Worth the While?
Time and Politics in Delhi

Lucy Dubochet

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Geneva, 26 March 2019

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Abstract

This thesis discusses how time and politics interact around basic services in two poor neighbourhoods of Delhi, India. It asks when do people deem it worthwhile to devote time to actions aimed at improving access to services. Its most original contributions stem from several apparent contradictions between findings from a survey conducted during the first weeks of fieldwork and the extensive ethnographic research that followed.

The survey's findings suggest that fewer people are taking action to obtain better services in places where political accountability is weak. They are also less likely to take action or engage in politics when disadvantages related to gender or other identity characteristics compromise their claims.

On the contrary, the ethnographic evidence suggests that people are devoting long hours to negotiating with service providers and middlemen precisely where caste rivalries and land disputes undermine service delivery. It also shows that women do so more than men, and that a group of slum dwellers whose political rights are compromised embark on a long journey to cast their votes with no expectation of better services in return.

The analysis of these findings offers new insights into how time and other factors combine to enable or undermine demands for better services. It also provides evidence that people under-report the time and opportunity costs of having to wait for erratic service delivery. Similarly, ethnographic observations reveal many time-consuming involvements in the politics of basic service delivery that are not reported in the survey.

These contributions speak to debates spanning questions both of method and of substance across several disciplines. Insights about how people report their time, value it and behave within it, bring into dialogue 'quantitative time use research' and 'ethnographies of waiting'. More broadly, the behaviours described in the thesis bring a temporal perspective to questions raised by literature on everyday interactions with the state in India.

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Acronyms

AAP	Aam Admi Party
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
CSR	Corporate Social Accountability
GOD	Government of Delhi
GOI	Government of India
MLA	Member of Legislative Assembly
NDTV	New Delhi Television
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PUCL	People's Union for Civil Liberties
PUDR	People's Union for Democratic Rights
RSS	Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh
TOI	Times of India
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

Madanpur Khadar, people are queuing during the daily visit of the tanker-truck. Behind them, the new school is on the right, the gutted vestige of a real estate scam is on the left.

1   Introduction

We are in Madanpur Khadar on the south eastern periphery of Delhi, waiting for the tanker-truck that brings drinking water to about half of the area's 150,000 households.[1] It comes at 10AM, we have been told, but it is 10:30AM and the tanker-truck is not in sight.

'It won't come?' we ask three women who are sorting wheat on a porch.

'It might come, sometimes it comes at 11AM, sometimes it comes at 3PM'.

'How do you get to know?'

'We wait for the horn'.

'And if the horn does not blow?'

Some time passes; on the cot in front of the women, wheat is lifted, then spread out again.

'The woman in D-286, we ask her', says one of the three, her eyes on the yellow grain in front of her. It is clear from her demeanour that she does not think highly of that woman, whether this is because her neighbour is part of what is known here as the 'water mafia' or because of some other animosity in the lane. Some more time passes.

'And if the truck does not come?'

'We wait for the next day, and if it still does not come, we buy water. What else can we do?'

'You don't complain?'

At first none of the women react, then one of them looks up with a shrug: 'What's the point? No one listens'.

It is 10:45AM by the time the horn blows. Slowly, the three women straighten up. 'Meera',[2] one of them calls towards the open door in her back. The horn blows a second time, and then no more. The sound is deep and well audible in the lane, but it could easily be missed out on the busy market street two blocks away or even inside the house: it is the kind of sound one needs to be waiting for to hear. 'Oh Meera'.

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[1] Madanpur Khadar, 21.10.2016.

[2] All names and addresses changed. See chapter 2, p.53.

The three women stand up, gather a couple of buckets each and start walking down the lane towards that sound a moment ago. Soon, Meera, who might be seven years old, catches up with us and walks ahead, her empty bucket dangling along her right-hand side. The flow of people grows as we turn right into a larger lane, past a derelict park where a few men squat amidst the litter betting on cards, past a public toilet until we reach the spot where some 40 people, most of them women, have gathered in a bulky but quiet crowd around the three taps that run from the back of a tanker-truck. For some 30 minutes, people are coming with more buckets, often the same person comes twice, sometimes three times. Then a boy closes the taps, a woman comes running with her two empty buckets, fumbles around the tap, but is told off by another woman who stands in front of house D-286:

'Stop it. Not after they close the tap, you are slowing down the driver. Just come earlier tomorrow'. Her voice softens as she adds: 'Try it in block B'.

A few days later, inside her house D-286, Rama Kumari shows us a few numbers stored on her mobile phone: 'The tanker drivers. I call them if they don't come. If that doesn't work, I get in touch with the Member of Legislative Assembly's (MLA) helper'.[3]

In the past, the tanker-truck did not supply this part of Madanpur Khadar, Rama explains. She and some three other women had gone to fetch water in another block, when a man asked them why they walked all the way to fill their buckets. Could no one help them get supplies near their house? When they answered that they knew no one, he said he would arrange for supplies and asked them to form a committee. They were to let him know if the driver did not show up and ensure that there were no fights in the queue.

'He made us sign a paper and the next day the tanker-trucks started coming'.

The arrangement lasted for some time, but supplies were irregular. Eventually, Rama and her neighbours wrote to the MLA, who has since arranged for the tanker-trucks. Their next target is to get the drains cleaned regularly.

