari⁸⁸ pastoralist community. Chitranjan was formerly engaged in agricultural work but for a daily wage of only Rs, 80 and work was only available for ten months of the year. His father was a smallholder and could not produce enough corn to feed the family nor sell on the market. Chitranjan came to Ahmedabad at the invitation from an uncle who used to live in the city. He was advised to come and earn money and used his

⁸⁸ An indigenous tribal caste based in north-west India.

“own savings” to fund the move, and thus did not require the assistance of a *thekedar*. Eventually, Chitanjan returned to his home village to get married and as per the custom of many migrant husbands, after a year, he left his wife, Purnita behind in the village to return to Ahmedabad. After five years, following delivery of their child in the village as there was no available government hospital in Ahmedabad, Purnita moved to join her husband with their child.

The financial draw of settling in Ahmedabad for work was made clear when Chitranjan noted how he had been engaged in casual or contract labour for fifteen years, starting from a wage of Rs, 100 per day for loading work and graduating up to a wage of Rs, 300 per day. According to Chitranjan, his wage had increased on average once every five years. Whilst Purnita was engaged in domestic help when she lived in Udaipur but settled as a housewife after becoming a mother. In terms of ration card access, they had recently acquired a BPL card in their home village after government officials surveyed their housing situation, and with it they were able to procure wheat, kerosene and sometimes sugar. However, “[t]he dukandaar sells things to other people and to ration card holders they deny; they say they have not got the quota. They sell everything to the black market” (Purnita).

In the 15 years settled in Ahmedabad, Chitranjan and his family previously lacked a ration card in the city but would procure rations from their parental household in Udaipur and transport them back to the city. In times when scarcity affected rations in Udaipur, Chitranjan and his family would make their main grocery purchases from the local open market in Ahmedabad. The price discrepancy for kerosene between Udaipur and Ahmedabad was significant according to Purnita – Rs, 15 per litre in Rajasthan and Rs, 50 per litre from the local black market. Purnita estimated that average of 6-7 litres is required for the household each month and an expense of Rs 150 per day for their grocery needs as a household of four members. In order to finally procure the ration card in Ahmedabad, Chitranjan was instructed by local officials, after multiple fruitless visits to the AMC office, that he must delete his name on local ration cards lists back in Udaipur before

applying for a new one. He reported taking the ‘official’ route to reassigning his entitlements to Ahmedabad, thus symbolically signifying his new ‘settled’ status.

Many of the *naka* workers interviewed in Ahmedabad were based in one of the city’s largest slums, Ramapir no Tekro. The latter is home to approximately 150,00 residents,⁸⁹ both migrant and local communities. It is one of Ahmedabad’s largest slums, located near the centre of the city and inhabited by both local communities and migrants. The slum settlement, encroaching upon government land, has existed for over fifty years and facilitates many who were seeking resettlement following a large flood in the 1970s.⁹⁰ The migrant communities are predominantly from SC and ST groups in Rajasthan and rural Gujarat, though certain sections are also inhabited by those from northern states such as UP. Many of the inhabitants are involved in informal, low-paid labour including day labour procured at *nakas*. Nativist tensions were expressed by some of the local-born residents of the slum, specifically in reference to the diversion of PDS grains toward the ‘black market.’ On one end of the slum live Shivraj and Radha, a young couple from the city of Banaras in UP who moved to Ahmedabad three years before. Radha was six months pregnant when we met, and they have a son of three years. The three of them – soon to be four – lived in a rented cramped tin shed. After marriage, Shivraj moved to Kolkata without his new family, working the machinery in a leather factory for approximately Rs, 2000 per month. In the meantime, Radha suffered from ongoing conflict and abuse at the hands of her mother-in-law so Shivraj took her and his son with him when he shifted to Ahmedabad. In Ahmedabad, Shivraj worked as a day labourer finding work at the nearby Akbar *naka*. Radha, heavily pregnant at the time of our interview, worked as an embroiderer for a piece rate and relied upon her supplier for payment and work.

⁸⁹ Source: Manav Sadna, a local NGO in Ahmedabad: <http://www.manavsadhna.org/sidenode.aspx?&sidenode=2>

⁹⁰ Source:

https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Vishal_Jain17/publication/280564892_Assessment_of_environmental_impacts_on_slum_societies_of_Ahmedabad_-_Case_of_Ramapir_no_Tekro_and_Chandola_lake_slum/links/55ba088408aec0e5f43db0c0/Assessment-of-environmental-impacts-on-slum-societies-of-Ahmedabad-Case-of-Ramapir-no-Tekro-and-Chandola-lake-slum.pdf

In terms of acquiring a ration card, Shivraj expressed awareness of an AMC office is in his locality but was deterred by “top to bottom corruption” and the need to pay bribes. Though he followed due process and completed the application form with a photocopy of his father’s ration card, Shivraj was denied by an officer and told he was ineligible. The reasons behind this decision were not made clear to him. Other repercussions were the lack of credible or valid proof of identity in the city. Shivraj has an APL ration card linked to his native address in Banaras though he felt it has been incorrectly assigned. Shivraj told us of how he offered a bribe to his local sarpanch in Banaras for a ration card and for a BPL card was instructed to give approximately Rs 600 for a BPL card.

“All the wealthy people get the BPL ration card and poor don’t get anything [...] Even the sarpanch said ‘you can’t complain, nothing will happen. I have the power’” (Shivraj)

He applied for BPL card and filled the form with photocopies of his documents linked to his native household but was refused and told he was ineligible by officials in the office. Shivraj and Radha made their grocery purchases from the open market and cooking fuel was acquired from the local ‘black market’ – most likely diverted from their local ration shop. They estimated they would make a saving of Rs, 350 each month from their grocery costs with a ration card. Food is not the only reason they needed a ration card however. They also lacked an important proof of identity, without which they could not prove where they are from or where they reside, “for anything, for a government job, you need an ID card, a ration card” (Shivraj).

The family also faced barriers to health, compounded by a hostile family environment. Their son is ill, and they were forced to spend Rs, 25,000 on treatment back in Banaras. Shivraj’s mother failed to share any of his remittances with Radha to treat her son, another reason she and their son were sent for in Ahmedabad. Radha was not aware of any maternal health benefits she was entitled to in Ahmedabad and had only had limited interactions with her local hospital though she was pregnant. She continued to work on embroidery, almost 15 hours of the day in small cramped

conditions and hardly any mobility, whilst also responsible for taking care of a young, sick son and performing household duties whilst Shivraj is at work all day.

Though low wages are paid both in Ahmedabad and Banaras according to Shivraj and Radha and they lacked access to the PDS and other entitlements - the move was considered worth it to protect Radha from abuse from her in-laws. They described the intergenerational pattern of family conflict between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law that first forced Shivraj's mother to move from UP to Surat, Gujarat (before moving again) and then triggering Shivraj's shifting of his family to Ahmedabad. "The main benefit to moving here is that my wife does not have to live with her in-laws. They fight all the time in my family" (Shivraj). As alluded to in the preceding chapter, family strife and gendered intra-household social norms can lead to vulnerabilities derived from social networks, as well as state sources.

Among the intra-state migrants interviewed in Ahmedabad, we see very specific vulnerabilities attached to specific identities – religious, caste-based or tribal. The degrees in vulnerability vary widely in correlation with migrant status. Amir is a *naka* worker from the Amreli district in western Gujarat and in Ahmedabad, his family live in a canvas shelter, as semi-street dwellers near the Juhapura area. Amir and his wife migrated to the city some 17 years before and live in some of the most deprived conditions observed in the city. Amir hails from an ST community which practices 'reverse dowry' and there are four brothers in the family. Each one used a large loan to pay for marriage and together have amassed a crippling level of debt. For Amir's marriage, he paid Rs, 45,000 at the wedding itself and currently the debt stands at around Rs, 7000. Amir's parents left a small amount of land divided up among four brothers. Amir's wife, Nasreen has engaged in manual labour to help pay off the debt.

Amir himself sold water when he could not find *naka* work, and before marriage was a full pavement-dweller. Two goats were the main tangible (non-durable) assets belonging to Amir and

his family – they provided milk and served as assets in a very basic housing situation. His brothers also lived in Ahmedabad in similar situations and one remained in their home village. A mix of social discrimination and debt trapped Amir and his family in these deprived conditions, where they are not even afforded a home in a slum settlement.

“Now I can earn up to Rs, 300 per day but nobody allows me to become a *karigar* [skilled worker] and earn more money. Employers are not willing to give me a *karigar* salary even though I have been here for a long time and I don’t have the skills or energy to bargain and negotiate with labourers for higher salary.” (Amir)

Amir alluded to discrimination either due to his ST or Muslim status among employers. Amir was also unable to draw upon state social protection to supplement his continually low wage income. Though he had a ration card in his late parents’ names, it was shared between his four brothers and they could only procure a small supply of food and kerosene on it. The remainder of kerosene was procured not from the local black-market sellers but from neighbours with ration cards, highlighting an informal redistribution among claimants as well as market actors. Food security for the children was supported however thanks to the state-sponsored Midday Meal Scheme⁹¹ in schools. Amir described of multiples challenges to his household food security from the previous year alone. He described times when they feed only the children and go without meals or are forced to borrow money from neighbours or make purchases on credit.

In terms of documents overall, Amir lost his voting card and other valuable documents in a fire and lacked photocopies. Lacking even a birth certificate or school leaving certificate. Amir relied on using relative’s documents to enrol his children in school.

“Whenever officials “big people” come to the locality they are just talk and don’t do anything [...] I am not able to get sim card and not even the ration card because they ask where you are from and send you back to your village and you will not get the receipt. I have not

⁹¹ Government programme under the Food Security Act which provides nutritious meals to school-going children across India. See: <http://mdm.nic.in/>

gone through an agent because I have no documents.” (Amir).

The social discrimination among employers and state officials is highlighted clearly here. Amir and his family’s ‘bivalent’ vulnerabilities based on his ST and religious status (Fraser, 1997; Kabeer, 2000) are a prominent factor in exacerbating culturally entrenched sources of precariousness (such as the dowry practice) though Amir seemed to lack the ‘collective’ dimension in Ahmedabad and lacks collective bargaining power both in ‘reworking’ wages and entitlements. Other long-term labour migrants in the city that I spoke with also highlighted religious discrimination, such as Ismail, a *karigar* originally from UP, who recounted a difficult work history in the city due to his identity both as a Muslim and migrant in the city, “it is difficult to get work as a Muslim sometimes.” He was often asked to show his identity documents within the city and was only able to advance through his social connections established in the ‘ghettoised’ area of Juhapura.

5.4.1 Barriers in observation – urban sightings of the state

The barriers of both design and implementation experienced by the labour migrants as described in Chapter Four and here can be attributed to a series of divergences between policies and implementation practices, behaviours and attitudes at the local level of governance. This ‘front-line’ level is also where poor and vulnerable citizens can ‘see’ the state and seek accountability in terms of access to state resources such as the PDS. The below are notes from a field observation in Ahmedabad at a ‘zonal’ office, a sub-district municipal office dealing with ward-level PDS administration in Gomtipur, Ahmedabad. My observation offers some insight into how the gaps between policy design and implementation are caused by negligence or rent-seeking behaviour among local officials, and how they further generate ‘barriers of implementation’ for groups such as local labourers and labour migrants.

The office is crowded and small, with two staff members at their desks. Visitors wait on benches lined up against the walls and or just stand. There are posters on the walls stating the rules and regulations

of the PDS procedures in Gujarati. A man who has been waiting goes up to one the clerks, a woman, and sounds angry as he complains about waiting for a lengthy period of time without being seen and uses the word '*dhakka*' several times. The clerk tells him calmly to return the following week, but he continues to complain loudly and angrily and says he has been coming back and forth to the office for four or five months. The clerk responds saying there is normally a two month wait for a BPL card to be processed. A lady with a badly torn sari sits close by waiting patiently.

Finally, there is a chance to speak with the clerk and ask a few questions, but I am conscious of the fact we are holding up the long queue. The clerk answers several questions from claimants in between answering mine and she seems to be doing several tasks at once. She said the main challenges faced in her job are the lack of staff – there are only five members designated at that office and only two are actually in the office, the rest are out working on ration card distribution. The other main challenge had been brought on by the Gujarat state itself – in an attempt to modernise how the PDS is accessed, ration cards were reformed to include a barcode. This overhaul was contracted out to a private agency and in the process, “thousands of mistakes” were made in the information on the cards and in whom they were allocated to. The agency was not made accountable for dealing with and addressing the mistakes and instead the zonal level offices’ already disproportionate workload was “doubled.”

On the way downstairs, out of the office, we meet a lady in a veil who tells us this was the fourth *dhakka* she experienced. She had an old ration card and it stated correctly that she did not have an LPG [gas] connection. When she moved from one place to another, the new card said she had an LPG connection. Previously she went to the office and with a xerox of the old card but was repeatedly told that she has been given an LPG connection. Then she spent Rs, 200 on an affidavit to prove she doesn't have an LPG connection – today she was successful in getting an appointment for a making a new correct ration card and was told to come back on the 20th June for a new ration card and she thinks it is only because we were there.

(Field notes, Ahmedabad, May, 2014).

The granting of an appointment to change the woman's ration card was attributed to 'front-stage' behaviour of the officials (Goffman, 1995), as referenced in Chapter Three. However, in any case the chaotic and understaffed office and encounters witnessed revealed some of the main factors

involved in local PDS implementation in Ahmedabad. The small, busy office; lack of staff; intimidating posters (inaccessible to the illiterate and semi-literate) and quietly hostile behaviour of the staff all depict a challenging environment for vulnerable citizens to ‘sight’ the state and make their claims. The overall observation typifies some of the everyday encounters or “sightings” (Corbridge *et al.*, 2005) between the urban poor, both migrant and non-migrant, with government representatives. The word *dhakka* was commonly used by both migrants and local labourers to describe their encounters with officials in local institutions and the meaning beyond the literal definition is captured in the above observations. People are batted or ‘pushed’ away with words of rebuff if not rejection.

The clerk I spoke with also established the ‘formal’ rules regarding migrant transfer of PDS access – they should delete their names attached to ration cards in their place of origin and apply for a new card in their place of destination. In sharing these ‘formal’ rules, the clerk also inadvertently exposed the discretionary and informal practices that take place, as the experiences of Gopanalal in Nashik and Shivraj in Ahmedabad show, “top to bottom corruption” (Shivraj, from UP) still poses barriers to access even when trying to apply for a new ration card through formal processes

5.5 Summary

Though this group of migrants remains vulnerable in multiple ways, they can be situated in the middle of the ‘spectrum of vulnerability’ when it comes to access conditions and experiences. In some ways this group of migrants possess certain advantages over the migrants described in Chapter Four. They also engage in precarious forms of labour - in terms of wages and availability of work but live in informal settlements in relative proximity to public resources, rather than on remote sites. Though these slum settlements are themselves sites of multiple inequalities and precarities for both local and labour migrants, they provide living conditions that are distinct from those on brick kiln and construction sites. Being settled within the city also enables migrants to

develop communal ties, local awareness and social networks – essential for identifying informal routes to access and entitlements and enabling ‘reworking’ strategies (Katz, 2004). However, living and seeking work alongside local workers can throw social tensions into relief, and while the breadth of this topic falls beyond the scope of the thesis, it is notable that this tension was vocalised mainly by local communities rather than the migrants themselves. Intra-state migrants and established inter-state migrants also described multiple experiences with *dhakkas* in official spaces, as also observed in my visit to a municipal office. While still denying access, these encounters imply a level of awareness of local governance infrastructure and opportunities to catch sight of the state, that are not afforded to the labour migrants discussed in Chapter Four.

However, mapping vulnerabilities of the different groups across my ‘spectrum’ of findings is not a straightforward task. In terms of labour relations, the *naka* workers can be defined as ‘the precariat’ – they are not in contracted relationships (though these themselves can be exploitative as outlined in Chapter Four). While the mean average for working days per month was in the highest bracket for Ahmedabad (20-25 days), it was reported as 15-20 days for individual *naka* workers in Nashik, implying greater competition among labour supply in the growing city. Many of the long-term migrants working via *nakas* reported periodic scarcity in terms of income and subsequently resources. Many migrants in this category do not require a *thekedar* to enable their movement to seek urban labour as they already have relatives or friends in Ahmedabad to help identify labour at *nakas* and settle into the destination. In Nashik, the dynamic construction boom taking place across the city buoyed demand for casual, as well as contracted labour, attracting a mix of inter-state migrants away from the cities of Pune and Maharashtra. Long-term intra-state migrant networks have formed among those who have left the drought-stricken districts of Washim and Beed. Compared with the migrants described previously, the labourers are less ‘unfree’ or bonded to one particularly place and can themselves potentially ‘compete’ for wages and working conditions. They are less beholden to share a significant proportion of wages to a *thekedar* due to debts, and over time are presented with opportunities to accumulate skills and

steadily increase wages. Long-term migrants in *nakas* are also relatively free to regularly maintain strong linkages with their native places.

A complex range of experiences exist even within the group of migrants covered in this chapter. The duration of migration does not necessarily correlate with a decline in vulnerability. Narratives of social tensions and discriminations emerge for inter-state migrants, as covered in the extant literature (Weiner, 1978; Rajan *et al.*, 2011; Bhagat 2015) and also for certain types of intra-state migrants, regardless of the length of time spent in Ahmedabad or Nashik. Such migrants are neglected both by their ‘native’ and urban state representatives. Tribal migrants are among the most marginalised of social caste groups in India (Mosse *et al.*, 2002), overrepresented in terms of illiteracy, unskilled labour, poor health indicators and lack of assets. The vulnerabilities experienced by these particular groups are distinct, and while urban migration can help prevent a further descent into poverty and provide crucial livelihood options for such groups, the lack of access to social protections in both places of origin and destination compounds the double disadvantage experienced by all labour migrants.

For long-term and medium-term migrants living in Nashik and Ahmedabad, specific nativist hostilities come to the fore, rather than the more neutral and mechanical dismissals of the urban poor overall or more clearly ‘othered’ communities – spatially zoned off out of public ‘sight’ in construction sites or brick kilns. Insidious forms of discrimination and social othering are widespread. Living in slum settlements alongside local communities, migrants from UP and Bihar are, often disparagingly, referred to as the ‘*bhaiya lok*’⁹² and regarded as a burden on both local resources and labour supply. However, this seems to hold less for the intra-state migrants in Nashik and Ahmedabad (who do not belong to ST groups), who establish social networks and accumulate skills, and thus financial capital, as well as social capital over time. In Ahmedabad, dense and extensive social networks that have emerged out of the historical Rajasthan-Gujarat

⁹² ‘*bhaiya lok*’ is a crude slang term referring to migrants from northern states, usually Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. It is in many senses derogatory although arguably has become normalised and is a form of group identification common for categorising migrant groups from different states across the country even by the state and among migrants themselves. See de Haan (2004) for further discussion of migrant stereotypes in India pp.206-207

migration corridor (Aajeevika Bureau, 2007a) benefit both household and individual migrants. Household migrants in Nashik tend to be intra-state migrants from rural backgrounds, and initially face a host of *dhakkas* in the city when trying to access the PDS though in some cases this is ‘reworked’ over time through the use of agents, persistence or bribes.