'I got a letter written and asked my neighbours to sign. Some agreed, others did not. You will always have some people who aren't happy. They say it isn't worth it, and when things start working out, they complain. Still, it has changed things to come together. It has changed us'.

This thesis explores situations such as the one above where time thickens around behaviours—because people are made to wait for unpredictable supplies, because they have to

[3] Madanpur Khadar, 25.10.2016.

choose between taking time out to lodge a complaint or getting together in collective protests. Situations such as these are common for residents of this neighbourhood and for countless other people across the world. In spite of this, there is much we do not know about the role of time in behaviours around basic services. What is the temporal cost of each of these options, and to what extent does this cost influence the decision to pursue one or the other? What in that temporal cost matters: is it merely the amount of time, the predictability?

As the scene above makes clear, the choices considered in this thesis take place in situations where resources are scarce, supplies irregular and information about them limited. How, then, do these constraints rooted in underlying issues of governance influence the way people behave within time, think and report about time? More broadly, the scene invites us to consider the kind of life trajectories that emerge from this juggling between heavy trade-offs. Why do some people, like Rama, progressively gain a know-how that allows them to navigate the networks of middlemen, politicians and bureaucrats who have a hand in delivering, selling or diverting public goods? What keeps others trapped in a state of waiting and rushing for irregular services, away from education and work?

My approach to the questions above is informed by two theoretical traditions rooted each in distinct methodological paradigms. The first, mainly quantitative tradition comprises economists and sociologists concerned with how individuals allocate their time.[4] It draws on time-use surveys to explore how everyday behaviours are shaped by gendered social institutions spanning the family, the workplace and the state. The second, dominantly qualitative tradition, has researchers in anthropology and related disciplines heeding Pierre Bourdieu's call that we should busy ourselves 'cataloguing and analysing all the behaviours associated with the exercise of power on people's time' (2000, 228). In this wider strand, a handful of studies have focused on waiting and power in everyday interactions with the state,[5] in enquiries that open onto a rich tradition concerned with the state in India.

I am not aware that the two traditions have met around the politics of time despite multiple examples of fertile 'conversations between economists and anthropologists' about other topics (Bardhan and Ray 2008). Between the two strands of research, therefore, is a gap circumscribed by what the strength of one tradition tells us about the limitations of the other.

In time-use research, the state is at most a thin framing condition for choices that primarily evolve around the workplace and the household.[6] In contrast, the nuanced ethnographic depiction of everyday interactions with the state reminds us of just how deeply and tangibly the state is

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[4] A few references ahead of the discussion in section 1.3 and 1.4: (Antonopoulos and Hirway 2009; Becker 1965; Bittman et al. 2003; Burchardt 2010; Gershuny, Bittman, and Brice 2005; Goodin et al. 2008).

[5] Again, a few entry points ahead of the discussion in section 1.1 and 1.2: (Auyero 2012; Bayart 2007; Corbridge 2004; Jeffrey 2010a; Schwartz 1975).

[6] For on enquiry, where this framing condition is studied at length: (Rice, Goodin, and Parpo 2006).

implicated in the lives of many people in India and beyond.[7] Seen from this perspective, the focus on work and the household appears to leave out an entire swath of behaviours, in which people interact with officials, wait at a counter, get involved in politics, or see their daily routines shaped by laws and administrative guidelines.

Ethnographic accounts of waiting describe how administrative practices turn people who approach the state into 'patients' (Auyero 2012). They depict the effects of unpredictable times on their behaviours (Corbridge et al. 2005; Helweg-Larsen and LoMonaco 2008; Larson 1987; Schaffer and Huang 1975). How, though, beyond these few sites of interaction, does time feature in behaviours and subjectivities around the state? What about gendered relations of power, whose understanding at the household level owes so much to time-use research? Should we not look beyond the scenes of male citizens interacting with male officials and political representatives found in much literature (Gupta 2012; Harriss 2005; Jeffrey and Lerche 2001; Witsoe 2013), and consider women's negotiations with providers of public water and food as the most ordinary interactions between citizens and the state?

More fundamentally, when economists observe that time is the 'currency of life' (Krueger et al. 2009) without which nothing else can be enjoyed (Zeckhauser 1973), they give us a good reason to focus on this aspect of poor people's everyday interactions with the state. To put it briefly ahead of the discussion in later sections, the 24 hours of a day are the one resource of which we all receive an equal share, but whose use reflects the many other inequalities that distinguish us. For a thesis focused on people who come to the state with few other resources and little money, it offers a helpful entry point into how they negotiate the many constraints that shape their behaviours.

The dialogue between the two anchor traditions above is also a dialogue between methods. Whereas time-use research draws on surveys of the largest available scale to explain choices of time allocation, research about time and power in everyday interactions with the state uses fine grained ethnographic observations. This thesis starts with a survey, which is complemented with official statistics. These quantitative markers are contrasted with extensive ethnographic evidence from research spanning the year 2016. This dialogue will often evolve around divergences—people's reporting about their time differs when answering survey questions and when answering in-depth interviews; it changes depending on the presence of family members or neighbours; and it diverges from my observations. Over and over again, we will find ourselves interrogating what these apparent contradictions say about the way people think about time and politics.

The research focuses on the two poor neighbourhoods of Madanpur Khadar and Sunder Nagri on the periphery of Delhi's National Capital Territory. The two share several common features. They are resettlement colonies built to host people forcibly evicted from central slums around which

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[7] Among other: (Corbridge et al. 2005; Fuller and Harriss 2009; Gupta 1995).

new slum clusters have emerged. They are areas where government services play a central role, and they are areas where grievances about these services abound.