For lone male migrants – usually inter-state - ration cards do not seem integral to their experiences, as by design cards are geared toward whole households rather than individuals. The cards are often left with their parental or marital households. Whilst the entitlement does not appear to be urgently required by those cooking only for themselves, lone migrants are forced to purchase kerosene on the black market. Other forms of vulnerabilities related to migrant identity are revealed here - sim cards are obtained on other people’s names, access to free healthcare or medical compensation is often denied and labour relations are often exploited. Network migration plays a role in establishing local social networks for newly arrived or sole migrants (Massey *et al.*, 1993), as we see with Rakesh, though the experience of Mohan (in Chapter 4) shows family networks in the city are not always reliable. Inter-state migrants also experience major barriers to healthcare through blocked routes in the form of knowledge and access. They face institutional barriers to ration card access in their home towns and are thus primed for *dhakkas* and setbacks in Ahmedabad.

A running theme in the findings from this group is the extent to which intra-household conflict can motivate household migration or exacerbate vulnerabilities and precariousness at the place of destination, also referred to by some of the migrants described in Chapter Four. For example, Shivraj in Ahmedabad explicitly cites the abuse his wife faced from his mother-in-law in UP during his absence, as the reason for bringing his whole marital family to Ahmedabad, despite a range of new barriers faced in their destination. This breaks with traditional gendered norms surrounding intra-household power balances in situations of daughter-in-law abuse, where husbands align with mothers-in-law (ICRW, 2006; Gangoli and Rew, 2011). Tensions between

siblings and quarrels among in-laws are frequently mentioned, and also noted in the findings of Parry in his work on long-term migrants in Chhattisgarh (2003). My findings suggest that social ties are not necessarily reliable safeguards against the barriers faced by labour migrants in either their 'home' or destination contexts.

In terms of city context, in Ahmedabad, the communal riots that took place in the 1980s and in 2002 have also heightened identity-based vulnerabilities in the city, creating scope for recognition of marginalised groups such as migrants in the process, though the city's active civil society sector continue to neglect the specific vulnerabilities of labour migrants. Both religious and tribal segregation and dynamics in the city represent 'bivalent collectivities' such as in the case of Aamir and Ismail. Longer-term migrants overall are relatively more open in their discussions of social barriers. The findings from Nashik among this group of migrants however, is consistent with those covered in Chapter Four – silence, or overtly positive accounts of life in the city prevail among labour migrants.

Finally, in terms of governance, though more empowered by way of awareness and availability of time, *naka* workers still face structural barriers of implementation. Migrants who followed due course in both Nashik and Ahmedabad and attempted to transfer their ration cards across from their places of origin, still faced *dhakkas* at an inter-state level, highlighting the weakness of inter-state linkages across Indian governance in terms of PDS access. My observations from a municipal office and the findings that emerge from the intra-state migrants themselves show a combination of 'unintentional' policy dissonances or departures from policy design, (in the flawed delivery of the barcoded ration card overhaul) and more wilful *dhakkas* that claimants are subjected to. These experiences can be termed as barriers of PDS *re*-design that remain subject to the vulnerabilities generated by policy dissonances, even in contexts which actively seek to improve social inclusion through technological advancement. In Maharashtra, allusions to social tensions are made by the local labourers rather than the migrants themselves. Politics does not

figure in my conversations with labour migrants though a subtle tension is seen in references to PDS resources, spatial divisions at the *nakas* themselves and within the slum settlements.

6. BARRIERS TO ACCESS FOR LOCAL LABOURERS

Contrary to expectations that local labourers fare significantly better than their migrant counterparts in accessing the PDS (and other state resources) (Sabates-Wheeler and Waite, 2003; MacAuslan, 2011), my findings show that both groups are at a disadvantage. Both broad groups face barriers, though at different structural levels. While migrants are locked out of access to the PDS due to barriers of policy design, as well as experiencing barriers related to implementation: local labourer experiences of vulnerability are primarily related to the latter. As sedentary citizens with fixed and local proof of address, they are eligible for ration cards in their locality in Nashik or Ahmedabad, however they also face barriers of implementation representing a range of corrupt practices from rent-seeking and patronage to discrimination or negligence.

The barriers of implementation faced by local labourers are characterised by *dhakkas* with state officials and also with *dukandaars* at the front-lines of PDS access structures. The barriers are commonly attributed to dissatisfaction with what Corbridge et al (2005) term as ‘state scarcity’; and nativist resentment toward labour migrants themselves is common among local labourers. Local labourers experience *dhakkas* mostly when trying to seek redress for a form of misallocation or non-allocation of entitlements. For example, many households I encountered considered themselves as ‘below poverty line’ (BPL) according to their income - corroborated by my observations of their household, family size and (lack of) assets - but were allocated ‘above poverty line’ (APL) entitlements and thus denied adequate food rations.

In response, local labourers are relatively well-equipped, compared with labour migrants, to navigate informal routes of accountability and to draw upon social capital (Putnam, 2000) and local resources of ‘mediation’ (Berenschot, 2010) to acquire access to ration cards, other entitlement documents or the food and fuel provisions themselves. However, labour migrants do not escape barriers of design - which affect vulnerable, poor and marginalised communities in general. The barriers of design, introduced in Chapter Four, do not formally lock local labourers

out of access in the way they do for migrant populations but certain design elements of the targeting system and PDS operations as implemented in Gujarat and Maharashtra can inhibit access as highlighted in the findings.

Certain indirect barriers, or at least obstacles, to access are filtered through misinformation and can be considered specific to those with fixed place of address, or in biopolitical terms, being ‘in sight’ of the state (Scott, 1998). An example of this is where the offer of access tools – such as an additional identity document - are manipulated to persuade citizens to share information and often to pay a bribe but end up being no use to the claimant. Local labourers also face barriers of re-design, as introduced in Chapter Five – where sub-national governments seek to recast existing systems to become more efficient and inclusive. However, as my observations at a local municipal office in Ahmedabad and in the experiences of labourers in the city show, these processes remain exclusionary and dissonant from policy. The redesign promises of the Aadhaar card also failed to materialise in the lives of my research participants at the time of fieldwork. The main source of barriers experienced by local labourers however are related to the implementation patterns of the PDS both in terms of the ration card and the rations themselves.

The experience and intensity of access barriers are correlated with the socio-economic background and identity of the labourers themselves. Through selected for being engaged in informal and low-income labour; living in slum settlements in BPL conditions and belonging to ST or SC groups – variation was found among the labourers themselves depending on age, specific SC group, religion, gender, social connections, family background and level of education. Those who are relatively well-off mainly benefitted through non-labour sources for example by belonging to higher caste categories, social connections and inherited assets, and literacy. And, though the labour relations are relatively less precarious than those of migrants (Bremar, 1996; 2010; Lewis *et al.*, 2014); women-headed households (who do not tend to migrate, (Keshri and Bhagat 2013) , victims of permanent injury and illness and particular ‘bivalent collectivities’

(Fraser, 1997; Kabeer, 2000) – vulnerable identity groups - fare the worst in terms of access to the PDS and other state resources and face their own range of structurally embedded precarities.

The bifurcation between labour migrants and their local counterparts is represented in the level of nativism among communities in Nashik and Ahmedabad. Migrants themselves are perceived to be a source of barriers themselves in accessing the PDS for local labourers. PDS resource burdens and grain diversions to the black market are recurrently attributed to the presence of long- and medium-term migrants in a given locality. Though the formal and informal market dynamics involved in the PDS are complex and extend beyond intra-urban community resource disputes, nativist perceptions stigmatise labour migrants and can inhibit their access to social networks, in addition to state resources thus intensifying their ‘hyper-precarious’ lives (Lewis *et al.*, 2014). Concomitantly, local labourers perceive a barrier and source of vulnerabilities, highlighting the reciprocal nature and socially layered nature of state-imposed barriers to access through design and implementation.

In general, the most striking contrast in the experiences of local labourers and migrant experiences are observed in the fluency and easy vocalisation of specific grievances compared with those of migrants. Locals seemed more confident in expressing them in elaborate detail. Many concerns regarded the misallocation of ration cards and serial rejections by local actors to provide remedial action. While the impacts of no access to the PDS on food security - expressed as ‘not enough’ and being forced to procure food ‘on credit’ were reported by all groups - local participants appeared more familiar with local community structures and could use these to draw upon resources. Those more confident in their residential security were more explicit in reprimanding the ‘unruly practices’ of officials in the process of administering ration cards.

As shown in Appendix Four, and in Chapter One, the highest proportion of ration card holders is represented by locals (native born) and those who were long-term migrants (10 years plus),

therefore suggesting a correlation between time and spatial stability and access, as per sedentary policy norms. We can see here that barriers of design are comparatively less of an influence in determining local labourers' experiences compared with migrants. However, as the findings show, many households faced a variety of barriers in accessing the ration cards themselves, despite their sedentary and locally rooted status. The locals who did have ration cards spoke of problems emanating from the delivery or bureaucracy regarding the delivery of grains or management of ration cards. The migrants on the other hand spoke of the high price of household items (food and fuel) purchased on the black or open market and the burden it created on households already suffering from credit constraints.

The following chapter will present the findings from interviews with local labourers who were born in the cities of Nashik and Ahmedabad and remained there for the majority if not entirety of their lifetimes. The chapter will illustrate the experiences within each respective urban milieu, with various types of barriers, within the specific labour-market sector and spatial settings, paying attention to the contextualised differentiations along lines of caste, gender and religion. The findings are organised according to the three main types of barriers experienced by local labourers in Nashik and in Ahmedabad – barriers of design (which also affect labour migrants, though in distinct ways); barriers of implementation (also faced by migrants, though they have fewer resources to overcome these) and finally barriers at the front-lines of the PDS. These describe *dhakkas* and other challenges faced in relation to *dukandaars* at the FPS representing the actual point of access for resources.

6.1. Access to the PDS – barriers by design

The characteristics of the survey sample for local labourers captured in both Nashik and Ahmedabad show that local labourers experienced vulnerability as shown in the indicators: 'lack of ration card' and 'income' under the poverty line. Below we can see in addition to belonging to low-income groups and working in precarious forms of labour – both physical and economic, the

urban poor are vulnerable to being denied access either to PDS rations, or in some cases, to a ration card itself. A small proportion of the sample of local labourers did not possess a ration card at all, despite residing at a fixed local address.

Kajal is an elderly widow who lived in semi-pukka construction in Siddharth Nagar in Nashik, where some of the long-term migrants discussed in Chapter Five were based. Her eldest son, the primary earner in the household had died ‘a few years’ before we met and the household, where Kajal lived with her widowed daughter-in-law and grandchildren, relied on wages from *naka* labour – usually in domestic work conducted by Kajal and her daughter-in-law. The vulnerability of this female-headed household was compounded by Kajal’s illiteracy and lack of awareness. Her main source of information and representation in ‘sighting’ the state had been the male members of the household – her late husband and son. When asked about the ration card, Kajal initially confused it with the Aadhaar card, before we verified she was not in possession of either. Kajal explained that while her husband had been alive, he had applied for a BPL ration card and filed the necessary documents, but they were ignored: “They give excuses. ‘There is nobody there to sign, Sir is out of station’, they ask us to apply again.” Kajal had not heard of nor received an AAY ration card despite her both her own and her daughter-in-law’s eligibility as widows, reflecting both her lack of awareness and lack of state support.

The slum settlement surrounding Chandhola lake in south Ahmedabad is one of the most deprived, religiously segregated and largest in the city.⁹³ Fowzia lived there as a single mother with six children aged between 22 and seven years old and was separated from her alcoholic husband. The family live in a precarious *kacha* construction. On one of our visits during a rain storm, I observed a heavily leaking tin roof and damp mud floor – posing risks not only to the inhabitants of the house but their labour assets, crucial to Fowzia’s livelihood. Fowzia is a Muslim woman who was born in Ahmedabad and lived there her entire life though her parents’

⁹³ According to information gathered from KIIs and local interpreter

family originates from UP. Her abusive and alcoholic husband lived separately and did not financially support the household except for occasional contributions to medical expenses.

Dilapidated though it was, Fowzia's most significant asset was her house – in her name and bought with the help of loan from her father. Her livelihood, since marriage, was based on making handicrafts; *rakhees* (bracelets of woven thread used in a particular Hindu festival) and brooms – on a contracted piece rate, similar to the brick kilns. The brooms for example are sold for 30 paisa (0.3 percent of a rupee) per plastic wrapping and handle, thus generating Rs, 300 for each 100 brooms. Fowzia initially learnt the skills for her work informally through networks at her in-laws' house, and through her neighbours. Initially she earned Rs, 100 on average per day (on a piece rate) for machine stitching work and at the time of our meeting, her daughter had taken up this work while she focused on broom making and jeans-cutting work. Fowzia negotiated work with three different contractors for the brooms, jeans and stitched scarves and her daughter who has been schooled was responsible for keeping accounts and in total earned a combined average income of Rs, 3000 per month. This diversification of income and intra-household contributions of labour, in addition to negotiations with multiple 'agents' displays a sense of agency and strategic calculation in the face of multi-dimensionally precarious circumstances.

Fowzia's husband was formerly the main breadwinner, earning approximately between Rs, 700-800 per week and his departure has caused a significant loss to the household income. Fowzia did not allow her husband back in the house despite the negative financial impact, "before [it was worse], we always had tension - 'when will he come back and beat me?'" Fowzia's husband's alcoholic behaviour – also commonly observed among labourer communities in Nashik - highlights the fallibility of the 'dry state' imposed in Gujarat – where illicit alcohol is available to elites and among the urban poor though with significant health risks for the latter, as it is usually derived from toxic and illicit substances (Shah et al., 2012; D'Silva, 2015). For Fowzia, the economic turmoil and social castigation faced as a separated woman was preferable to the

constant threat and trauma of domestic violence. Fowzia's social and gender identity are both instrumental to her vulnerability.

In terms of social protection, she lacked formal manifestations such as the ration card, but had access to strong networks within the community and was visited upon by civil society actors in a way that was not experienced or observed among migrants in the same socio-economic category. Some of Fowzia's financial burdens were eased through family help, her brother covered the children's schooling costs. But there were still many challenges: the household did not own a ration card as Fowzia's and her children's names were on her in-law's household ration card. Fowzia had tried to apply for a ration card – she stated she had visited the state office three times to no avail. Instead, she was constantly faced with minor harassments via processes of being sighted *by* the state and by civil society actors.

Many government people have come here and surveyed me about income and so on. But nothing happens. Many NGOs come here and take photographs, but they don't follow through with anything. They are coming regularly, regularly! But no action. Once an agent came to the slum and those who are rich paid Rs, 5-7000 for an APL card. When I asked, the agent only asked me for Rs, 3000 because I am poor, but I didn't have enough at that time.

These are just some of the numerous accounts shared by Fowzia regarding being tricked, cheated and exploited by both state and civil society actors – representing an institutional continuum of negligence and exploitation, reflected in Fowzia's continued lack of access to social protection and precarious experiences.

Mahesh and Leela were a local couple living in highly deprived conditions near Chandhola slum. They were a household of six members include Mahesh's mother, Pia, and reside in a very small pukka construction of approximately 8 by 10 feet and visibly infested with mice. Mahesh's family background is unique among the research participants I encountered in that his mother still had her Pakistani nationality – despite fleeing the country with Mahesh's father after Partition (in

1947). Pia shared that she has never been granted an India visa for longer than two years and was charged Rs, 1500 each time a visa was processed: citizenship seems to be entirely beyond her reach. She had applied several times for Indian citizenship, according to the proviso that it can be obtained after living in India for 40 years. Frequent payments to agents to try and obtain Indian citizenship had been met with no success and Pia had faced several *dhakkas* or lack of response from officials. She had also sold various assets in a bid for citizenship to no avail. Each application for a visa or for citizenship involved a costly journey to Delhi adding to the burden and barriers faced by Mahesh's mother.

As for Mahesh himself, he traced his experience of losing his ration card among other documents in a flood in the 1980s and being compelled to live as a pavement dweller for roughly ten years before shifting to *pukka* housing. Among various precarities – represented by his mother's more existential form of precarity, to his family's economic precariousness - is the lack of state support without a crucial base of documents. In addition, without a ration card, the cost of household groceries was too high to sustain "Sometimes we can only afford to eat bread and buttermilk and the children are hungry. In the past six months, we have done this many times" (Mahesh).

The family had tried to acquire a new ration card but were stalled when asked for documents by officials.

We have tried many times to get the ration card but they ask for documents... I have been trying to get the election card, and I paid Rs 500 to an agent, I met him outside the municipal office. I have heard of many stories where the agent has run away after taking the money so I will not pay Rs 1000 to an agent to get a ration card.
(Leela)

To add to financial challenges, Mahesh had also experienced injury at work but did not receive any compensation and was out of work for four months at the time of our interview. During this time, money was loaned from community members and combined with any existing cash savings.

6.2. Access to ration cards – implicit barriers in implementation

The findings suggest that misallocation of ration cards is widespread and common. A significant proportion of the highest earners consists of BPL ration card holders, and inversely a high proportion of APL card holders are found in the lower income brackets. According to my findings, 76 percent of local labourers in my sample from Nashik reported possession of a ration card (of any status) and 14 percent as formerly owning one. This compares with a national average of 23 percent and 19 percent of urban households across India in purchasing rice and wheat respectively, through the PDS. In 2006, 81 percent of households in India possessed ration cards (Paul, 2006).

Motilal, a *naka* worker, and his wife Jigna are a middle-aged couple who exemplify a household with mismatched state entitlements. They lived in a rented *pukka* but cramped construction in Siddharth Nagar in Nashik. The household ration card was registered in Motilal's name. Their son was married and had children of his own and lived with them in the same household, however this situation and the new family members were not reflected on the separate ration card. Though Motilal and his family felt they were eligible for a BPL card, and were in possession of a 'BPL certificate', they were given an APL card. Each month they received 10kg of wheat and 2kg of rice, but no kerosene. They made their remaining purchases from the open market. Though Motilal and Jigna stated they did not experience any problems in accessing the grains according to the quota, Jigna explained they were reluctant to buy things from there every month as the quality was poor, claiming their daughter-in-law and grandchildren were frequently ill because of the low-quality grains.

In addition to these 'front-line' barriers, the family also seemed to have faced indirect *dhakkas* from local officials. Motilal recounted that the ration card was acquired at the local NMC office but a fee of Rs, 500 was paid – it was not clear whether this went into the pockets of bureaucrats or informal agents. According to Motilal, as part of a 'BPL survey' an official had visited

Siddharth Nagar – approximately a decade or so ago - and informed the residents about the ration card process, distributed forms and instructed them to fill them out and submit at them to the NMC. This modality of access, by way of formal induction, contrasts with the dissonant practices that took place at the NMC itself – where a process or ‘rule’ (of paying a bribe) additional to the completion and submission of forms was introduced.

Going into further detail about the BPL survey official’s visit, Jigna shared they had also been asked to verbally complete some forms there and then; simply providing their name, number of people in the household and address. On this basis, they were granted a BPL certificate. Jigna mentioned they were not asked to state their income. The government official informed them they could use the document to prove their socio-economic status when applying for state social programmes or government loans. The couple showed me the certificate - carefully packed away in a dust sheet in an old suitcase and clearly not in regular use. The certificate bore the official credentials of the NMC, however in practice it has had no bearing on the family’s PDS access. Motilal claimed his local PDS *dukandaar* disregarded the certificate and informed him he could not access BPL subsidy prices without an income certificate from his employer. Motilal split his time between Gangapur and Peth *nakas* to find work and also relied on the occasional phone call from a known *thekedar*. With such weak employer ties, he found it challenging to acquire an income certificate. These experiences represent a conflation of formal and informal institutional practices – thus blurring their lines in the eyes of the urban poor. An additional layer of barriers in the form of misinformation and deceit, as represented by the *dukandaar* further tilt asymmetries of power that structure state-social relations in Nashik for the urban poor, compounding existing precarities related to income poverty and labour. Motilal and his family’s experiences also represent a set of vulnerabilities exploited through biopolitical ‘counting’ processes and *enabled* by their fixed place of residence – in contrast to the barriers faced by migrants.

Sonal and her husband Ramu have four children and lived in Swa Babar slum settlement in

Nashik. Their elder daughter was training to work in a beauty parlour and the other children attended school. While Sonal and her husband are natives of Nashik, her husband himself was a migrant at the time of our interview, working in the city of Vapi in Gujarat as a contracted painter on construction sites. Ramu found work through a *thekedar* for 10-15 days per month. Sonal also engaged in *naka* labour occasionally in times of need but preferred to find domestic work through word of mouth. The household income, including their daughter's beauty parlour salary cost approximately Rs 8000 - insufficient to feed a household of six members according to Sonal. They were granted a BPL ration card when Ramu first applied a decade or so before, but since then have faced barriers of implementation.

“I tried to apply for my children's' names to be included in the ration card but the *dukandaar* said it's not necessary, I will not get it. The *dukandaar* just gives quotas to the *bhaiya lok* black market, those from UP. We get 5kg less in the rice ration and 10kg less in the wheat ration, than the original amount – the rest goes to the *bhaiya lok*”
(Sonia)

Nativist resentments towards inter-state migrants (from UP) are explicitly mentioned here, citing them as an indirect source of the vulnerability faced by Sonal's family while she also perhaps failed to recognise the fact that her own husband is an inter-state migrant. This also suggests the 'regionalist' and identity-based nature of Sonal's resentment - aligning with community-wide patterns of discrimination in Nashik. However, the resentment seems directed mainly toward the *dukaandaar* – the institutional representative in Sonal's PDS transactions. Sonal's *dhakkas* were experienced at her local Fair Price Shop (FPS) – on the frontlines of PDS implementation – rather than at her local NMC office suggesting a lack of awareness regarding official routes of access and accountability - though as seen in the findings these are not clear even within formal spaces due to internal practices of corruption, malpractice and unaccountable behaviours among local officials.

In Ahmedabad, native-born Pushpa had been married to her husband, also a native-born resident

for 15 years and they had two school-aged children. They lived in the Rampir No Tekro settlement, on the opposite end of the settlement to where the migrants described in Chapter Five are settled. She engaged in rag-picking work (earning on average between Rs, 150 and 200 daily) and her husband was a *naka* labourer though he intended to set up a small business. The family owned a semi-small pukka house in the slum and possessed an APL ration card which was only granted after they separated from Pushpa's in-laws as part of a joint household. Though Pushpa contributed financially to the household through a socially derided form of labour, she displayed a striking level of confidence and auto-didacticism. She took initiative to independently acquire knowledge of how to use her voice and hold authorities accountable. Pushpa described various *dhakkas* she faced in trying to obtain the new separate ration card at the AMC office, waiting for an average of 45 minutes each time she visited. In addition to the ration card subsidies, she estimated an additional Rs, 5000 were spent on grocery costs on a monthly basis for the household.

At the FPS itself, Pushpa recounted the multiple encounters she had experienced where she tried to complain about the under- or non-provision of adequate quotas and was only met with hostile language and treatment. "I said to him [the *dukandaar*] 'the government gives you this responsibility to answer to our questions, this is your job' but he only scolds me and never gives the ration on time." Pushpa expressed the desire to raise a Right to Information (RTI)⁹⁴ proceeding against the *dukandaar* to try and find out his quota records and see whether he is reporting them correctly but is not sure of the process. She explained she learnt about the RTI from "watching the news on the TV." This partial 'information failure' is an example of how the lack of knowledge and access in utility among the poor remains a barrier in spite of a progressive legislative framework aimed at empowering citizens to demand accountability, "we the local people who have a ration card never get the ration on time because the *dukandaar* sells the quota in the black market to the *bhaiya lok*."

⁹⁴ An application for access to public information in order to make appeals and redress grievances. A specific RTI mechanism is available under the PDS. See: <http://dfpd.nic.in/right-to-information.htm>

Like Sonal, Pushpa directed her resentments and grievances toward both institutions and inter-state migrants though her active efforts in using voice and agency to try and ‘rework’ if not resist (to use Katz’s framework, 2004) the institutionalised distribution of resources does not seem to be focused toward migrants. Pushpa represents an example of a relatively privileged and thus louder voice among the urban poor in Ahmedabad – her very cognisance of the specific types of barriers that make up local PDS structures can help empower her pursuit of accountability, though ultimately policy dissonances between RTI law and access (as well as practice, see: Roberts, 2010) help to further entrench structural barriers.

Paresh and his family also live in Rampir No Tekro. Paresh engaged in unskilled manual labour on a contract basis but had been out of work for two months due to illness. The household consists of six members including Paresh’s mother-in-law who was ill. They needed to correct multiple errors on their existing ration card and transfer the names of all their children onto it. However, attempts to address these issues had been met with *dhakkas* and rejections: “They are asking for a Rs, 1-2,500 bribe for a [correct] ration card” according to Paresh, although it is not clear whether he is referring to government officials or agents.

Paresh explained that whenever he tries to go to the office to ask for the ration card corrections he is told to return the next day. He stated that the age and names of his mother-in-law and his wife are mixed up, and there are various other mistakes and omissions on the card following a recent state-led update of the card. Paresh and his family are yet another family who have been adversely affected by Gujarat’s ration card overhaul, which failed in its aim to be innovative and improve access. The overhaul has also affected both local and intra-state migrants, as shown in the previous chapter. Paresh had a photocopy of his original (and accurate) ration card which he brought on his multiple visits to the NMC office: “I am going there [the office] many times but no response. If I go again and again, I am not getting a proper response from the government office. I just keep getting *dhakka* and I can’t keep taking time off work” (though in any case

Paresh had recently been out of work) – this situation describes a common barrier to access for labourers.

As a result of the incorrect ration card, the household was not able to fully access their ration entitlements. Paresh and his wife, Rani, insisted they are forced to make purchases not just for kerosene but also basic grains from the ‘black market.’ “Those who have BPL cards and don’t want or need to buy wheat, so the [market sellers] are buying it at a rate of Rs, 75 per 10 kilos and we are buying it from them at an inflated price of Rs, 120 per 10 kilos” (Rani). On average, the family made purchases each month from both the ‘black’ and the open market to meet their household consumption needs. According to Rani, “we are managing somehow each month, if we don’t have the money then we have to buy on credit.” The impacts of misallocation where BPL assigned families ‘do not use’ their quota, rather than migrants, are highlighted here. In addition, the use of social networks is also flagged - the grocer who lends to families on credit in times of crisis occupies a similar space to the FPS *dukandaars* further blurring the lines, in this case between ‘hostile’ and supportive behaviours practiced by actors.

In addition to Paresh, most of his family were engaged in some form of casual or manual labour, including child labour. A gendered division of labour was apparent as was the prioritisation of their one son’s education over that of the daughters.’ One daughter had dropped out of school and helped with household work and was a cook’s helper for events and occasions such as weddings, earning an average of Rs, 250 per day. The children were also involved in work with Rani as rag-pickers (waste collector) and collected firewood for household fuel. The girls earned roughly Rs, 20-50 per day. Paresh and Rani’s son did not work and attended a school run by a foundation and charges Rs, 100 per month. The youngest daughter had medical problems, but Paresh was not sure he could afford the full treatment advised by doctors at a private hospital. In such cases, he explained, a choice often had been made between food for the family and medical care for one member. The household financial situation was heavily compounded by the deep level of debt

Paresh was in, due to borrowing from local moneylenders charging exorbitant rates of interest. He could not ask his siblings as one brother has passed away and relations with the other are damaged due to conflict between their wives. Paresh also used loans to cover his brother's funeral costs – his brother was an influential figure in local politics and an important source of support while alive – as well as treatment for serious illness and to fix his household water supply. A combination of debt, illness and rupturing of close and significant kinship ties, intensify the vulnerabilities faced by Paresh and his family, who had entered into child labour, and further generational impacts of vulnerability, despite their local status in Ahmedabad. Their working and living conditions were further emphasised by their lack of access to adequate state resources.

Rahul and Seema also live in Rampir No Tekro slum settlement with their two children, a boy and a girl who both attended school. Rahul was a day labourer, usually on construction sites. His family was one of the many in Ahmedabad who were misallocated or delayed receiving updated ration cards in a 2013 overhaul of Gujarat's state-level PDS reform which included barcoded access and involved a poorly implemented update of ration cards. Their BPL card was replaced with an APL card stating they had an LPG connection, and thus denying them access to much needed kerosene. This is despite Rahul possessing an income certificate which entitles him to a BPL ration card, obtained at the AMC district collector's office. He reported paying a fee of Rs, 300 for the certificate. However, "until now, it has not had any use." Rahul described the extent of misallocation and nepotistic behaviour at the hands of local officials.

"Their [a neighbour's] annual income is below Rs, 36,000 and the government official recorded that they earned Rs, 40,000 instead. I asked for BPL card and they said it would cost Rs, 10,000. The government only helps those who are dominant and connected. The ration card is only given to favourite people" (Rahul).

This quotation clearly captures the 'unruly practices' of officials, in direct contravention of official rules for entitlements. While the 'personalised' form of targeting according to anti-migrant discrimination has been suggested in my findings on *dhakkas* encountered by migrants,

and in evidence from Mumbai (Abbas, 2016), the unscrupulous targeting methods here are attributed to nepotism toward ‘favourite’ people – indicating particular favoured social markers such as caste, as well as the propensity to comply with rent-seeking practices.

Rahul’s wife, Seema had applied three times for the corrected ration card and had made a photocopy of the original ration card to show bureaucrats the error regarding their lack of LPG connection. However, she was told it would cost them Rs, 2000 to rectify the mistake.

“I am going alone to the office to try and fix the problem because my husband needs to find work. I went last month, it was very crowded and busy in the office and nobody responded to me, no staff were there, only two people. Once in the past, a rude lady asked about the jewellery I was wearing. I go by walking because the bus fare is too much” (Seema)

There are various dimensions to the challenges faced in Seema’s encounters or ‘sightings’ with the government. Seema experienced personal insults as well as outright rejection of her claims for entitlement; her experience was highly gendered and there is an economic cost in terms of time spent at the NMC offices as well as the transport needed to travel there

6.3. Access to rations – frontline barriers

In this section, the focus is on barriers that are mainly experienced at the front-line of accessing the PDS – at the ration shops themselves. These are some of the more complex layer of barriers at the level of implementation influenced heavily by the arbiters of access including local governance actors and their co-opted agents working in both official and unofficial capacities (such as brokers and agents). Indicators for nutrition among the urban poor reflect conditions of deprivation and lack of access to resources through state – as well as social and economic – barriers.

Madhavi is a widow and native of Nashik. She lived in Siddharth Nagar, in a household of nine

members, but their ration card only reflects the names of four members of the household. It is a BPL ration card, but the family were still required to spend money at the open market to buy sufficient groceries to cover the needs of the large household.

“I need to buy from the open market - rice and wheat to supplement the rations. I purchase 30kg wheat and 10kg rice from the open market, and I get 5kg from the ration shop in the last month. At the open market, I think I spend about Rs. 20-25 per kg of wheat, Rs 25-40 per kg for rice depending on the price fluctuation. Vegetables are very expensive. We do not have enough for the family”

Madhavi did not acquire the ration card directly from the government offices but went through a local community member who she seems reluctant to identify as an ‘agent’ – ‘a neighbour helped to get the card, he is based here in the community itself.’

A neighbour, a woman of a similar age to Madhavi overhearing our conversation, chimed in:

“We get 5kg less [then entitled amount] in the rice, and they cut 10kg wheat from the original amount. I have made a complaint to the ration shop *dukandaar*, I made a complaint, but others should also talk and only then he will listen. What can I alone do? ...No, I don't buy [from the black market] because that is expensive, it's for the *bhaiya lok*”

The complainants’ description of treatment from *dukandaars* and the openly known diversion of grains toward the black-market centre on hostility, corruption and collusion with distributors and suppliers. Madhavi’s neighbour also highlighted the individualised, rather than collective, nature of complaints that are lodged against institutional actors and representatives. The direct impact of migrant’s lack of access to rations on local communities is clearly depicted in these findings. Shifting understandings and engagement with the black market are also shown in these interviews – where in Ahmedabad, the ‘black market’ is used by local as well as migrant residents, in Nashik it is clearly understood a recourse for inter-state migrants – though highlighting the burden it causes for local residents and also, through the high costs, those imposed on vulnerable labour

migrants.

Naia lived in the Swa Babar slum with her two sons and husband - they are all Nashik locals. Her two daughters were both married and lived separately. Her husband had an eye injury and did not work – Naia alluded to his alcohol dependence. The family possessed a BPL card, and the main earners in the household income were Naia and her son. The first few times I met with her, we attracted a crowd of her neighbours. Naia appeared to bicker constantly with her neighbours over matters such as where her son parked his two-wheeler vehicle. In our interviews, we frequently competed with loud and long quarrels among the neighbours, sometimes in the background and sometimes with Naia involved in the quarrels.

Naia showed the ration card to us - it included the names of herself, her husband, her father-in-law and the names of three children. It was not clear why the second daughter's name was not on the card. Naia claimed she did not remember the process of obtaining the card itself, explaining that her parents-in-law acquired the card and paid a nominal fee at the time. The family could obtain the correct amount of wheat and rice on their ration card. They sometimes obtained five litres of kerosene, but access was irregular. They had never received sugar and when they had asked the *dukandaar*, they were told they were ineligible. Otherwise, Naia spoke positively of her experience at the ration shop describing the service as cooperative. "Even when they are running short on grains, they give me at least a little amount of what they have." It does not seem to occur to her that the grains that fell under her quota may have been diverted surreptitiously. When asked about how often this happens, she says it is only every few months or so.

When the shortfall occurred, Naia made her monthly purchases from the nearby open market where she bought her fresh produce. She calculated that she needed to spend a significant additional amount on overall groceries: "We need at least 5kg more of grains from the ration shop" according to Naia. She cooked the household meals on a kerosene stove as they lacked a

gas connection. When they lacked access to kerosene they used firewood and cooked on a *chola* (open fire). Naia was reluctant to discuss purchases from the black market in front of her neighbours, as it was considered the preserve of socially derided inter-state migrants.

In Ahmedabad, Naresh, a semi-skilled labour who lives in Rampir No Tekro with his wife Harisha and grown children, also described the added financial and time burden of having to travel further to access the rations from his previous locality as in the Gujarat state overhaul of ration cards, his card was not linked to his current address. Their local *dukandaar* was not sympathetic to their situation and refused to provide them with rations. Harisha stated the cost of the rations were too high on the APL card and stated that to make things worse, the *dukandaars* administer rations inconsistently – on different dates every month - and the grain quality was unacceptable: “Normally it’s so bad you cannot even give to the cattle.”

6.4 Summary

The findings covered in this chapter suggest that a strong dichotomy between barriers to accessing the PDS does not hold for labour migrants and local labourers. Local labourers face a range of barriers at different levels regarding the PDS. However, they are situated at the lower end of the ‘spectrum’ I set out in Chapter One, as they fare relatively better in terms of access outcomes and processes. Local labourers can access strategies, assets and resources to help them cope with and ‘rework’ if not resist barriers (Katz, 2004) to access, making them less precarious than labour migrants in the cities of Ahmedabad and Nashik. Local labourers also have advantages in terms of being embedded within existing social networks in the city, familiarity with local and governance infrastructures and therefore are better equipped to use ‘mediation’ processes for access to state resources (Putnam, 2000; Berenschot, 2010). Within a ‘hostile’ urban environment, as outlined in Chapter Two, where competition for labour and resources define many of the struggles among poor communities and conflicts with elites and middle-class groups in the city, local labourers are not burdened with the ‘double disadvantage’ often faced by labour migrants.

The local labourers described in this chapter all show indicators of vulnerability: low-income status, precarious labour relations and conditions (though not in the worst forms), living in deprived slums and socially-embedded vulnerabilities (for example, related to gender or caste and religious identity). Like the labour migrants in Ahmedabad and Nashik, they also face multiple barriers to accessing state social protection including the PDS. They either lack access to the PDS by not having a ration card at all or, more commonly, possess a misallocated or outdated ration card. Access structures for urban poor overall, including local labourers, are distorted through corruption, collusion, confusion and misinformation and misallocations – some of these can be articulated as *dhakkas* from the state.

Barriers can be experienced at the level of design, in terms of aspects that universally affect poor and vulnerable households and individuals; though not to the same extent that they affect labour migrants. The barriers of implementation - such as the *dhakkas* and corruption – are more commonly described in the accounts shared by local labourers in Nashik and Ahmedabad. Also, as the labourers are all living at their fixed places of address, they are more likely to experience *dhakkas* from the ‘front-lines’ of PDS access structures and the FPS themselves where unscrupulous *dukandaars* can also manipulate and deny direct access to the subsidies themselves. The migrants themselves are referred to as a source of barriers to accessing PDS subsidies according to local labourers and their families, in both Nashik and Ahmedabad. The rare instances of any vague open hostility expressed toward migrants were mostly reported in relation to discussion of the ‘black market’ and diversion of quotas for ration holders. This highlights the mutually reinforcing factors which generate precarious and vulnerable conditions of all labourers, due to failures of governance – characterised as ‘state scarcity’ (Corbridge *et al.*, 2005) and divergences between policy and implementation.

However, local labourers are relatively more empowered than their migrant counterparts and experience more ‘sightings’ with the state. Local labourers can navigate informal routes to access

and deploy known agents to circumvent barriers to accessing the PDS. They can also tap into illicit markets, navigate the local open markets to assess and compare prices of goods and also use established relationships to borrow on credit in times of need. The relative advantage of local labourers is shown in their vocalisation of *dhakkas* and grievances – they are both cognisant of the barriers they face and relatively more equipped to try and mitigate or even overcome such barriers. These *dhakkas* themselves entail complex processes and outcomes – representative of both small forms of ‘reworking’ and even resistance strategies but ultimately within the confines of structure (Jessop, 2001).

Barriers to be access for local labourers feature in the governance contexts of both Ahmedabad and Nashik. In terms of improving the lives of the urban poor, and making development more inclusive, the living conditions and resources available on the slum settlements in both cities I observed can be represented as a fractal of inequalities and degrees of precariousness. The degree of access to resources and living conditions varied *within* the slums and among the slums themselves, as well as contrasting with formal and privileged spaces in the cities. These sites of exclusionary urbanisation, inequality and deprivation seem to stand in direct contravention of the national government JNNURM funds which both cities are beneficiaries of.