Beyond these commonalities, however, Sunder Nagri has better services and a history of social mobilisation against corruption in the delivery chain. It is here Arvind Kejriwal founded *Parivartan* [change in Hindi], which from the mid-1990s onwards worked with residents to fight corruption in the delivery of basic services. The same Kejriwal eventually moved on to establish the *Aam Admi Party* (AAP) or party of the ordinary people, which in 2013 swept to power in Delhi. After the AAP's accession to power, several cadres of its government maintained direct connections with Sunder Nagri and some of the older residents still remembered the Chief Minister by his first name. In comparison, accountability was marred by conflicts and caste rivalries in Madanpur Khadar, where there was also no history of mobilisation against corruption.

The contrast is familiar to researchers concerned with the working of the state in India. One study (Mooij 1999) finds that in one region, the poor performance of the of the public food distribution programme combines with a political competition organised around caste patronages and citizen disillusion. This contrasts with another region where the delivery of public food is an important stake in political competition, and something citizens are vocal about. In Delhi, poor people are found to seek help from their political representatives when they face problems while accessing basic services, not just at the time of elections but also throughout the year (Chandhoke 2005; Harriss 2005). In another study about central India, the state's responsiveness to the needs of poor people is linked to a twofold relation of accountability rooted in political parties—horizontal to voters and vertical to a leadership committed to delivering basic services to the poor (Corbridge et al. 2005; Véron et al. 2006).

In light of these contributions, Sunder Nagri seems to cumulate relative advantages with its history of anti-corruption activism and its elective affinities with a political party that won elections based on the promise of delivering transparent services. On the contrary, Madanpur Khadar appears to cumulate disadvantages. Extrapolating, it seems likely that these elements tilt the balance towards demanding better services from the state for residents of Sunder Nagri, while tilting the balance against such initiatives for residents of Madanpur Khadar. From a merely pragmatic perspective, returns on the time spent complaining or organising in collective interventions are likely to be more substantial in Sunder Nagri than in Madanpur Khadar, and this is without even considering the factors that give people the capacity and the confidence to take on their representatives. Extrapolating further, we can expect a similar contrast between individuals more or less endowed with the resources, the know-how and the political connections that allow a person to activate institutional channels of accountability rooted in political parties. Women would be less likely to do so than men, minorities less than majority groups, individuals whose claims to citizenship are challenged less than anyone else.

However, this is not what I found. Still, findings from my survey roughly fit the expectations. More people did report having done something about services in Sunder Nagri than in Madanpur Khadar, more men did so than women and more Hindu residents than Muslim residents. When turning to ethnographic observations and interviews, the picture diverged on several counts.

First, it diverged with regard to location and political party. In Sunder Nagri, the AAP's new base of sympathisers was fledgling and disillusion ran high among former Parivartan members: 'I have enough time', said one of them, 'I just don't feel like it is worth it'.[8] In Madanpur Khadar, in contrast, people spent long hours in initiatives such as the water committees or in the meetings of a man whose yellow slips were said to help people solve their problems with shopkeepers of the subsidised food distribution system. These initiatives emerged precisely where parties failed to integrate accountability around basic services and did not feature in the survey.

Second, women spent a significant part of their day arguing with providers of services, forming committees and attending the meetings of middlemen. Most striking among these figures were several women from the Muslim minority who spent long hours establishing themselves as intermediaries between service providers and their neighbours despite facing the combined disadvantages of gender and religion in a polarised neighbourhood.

Just as striking, and this was the third unexpected finding, was the case of a group of slum dwellers in Madanpur Khadar who had migrated from villages near the border separating Bangladesh and the Indian state of Assam. They had no political rights in Delhi, and even their claims to citizenship were undermined by suspicions that they might be Bangladeshis. The only government basic service they used was drinking water from a faraway tap and the roads on which they carted the waste they collected and recycled for a living. In spite of this, many of them went back to Assam to cast their vote during elections, a trip for which just one way took three days and whose cost represented more than one month of income.

Why did these different people deem it worth their time to engage in these behaviours? Each of these cases seemed to challenge my starting hypothesis linking the willingness to demand better services from the state with the extent to which political parties promote accountable basic service delivery. The situation was such that a few months into fieldwork invalidating the hypothesis seemed like the right thing to do.

With some distance and the full set of findings at hand, I take a more nuanced stance. For all the disillusion, residents in Sunder Nagri knew more about what they could expect from the state and how they could go about obtaining it; they were more likely to report having approached their party representatives to complain about problems of basic service delivery than their peers in Madanpur Khadar, and men were more likely to have done so than women. Just as importantly, they

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[8] Sunder Nagri, 6.2.2016.

were more likely to identify these actions as worth reporting, which explains why they featured in the survey when informal complaints to service providers or involvements in water committees rose to prominence in ethnographic observations.

Nevertheless, the findings raise a series of questions. Why did people deem it worth to devote time to political parties that do not provide accountable service delivery? Why did women spend long hours negotiating with service providers or manning committees in spite of the many factors that collided to undermine their ability to demand better services from the state? Why did the Borderlanders care to vote? A series of chapters that revisit each one of these questions try to account for the contrasted picture that emerges from my findings. They depict forms of participation that are not rooted in the formal institutions of the democratic state, but in informal negotiations with middlemen, political representatives and sub-contracted service providers who have a hand in delivering and diverting services. We come across political parties that succeed in marshalling the time of a core section of sympathisers around religious and nationalist events. We see people for whom citizenship is a perpetual burden of proof compelled to make the long journey back to their villages at times of elections only to keep suspicion about their belonging to India in check.