In Ahmedabad, a digital governance initiative designed to make the PDS inclusive and better targeted at those in need had been poorly implemented, as described in the findings of this chapter. Gujarat’s commitment to ‘e-governance’ (Jani, 2015) is fuelled by claims that technology can improve inclusion and social policies and resolve issues of corruption and inefficiency. However, this does not match up with the implementation chaos that emerges in the evidence from my fieldwork. These can be considered as barriers of *re-design*, where access mechanisms perpetuate barriers to access for both migrants and local workers despite so-called ‘progressive’ innovations. The redesign, aiming to make access more inclusive, adversely affected those who already possessed ration cards who were then forced to make purchases at the local black market, or

highly-priced open market to supplement misallocated cards and restricted rations. The governance failures with the ration card overhaul have been attributed to the rural-urban divide in local governance structures (KII with representative of Government of Gujarat, 2014) thus highlighting a confluence of urban and social inclusive governance failures.

Nashik is a smaller city, and ‘sightings’ between local labourers and the state seem to be more concentrated and common. Most people who were native to the city knew the location of the ‘CBS Court’ as the NMC office is known, but it is usually associated with practices of mediation, rent-seeking and generally a place where *dhakkas* frequently occurred. The local labourers, and also long-term migrants, living in Nashik were often unable to disentangle formal and informal actors in the NMC offices, thus suggesting both an asymmetry of information between elites and the urban poor, as well as the deeply entwined and collusive relationships between agents and government officials. The barriers to access here can be attributed mainly to traditional forms of rent-seeking and corrupt behaviours, and lack of accountability structures rather than unwieldy attempts to integrate service infrastructures through technology as in Ahmedabad, which can generate mixed outcomes for citizens (Masiero, 2016). ‘Unruly practices’ of corruption and mediation are also prevalent in Ahmedabad, as they are in Nashik however the ration card overhaul is seen to play a more significant role in distorting PDS distribution of access according to the findings.

7. MULTIDIMENSIONAL STRATEGIES TO OVERCOME BARRIERS

The preceding empirical chapters have focused on multiple vulnerabilities in the form of barriers experienced by migrants and local labourers. The findings also provide evidence that migrants, and the urban poor overall, do not passively experience these barriers. In recounting experiences of vulnerability, the participants also revealed narratives of active resilience and agency. Beyond the ‘sightings’ of the state and experiences of ‘*dhakkas*’ which themselves are complex examples of mutual processes of structure and agency (Giddens, 1984), this final empirical chapter sets out the economic, social and spatial strategies deployed by different groups within the urban poor – both migrant and local. Drawing from Katz’s (2004) framework of agency that is “disaggregated” (as described by Carswell and de Neve, 2013), the strategies deployed to mitigate the absence or inadequacy of PDS subsidies can be categorised as ‘coping.’ These include diversification of household resources or accessing illicit markets; and more active forms of ‘reworking’ through utilising social networks and engaging with ‘agents.’ Social capital remains a crucial factor across these strategies and, as described in the previous chapters, is generally more available to local rather than migrant groups, least accessible to those engaged in the most precarious and segregated forms of labour.

Chief among the strategies used specifically by migrants, are linkages maintained between their place of origin and the cities where they work. While migration itself is considered a strategy to overcome vulnerability (Stark and Bloom, 1985; Sabates-Wheeler and Waite, 2003), the barriers faced by urban migrants warrant further strategies of resilience and protection. The findings reveal that in the absence of local social networks and awareness, migrants of all types and durations actively engage in maintaining linkages with their place of origin. While this is an expected observation for seasonal migrants (Deshingkar and Farrington, 2009), the same held in my findings for long-term and long-distance inter-state migrants. In addition to splitting households between places of origin and destination, migrants traverse both sites regularly; remit money over extended periods of time; maintain economic and state assets (such as identity documents) and

express emotional and aspirational linkages where they locate future plans in their place of origin, or even beyond India, rather than their current cities of residence. These linkages shed light on the ‘self-exclusion’ practices and attitudes displayed by many long-term and household migrants who would theoretically benefit from cutting ties with their place of origin and applying for social protection access in their city of residence but remain unwilling, or unable, to do so.

In terms of strategies used at urban destinations - ration cards are also used strategically in ways that go beyond their intended utility. They are often informally used as forms of identification (MacAuslan, 2011), and as such, lack of access to ration cards can also lead to the loss of political voice for migrants as well as deprivation of entitlements. In turn, several identity documents not available to migrants in their destination are a baseline requirement for accessing a ration card. As a result, ‘document paucity’ among poor labourers, particularly migrants, can represent another barrier to access. In addition to accessing the PDS, the ration card can be used as a general identity card – it is highlighted it as often the most sought-after document among those who are poor and vulnerable and typically lack formal access to the state as it offers both entitlements and identity proof. Whilst formally linked to the PDS, the ration card has multiple informal purposes – granting access to medical care and banks, as well as proof of identity or citizenship to police and other authorities (Aashray, 2002; Sadiq, 2008).

This chapter reveals the ways in which the possession or absence of ration cards (and other documents) can be modulated to mitigate, or even overcome, barriers to accessing citizenship rights in addition to PDS entitlements. Returning to one of the sub-questions of this thesis – how the state has responded to structures and patterns of access for migrants - this chapter also makes brief reference to how individual actors and institutions within sub-national governments respond to the exclusionary characteristics and outcomes of policy design in the PDS. Both Maharashtra and Gujarat introduced state-wide schemes seeking to modernise the PDS and become more inclusive of migrants. These attempts have been unsuccessful and examining them can enable our

understanding of the relationship between institutional dynamics and the persistence of barriers.

This chapter will first present the strategies employed by the urban poor overall – both migrants and local labourers – to mitigate barriers to access, delineating the differences in strategies available to each group. These strategies are endogenous to urban structures, shaped by the socio-economic contexts of Ahmedabad or Nashik. The chapter then turns to strategies of linkage undertaken specifically by migrants, focusing on long-term and long-distance migrants. These linkages themselves represent a crucial strategy for migrants in overcoming lack of access to resources in their cities of destination. Threaded throughout each of these sections is how ‘responsive’ policy strategies adopted at state level (as introduced in Chapter One) designed to make PDS access more portable and inclusive, have impacted the lives of the urban poor, revealing the entrenched nature of barriers against migrants.

7.1. Strategies to overcome barriers to access

One of the ways in which both migrant and local households in Ahmedabad and Nashik strategise to overcome PDS barriers, either because of a lack of, misallocated or non-functioning card, is by diversifying their household expenditures. My empirical findings demonstrate ways that labourers employ micro-scale economising skills and use the open and/or ‘black market’ to make purchases in a way that allows them to manage in the absence of the PDS. In both cities, local residents claimed to be directly impacted by migrants who lack ration cards and thus generate demand for the ‘*black se*’ as the black market is known. *Dukandaars* are incentivised to divert subsidised grains and more commonly, kerosene, to the black market where those who lack ration cards, predominantly migrants, are forced to make purchases. This is one of a complex range of factors involved in the creation of the black market as cited in the literature. These factors include grain transportation leakages, quotas miscalculated at state level and open market fluctuations involved in the creation of the black market (Jha *et al.*, 2009; Saxena, 2011). For those who cannot afford to purchase, or even find supplies of kerosene on the open market, the black market is the only

option. Both kerosene and *chola* based cooking methods are deployed for economic efficiency in many households among the urban poor, in particular for migrant families.

Strategies for accessing credit vary according to different categories of migrants. Many migrant workers lack the necessary documents to open a bank account, although there are several participants among those who have been settled in Ahmedabad or Nashik who use their newly acquired Aadhaar cards to address this. The very nature of informal work undertaken by the ‘precariat’ is characterised by intermittent periods of work, due in part to micro-economic issues affecting the locality such as a strike in a particular sector, or personal economic shocks such as medical emergencies. Wages can also fluctuate each month depending on number of days’ work accumulated. In such times of shortage, almost all the migrant workers mentioned borrowing loans either from their employers or *thekedars*; or for more established migrants, borrowing from social networks and developing relationships with local *dukandaars* in order to build trust and purchase household items on credit in times of need. However, this is not an immediate option for recently arrived or temporary migrants, or those isolated from broader social networks such as those working in construction sites, as discussed in Chapter Four.

7.2. Local labourer strategies – household level

Most of the local labourers that I interviewed and surveyed did indeed possess a ration card, however they experienced barriers of implementation: they were either given an incorrect or insufficient allocation. The most common FPS aberration was the lack of subsidised cooking fuel and provision of sugar – the former more keenly felt in both states. While certain grains and food items can change in priority according to season and state culture (typical diets vary across India), cooking fuel is a consistent necessity but the commodity most prone to corruption and diversion within the PDS. In response, labourers and their families economise by diversifying cooking fuel, to ration the use of rations – a tautology which represents the inefficacy of the PDS and its barriers of implementation. In almost all cases, the rations are heavily supplemented with open market

purchases for essential household grains. Local households are sometimes also compelled to purchase kerosene from illicit markets.

In Ahmedabad, Rahul and Seema, local labourers who live in the Rampir No Tekro slum settlement use both a *chola* and gas stove in order to ration their kerosene use – one litre is typically used up within three days. According to Seema, one kilogram of wheat from the open market is Rs, 20, versus Rs, 7.50 under the PDS. The need to supplement costs of food from the open market can significantly impact on household expenditures, particularly during periods of unemployment. In the same slum settlement, Paresh, who was not working due to illness, explained that his family buy rice for approximately Rs, 40 per kilogram from either the black or open market - signifying the similarity (or Paresh's confusion) regarding both options. In times of financial shortage, they purchased from their local grocers on credit – an option which seems to be more widely available to locals in the city. Paresh borrowed money from friends or relatives in times of need (though specifically not moneylenders), to help out during times of hardship.

Local social ties are imperative for coping with barriers to access, generated through both economic and institutional factors for vulnerable households such as that of Fowzia's. Fowzia is a single mother living in the Chandhola slum in Ahmedabad whose abusive husband did not live with nor provide for her or their six children. This meant she could no longer access her in-laws' ration card (which was registered with her and the children's names).

“When there is no work in the rainy season, we buy food on credit from the provision store...[Now] my sister has a ration card and she helps me with rations. My in-laws had a APL card and got kerosene and wheat. My sister has APL and gets the same. My sister has six members in the household and is financially better off so can give me her rations. ...Sometimes the neighbours send me leftovers to eat and feed children and that is how we can manage.”

Fowzia's sister provided 20 kilograms of wheat and six litres of kerosene per month. Fowzia mainly used *chola* for everyday cooking but for guests, tea occasional use, she used the stove.

She did not have enough for the whole household of seven members to run for a month. Nevertheless, this redistribution of rations between family members and occasional support from members was vital for keeping Fowzia afloat in the absence of a ration card and would not have been possible without social capital.

In Nashik, several local labourers and their families, both with ration cards and without, resorted to the open and black markets to procure groceries. Naia who lived near Satpur was compelled to ‘top-up’ her subsidy with a significant portion of her household grocery needs. She also diversified her monthly household expenditures on groceries to accommodate both cash and resource shortages.

“[The ration] is not sufficient so that’s why I have to buy from open market - there should at least be an increase of five kg at least, or five litres is enough for the month - I don’t have an LPG connection and I use an open stove - when I don’t have enough oil, I use wood.”

Naia echoed many of her neighbours who possessed a ration card but did not feel it adequately supplemented their needs as a BPL household. By employing a variety of household-level strategies, Naia stated she could just barely manage the expenses but the risk of sliding further into poverty remained imminent.

7.3 Migrant strategies - household level

Strategies used in migrant households in the city are similar to those of local labourers. In Ahmedabad, migrant workers are typically compelled to make purchases in the black market as the residents lack access to an LPG connection and *chola* is not always possible if firewood cannot be easily obtained, particularly in dense urban spaces. Those with ration cards also created an additional layer in the black market, distributing even more limited resources among ordinary PDS claimants rather than at the level of official *dukandaars*, as described by intra-state migrant, Amir.

I buy kerosene from the black market here not only from the shopkeeper but in the neighbourhood from people who have ration card. I pay about Rs, 50 per litre. We use about five litres per month. The children benefit from the Midday Meal scheme at school” (Amir, intra-state household migrant)

Amir is a long-term migrant. At the time of our interview, he and his family had lived in deprived conditions in the city for his entire adult life due to ‘bivalent’ vulnerabilities – a conflation of social and economic factors (Fraser, 1997; Kabeer, 2000). However, he was able to undercut structural barriers, for example by illegally tapping electricity; diversifying livelihoods by maintaining livestock as assets and engaging in casual labour, as well as relying upon state resources such as the Midday Meal Scheme to feed his children. The black market and level of access within his locality, though inconsistent, could also be used to help cope with, to a limited extent, the high barriers Amir and his family experience.

Migrants also economise and strategise by using a combination of both the black and open markets for food and fuel. Bhavin, a labour migrant from Rajasthan, working and living in Ahmedabad on a long-term seasonal basis purchased kerosene from the black market. All other groceries in the city were purchased on the open market by default as his ration card remained with his family in his ‘home’ village. However even in Rajasthan, the family used the open market as a buffer during times of food shortages. Bhavin had been living in Ahmedabad for a number of years and despite family strife with his brother who also lived there, had established contacts in the city. In times of financial need he was able to borrow money from acquaintances and reported that he was always able to successfully repay such informal loans. Chitranjan and Purnita, another couple from Rajasthan living in Ahmedabad, maintained tight linkages with their families in Rajasthan, and relied upon them to help out with accessing subsidised grains. In terms of credit shortages in the city itself, they were able to draw upon the help of trusted neighbours in their slum settlement.

The availability of resources such as kerosene can be negated - as well as enabled – by information

on the ration card in ways other than through socio-economic category. As Rakesh, the young lone male migrant from Rajasthan living in Ahmedabad explained, one cannot access subsidised kerosene if their card shows they have an LPG connection in their household. Even if these circumstances are not accurate or if they have changed – the subsidy in practice is still denied. Mohan, another young lone male migrant living in Juhapura in Ahmedabad, relied upon his familial networks in the city to acquire kerosene on the black market for his cooking needs – his aunt purchased kerosene from her local black-market peddler on his behalf. His *thekedar* occasionally provided food for him though this was not on a fixed basis. Without the ration card, Mohan estimated he spends approximately Rs, 2000 a month on food and cooked it by himself – often regarded as the main challenge by lone male migrants such as Mohan and Rakesh.

In the Site One construction site in Nashik, labourers were also compelled to make purchases from the open market in lieu of PDS access. A common refrain among the participants here is the high cost of such goods both in comparison to PDS subsidies and also to the open market prices of their places of origin. The importance of social capital as a means of procuring financial capital during times of crisis is highlighted by intra-state migrants. *Naka* workers also struggle with expensive food costs in Nashik. Radhika is a young widow who lived with her in-laws in Swa Babar Nagar and her young baby. She underlined the importance of maintaining social networks within her local neighbourhood to access credit in times of need. Repayment of such loans is also vital to maintain this informal source of social protection according to Radhika, “When we don’t have money, we have to borrow money. [...] Yes, yes, we return it otherwise we won’t get it again.” The comparatively more ‘established’ intra-state migrant Ramesh, lives in the same neighbourhood as Radhika, and also experienced barriers in terms of food expenditure. According to his accounts, almost each day was characterised by some sense of ‘food insecurity.’

“Almost every day is like that... if there is no money, we just borrow from our neighbours. Cooperation is important - one who is very rich is not going to give you anything, but your neighbour will.”

Ramesh offers an incisive - and pithy – account of power and class relations at large, as well as within his neighbourhood in a Nashik slum. In certain cases, local communities can pool together resources despite their shared status below poverty line. Variation in income, household size, deprivation and access can be redistributed through such modalities. This example stands in sharp contrast to Amir’s world of a black market fuelled by deficits in PDS implementation -where barriers of implementation are reconfigured into new ones for certain community members.

7.4 Strategies in the city – the use of agents

The use of agents can be viewed as both a further barrier (and this is represented in the prior chapters focusing on structural and social barriers experienced by participants). However, in cases where opportunities to access entitlements are repeatedly thwarted, using agents strategically - by identifying those reputed to be trustworthy and those charging ‘reasonably’ priced fees – can serve as ‘reworking’ strategies to overcome barriers to the PDS and other state entitlements (Berenschot, 2010). Reddy and Haragopal (1985) refer to such agents as fixers who ‘lubricate’ state processes while also disseminating misinformation to exploit vulnerable groups (1985:1161). Agents represent a diverse market of enablers, ranging in fee costs, social ties and reliability. Some collude with the state – demonstrated by the fact that ‘agents’ can be found at the local municipal offices - making it difficult to parse between formality and informality even for local labourers and longer-term migrants who may be more familiar with local infrastructures.

Almost all the local labourers in both Ahmedabad and Nashik encountered agents, with varying outcomes. Some of the participants reported experiences (both direct and heard from others) with agents who ‘ran away’ after taking money, sometimes exorbitant amounts. However, others reported using agents, often embedded within their wider social networks, who provided a valuable service. In Nashik, the role of the urban and slum community leaders (*nega sevak*) figured often in accounts of overcoming barriers to access. Some were through informal means such as using an agent sanctioned by the *nega sevak*, and in others, through mobilising micro-

scale collective demands at formal institutions such as the local municipal office.

In Ahmedabad, corruption and chaos appear to be widespread when it comes to the experiences of the poor and vulnerable. Rahul and Seema obtained their previous ration card “four or five years ago” and explain they procured it through an agent for a fee of Rs, 200-250 and the provision of birth certificates and a light bill as proof of identity in order to “avoid all the *dhakka*.” They claimed the agents were not difficult to find as they were present in the AMC office itself. Overall, Rahul and Seema displayed extensive awareness of where the local municipal office was located and how to go about lodging a complaint. However like so many others, they have met with several *dhakkas*. As local residents they seemed more familiar with local community structures than their migrant counterparts.

Long-term migrants, particularly those who originate from within the given state, also describe the use of agents to overcome or mitigate access barriers. While for local labourers, agents are used to expedite bureaucratic processes, for migrants they offer a vital opportunity to circumvent the lack of proof for a fixed local abode. Vanitram, an intra-state migrant, described how a number of his neighbours in his slum who lacked ration cards collectively approached their *nega sevak* – who acted as a mediator. The group went to the NMC office, filled out the relevant forms and provided documents proving their fixed place of residence in application for a ration card. Vanitram and Laxmi estimate they had paid approximately Rs, 1000 to agents to acquire a household ration card. As described in Chapter Five, Vanitram considers using an agent as the only way to procure a ration card in the city.

In some cases, exorbitant fees charged by agents are paid in instalments by labourers and their families. Aariz and Alia are inter-state labour migrants from Maharashtra living in the Chandhola slum. They paid Rs, 3000 to an agent, along with other documents to procure a ration card. According to Aariz,

“There is no benefit in going to the government. Once you go to the government office they will ask you for more documents. I have plenty of documents but sometimes the officer asks for more and more documents. That’s why I’m not going there. I have not myself tried to go but I’ve heard from neighbours and others about this [...] so it’s just better to go through an agent. He will handle everything.”

It emerges that Aariz and Aalia developed this understanding based on secondary reports from neighbours and contacts, as well as their experience with the state prior to arriving in Nashik. They had never actually visited the municipal office in Ahmedabad though they are aware of where their nearest branch is located. Agents are widespread, embedded within local social networks and easy to encounter in the Chandhola slum, “we come to know them” (Aariz).

In Nashik, Heena and her husband are long-term intra-state migrants living in a slum settlement. They obtained their ration card but through an agent rather than through officials. They paid approximately Rs, 1000 for the ration card, in monthly instalments, after hearing about the agent from the local *dukandaar* stating this is the only way to achieve “direct action.” For Heena, and other intra-state migrant participants, the security offered by a ration card, both in terms of food security and as an identity documents warranted the high prices paid to acquire one in the absence of functioning formal routes.

7.5. Linkages as multilocal strategies for migrants – *ana aur jana hai*

The linkages maintained by migrants in the city and their ‘native’ homes can be categorised according to their quality and quantity. Table 7.1 below represents the quantity of one form of linkage reported by different groups of migrants – regular visits home. The qualitative interviews reveal the reasons behind these visits, ranging from seasonal livelihood and agricultural demands to family and social reasons, such as religious festivals or weddings. Marital and natal families; material assets; official documents and perhaps most strikingly, psychological attachments, are linked to the ‘native’ homes rather than in the cities where they lived and worked in the long-term

(and in some cases the entire adult life-course of migrant workers). This stands in contrast to the ‘waiting room’ or ‘prison’ tropes representing the village that emerge from Parry’s findings on long-term migrants in Chhattisgarh (2003). The constant flow of visits and upkeep of ‘translocal’ ties (Brickell and Datta, 2011) perhaps remove the tendency to preserve memories (Levitt, 2009) and imaginings of ‘home’ in unrealistic terms.

The idea of bifurcated residences, whether spatial or psychological, conforms to a binary conception of ‘home’ – an idea problematised however by evidence in the recent migration literature (Ahmed, 1999; Walsh, 2006; Datta, 2015). The experience shared by many of the migrants in both Nashik and Ahmedabad reconfigures conceptions of home and destination as integrated and reciprocal spaces rather than separate places. The term ‘multi-locational’ has been used broadly in the literature by Deshingkar and Farrington (2009) and others (cited in Rogaly and Thieme, 2012; McDowell and de Haan, 1997), mainly to describe circular and seasonal migration. However, these paradigms can fall short of capturing situations where long-term migrants tend to reside in their place of work for lengthy periods of time ‘returning’ annually or biannually for social reasons. This is encapsulated by long-term migrant Sumesh from UP, “*ana aur jana hai*” literally translated to ‘coming and going’ (in present tense thus denoting this process as continual).

Instability and insecurity are familiar ontologies for those who are poor and vulnerable and are further evidenced by the narratives of migrant lives that emerged in my findings. Many of the migrants I spoke with did not see themselves as permanently fixed in either place. For those long-term and medium-term migrants who were more vocal and teleological about how they envisioned their life trajectories; they see their native homes, or even beyond India, as their eventual ‘home’, rather than their current location. These findings provide insights into some of the practices and attitudes of ‘self-exclusion’ from ration card access among migrants – attributable to a combination of structural barriers, strategy and choice (Giddens, 1984; Jessop, 2001; Coe and

Jordhus-Lier, 2010).

Linkages are manifested in various forms and can create enmeshed milieus of both the city and ‘native’ homes for migrants. These forms include financial remittances; multilocal and shifting households according to the availability of livelihoods, schooling, care economies, health and safety or expenses; upkeep of material assets and state entitlements and identity documents such as the ration card.

Table 7.1: Proportion of migrants by frequency of visits home

Frequency of visiting home	Percentage of migrants
Once a month or more	10.3
Once per quarter (every 3 months)	21.3
Twice per year (every 6 months)	37.7
Annually	20.2
Less than once a year	4.6
Never	5.6
Total	100

The figures in Table 7.1 suggest that the migrants in my survey sample overall visited their homes regularly, according to their self-reported responses. Over a third (almost 38 percent) of migrants visit their homes twice a year on average, and the second highest proportion (21 percent) returned home on a quarterly basis. The figures represent an aggregate of both Nashik and Ahmedabad, across migrants of all duration types. Returning home of course represents just one aspect of linkages, a broader range of which are presented in the findings below.

7.5.1 Family linkages

Multiple types of linkages can be combined in the practices, attitudes and behaviours of long-term and medium-term migrants (between one and four years). For example, a split household usually entails financial linkages through remittances, sent by lone male migrants and in many cases, maintaining ration card resources in the native home rather than city of destination to

supplement resources for the main, often unemployed or under-employed, household back home.

Dipesh is from Gorakhpur in UP and lived with his brother in Nashik, in the Swa Babar Nagar slum. At the time of our interview, he had been based in the city for three years while the rest of his natal family remained in the village. Dipesh explained that visits and social ties with the place of origin were generally determined by one's family situation and marital status. He himself reported annual visits 'home', attributing the infrequency to the fact he was single, stating that married migrants tended to visit home more often. Dipesh maintained relatively limited contact in terms of financial linkages: he remitted on average a small amount of his wages (approximately Rs, 5000) to his family each year. This formed part of an overall contribution also remitted by his brother.

The conditions of urban labour can create gendered patterns of migration for inter-state migrants, particularly those from Bihar and UP (also reported by de Haan, 2004), belying an overarching sense of unease and lack of integration in the city. Dipesh explained that safety and economic constraints were key factors in such household scenarios.

“My brother is here, and he is married but left his wife in the village. I am getting married in a few months. I will leave my wife in the village. I will not bring her here, there is no good atmosphere here, we come back late night after finishing work and we have habit of drinking and anyone can go to anyone's house and it's not safe. [*But why not rent a room separately?*] It is not affordable.”

In this case, the linkages with 'home' are not entirely voluntary but allow individuals to strategically pursue livelihoods and 'maintain' family life (in both senses of the word – to continue practice and to fund). The stratification of labour and domestic spheres across a labourer's life-course is typical of many of the northern migrants I met in both Nashik and Ahmedabad. Narratives of the city as an intrinsically nefarious and risky environment for migrant women emerge from some of the lone male migrants, particularly from northern and eastern states in

counterpoint to existing ‘distress migration’ narratives in the literature (Mukherjee *et al.*, 1999; Breman, 2013). As discussed in Chapter Four, Aasif in the Site One site also described the additional economic burden of migrating with one’s family considering the cost differentials between Nashik and his home town in Bihar.

Dipesh also maintained strong ties with his native place through institutional means, in the absence of possessing proof of identity or access to entitlements in Nashik. For many of the migrants I spoke with, places of origin signify security in a literal sense of being free from physical dangers and threats: physical documents are considered prone to theft or damage in an urban setting. And also, in the sense of social security - the government has spatially fixed administrative and citizenship-based identity (and concomitant rights) with the place of origin, thus according to this logic, moving such documents could threaten the security of those rights. Dipesh harboured aspirations to migrate overseas for work and at the time of our interviews, had processed his passport application in the village in UP as he lacked proof of identity in Nashik.

“Because of security reasons and formalities, *I prefer to apply for passport from my native place* and my parents applied for it and got it from an agent on my behalf. The Aadhaar card was applied for from here and I also have a Pan card⁹⁵ but for security I applied passport from there”

However, Dipesh did not benefit from a ration card either in his native place or in Nashik with his brother’s family. In keeping with the findings on lone male migrants overall, the PDS is a low priority for mitigating household costs. The emphasis in the quote above [my own] highlights Dipesh’s spatial conception of security, emphasised further by the presence and involvement of his parents in the action described. Family-based and historical-spatial linkages are invoked here and indicate that the passport is a valued document for a single, aspirational migrant, more so than the ration card. Notably, Dipesh’s international aspirations do not seem to

⁹⁵ PAN card is a registration card for paying income tax, not typically used in the informal economy

be hampered by his impending marriage, suggesting a link between non-conformance to marital habitation norms and ‘freedom’ to pursue livelihood-based aspirations.

In Nashik’s Site One, Bhaskar, an intra-state migrant, was open about his outsider status, as highlighted in Chapter Four. Bhaskar was clear about his intentions to return home to Washim eventually, though he was not sure of when. When asked if he planned to acquire a ration card after working in Nashik for four years, his response captured his uncertainty:

“I am not sure about my residence here. I am not sure how long I will stay here and because of that I have not tried to get the ration card and there is no need to transfer these things [pause] I’m just not sure.”

The hesitancy is represented even in the way Bhaskar shared these future plans, perhaps emphasised because he was unmarried at the time, and represents both existential and livelihood-based drivers behind the spatial stratification of his current location and the native place to which his state entitlements are tethered. Bhaskar overcame the temporary barriers faced in access to the PDS by exercising strategic linkages with his natal family members at home. His brother used the ration card in his absence. Bhaskar arranged the ‘temporary’ situation with the local *dukandaar* – evidence of access to social capital and networks based on trust in his home village.

7.5.2. *Financial linkages*

Sumesh, introduced in Chapter Five, is another lone male migrant from UP living in Nashik though he lives with his sister and her family. He arrived as a teenager and at the time of our interview had been based in the city for over 20 years. Sumesh’s wife and two teenage children remain in UP in his home village where he owns a small piece of land. Sumesh described how he is continually “coming and going” between his home village and Nashik, every few months. Sumesh lacked a ration card both in Nashik and at home but he supplemented his wife’s and children’s costs by remitting some of his earnings – typically Rs, 6000 a month – regularly. He also claimed the crops grown on his small-hold also helped feed his family. Sumesh shared his

intentions of eventually migrating abroad, perhaps to Dubai where he had some contacts, which can explain his unwillingness to move his own (marital) family to Nashik with him, after being settled in the city with his natal family members for most of his adult life.

Medium-term migrants also show similar patterns of multilocal migration. Though Aasif, from Site One in Nashik, had his conjugal family living with him in his previous destination in Maharashtra, he sent them home to Bihar due to financial concerns. The purpose of migration itself can elicit the automatic need to sustain close linkages with both conjugal and natal families. As Aasif explained, “I send money home. My family at home needs money, and here I need money for maintenance and survival. I have to send [remittances] every month for the wife, baby and parents.” Like many labour migrants, Aasif’s future plans were dictated by labour availability rather than a clear long-term objective – he stated his plans to stay in Nashik as long as the work is available and will move next to “wherever there is work”. Nima and Atif, also from Bihar, planned to return ‘home’ eventually but according to Atif, “maybe just for 10 or 15 years. I will never return there permanently.” With their children enrolled in school in Nashik, the couple stated they were more interested in obtaining a ration card in Maharashtra, though they appeared to lack awareness that a fixed address, rather than their temporary abode in Site One was required for access.

In some cases, for longer-term migrants the financial situation can also pose a barrier to maintaining social and family linkages with the place of origin. According to Danan, a married male family migrant who originates from UP, and lived in the Jamfel Wadi slum settlement in Ahmedabad:

“If I want to go home, I have to plan in advance to save for travel and also to for the village to give to my parents. Occasionally I send money to my parents, about Rs, 2000, to my father’s bank account every few months [...] earlier there was a facility in LS Bank where if you put it in one account it can be deposited in anyone’s anywhere in India. Now the bank staff say you can only send with a bank ATM

card so since 2013 I had to send money through a colleague.”

As Danan’s experience shows, both access to financial institutions in the place of destination (and origin) as well as the ability to send money back home are obfuscated by spatial, governance and economic factors. The increasing scope of nationally imposed surveillance measures, mentioned in Chapter One, as exemplified by the trajectory of the Aadhaar card and increasingly tightened security measures for acquiring a sim card, has had a detrimental impact on all-India access portals. Along with rights and entitlements, access to credit and the private transfer of resources have also become biased toward sedentary norms. In place of formal mechanisms, remittances can also be facilitated through the linkages of other migrant community members through old-fashioned *hawala*-style⁹⁶ mechanisms. Interstate migrants in both Ahmedabad and Nashik reported putting money ‘in the hands of others’ to be transferred physically from place to place.

7.5.3. Resource-based linkages

Other forms of resource-based linkages emerge in my findings. Kavita and Manish, and some of their children migrated from Washim and work in Site One in Nashik. Their youngest children remained in their native home with Manish’s parents and they maintained use of a ration card there. They explained how they collected a bulk of rations whenever they returned to their home village, though the cost of travel is relatively high (Rs, 400 each way) so they strategically limit visits home to every few months and combined the purpose with social reasons when labour demands were low in Nashik. The transportation of PDS grains is a linkage-based strategy afforded to those migrants whose places of origin are relatively proximate and logistically easy to access from their destination – predominately intra-state and inter-state migrants, and for those in Ahmedabad, migrants from Rajasthan, particularly in the southern part of the state.

Chitranjan, a *naka* worker (introduced in Chapter Five) lived in Ahmedabad with his wife and

⁹⁶ *Hawala* refers to a traditional system of sending remittances, used widely in Arab countries and in South Asia. The money is paid to an agent who then instructs an associate in the destination country to pay the intended recipient.

young child. At the time of our interview, his ration card was still linked to his natal family's home in Rajasthan where he returned every two months for what he cited as social reasons – to visit family and partake in festivals or weddings – but also stocked up on subsidised grains to bring back to Ahmedabad. Chitranjan and his wife Purnita explained there is a differential of five rupees in grain costs and more substantial difference (Rs, 35) in the price of kerosene between their village in Udaipur and Ahmedabad. Reclaiming some of their entitlements helped to mitigate their barriers to access in the city. Chitranjan explained he travelled to Rajasthan on an inexpensive and commonly used bus route, covertly bringing the grains and kerosene in a bucket hidden among his bags.

Priya and her husband are long-term intra-district labour migrants from rural Ahmedabad who faced *dhakkas* in trying to acquire a ration card in the city for their family, similar to those described in Chapter Five. To help mitigate these barriers, they drew on family linkages to transport grains from their native ration card to Ahmedabad.

“My father-in-law was helping us out and when he came to visit us from the village he would the rations for us. Rice, wheat and so on. He took the local train, so it was only Rs, 200 as he paid the elder citizen discount. After he died, everything came on us.”

This practice came to an end following the death of Priya's father-in-law. Priya and her husband both worked long hours in the city and could not afford the time to make regular trips back to their village of origin. Priya's case highlights how multi-locational linkages, represented through family and transportation links, can provide an important source of relief for deficits and *dhakkas* faced even by long-term labour migrants in the city.

7.6 Documents as anchors and state strategies

As mentioned in previous chapters, state-wide measures have been introduced, and largely ignored, in both Gujarat and Maharashtra. One of the schemes that recognised how ‘document

paucity' affected seasonal migrants, was the Temporary Ration Card (TRC) scheme in Maharashtra. The TRC was a state response to national demands to include vulnerable persons in the BPL category, adapt to a multidimensional, rather than simply income-based definition of poverty and an attempt to hold governments accountable (Pande, 2008). The scheme came about through the confluence of 'judicial activism' under the Right to Food (RtF) movement (Ruparelia, 2013), NGO advocacy (exemplified by the Disha foundation in Nashik, and Mobile Crèches in Mumbai) and state-level government consultations. They resulted in a government resolution that recognises the very barriers discussed in Chapters Four and Five.

[A]s workers in the unorganised sector migrate in search of employment, do not reside in a fixed place and do not live in their native place, they do not have documentary proof, such as a birth registration certificate or a certificate for school enrolment for their children. It is also very difficult to get documentary proof on migration.⁹⁷

The resolution allowed for temporary ration cards to be issued to intra-state migrants. The proviso also allowed for flexibility on the migrants' part – if they wished to stay longer, the document duration could be extended (Borhade, 2007). The RtF committee ruled in favour of a state-wide temporary ration card scheme in 2001. Those who did not even have a ration card in their place of origin, were eligible for the 'pink' ration cards – temporary cards to access grains whilst in cities (field interviews with Mobile Crèches, 2013; and NMC District Collector (DC), February 2014). The gap in state implementation in this case became inhabited by NGOs such as the Disha Foundation in Nashik and Mobile Crèches in Mumbai. In Nashik, the NGO was able to help implement the TRC by building relations with a responsive District Collector, and acting as a mediator between state representatives, such as the Labour Commissioner, and beneficiaries (seasonal labour migrants). The intervention targeted small numbers: Disha was able to successfully mediate between state authorities and beneficiaries through legitimate processes,

⁹⁷ "Extract from the State Government Resolution 1000/G.R.399/2000/NP28 issued on 9 November 2000, for providing ration cards to migrant (temporary) and unorganised workers in urban areas. (Translated from Marathi) (as cited in Borhade, 2007: 13).

which led to the NMC's enactment of the resolution to administer cards for four months to a sample of seasonal migrants against their existing ration cards. Seasonal migrants were ordered to have their cards cancelled by the ration department when they departed for their areas of origin, in order to become eligible again for subsidised food grains in their home villages; the cards could be renewed upon each return to Nashik (Borhade, 2007: 14).

According to the DC of Nashik however, the introduction of such access innovations both in terms of expanding criteria and digitisation, ultimately failed in Nashik due to lack of information and promotion of the scheme among sub-district officials, as well as potential beneficiaries. The number of applicants for both the TRC and attempts at increasing the numbers of other documents such as birth certification in Nashik remained low.

“Migrant workers do not want to waste time getting ration cards, so the strategy is for the elderly to take the ration quota and stockpile and as per their convenience, they go and deliver to family or family goes back and access the grains.” (KII, with Nashik DC, February 2014).

The DC's perceptive view aligns very closely with the experiences shared in my own interactions with labour migrants in Nashik and Ahmedabad, though it fails to account for the 'time wasted' experiencing *dhakkas* at the hands of the state, often both in Nashik and in the place of origin.

In Gujarat, a KII with a representative from the state's Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Department revealed that a state-wide 'roaming ration card' system had initially been introduced as early as 2003 for intra-state migrants but to limited success. The programme was stopped after its initial phase of implementation in 2004. The failure was attributed mainly to the lack of technology involved in implementation. Information systems were managed on a district-wise basis and not shared, therefore when a claimant moved from one place to another within the state, authorities were not able to verify identity manually in a reliable manner (KII with official from Gujarat government, Gandhinagar, May 2014). The clash between policies designed to enable

portable rights and entitlements, lack of political will at local levels of government and limitations in bureaucratic and administrative infrastructures are exemplified in failure of the roaming ration card programme.

Another state response to appease demands for the right to food, and enable portability, among Gujarati citizens, was the introduction of a multi-level shared information system enabled by the use of barcoded ration cards (ibid). The programme aimed to enable the mobility of food grains within the state across district and sub-district levels. At the time of my fieldwork, approximately 85 percent of the new barcoded ration cards had been distributed (KII with Gujarat government, 2014). As described in the previous chapters, the process entailed an unwieldy system overhaul for both ration card claimants and sub-district bureaucrats and was characterised by chaos, error and inefficiency – leading to further barriers of implementation for local residents and intra-state migrants alike.

According to the representative in Gujarat, the long-term objective for this revised ration card system was to enable portability of access throughout the state so that grains can be accessed anywhere with the same ration card. At the time of the interview, the system was under review and the interviewee acknowledged significant challenges in implementing this in urban contexts, such as Ahmedabad. Cities lacked the necessary infrastructure, and the state government were unsure of which city authority should be delegated with card authentication duties. The impacts of this circuitous route of accountability and policy design were highlighted in the field observations from a municipal ‘zonal’ office in Ahmedabad, covered in Chapter Five, as well as in the experiences of research participants.