This exploration casts a new light on the two central poles of my thesis: time and politics. The pattern of minimising that surfaces when contrasting my observations and people's answers will lead me to argue that their outlooks about time reflect their internalising the same constraints that shape their behaviours. Similarly, the fact that many low-key informal actions to improve basic service delivery are not reported by respondents will invite us to question the representation of politics and of the state in the outlooks of those who engage in it and in research about their behaviours.

With these remarks, however, the argument gets ahead of itself. Let me start by reviewing the two strands of literature in which the thesis finds a theoretical anchor. I make my way from an atemporal everyday state, to the politics of time, and from there through theories of temporal choices to the conception summarised by my starting question: is it worthwhile?

1.1 The State in Daily Life

In the opening scene, women are waiting for free public water delivered by a contracted tanker-driver. One of them is part of a water committee set up under the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities of a mega business conglomerate. These interactions evolve around a chain of water delivery so marred by corruption that many residents referred to it as the 'tanker mafia'. Later parts of the thesis come back to how time features in these behaviours, here though, let me draw loosely on the scene to ask: what does it tell us about interactions with the state in Madanpur Khadar and Sunder Nagri?

The question speaks to a wider body of literature, where the Indian state features not as a self-evident entity, but as a set of practices spread across multiple offices and desks. The reality of

the state at work should warn us against more theorising about a 'master concept', and instead encourage us to look at what it 'means and does for people', write Chris Fuller and John Harriss (2009, 10) in their introduction to a collection of essays entitled '*The Everyday State and Society in India*'. For Akhil Gupta, the state is too profoundly 'implicated in the minute texture of everyday life' (1995, 375) to be neatly distinguishable from society, but it is nonetheless instituted as one identifiable whole through bureaucratic practices and malpractices.[9] The use of paper work has a way of defining relations between citizens and the state that, even in its diversity, is constitutive of the bureaucratic order. This remains true even in what remains 'illegible' (Das 2004b; Gupta 2012, 215) to citizens who cannot read its documents or predict the use officials make of these documents, and in what remains obscured to the state whose categories do not match the complexity of real life (Gupta 2016, 346; Scott 1998; Truelove 2018). Among citizens, discussions about the corrupt malpractices of the bureaucracy flesh out the perception of the 'state' (Gupta 1995).[10]

Though spread across multiple sites and practices, the state in the depictions above is still simpler than the one we see at work in the opening scene. In the literature just quoted, government officials are seen delivering public goods to citizens or diverting them through the practices and malpractices of bureaucratic governance. What about the situation, though, when a public resource is delivered by private sub-contracted drivers and when the last mile of the chain is managed by water committees set up with the support of a large private company's CSR funding? From the image of a bureaucracy at work, we arrive at the image of a state of private contractors, committees and strong men.

The civil side of this arrangement is part of a decentralising participatory shift meant to bring decisions about basic services closer to citizens. Doing so, the literature has argued, ensures that those who make decisions really know about local needs and exposes them to pressure for accountability (Bardhan 2002; Besley, Pande, and Rao 2005; Heller, Harilal, and Chaudhuri 2007). When combined with a partial privatisation of the delivery chain as is the case with Delhi's water and the tanker-trucks, it exemplifies one version of this model that its most influential champion, the World Bank, has depicted as means to 'make services work for the poor' (2004).

The opening scene is the ambivalent real-world realisation of this development paradigm where spaces of participation expand both the responsiveness of the state and the risk of capture (Bardhan 2002; Bardhan and Mookherjee 2006a; Véron et al. 2006). They are spaces that bring the state closer to citizens and where new practices of citizenship can emerge (Corbridge et al. 2005; Crook and Manor 1998; Jayal, Prakash, and Sharma 2007), yet they do so in a truncated often obscure way permeated by dynamics of gender, caste, and religion (Ban and Rao 2008; Besley et al. 2004;

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[9] Beyond India, for a few enquiries into this diverse, fragmented state that is nevertheless instituted as symbolic unity in discourses and practices: (Bayart 2009; Comaroff 1998; Ferguson and Gupta 2002; Joseph and Nugent 1994).

[10] On these everyday practices of corruption, see more broadly: (Parry 2000; Ruud 2000; Wade 1982).

Dutta 2012; Pai 1998). Along with new capacities and responsibilities, they also push onto citizens burdens that were once thought to befall service providers.

The murkier sides of this context of governance evoke another strand of literature that describes how informal processes of private accumulation can force the state to 'teeter on the brink of fiscal failure' (Harriss-White 1997, 21). In Barbara Harriss-White's depiction, the state is hollowed out by an informal nexus of politicians, officials, criminals, businessmen and their fixers 'bound together in a mutual protective embrace' (2003, 7). Out of these 'relations of accommodation, sabotage, corruption and fraud' (1997, 1) a 'shadow state' emerges (1997, 19, 2003, 89), which my respondents readily identified as the 'mafia'. To complete this political economy of scarcity, we can mention accounts of how over decades politicians and business elites such as those under whose guard Madanpur Khadar's water committees were set up have bonded through a series of negotiations that shaped India's development trajectory (Kohli 1989, 2007). Here too, the state appears weakened, caught as it is between the interests of this business elite and the necessity to deliver developmental goods to its electors. Citizen participation in collective action becomes a response to resource scarcity and a way to compensate for some of the state's failings.