Not one of the migrants who I interviewed, or surveyed, had heard of the roaming ration card in Gujarat nor the TRC in Maharashtra. However, some migrants who have been settled in Ahmedabad for over five years and did not possess a ration card linked to place of origin

benefitted from the card overhaul when officials conducting door-to-door surveys captured new claimants as well as updating existing ration cards. Certain migrants, who had been settled a while in the city, were able to acquire a ration card in this way without showing documents and simply by filling out a form. The acquisition of the ration card in the system overhaul in some cases provided opportunities that enabled certain migrants to address their document paucity and obtain a voter card with which they opened a bank account in Ahmedabad.

For those whose lives were not changed by the state level strategies in Maharashtra or Gujarat, a combination of social networks and multi-locational strategies are used to mitigate challenges in the absence of a valid ration card. In the case of Rakesh, a young lone male migrant from Rajasthan working as an unskilled labourer in Ahmedabad, he had not yet been asked for proof of identity at the time of our meeting “No, no one has asked. The landlord is from UP and has the same issue as me, so she let it go as she knows the situation. I didn’t give anything or any photo or any such thing.” He had only just reached the age of eligibility for a voter card and kept his original documents at home; and photocopies with him in Ahmedabad. He was able to procure a sim card using his brother-in-law’s name. Networks are tapped to address gaps in proofs of identity and documents. Many use private medical facilities if in need and purchase sim cards in the names of their employers or any social contacts they have in the city. Those who originate from Rajasthan or within the state felt they could return home easily to access any documents if necessary.

Newer, or lesser earning, migrants generally tend to split their documents between home and destination bringing with them a photocopy of certain documents, particularly those who come from relatively shorter distances. In our discussions, many of the participants equated place of origin with security and permanence and thus kept important documents and established points of access to important facilities and services (e.g. bank account) in places of origin. Documents are maintained as ‘anchors’ to secure identities and link them to places of fixed address in the

eyes of the state. The prevailing sense of uncertainty about future residence, regardless of time spent at place of destination or distance travelled governs many of these decisions as illustrated below.

“Right now, I am living here as a labourer and I don’t know about the future and whether I will live here or go back and don’t know what will happen, might have to go back to the village. Mice might eat the documents, so we don’t keep any here, we keep it in the village” (Chitranjan, from Rajasthan).

Chitranjan and Purnita expressed a need for a ration card in Ahmedabad but initially did not wish to delete their name from their ‘native’ village, anchored by existing documents attached to that address, “we have a bank account in the village and Aadhaar card there too” (Chitranjan). They both lacked birth certificates, as did their children who were born in private hospitals. They had been asked for such documents at the point of enrolling their child at the local school. Both had voter cards attached to their native town where, according to Chitranjan “people are getting money for voting.” Chitranjan explained they are not asked for documents by their landlords as they themselves are of tribal caste – Rabari - and consider themselves ‘outsiders’. Many migrants stated they had not been asked for identity documents, usually due to living in proximity to other interstate migrants and paying rent to those who themselves who are considered migrants. The reciprocal support systems enabled by small ‘eco-systems’ of inter-network migrants is seen to a greater extent in Ahmedabad, where it appears there are more deeply embedded and broader networks of non-‘native’ communities than in newly urbanising Nashik. The findings also provide insights into some of the practices and attitudes of ‘self-exclusion’ from ration card access among migrants –attributable to a combination of structural barriers, strategy and choice.

Priya, a migrant in Ahmedabad kept all the family documents in her home village. Her birth certificate, her and her husband’s voter cards and her Secondary School Leaving Certificate (SSLC) were kept there: “Here we never lock the house and children are playing here so we don’t keep any important documents here.” Whenever documents are necessary, for example for getting

a sim card, she returned home to obtain relevant documents when necessary and then returned them on her next trip home. Priya used a photocopy of her ration card and her light bill to open a bank account and enrol her children in school. The ration card is still considered the most reliable and trustworthy document by both migrants and local labourers (in addition to the voter card) in terms of the entitlements it represents, as well as a reliable identity proof and Priya explained that her husband does not wish to cut their names from the village ration card.

Those who lack documents both in their native location and in Ahmedabad are among the most vulnerable in terms of 'document paucity' and lack of entitlements. Shivraj, from Banaras in UP who was introduced in Chapter Five, stated he would benefit greatly from public healthcare for his wife, Radha, pregnant at the time of our meeting, and sick child. Radha was keen to use state services for maternal healthcare but said she was unable to avail such services as 'an outsider'. Shivraj claimed he could not use his native voter card for proof of identity in Ahmedabad and gathered information from his neighbours that it would cost Rs, 500 to obtain a PAN card, almost five times the official fee (set by the government).

In Nashik, whilst most of the migrant workers at Site One construction site possessed at least one document – usually the voter card, or ration card linked to their home address – hardly any bring them to Nashik. If anything is brought, it is usually a 'xerox' of the original. Most of the inter-state migrants from UP and Bihar kept a xerox of their voter card with them and left their portfolio of documents in the village. Migrants with 'contested identities' such as lone males from West Bengal underline the importance of the birth certificate over the ration card. In place of the ration card, Zaarib (from West Bengal, Site One) relied upon his voter card as proof of identity – a document of heightened value for migrants. Migrants from West Bengal commonly face extensive questioning and screening from authorities who suspect they may be undocumented migrants from Bangladesh (Sadiq, 2008). The voter card is also useful for accessing healthcare, Zaarib insisted. Other than that, he regarded the birth certificate as the only other important

document, corroborating Reema's, a fellow West Bengal migrant at Site One, statement that they are all that is required for school enrolment, "that's the way it works in Bengal."

7.7 Summary

A number of strategies, ranging in their impact and sustainability are deployed by the urban poor overall, in overcoming or mitigating barriers to accessing the PDS. For migrants in particular, another category of 'translocal' or 'multi-locational' strategies are deployed through a variety of 'linkages.' The findings suggest that linkages are maintained by migrants due to a combination of agency and structural barriers - in line with Giddens' vision of structuration and further interpretations of the various dialectical configurations of structure and agency (Jessop, 2001; Katz, 2004; Coe and Jordhus-Lier, 2010; Carswell and de Neve, 2013).

Whilst Chapters Four to Six looked at the barriers faced by migrants and their non-migrant counterparts alike when it comes to access the state, their entitlements and the quality of resources; this chapter summarised various strategies undertaken by migrants to overcome the lack of access to the PDS. The findings show that both migrants and their non-migrant counterparts employ informal strategies, in order to confront barriers in different ways. Here, Katz's (2004) framework of the different degrees of agency in labour (resilience, reworking and resisting), is useful to map against the strategies undertaken by the labourers in Nashik and Ahmedabad. Migrants are seen to practice 'wilful' refusal of options to extricate themselves from home-based entitlements, either a 'self-exclusion' practice or an outcome over which migrants feel they have no control given their diversified livelihoods and households, multi-locational lives and mind-sets and the exclusionary and hostile set of barriers for labour migrants in urban destinations.

Most migrants are able to draw from translocal networks and live multilocal life-courses in order to supplement their lack of access to local entitlements, but this varies according to location

of origin and type of migration. Those who are seasonal migrants and move together with their core 'network' so to speak, such as Ashwani and his family in Uvarsad brick kiln (discussed in Chapter Four) have a mutually exclusive approach to multilocal strategies compared with those who are more settled in one place and draw reciprocally from multiple locations. Lone migrants, such as Sumesh from UP, can for example strategically diversify household expenditures across multiple locations, with elder family members or children who are 'left behind' in migration, continuing to use ration cards while the migrants themselves use the open and/or black markets in their place of destination. Strategies can be undertaken at the household level when multi-local linkages are maintained, due to self-exclusion choices or structural barriers. The durability and strength of such linkages are examples of 'positive' and 'negative' freedoms afforded by both structure and agency (de Haas, 2011) where policy design and implementation practice restrict the portability of rights and resources and where migrants strategically maintain linkages and 'self-exclude' themselves from rights and resources at their place of destination.

The findings suggest that the temporal and spatial scales of migration are not necessarily related to the degree of linkage maintained with the place of origin. Linkages between long-term migrants can be maintained in several forms: through family, financial dealings or administrative affairs or for the maintenance of assets and resources. Whilst integration theory would posit that migrants loosen their ties with the place of origin the longer they are settled in their place of destination (Portes & Zhou, 1993; Taylor 1999; de Haas, 2005), both whole-household migrants and those with split households show sustained patterns of engagement, both functional and social, with their place of origin.

8. FINAL CONCLUSIONS

This thesis aims to improve our understanding of internal migrants' access to formal social protection in urban destinations, by comparing migrants with their local counterparts. Both groups are engaged in low-paid labour and can be considered as vulnerable and poor. The research for this thesis took place in two cities representing high migrant-receiving states in India: Ahmedabad, in Gujarat and Nashik, in Maharashtra. By focusing on two sub-national states, I was able to examine the extent to which sub-national governance context - including the gap between policy and implementation – may impact the access structures and outcomes of internal migrants in a federalised national context. The PDS is used as an example through which patterns and structures of access are examined. As a nationwide and large-scale social protection programme jointly managed by central and sub-national governments, the programme enables insights into India's governance context with regard to social protection, inclusion and access for vulnerable groups such as internal migrants engaging in low-paid labour.

The theoretical framework of this thesis draws from the multi-disciplinary scholarship on vulnerability and precariousness, in relation to labour, migration and the combination of both. Without portability of social protection access migrants run the risk of heightened vulnerability in their place of destination, not necessarily offset by higher wages due to higher expenses and social disadvantages in urban contexts. The terms 'vulnerability' and 'precariousness' (or 'precarity') are used in this thesis to describe processes of poverty, exclusion and conditions of risk and uncertainty (Waite, 2009; Anderson, 2010; Ori and Sargeant, 2013). Though the terms are closely linked and overlap in many ways, the broader "structural production" and political and institutional context acknowledged in conceptions of precarity distinguish it subtly from the relatively "individualised" focus of vulnerability (Waite 2009: 421). The lack of access to a programme that can formally help to alleviate food insecurity, malnutrition and mitigate household expenses; and informally, ratify a person's citizenship status, their identity and

concomitant rights, can heighten the already ‘hyper-precarious’ conditions of labour migrant lives (Lewis *et al.*, 2014).

In this thesis I focus on the state-led attributes of precariousness, and how access to social protection structures plays a role in shaping the livelihood trajectories and outcomes of labour migrants. The federalised, and decentralised system of Indian governance can be prone to policy dissonance - gaps between design and implementation of policy as filtered through sub-national levels of government. While migration is constitutionally permitted, states, and other institutions enact a range of indirect or implicit movement controls including restricted access to social protection and anti-migrant city planning procedures. Strategies at the city level to prevent rural-urban migration are usually based on fears of overcrowding, slums and crime and spurred on by desire for cities to become investment-friendly centres (Bhagat, 2017). The targeting systems and access structures of social protection can also be used as a form of government control over migrants (MacAuslan, 2011), despite their eligibility as citizens who are poor and vulnerable. With India’s population (and urban migration) projected to increase (Bhagat, 2011) and increased state-led efforts to innovate and mobilise technology to improve social and governance outcomes (Sarkar, 2014), this thesis sheds light on the importance of designing accountable and portable social protection programmes in order to be progressive in a way that includes all citizens.

In this final chapter, I bring together the theory and evidence to present the core conclusions of this thesis. I revisit the main research questions and in summarising responses to these questions, I provide further insights and context on the main conclusions. I follow the framework of the loose and overlapping ‘spectrum’ of evidence that I introduced in Chapter One to organise my responses to the three research questions. I then examine the main points of comparison, and contrast, between the field-sites that represent two sub-national states in India in order to consolidate conclusions on the role of governance context in structuring access for labour migrants to the PDS, and other state resources and entitlements. Finally, the chapter acknowledges limitations and considerations of areas which can be expanded upon in further research and

identifies the main scholarly contributions of this thesis.

8.1 Summary of main findings

The first research question asks whether migrants fare worse than their local counterparts in accessing social protection in India. The findings show that while a strong dichotomy between the degree to which labour migrants and local labourers experience vulnerabilities does not hold and their experiences are distinct and variegated, certain categories of labour migrants face more intense forms of vulnerability overall and specifically in accessing the PDS. The evidence presented in Chapters Four to Six show that both migrants and local labourers who are poor face a range of barriers in accessing the PDS and state resources. The findings also confirm that different sets of access conditions exist for migrants and local labourers.

The second main finding is that labour migrants are diverse, and thus homogenising them according to categories of labour and wage amounts can be restrictive. As per multidimensional and capabilities-based approaches to understanding poverty and vulnerability – referenced in Chapter Two - a spectrum of vulnerabilities and of precariousness exists and can offer a useful analytical framework for understanding the intersectional and variegated experiences of labour migrants within India. Intersecting with spatial and temporal categories of labour migration, various nuanced and differential experiences exist depending on social identities such as caste, religion, ethnicity and gender as well socio-political factors such as regional background within India. In terms of lacking access to the PDS, the place of destination can affect the vulnerabilities of migrants in diverse ways. The impacts will be more pronounced among household migrants, particularly those with many young children, than for lone male migrants. As the different groups of migrants presented on my spectrum of evidence show: inter-state migrants' experiences of lacking access to the PDS in urban destinations can depend on their state of origin. It can either provide a stark contrast to well-resourced experiences in migrant home states, or a continuation of poorly implemented social protections in their home contexts. The gendered dimension of PDS barriers is also highlighted in the findings. The household unit of ration card entitlements does

not easily accommodate for the social realities of household patterns in India, particularly for women. Daughters-in-law are routinely excluded from the ration cards of the families they join as well as new children born into joint households. The process of separating ration cards for new families who migrate and leave their joint households with in-laws is difficult and prone to *dhakkas* from the state. Discriminations and *dhakkas* that emerge from barriers of implementation can also influence who is allocated a valid ration card according to certain religious and caste categories. Personalised discriminatory targeting replaces institutional systems of targeting in place for programmes such as the PDS. These examples demonstrate the ways in which gender, regional background, caste and religion can impact PDS access even within temporal and spatial categories of migrants, as well as among local labourers.

A third finding is that the role of the PDS is not only instrumental for food security but can have indirect impacts on broader conditions of health, safety and security for claimants. As a social protection programme, the PDS is designed to both promote food security and prevent food insecurity (Devereaux and Sabates-Wheeler, 2004). By focusing on resource – rather than cash – transfers, the programme can potentially alleviate the risk of malnutrition among poor households and ensure food security in households vulnerable to the prioritisation of non-food expenditure (for example, where the head of the household abuses alcohol). This was the premise of upholding the PDS as part of the Right to Food movement discussed in Chapter One. Going beyond food security, the PDS can also influence broader health impacts (Balhotra, 2002) and economic impacts (Jha *et al.*, 2009). In contexts such as the precarious sites of labour discussed in Chapter Four - where labour migrants face significant health risks; restricted access to health services; precarious wage payments and high costs incurred by debt, medical emergencies and high-cost urban food expenditures in the absence of a ration card - their economic and health-related vulnerabilities can increase. The findings on the vulnerable and precarious conditions in which labour migrants work and live, highlight the importance of PDS access in fulfilling its role as a social protection programme with potentially broad-ranging impacts (and conversely, the

negative impacts of lacking urban access to the programme).

The evidence also highlights the instrumental value of the ration card as an identity card - helping to address gaps in 'substantive' citizenship outcomes experienced among inter-state migrants, and to a lesser extent intra-state migrant and local labourers (Jayal, 2009; Abbas, 2016). The combination of contemporary security concerns and responsive 'biopolitics' (Sarkar, 2014) and historical prejudices against so-called 'illegal' international migrants from neighbouring countries (Sadiq, 2008) create precarious conditions for labourers from states such as West Bengal, particularly those who work in the nativist context of Maharashtra, where recent anti-migrant violence has also been seen in Nashik. Existing documents that constitute India's 'identity infrastructure' (Sadiq, 2008), including the ration card, are biased toward sedentary rather than migrant citizens. Despite new developments in identity documentation such as the Aadhaar card, migrants and local labours alike prioritised the value represented by ration cards. They are seen as intrinsically linked to identity and security and access to a range of social entitlements and services (such as financial services and mobile phone sim card purchases), that extend beyond their official remit.

The fourth main finding relates to the role of governance context in structuring and determining access for different types of labour migrants in comparison with local labourers. Both sedentary and labour migrants experience the outcomes of a hostile policy environment which yields adverse outcomes regarding social inclusion, social protection and constitutional rights for Indian citizens – regardless of class or movement within national borders. Migrants are delinked from access to social protection partly due to a dichotomy in governance attitudes. Policies are fractured along one stance that promotes social protection and improved targeting of the poor, and another stance which either disfavours or neglects migrants and their needs in terms of social protection. The implementation patterns of both types of policy can overlap to compound the vulnerability of poor migrants. This form of policy dissonance is exemplified at the highest level

in terms of divergences from India's constitutional rights, through to the government's departure in practice from its rights-based agenda promoted under the Congress-led government before 2014 and also filters down to the mediation and 'unruly' (Fraser, 1989 as cited in Kabeer, 2000) practices that characterise local government.

Overall, a dual policy attitude can be observed – one aspect is related to internal migration and another is related to social protection for the poor – these combine to create 'hyper-precarity' for migrants (Lewis *et al.*, 2014). In addition, the variegated nature of Indian citizenship also contributes to differentiated policy outcomes (Jayal, 2009; Abbas 2016). The absence of an explicit policy framework or accountable legal framework to formally protect migrant workers in India both fuels the 'distress' narrative and impedes any empowerment or development potential of migration itself. Ideas of governance as developed by Corbridge *et al.* (2005) and Chatterjee (2004) are articulated in this thesis through focusing on how strategic negotiations between the poor, migrants, and representatives of the state determines patterns and outcomes of access rather than policy norms. Despite the emergence of the rights-based movement and resultant legal reform, migrants remain excluded from both judicial and advocacy agendas. Migrants find themselves in a 'greyzone' of citizenship and must navigate and negotiate their entitlements – thus heightening and extending their precariousness and vulnerability.

In Ahmedabad, the policy dissonances which characterise its governance context are manifested in attempts to modernise 'governmentality' (Foucault, 1978) and "re-imagine" state-citizen relations (Sarkar, 2014: 516). The failure of attempts to make ration cards portable for intra-state migrants in 2003, and ongoing chaos incurred by the introduction of a barcoded ration card system during the time of my fieldwork were articulated in experiences of the PDS claimants themselves. Awareness of the roaming ration card system was nil among its intended 'beneficiaries' and many of the local labourers complained of system errors in terms of misallocated or inaccurate ration cards granted in the upheaval of introducing a new barcoded system and in general. Interviews

and observations of state representative at the municipal and state level in Ahmedabad and Gujarat showed that failures specific to urban governance, insufficient digital and communication infrastructures and incompetence had created a divergence between policy design, implementation and outcomes. Advancements in technology can therefore not achieve socially equitable outcomes without accountable systems in place and while spaces for ‘unruly practices’ remain. The widespread practices of patronage and mediation described in Berenschot’s study of Ahmedabad (2010) signal the need to ameliorate such practices with attempts to modernise governance. The emphasis on governance and policy shows that rhetoric, policy design and technology are not effective in isolation to address these issues but rather a concerted and collaborative effort through accountability measures and the recognition rather than contestation of vulnerable groups such as migrants.

In comparison, Nashik is a smaller but fast-growing city where socially inclusive and pro-migrant welfare governance has been dependent upon the agency of municipal individuals such as the District Collector at the time of my fieldwork and NGO organisations. This contrasted with Ahmedabad, where its vibrant civil society organisation appeared to be more focused on the labour aspect of migration rather than access to state provisions and welfare. The state of Maharashtra also introduced a Temporary Ration Card (TRC) scheme targeting intra-state migrants and aiming to improve inclusion for vulnerable groups – however the lack of incentives and awareness for implementing the programme, in a governance context embedded with systems of patronage (Deshpande *et al.*, 2017), inhibited policy outcomes.

As a rapidly urbanising city, the governance context of Nashik has exhibited relatively positive aspects for labourers such as conforming to legislative protections for vulnerable workers in sectors including construction, to an extent. When compared with Ahmedabad’s more ironclad sites of precarious labour, this can be seen more as an oversight of a ‘younger’ city less in thrall to large-scale neoliberal interests, rather than an intentional pro-worker policy. Evidence from

evaluation reports (YUVA, 2010) also suggest that the NMC had prioritised urban development over poverty alleviation and welfare despite JNNURM commitments, suggesting that the governance context is in a state of flux, as well as the city's development. During this period of extending its urbanisation, the city of Nashik appears to offer spaces for proactive agents and NGO assistance that co-exist along exclusionary practices, particularly for migrants.

Finally, in keeping with theorisations of the dialectical and reciprocal processes involved in structuration (Giddens, 1984; Jessop, 2001), the findings show that labour migrants and local labourers draw upon their own agency in various forms that can be articulated through Katz's (2004) framework of resilience, reworking and resistance. In Chapter Seven, I present evidence on various strategies undertaken by local labourers and migrants to overcome or mitigate access barriers. I argue that local labourers have more access to strategies, local resources and social networks in the city – thus making them marginally less vulnerable than labour migrants. However, labour migrants have access to distinct and geographically varied forms of agency. They strategically maintain linkages with their places of origin and deploy multilocal strategies to help 'cope with' or 'rework' barriers (Katz, 2004). The evidence highlights the 'false dichotomies' of rural versus urban livelihoods (Mosse *et al.*, 2005) and policy lessons can be drawn from the evidence in this thesis that both life-courses and livelihoods can be multi-local and 'trans-local' (Brickell and Datta, 2011) and there is a need for portable social protection rights to reflect this.

8.1.1. How do labour migrant experiences fare against their non-migrant counterparts in terms of access to the Public Distribution System?

As summarised above, both migrants and non-migrants experience barriers to PDS access, though a strong dichotomy does not hold. The findings from my sampling survey, as shown in Annex Four and Five show that ration card possession occurs across both groups, though not at the place of destination for migrants. Lack of access to the PDS can affect all groups in terms of food

security, compulsions to procure items such as kerosene on the local ‘black’ market, and the lack of support in household expenditures. Indirectly, a lack of PDS access can have long-lasting impacts on nutrition particularly for children in the most vulnerable households, including migrant households (not observable in my research but established in the literature). Local labourers also face various *dhakkas* in their experiences with the state when trying to resolve issues with their ration cards, or even when applying for access. However, local labourers have the strongest social networks within the cities of Nashik and Ahmedabad. They can establish trust with mediating agents, are often charged lower fees than their migrant counterparts and face lower risks of agents exploiting them by evading delivery of services.

However, for labour migrants in particular, the lack of PDS access also creates vulnerabilities that are specific to migrants in terms of legal security, poor ‘citizenship outcomes’ and identity (Abbas, 2016). The ration card is an essential document required for a broad range of citizenship rights and protections *in addition* to entitlements for mobile and migrant citizens who are away from their fixed and proven address. In conclusion, the findings show that while both migrants and their non-migrant counterparts fare poorly in terms of PDS access, the outcomes are distinct and more broad-ranging for migrants.

8.1.2. What are the structures and patterns of social protection access for different types of labour migrants and how are they affected?

Though the evidence shows that both poor labour migrants and poor local labourers are vulnerable, I argue that it also confirms the distinctive vulnerabilities and precarious conditions for different types of labour migrants. Furthermore, the evidence from labour migrants is not uniform and a diversity of precarious and vulnerable experiences are represented according to multiple intersecting factors including social identity, economic background, labour sector and relations and nature of migration itself. According to the loose spectrum of evidence that I present

in Chapter One, migrants working in precarious sites of labour such as remote construction sites and brick kilns can be considered among the most vulnerable. They are migrating to the city and working in urban industries yet unable to access resources, infrastructure, as well as services available in the city. This can be attributed to a combination of structural barriers related to urban governance – including the specific spatialisation of urban infrastructures and basic services - and exploitative labour markets and contract arrangements. These structures of access appear to be more deeply embedded in the larger and more developed city of Ahmedabad, than in Nashik. The second assemblage of labour migrants are loosely categorised as *naka* workers who are also vulnerable but face slightly less intensive barriers different patterns of PDS access can be observed. As long- and medium-term migrants, they are relatively more settled in their cities of destination and familiar with governance infrastructures, so they can try to apply for ration cards, or they are familiar with informal routes such as mediating agents who can procure ration card access, though for a high fee. Access conditions and outcomes overall are more closely linked to the socio-economic backgrounds, type and duration of migration as this can dictate how migrants navigate general structural barriers to access, rather than to individual state context.

8.1.3. How do labour migrants and non-migrants respond to such structures and patterns of access? b) How can the state learn from these responses to improve access for migrants?

The findings show that neither labour migrants nor local labourers passively accept the multiple barriers they face in terms of accessing the PDS and other state resources. While a greater access to strategic options exist in Nashik and Ahmedabad for local labourers – hence their relatively lower positioning on the gradient of vulnerabilities and precariousness - labour migrants exercise agency in distinct and varied ways based on linkages actively maintained between their places of origin and destination. Despite a hostile policy environment at inter-state governance levels (Deshingkar and Farrington, 2009; KII with representative of Cabinet Secretariat of India, May 2014), labour migrants manage to navigate access structures to cope with and ‘rework’ barriers to state entitlements in a variety of ways. The various multilocal strategies of linkage are

influenced by the spatiality and temporality of migration but are individualised according to subjectivities such as personal aspirations, life paths and attachments (which entail practices of ‘self-exclusion’ from state entitlements at destination).

Both local labourers and labour migrants experience *dhakkas* in their sightings of the state, though local labourers appear to be more confident, vocal and active in these engagements than their migrant counterparts. However, migrant encounters with the state can either represent a continuum of ‘*dhakkas*’ and barriers or a rupture in access to state entitlements, sightings of the state and governance context depending on their state of origin as shown in the findings. Certain migrants compared their positive experiences of the PDS with the current situation in either Nashik or Ahmedabad, while others took for granted a broader sense of state failures and ‘state scarcity’ (Corbridge *et al.*, 2005).

Finally, the states of Gujarat and Maharashtra both attempted to develop ‘responsive’ approaches to limitations of PDS access for labour migrants – though this was restricted to intra-state migrants. However, at the time of fieldwork both interventions had failed and been cancelled. In Gujarat, characterised by an ambitious state project to modernise programme implementation and targeting through technology, the failures of this programme and flawed implementation of similar PDS initiatives at the time of fieldwork were attributed to gaps in technological infrastructures. In addition, a culture of patronage, rent-seeking behaviour, collusion with market forces and other forms of corruption pervade the governance context in Ahmedabad, and Gujarat overall (Dayal and Agarwal, 2005; Berenschot, 2010, KIIs with NGOs in Ahmedabad, 2014) which can also account for failures of implementation in pro-migrant access programmes. In Maharashtra, an active civil society platform for improving the rights of unorganised workers – which encompasses labour migrants – clashes with deeply embedded networks of patronage (KII with representative from Nashik Municipal Cooperation, 2014; Deshpande *et al.*, 2017). This context illuminates the failings of a state-wide scheme to improve access for intra-state migrants,

including in Nashik, though the flaws in the scheme's design itself were also highlighted in an interview with a district-level official. These 'responsive' strategies highlight the need to align governance incentives and objectives through mechanisms of accountability as well as robust infrastructures (such as computerised systems of access and targeting) at all levels of governance.

As discussed in Chapter One, the Aadhaar card and other e-governance initiatives that have been piloted across the country have generated highly controversial outcomes (and failures) in terms of accountability, transparency and enabling social inclusion through portable access (Ramanathan, 2010; Rao and Greenleaf, 2013; Khera, 2017). Though the Aadhaar card was hailed as a "key mechanism for addressing the knowledge asymmetry between the government and the governed," (Nilekani, 2008: 350), its legacy has unfolded in a less than celebratory way. Implementation became embroiled in highly political dynamics – Gujarat's ruling party at the time and the incumbent government, the BJP openly critiqued the 'unconstitutional' and invasive nature of the Aadhaar card, and in 2013, when I started my fieldwork, a Supreme Court ruling derailed the process of coverage.

The programme initially claimed to enable portability of access, thus potentially transforming access structures for migrant workers. However, at the time of fieldwork, both public and political responses were mixed, and the level of uptake to the new centrally mandated programme varied from state to state. Khera (2011) warned that linking the Aadhaar to programmes such as the PDS was not infallible to operational flaws and corruption/leakage in the 'last mile' of implementation and could indeed perpetuate existing inclusion/exclusion errors in the PDS. My findings from both Nashik and Ahmedabad do not suggest that the Aadhaar card had yet made a significant impact on the lives of migrants in terms of access to the PDS, and contemporary criticism from Khera (2017) argues that Aadhaar empowers the state rather than citizens. My findings also showed that the ration card is still considered one of the most reliable and trustworthy documents among the poor overall, particularly among migrants, in terms of the entitlements it represents

as well as a reliable proof of identity.

Considering these findings against the rise of digitalised access structures in ‘Digital India’⁹⁸, the findings of this thesis make an important contribution to the literature by highlighting the scope of need for accountable and inclusive innovations in making rights portable. The improvement of access conditions for all Indian citizens regardless of movement is necessary, given the inadequacy of state instruments for measuring and understanding migration; the scale of migration; the complex and highly mobile practices of labour migration itself and multitude of nuanced differentiations within groups of labour migrants and the ways in which they are vulnerable across different states in India.

8.2. A holistic ‘hostile policy environment’ for labour migrants

The enquiry underpinning this thesis is anchored in this paradox: the right for Indians to move and settle anywhere within the country, and the curtailments of their rights and entitlements as citizens if they do so. The heterogeneity of social protection outcomes in different states across an increasingly decentralised India further problematises access conditions for labourers who move across (and within) state boundaries. I selected two different states in Western India to try and identify how far specific state (and city) contexts influenced patterns and structures of PDS access and their impacts for labour migrants. The empirical findings show that migrants typically experience different social protection outcomes in terms of PDS access in their places of destination, compared with home states. The lack of portable access to state social protections such as the PDS means that migrants are at a disadvantage (Sabates-Wheeler and MacAuslan, 2007; MacAuslan, 2011). However, the differentiation of PDS experiences were highly nuanced and do not fall neatly along binary lines, defined by state boundaries. According to my findings,

⁹⁸ Nationwide campaign launched by Government of India in 2015 aiming to increase internet connectivity and make government services available online for citizens.

the “hostile policy environment” (Deshingkar and Farrington, 2009) described in the literature appears to be holistic in the sense that it is pervasive across all migrant-receiving states rather than more specific to one state than the other.

For those who migrate, the resulting negation of citizenship – through the denial of access to state resources - can have damaging impacts on an existing set of deprivations and vulnerabilities. When considering the PDS, citizenship rights related to food security are curtailed. Migration itself is often driven by the need to find livelihoods that will in turn contribute to household food security in the places of origin, for households left behind and when migrants return, as well as in the place of destination. Another right that is denied specifically in both Ahmedabad and Nashik, and cities across the rapidly urbanising landscape in India, is the ‘right to the city’. This is based on the idea that if poor and vulnerable migrants are compelled to leave the bleak prospects of their rural origins to help (literally) build new cities, they should be able to partake in the fruits of urban ‘progress’ and development (Harvey, 2003; Bhagat, 2017).

The limited success of both rural development schemes (such as the MRNEGS) in migrant-sending states (Khera, 2013; Imbert and Papp, 2015) and urban social development schemes (including the JNNURM) (Maringanti, 2012) have contributed to an overall ‘hostile policy environment’ for rural-to-urban migrants (Deshingkar and Farrington, 2009; Mitra, 2010). While both Gujarat and Maharashtra have employment protection laws in place for ‘unorganised workers’ (those engaged in the informal sector including migrants) my findings are aligned with the literature in indicating that implementation is weak (Srivastava and Sasikumar, 2003; Breman, 2013). However, in the realm of social protection, both states had introduced sub-national innovations in the early 2000s, designed to improve PDS access for intra-state migrants,⁹⁹ though neither were successful nor sustained.

⁹⁹ In the case of Gujarat, they continue to do so. The Gujarat Government’s Migration Card initiative was launched in 2015 to help track inter-state and intra-state migration of school-going children. More information found here: <http://niti.gov.in/best-practices/migration-card-and-migration-monitoring-software-tracking-and-educating-migrant>

The cities of Ahmedabad and Nashik were selected because they are located in states that are similar in terms of unorganised labour wage markets; composition of migrant stocks and flows and rate of urbanisation (Bhagat, 2011). The cities themselves are at contrasting levels of development and scale and reveal how barriers to access persist in both types of contexts. According to findings from key informant interviews, the failure of the roaming ration card scheme in Gujarat was attributed to weaknesses in infrastructure, such as the lack of technology and digital information systems, and lack of clear accountability in municipalities. In Maharashtra, awareness and action on the Temporary Ration Card scheme seemed the domain of NGOs rather than local bureaucrats who lacked both interest and awareness in promoting the scheme. The very implementation of the scheme in Nashik can be attributed to a mix of NGO action and the personalised, rather than institutionalised, support of the District Collector at the time of implementation.

The role of NGOs is prominent in both cities, in trying to address barriers to access for the urban poor overall and specifically for migrants. However, in line with the size and development of each city, Ahmedabad has a continuing legacy of a vast and rich network of civil society organisations (driven by specific historical and social factors such as ongoing social and environmental disasters), whereas this is not present in Nashik. However, small NGOs such as the Disha Foundation played a prominent role not only in grassroots movements to support labour migrants in areas such as access to the PDS, but also in stimulating interest in policy innovations, though this was not sustainable. Much of the innovation appetite for redesigning access to the PDS was generated at district level in Nashik at the time of fieldwork, in contrast to the broader scale of ‘transformation’ sought by the state of Gujarat. The governance and social context of Ahmedabad creates a specific landscape of encounters with the state – not only in terms of *dhakkas* with officials, engagement with agents and brokers but also in term of the city’s wide-reaching civil society sector. Such organisations work with both migrants specifically (such as Aajeevika Bureau) or as labour organisations (such as PRAYAS), capitalising on existing

and proximate *thekedar* relations such as those that run through the Rajasthan-Gujarat corridor. In comparison, the institutional and semi-institutional networks in place for vulnerable migrants in Nashik appear to be less robust. However, for labour migrants working in particularly vulnerable forms of labour – on construction sites and brick kilns – access to local social networks beyond one's contractor is limited in both city contexts.

Finally, another attribute of each state which formed the basis of the site selection was the level of 'nativist' discrimination. Despite Maharashtra's, and in particular Nashik's recent history of anti-migrant hostility, generated at both social and political levels, a significant finding was that migrant groups, particularly the longer-term and more settled migrants, did not vocalise any complaints or negative views on local populations. Such views were more overtly expressed by local communities in both Ahmedabad and Nashik. This implies that migrants who are longer-term and engaged in *naka* work, are more likely to use strategies to help their integration (for example refraining from expressing resentment and promoting social harmony) and face significant social, as well as structural barriers in the cities of Nashik and Ahmedabad. In Ahmedabad, the social tensions are predominantly divided along lines of religion (among other social factors) rather than overt nativism and as the findings showed, this played into the experiences of migrant as well as local labourers.

8.3. Considerations and research contributions

In this final section, I set out the considerations and limitations of this research, before presenting recommendations of how the themes of this thesis can be developed further in different directions. I conclude by setting out the main scholarly contributions of the research on which this thesis is based. In terms of research considerations and limitations: while the question of vulnerability is at the centre of this thesis, methodological constraints and my positionality as a researcher prohibited wider access to the most vulnerable groups, such as migrants from nomadic and tribal caste groups in urban settings, for extensive interview. Social aspects of vulnerability could also

be further probed. Though this thesis is preoccupied with discrimination of labour migrants at the hands of the state, this is bound up with social forces, as demonstrated in the case of long-held nativist politics in Maharashtra and other evidence on structure and agency presented in this thesis. However, a relative lack of explicit evidence on experiences of social discrimination emerged. These limitations can be placed in a broader context of power relations and trust within Indian society and in terms of insider/outsider research scenarios in developing country contexts overall (Mosse, 2005). The lack of self-reported evidence on social discrimination themselves can be seen as important evidence of the complex nature of integration strategies undertaken by migrants in nativist contexts and is a crucial consideration for further research in this area.

In terms of externalities, the research itself was conducted at what can be termed as a time of political upheaval, though within the framework of a functioning democracy. This was marked by a divided and contentious campaign atmosphere in the period foregrounding a national election. In the specific context of Ahmedabad, formerly governed by the elected Prime Minister who had been accused of fomenting violent inter-religious tensions in the city, this created a climate of suspicion and additional strategic social ‘masking’ among migrants and the urban poor overall when it came to interactions with ‘outsiders’ of any sort. Many participants made reference to the increased number of politicians visiting their slums or native villages and, in some cases, were primed to discuss their experiences of vulnerabilities and in others, suspicious of sharing information about their lives.

Another consideration arising from these contextual factors is how they locate my findings firmly within its temporal framework. The rights-based approach culminating in the Food Security Act, discussions on more inclusive polices (though limited in the area of migrant access), and the launch of the Aadhaar card which originally promised to make rights portable for all citizens, contributed to the inspiration behind this thesis. However many of these movements have dramatically changed course during and since the fieldwork was conducted. For example, the

Aadhaar card has shifted course from national state mandate to a reversal of this by the Supreme Court. The implementation of the programme has been chaotic, according to narratives both the literature and media, and most recently has been exposed as being vulnerable to the very corruption it was designed to eliminate.¹⁰⁰ Though recent proliferations in the area of e-governance provide potential directions for further research in access to social protection for vulnerable groups and the role of governance.