In the lanes of Madanpur Khadar and Sunder Nagri, the political loomed large not just in such questions of resource distribution and electoral domination but also in everyday routines. As in other poor neighbourhoods of Delhi (Chandhoke 2005; Harriss 2005), residents overwhelmingly mentioned their political representatives when asked about who they approached for help. Here too, the legal and the illegal combined. On the one hand was the AAP, whose leaders came to politics with a history of mobilising poor citizens around accountable public services. On the other hand, was a self-proclaimed president of a 'party-that-never-wins'[11] in whose hands the same technologies of activism the AAP's leaders had used to document corruption became tools to document how he beat up providers.

Even these interactions, however, were a small minority compared to the many informal complaints and negotiations that could be observed at water points or in front of subsidised food shops. Day after day, users of these basic services argued with tanker-truck drivers or with the owner of a subsidised food shop. Compared to this 'pervasiveness of voice' (Schaffer and Lamb 1974, 79), interactions between citizens and bureaucrats (Gupta 2012, 2016) were rare. Even interactions with political representatives (Chandhoke 2005; Harriss 2005) were occasional. In Madanpur Khadar and Sunder Nagri, offices of bureaucrats were not the places where the state's implication in the everyday life of residents (Gupta 1995, 375) could be sighted. Occasionally, it could be witnessed in the small offices of local party workers or around the desk of the president of the 'party-that-never-wins'. Most of the time, however, interactions with the state occurred in front of house D-286 where a woman told another not to reopen a water tap because it would slow-down the sub-contracted driver who

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[11] Madanpur Khadar, 9.10.2016,

had just delivered water in his private truck. It played out a hundred meters down the lane in front of this iron shutter that opened too late and closed too soon where residents argued with a shopkeeper selling subsidised food under a system of license.

It might be that the bureaucracy really is more of a site of interaction with the state in rural areas such as those studied by Akhil Gupta, but I suspect that the difference between this state of bureaucrats and the state of sub-contracted workers and fixers in this thesis also points to a more fundamental difference of perspective. Within the literature quoted above, the state might not be taken for granted, its coherence might have to be looked for across scattered places and diverse practices, but it is nonetheless the point of gravity of the entire discussion. On the contrary, the diverse points of gravity for this thesis are residents of two poor neighbourhoods who meet the state in their everyday struggles to secure basic services.

By decentring the perspective on the state, I follow a shift that Stuart Corbridge and co-authors (2005) implement in their enquiry about how poor people in India 'see the state'. Going beyond what Akhil Gupta (1995) has done for narratives of corruption, they explore the interactions and rumours that define people's perception of the state. Veena Das and Deborah Poole (2004, 19) invite us to make one step further towards decentring the perspective in their writing about how people on the margins of the state negotiate the practices and institutions that this situation forces upon them. Taken to its extremes, this is an invitation to pay attention to how the state is made from its margins, not just in the narratives that constitute it in the imagination of those it governs (Gupta 1995), but also in the tactics they oppose to the state's ordering intent. It is an invitation to look at how such tactics prompt frontline officials to adapt their practices and ultimately define the real-world application of state institutions. Nowhere did this focus find a more striking echo than in the example of Madanpur Khadar's slum dwellers, for whom the ballot box became a space where they struggled to uphold their Indian citizenship. This struggle, in turn, influenced the contours of the human boundary delimiting Indians and foreigners, the nation and its 'other'.

From a focus on a state of bureaucrats, political representatives, private providers and middlemen, we decentre the perspective to look at how the state was being worked, endured, avoided or faked by residents of Madanpur Khadar and Sunder Nagri. The behaviours we come across evoke Partha Chatterjee's famous distinction between political and civil society. For him, the forms of associational life based on stable rights and ideas of equity we define as civil society apply to a small minority of well-off residents (Chatterjee 2001, 172). They do not describe the mobilisation of most other people who 'make their claims on government…, not within the framework of stable constitutionally defined rights and laws, but rather through temporary, contextual and unstable arrangements arrived at through direct political negotiations' (2008, 57). Those in 'political society' live in partial violation of the law as squatters and unauthorised users of public services, but they nevertheless demand 'welfare as a matter of rights' by coming together in political struggles (2001, 177, 2006, 40).

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While I will often refer to Chatterjee's emphasis on informal political practices, the situation in Madanpur Khadar and Sunder Nagri challenges his conception of two distinct domains that overlap with class differences.[12] Large parts of Madanpur Khadar and Sunder Nagri were authorised settlements built by the state to accommodate people forcefully evicted from centrally located slums. Its residents used forms of mobilisations akin to those of Chatterjee's political society, not because they lived in violation of the law, but because their power to invoke the law or other institutional means to hold service providers and politicians to account for poor services was limited. Nor were their strategies very different from residents in one of the unauthorised slum clusters nearby. Rather than two distinct domains, therefore, I find that Chatterjee's two notions help us conceive two different ways of making claims on the state, which often combine in the strategies of citizens. One of them is framed by the legal and administrative procedures of the state, the other is rooted in the informal practices of the state's 'shadow' of fixers, politicians and officials bound in a relation of accommodation and fraud (Harriss-White 1997, 1).

In Madanpur Khadar and Sunder Nagri, the progressive deployment of the rule of law met powerful eroding forces—new schools and hospitals neighboured gutted vestiges of real estate scams whose corroding influence ran deep into the politics of the area. Whether they wanted it or not, residents were on this frontline. When they wrote letters to complain about poor service delivery, protested, bribed or sought the help of a strong man, they became this frontline.

From a bureaucracy at work, we have come to a state being worked, endured and avoided by residents. One further aspect distinguishes my perspective on the state from much of the literature above, where women stand out for their absence. In rare cases where they are mentioned, they are said to face such constraints that their involvement in politics is curtailed. If we wish to know how women negotiate these constraints, we can turn to gendered literature about how structured collective mobilisations can emerge from women's livelihoods concerns (Kabeer, Sudarshan, and Milward 2013). Alternatively, we can draw on a body of studies about the impact of a new quota for women in local elected assemblies across India.[13] These provide precious insights into how a minority of women who are part of a structured collective or who make it into an elected seat can emerge as political agents, but they do not tell us how ordinary women negotiate with the state.

Far from the male or gender-neutral interactions with the state depicted in the literature above, I found that women, though less likely to reach out to political representatives or officials, were most likely to be arguing with service providers and turning to strong men, for the simple reason that they were usually the ones procuring in-kind goods from the state. In this encounter, male family

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[12] For similar reservations: (Jeffrey 2010a, 18).

[13] For a few entry points into a broader body of work: (Ban and Rao 2008; Besley et al. 2004; Chattopadhyay and Duflo 2004; Dutta 2012; Jayal 2006; Kudva 2003; Pai 1998).

members played an important role, but they were often one more layer in a shroud of intermediaries who had to be cajoled, tricked, or avoided while accessing services.

Along with gender, violence made its way into the answers and behaviours of my respondents, oddly ordinary yet at the same time strikingly hyperbolic. More than religion, more than caste, gender was the major social fault line along which everyday violence set in. Not that there were no communal tensions in Madanpur Khadar and Sunder Nagri, but actual outbreaks were not ordinary. This raised important questions that were not part of my initial interrogation: why did women speak about violence so openly, and how did this threat shape their temporal choices?

Summing up, the initial scene of women waiting for irregular water supplies became our guide through a tradition of research about the state in India. Moving through this anchor tradition, we came across a series of distinctions that help situate my approach. From the image of a bureaucracy at work, we have come to the image of a state that presents itself to poor citizens sometimes through its political representatives, but more often even through private contractors and middlemen. We decentred the perspective to look at how residents of Madanpur Khadar and Sunder Nagri approach this state by getting organised in committees or by arguing with service providers and middlemen. From the image of men interacting with male representatives, we broadened the focus to include women's everyday interactions with service providers and powerbrokers. The final shift that distinguishes my approach from the one above brings us back to question of time.

1.2 The Politics of Time

Time rarely figures in the research above. When it does, it is in passing as in Gupta's (2012, 9–11) observation about waiting at a pension camp: 'As a rule, the rank of an official is inversely related to punctuality'. Eventually, the official arrives, and we read about how an old man is turned down because 'by the time he reached the front' the official has moved on to the next applicant. The temporal reference opens onto a strand of studies focused on the relation between time and power revealed in this exchange.

The terms are perhaps most synthetically analysed in an older essay by Barry Schwartz, where waiting is described as a device through which a society 'prioritises whose needs are to be satisfied' (1975, 842). It is a reflection of power imbalances rooted in the unequal goods and skills people command. Because making other people wait is also, for the person who has the power to do so, a way to organise their behaviours in ways that suit his or her own interest, it also entrenches relations of power. Waiting times, in sum, reflect social stratifications, and they entrench them further—time and power become the two terms of a circular relation.

Several contributions since have detailed this relation. Javier Auyero, for example, has described how practices of frontline staff at a welfare office in Buenos Aires discipline people who have come to claim their benefits into being 'patients of the state' (2012). Temporary neglect and

postponements enter here a bureaucratic performance of power, which other studies have observed about unemployed people accross the world (Ozoliņa-Fitzgerald 2016), asylum seekers caught in prolonged immigration procedures (Haas 2017; Hyndman and Giles 2011), or prisoners suspected of being terrorists waiting in detention centres that lie outside all legislations (Bayart 2007, 269–71). Waiting, within these studies, is a salient feature of how people endowed with lesser resources or entitlements experience the state (Procupez 2015). It is the most ordinary symptom of how power permeates the practices of frontline officials, and it is a symptom of the multiple rules, regulations and normative framework whose overlaps and contradictions underlie these practices (Randeria 2007).

Studies on queues cast additional light on this politics of waiting. The queues, we are told, are 'moral geographies' (Corbridge 2004), in which behaviours reflect people's feeling of being treated fairly (Helweg-Larsen and LoMonaco 2008; Larson 1987). In their ideal form, ruled by transparent, neutral and predictable criteria, they create an order that suspends the competition for access between those standing in line (Schaffer and Lamb 1974). In reality, unpredictability, arbitrariness and the risk of losing access altogether often turn those waiting against each other and against frontline officials (Helweg-Larsen and LoMonaco 2008; Larson 1987; Schaffer and Huang 1975, 27). Inequalities of power are entrenched because people are denied the ability to make informed choices about whether or not to stay in the line (Schaffer and Huang 1975, 29). When pitting them in conflict against each other, they cement this relation of power by undermining their ability to come together and challenge the condition that keeps them waiting for unpredictable durations. With this last aspect, we touch on a broader question of collective action, which this thesis will revisit on multiple occasions: when can people extract themselves from this temporal alienation?