Further and additional directions in which the research in this thesis can be taken and developed, include an exploration of the role of civil society organisations in influencing the governance context, and addressing the barriers that labour migrants face. An ample and continually growing evidence base, to which this thesis hopes to contribute at least indirectly, from across cities in India illustrates the different ways in which the urban poor (including migrants) draw upon mediators and local leaders to exert influence in opening up access to basic entitlements and services. A focused study on interactions with labour migrant communities would also make a valuable contribution to this evidence base. Traditional forms of civil society governance in urban locales, such as NGOs and community-based organisations tend to fit with Chatterjee's description of 'political society', but do not fully represent the specificities of the Indian urban 'demos' (cf: Chatterjee, 2004; Harris, 2010; Mahadevia, 2010; Nijman, 2008; Berenschot, 2010). A focus on the experience of urban migrants interacting with civil society and labour organisations, would further enrich the findings of this thesis both in terms of understanding available strategies for labour migrants but also in terms of further understanding governance context in terms of unorganised labour and social protection.

In terms of continuing to broaden out the scholarship on internal migration; qualitative and multi-disciplinary explorations of the linkages between internal and international migration would

¹⁰⁰ 'Rs 500, 10 minutes, and you have access to billion Aadhaar details' *The Tribune*. January 4th, 2018. <http://www.tribuneindia.com/news/nation/rs-500-10-minutes-and-you-have-access-to-billion-aadhaar-details/523361.html>

provide worthwhile research endeavours in the context of India. Both vague aspirations and concrete plans for overseas migration were expressed by some of the labour migrants encountered in both Ahmedabad and Nashik, by men in their early 20s and in older age groups. Some of these migrants were already in the process of preparing their passport applications, while others alluded to future aspirations. This points to the potential for further research (invoked by King *et al.*, 2008) on the linkages between internal and international labour migration from India, and the dissonant roles and attitudes of the state regarding each form of migration.

In terms of access to social protection, the research in this thesis could be developed further by visiting contemporary debates on the effectiveness of resource transfer programmes versus cash transfer programmes – popular in Latin America. Debates within India have questioned the role cash transfers could play in India's welfare system. Direct Benefit Transfers (DBT)¹⁰¹ – linked to the Aadhaar card have been trialled in certain states under the Modi government and mark further efforts to digitalise India's social protection programmes. Going beyond the PDS to understand the impact of other food security and social protection schemes such as the Midday Meal Scheme for children, and MRNEGS public works schemes in rural areas for migration would also complement the findings of this thesis and take them further in expanding our understanding of migration and social protection in India. While studies on the inter-related impacts of such schemes exist, they are mainly restricted to quantitative approaches, and do not specifically focus on the impact on migrants. Beyond the specific case of India, the trend for studying the close reciprocal linkages between social protection approaches and precarious workers such as labour migrants have gained traction in the overall development and social and labour protection literatures (Sabates-Wheeler and Feldman, 2011; MacAuslan, 2011; Lewis *et al.*, 2014, Cheng *et al.*, 2014). Migration and social protection can potentially reduce vulnerability and precariousness and improve or protect livelihoods – they yet remain complex, lack consensus across practice and theory and yield multiple possibilities for further research.

¹⁰¹ See 'Direct Benefit Transfers': <https://dbtbharat.gov.in/>

Finally, my findings showed how both the impact and necessity of the PDS, as perceived the claimants themselves, changes over an individual's lifecycle. Transitioning from a child, to lone migrant, to household migrant and then to elder aged citizens based either in the place of origin or destination, can change the relationship to vulnerability and social protection. Both observations lend themselves to further and deeper enquiries into the temporality of how migrants experience barriers to access – already probed in the precariousness literature (Lewis *et al.*, 2014) to further understand broader temporal as well as spatial aspects of 'access-scapes' for social protection programmes as experienced by migrants.

Overall, this thesis contributes important findings in the relatively understudied area of internal migration in the context of the overall migration literature. It also focuses on the role of governance on vulnerability and precariousness experienced by labourers overall, and particularly among migrants. While narratives, and evidence, of the vulnerabilities faced by labour migration exist on a global scale, the literature review suggests there is comparatively less by way of qualitative evidence on how they compare with their sedentary counterparts in India. I present findings that indicate policies in India are biased toward sedentary populations and fracture citizenship along spatial lines. Considering India's governance context as democratic, its (former) focus on articulating and realising constitutional rights and lack of explicit restriction on internal movement (unlike its regional neighbour China, another large and populous country undergoing rapid urbanisation and with a contrasting governance context), this can be seen as a form of policy dissonance. Data gathered from fieldwork carried out among labourers themselves and policy officials provide a rich insight into how existing policy frameworks need to be made inclusive for both migrant and sedentary populations: through governance reform and a deeper understanding of internal migration patterns in the informal economy, as well as technological advances.

The thesis also provides insights into the nature of labour migration itself, both short-term and long-term and casts light on relatively understudied locations within India, such as Nashik. In

addition to households split between place of origin and destination; migrants travel back and forth regularly; remit money over long periods of time; maintain both economic and state assets (such as identity documents) and express emotional and aspirational linkages with their places of origin. Some migrants also express aspirations to migrate overseas – a pattern of migration behaviour in Asia established in the literature (Skeldon, 2006; King *et al.*, 2012). The other linkages are evidence of such aspirations and also shed light on the ‘self-exclusion’ practices and attitudes displayed by many long-term and household migrants who would theoretically benefit from cutting ties with their place of origin and applying for ration card access in their city of residence but are unwilling to do so. These findings contribute to debates which attribute migration processes and outcomes to either structure or agency, or a combination of both. They also prompt a revision of how we understand labour migration, blurring the divisions between ‘home’ and destination in a way that tends to be restricted to understandings of transnational migration, and opening up the ways in which we can think of citizenship, mobility and universal access to social protection.

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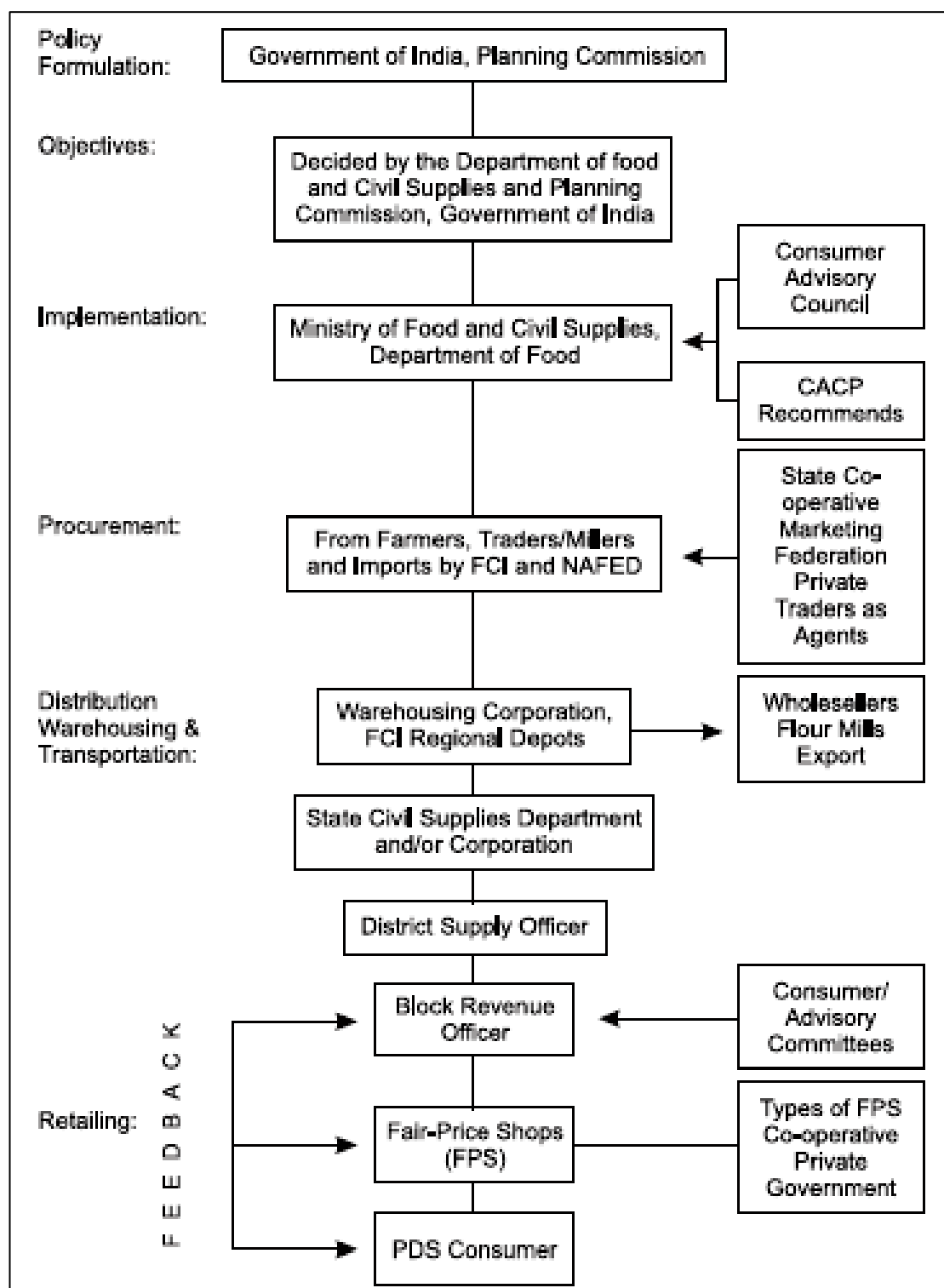
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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Operations of the Public Distribution System



Source: Rajagopalan, S. 2010. The role of targeted public distribution system and food stamps in promoting better access to food in poor households. In: Towards national nutrition security, Nutrition Foundation of India (NFI), Silver Jubilee Symposium, 29th November -1st December 2004, New Delhi. p.77

Appendix Two

Migrants' Access to PDS - Initial Sampling Survey

Serial No. _____
Date: _____
Location type: _____
Location name: _____
Researchers present: _____

Instructions:

- This survey is intended only for participants aged 18 years and up.
- This survey is intended only for Indian citizens.
- Shaded boxes are for migrants (intra-state, intra-district, inter-state) only.
- All instructions within survey are in **bold** and *italic*.

SECTION I. DEMOGRAPHIC

No.	Question	Response Choices	Code
1	Name		
2	Age	1 – 18-30 2 – 31-45 3 – 46–60 4 – 60 +	
3	Gender	1 – Male 2 - Female	
4(a)	Current Address		
4(b)	Contact number (optional)		
5	Religion <i>(If 2-4, skip to Qu.7)</i>	1 - Hindu 2 - Muslim 3 - Buddhist/Neo-Buddhist 4 - Christian 50 - Other	
6	If Hindu/Other, what is your caste/tribal status?	1 – UC 2 – SC 3 - ST 4 – OBC 5 – Don't know 50 – Other	

SECTION II. MIGRANT STATUS

No.	Question	Response choice	Code
7	When did you <u>first</u> arrive here to stay? <i>(If answer is 1 then go directly to <u>Qu.13</u>)</i>	1 – Native 2 – <1 year 3 – 1–4 years 4 – 5-9 years 5 – 10 years +	
8	Where did you stay before you came here?	1 – intra-district 2 – inter-district 3 – inter-state	
9	What type of place did you stay at before here?	1 – rural 2 – semi-urban 3 – urban 4 – mega-city	
10	Where were you born?	1 – intra-district 2 – inter-district 3 – inter-state	
11	Why did you leave your last place of residence?	1 – Livelihood 2 – Social/political pressure 3 – To join household 4 – Natural disaster 50 - Other	
12	Frequency of visiting native place	1 – ≥ Once a month 2 – Once every 3 months 3 – Once every 6 months 4 – Once a year 5 – Less than once a year 6 - Irregular 7 - Never	
13	Marital Status	1 – Single 2 – Married 3 – Widowed 4 – Divorced/separated	
14	Number of people in current household	1 – Single 2 – 2 members 3 – 3-5 members 4 – >5 members	
15	Number of working people in current household	1 – 1 2 – 2 3 – 3-5 4 - >5 members	
16	How long do you think you will stay here?	1 – More than one year 2 – One year 3 – Less than one year 4 – I don't know	

SECTION III. POVERTY ASSESSMENT

No.	Question	Response choices	Code
17	Education completed <i>(If answer is 3, skip to Qu. 19)</i>	1 – Up to Primary 2 – Up to Secondary 3 – Beyond Secondary 4 – Dropout from Primary 5– Dropout from Secondary 6 – None/illiterate	

18	If drop-out, why?	1 – Economic 2 – Social/family reasons 3 – Lack of interest 4 – Health 5 – Marriage 6- Migration 7 – Lack of access 50 – Other	
19	Name which amenities you have in your native place <i>(Please list all the items when you ask the respondent this question)</i>	1 – >One room per family 2 – Water source near premises 3 – Electric lighting 4 – Latrine on premises 5 – Land (up to 3 acres) 6 – Livestock 7 – Pukka house 8 – None 50 - Other	
20	Name which assets you have in your native place <i>(Please list all the items when you ask the respondent this question)</i>	1 – Vehicle 2 – >3 acres land 3 – Irrigated land 4 – Television 5 – Radio 6 – Electric/LPG cooking fuel 7 – None 50 – Other	
21	What type of house do you live in now ?	1 – Open space 2 – Squatter 3 – Kacha 4 – Semi-pukka 5 - Pukka 6 – Labourer camp 7 – Other	
22	House ownership status	1 – Rent 2 – Free 3 – Own	
23	What is your current average monthly entire household income?	In Rupees: 1 – >5,000 2 - 3,500–5,000 3 - 2,000-3,500 4 – <2,000 50 – Other/irregular	
24	On average, how many days per month do you and/or members of your household work?	1 – >25 days 2 – 20-25 days 3 – 15–20 days 4 – <15 days 50 – Other/irregular	
25	What was your household income before you arrived here? <i>(For migrants only)</i>	In Rupees: 1 – >5,000 2 - 3,500–5,000 3 - 2,000-3,500 4 – <2,000 50 – Other/irregular	

26	In the last 12 months, have you ever gone without a meal for one day or more? <i>(Please list all the options when you ask the respondent this question)</i>	1 – Many times 2 – Once/occasionally 3 – Don't know 4 – No	
27(a)	Do you have a ration card in your place of residence and/or native place? <i>(If 2, skip this question)</i>	1 – Yes 2 – No 3 – Formerly	
27(b)	If yes or formerly yes, what type?	1 – BPL 2 - APL 3 – Antyodya 50 – Other	

Appendix Three

Table 9.1: Breakdown of sample clusters in Ahmedabad, Gujarat

Site	Type	NUMBER	NOTES
Juhapura	Naka	14	Predominantly Muslim – historically linked with social tensions
Akbar	Naka	14	
Gurukul	Naka	11	
CMT	Naka	18	
Vasana	Naka	6	Predominantly Hindu – historical social tensions
Rampir No Tekro	Slum settlement	15	Mixed – both migrant and ‘local’ communities
Shastri Nagar	Slum settlement	5	
Chandhola	Slum settlement	16	One of the city’s largest slums
Jamfel Wadi	Slum settlement	12	
Jawarha Nagar	Slum settlement	11	
Site 2	Construction site	25	
Iqbal	Construction site	13	Located near Juhapura, predominantly Muslim area
Nagish Fashions in Chandhola slum	Small factory/warehouse	11	Semi- and unskilled labourers in the factory
Bavla	Brick kiln	7	
Uvarsad	Brick kiln	20	
Total		198	

Table 9.2: Breakdown of sample clusters in Nashik, Maharashtra (October 2013-January 2014)

Site	Type	Number	Notes
Sakal	Naka	16	
Pett	Naka	18	
Rana Pratap	Naka	25	
Gangapur I	Naka	9	
City 1	Construction site (large)	30	
Makhmalabar	Construction site (small)	11	
Manumay Mahar	Construction site (small)	5	
Gangapur II	Construction site (small)	10	
Siddha Puja	Construction site (small)	5	
Ramwadi	Temporary roadside settlement	4	Mostly nomadic or tribal status migrants
Swa Babar Nagar	Slum settlement	8	Mostly non-migrants
Siddarth Nagar	Slum settlement	5	Mostly non-migrants
Sant Kabir	Slum settlement	10	Mostly non-migrants
NDC Colony	Slum settlement	6	
Mangal Wadi	Slum settlement	8	
Kumbari	Temporary settlement	8	
Total		178	

Appendix Four- Local Labourers – Aggregate of Nashik and Ahmedabad

Based on data from sampling survey

Table 9.3: Age

Age Range	Frequency	Percentage
18-30	32	42.7
31-45	34	45.3
46-60	5	6.7
61+	4	5.3
Total	75	100.0

Table 9.4: Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Men	48	64
Women	27	36
Total	75	100

Table 9.5: Religion

Religion	Frequency	Percent
Hindu	49	65.3
Muslim	20	26.7
Buddhist	5	6.7
Christian	1	1.3
Total	75	100.0

Table 9.6: Caste

Caste	Frequency	Percent
n/a	20	26.7
Upper Caste	4	5.3
Scheduled Caste	12	16
Scheduled Tribe	18	24
OBC	18	24
Don't know	3	4
Total	75	100.0

Table 9.7: Education

Education	Frequency	Percent
Primary	5	6.7
Secondary	6	8.0
Beyond Secondary	1	1.3
Dropout - Primary	6	8.0
Dropout - Secondary	35	46.7
Illiterate	22	29.3
Total	75	100.0

Table 9.8: Housing status

House status	Frequency	Percent
Rented	20	26.6
Free ¹⁰²	8	10.7
Owned	47	62.7
Total	75	100

Table 9.9: Ration card possession

Ration card	Frequency	Percent
Yes	56	74.7
No	9	12.0
Formerly	10	13.3
Total	75	100

¹⁰² For example, provided by employer or squatter status

Appendix Five - Labour migrants – Aggregate of Nashik and Ahmedabad

Based on data from sampling survey

Table 9.10 Age

Age Range	Frequency	Percentage
18-30	157	52.2
31-45	105	34.9
46-60	32	10.6
61+	7	2.3
Total	301	100.0

Table 9.11: Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Men	229	76
Women	72	24
Total	301	100

Table 9.12: Religion

Religion	Frequency	Percent
Hindu	241	80.1
Muslim	46	15.3
Buddhist	13	4.3
Christian	1	.3
Total	301	100.0

Table 9.13: Caste

Caste	Frequency	Percent
n/a	43	14.3
Upper Caste	29	9.6
Scheduled Caste	82	27.2
Scheduled Tribe	74	24.6
OBC	42	14.0
Don't know	31	10.3
Total	9	100.0

Table 9.14: Education

Education	Frequency	Percent
Primary	25	8.3
Secondary	36	12.0
Beyond Secondary	7	2.3
Dropout - Primary	33	11.0
Dropout - Secondary	78	25.9
Illiterate	122	40.5
Total	301	100.0

Table 9.15: Housing Status

House status	Frequency	Percent
Rented	131	43.5
Free	118	39.2
Owned	52	17.3
Total	301	100

Table 9.16: Ration card possession (at home or in destination)

Ration card	Frequency	Percent
Yes	251	83.4
No	47	15.6
Formerly	3	1.0
Total	301	100.0

Table 9.17: Duration of migration

Duration of migration	Frequency	Percent
<1 year	55	14.6
2-4y	81	21.5
5-9y	48	12.8
10y+	117	31.1
Total	301	100.0

Table 9.18: Type of migrant

Type of migrant	Frequency	Percent
Intra-district	47	12.5
Intra-state	109	29.0
Inter-state	140	37.2
Total	296	100.0