This question speaks to a much smaller body of studies where waiting, though associated with limited resources and power, is also a space of opportunities. In Craig Jeffrey's ethnography of educated young men in a town near Delhi, prolonged waiting is the condition of the lower middle classes who are affluent enough to afford it but lack the connections to break into urban job markets. To convey the feeling of limbo generated by this waiting, they use the term *'timepass'* and other expressions that convey a sense of uselessness (Jeffrey 2010a, 77–79, 2010b, 465),[14] The condition, however, also offers a space where new forms of activism sometimes across religion and caste boundaries can emerge. In this thesis, expressions evoking *timepass* and a sense of uselessness are echoed by much poorer, often illiterate Hindi-speaking women about situations where they wait at service points or engage in paid work, in a mirror across gendered boundaries whose meaning is interrogated in chapter six.

Arjun Appadurai offers a still more positive interpretation when describing the strategic patience of the poor as their best weapon. In a series of reflections about a movement of slum

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[14] On gender anxieties and the waiting of unemployed young men, among other: (Honwana 2012; Mains 2007).

dwellers in Mumbai, waiting becomes an opportunity to acquire an 'ability to aspire' (2004), which such people have had less opportunities to practice than better-off citizens because the freedom to dream, discuss and try out different 'pathways' towards a likeable future is not equally shared (2013, 188–89). Waiting, in sum, becomes a space where slum dwellers can come together around a common vision for the future, in a process of negotiation and consensus building that is nothing less than the development of a political claim. From Auyero's 'patients of the state' (2012) to Appadurai's 'patience as political strategy' (2001, 30), we have come a full circle that has taken us from temporal alienation to a political strategy of resistance and even emancipation.

I too will explore why people deem it worth their time to come together around collective aims. More than on the involvement in structured movement, interviews will direct us to focus on trajectories leading to them and on what remains of them when they fall apart. As was the case for the state in the previous section, decentring the focus away from the movement itself to look at how people behaved around this movement, I will not find a unified story of aspirations like the one told by Appadurai. Instead, I will try to understand both, how communities of involvement emerge and fall apart.

Around Madanpur Khadar's slum dwellers, lastly, I will ask: what happens when life is too precarious to leave any other object of strategic patience than the working body and its resistance in an environment that stacks all odds against patience? What are the consequences for people's temporal choices and imagination when the attachment to an idealised village of origin and the aspiration of a return are bound around this precarious present?

From an atemporal everyday state we have moved to the politics of waiting. We saw that waiting can be a symptom of alienation and that it can be a space of emancipation. And yet, for all the nuances, time in itself remains largely implicit in the literature above, embedded as it is in behaviours and power relations. Turning to how people think about time, we have finally arrived at the question of temporal choices, and at the point where the first strand of research that informs my thesis meets the second strand.

1.3 Time, Choices and Constraints

Gary Becker is a good place to start this review of research on temporal choices because he was among the first to call for including 'the cost of time on the same footing as other market goods' (1965, 49), and because his arguments offer an entry point into debates since. Becker's contribution is to apply a rational choice theory to domains that had so far remained on the margin of economic research (RSAS 1992). Choices of time allocation are for him a matter of maximising interests within a context of incomplete information. Along with money, time becomes an input into a bundle of commodities that contribute to the overall utility of a household. Care, paid work, unpaid work for

the household's own consumption—in the Beckerian household, such contributions to the overall wellbeing are divided between members so as to maximise returns.

In the early 'theory of the allocation of time' (Becker 1965), there is nothing but a complementary striving towards maximising wealth and wellbeing in a household conceived as a simple unit. Those endowed with marketable skills spend more time working, those less endowed with these skills focus on household chores. Becker himself would nuance this position in his later work on the family (1981), where the bargaining between members differently equipped to convert time into commodities is put forward. Nevertheless, the underlying assumption of a household understood as a coherent unit involved in maximising its own wellbeing remains.

Becker was a precursor in time-use research,[15] but for gendered research on the household his contribution was perhaps just as crucially to provide a counter model—in Nancy Folbre's words a 'theory of the misallocation of time' (2004). In time-use research, a series of studies have shown how household-level negotiations about sharing daily burdens of work, care and leisure are shaped and crosscut by social institutions that define how opportunities and resources are distributed not just in the household but also in society (Deding and Lausten 2011; Gershuny 2000; Sayer 2005; Sullivan and Gershuny 2001). To explain why women often choose to adapt or negotiate rather than leave a couple when faced with unequal work divisions, researchers have pointed to the institutions defining the fall-back positions of each family member, should the household break up (Gershuny, Bittman, and Brice 2005). Welfare regimes and labour markets become in these approaches framing conditions for interactions between family members. Elsewhere, we are presented evidence that 'gender trumps the money card' in figures suggesting that women who earn more than their male companions 'compensate with a more traditional division of household work' (Bittman et al. 2003).[16]

These debates about the nature of choices in time use research speak to a wider literature whose scope is too broad to consider beyond the aspects that help clarify my use of the words 'choices', 'behaviours', 'tactics' and 'strategies'. This literature outlines a middle ground between rational models of choices and structuralist accounts of the constraints and enablers that shape these choices, between the '"rational fools" and the "cultural dopes"' (Kabeer 2000, 16). It proposes a conception that leaves some scope for rational calculations about the costs and benefits of each option but acknowledges just how fundamentally this calculation is shaped by available resources, beliefs, emotions and habits. These aspects, furthermore, are underpinned by institutions—'formal laws and regulations, informal conventions, norms and self-imposed codes' (North 1995, 23)— spanning across the state, the workplace, the family and society.

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[15] Other economists of the household preceded Becker in writing about time (Mincer 1962), but none had a comparable influence.

[16] Also see: (Stalker 2014).

The same attempt to find a middle ground characterises Nancy Folbre's (1994) account of how intersecting inequalities of gender, class and race shape behaviours. For her, these identities combine to situate people in 'structures of constraint' made of asset distributions, political and cultural norms that foster allegiances to groups which compete to uphold their domination or to challenge the domination of others. In Naila Kabeer's reading, these structures assign people to a position in '"matrices of domination" in which the same individual may occupy a subordinate position as a member of certain social groups, but a dominant position in others' (2000, 31). A person's doing and his or her allegiances from this standpoint reflect preferences that are individual but shaped by constraints.

One could add to this overview of theoretical paradigms behavioural accounts of how adverse conditions can shape the outcomes of temporal choices in ways that can make them seem excessively costly to neutral observers. Scarcity, for example, is found there to affect the way we think, tunnelling the mind into a single focus, blurring away any other concern or long-term perspectives whether we are struggling with time scarcity, monetary poverty or food deprivation (Mullainathan and Shafir 2013). Elsewhere, we read about how long-term planning is compromised by the fact that accepting immediate hardship tends to be more difficult than accepting delayed hardships (Akerlof 2002; Banerjee and Mullainathan 2010). While none of these accounts contradict the approach adopted in this thesis, the emphasis differs between a behavioural focus on the 'heuristics' (Kahneman 2012, 109; Tversky and Kahneman 1974) of choices and the wider focus on how institutions and the distribution of resources they command can create the conditions of such adverse choices in the discussion to come.

One correlate of the discussion above is that a person's doing becomes a combination of choices, reactions, habits and dictated behaviours. To express these different shades of constraints, I will use the neutral term of behaviours to avoid emphasising discretion, and use Michel Certeau's (1980) distinction between tactics and strategies to differentiate behaviours that react to a situation without changing underlying constraints, from behaviours that work towards changing these constraints. The vocabulary of tactics and strategies, incidentally, also reconnects with the ethnographic perspective of previous sections, where Certeau's distinction has found a fertile application not least in James Scott's (1985) famous depiction of the covert tactics of resistance deployed by poor villagers in their interactions with well-off villagers—lying, hiding, foot-dragging, and pilfering, some examples of which are also found in this thesis.

1.4 From Time Poverty to Temporal Freedom

From its beginning research on temporal choices has been concerned with scarcity. The focus is at its purest in the notion of 'time poverty' first introduced by Clair Vickery (1977) as having too little time left for care and leisure and having no other choice. Beyond this, researchers have detailed how

'overworked Americans' (Schor 1991) are held in the 'time bind' (Hochschild 2000) of a 'second shift' day (Hochschild and Machung 2003). They have described how as consumption opportunities multiplied (Gershuny 2000), leisure time became 'harried' (Linder 1971). Others have included indicators about the amount of free time left to a person in indices of life quality (Alkire et al. 2013; Stiglitz, Fitoussi, and Sen 2010; Ura 2012). Meanwhile, considerations about time poverty are spreading in publications by multilateral organisations about women's work and drudgery in poorer countries (Gillian Brown 2015; Grassi, Landberg, and Huyer 2015; Wodon and Blackden 2006).

Figures underlying these claims, however, are fraught. Once again, Becker is a good starting point for a debate that is not closed today. His argument when writing that time out of work deserves to be treated on par with time at work was based on the observation of a 'large secular decline in the amount of work time' (1965, 493). The reduction is indeed massive between the 15-hour shift of the industrial revolution's early years and the current workday framed first by the Ten-Hour Work Bill (Engels and Marx 1950), and later by labour laws of the post-world war period. Since then, time-use statistics across rich countries show that the decline among those in the workforce has continued, albeit at a much slower rate.

These trends are at odds with the widespread perception that we have less time today than in the past. The few existing attempts to make sense of this contradiction differ. For Juliet Schor (1991), the problem lies in aggregate figures, where the decline is driven by the multiplication of part-time work coinciding with women's entry into the labour force. She points to the diverging trend between people who are underemployed and full-time workers for whom the progressive decline in work-hours until the 1950s has since been reversed. For Robert Goodin and co-authors (2005), in contrast, the problem is not so much that we have less free time today, but that we have more things to do during that time: our leisurely activities are more diverse; we want to spend more time with our children; houses are cleaner, and we spend more time-consuming—all these factors, they conclude, create an 'illusion' of time pressure.[17]

This last point brings me to what is perhaps the most significant shift in recent time-use research: scholars around Robert Goodin (Goodin et al. 2008; Rice, Goodin, and Parpo 2006) have proposed a measure that distinguishes between chosen and forced time poverty. Instead of merely quantifying free time, they propose to measure discretionary time, which they describe as the time left to a person after accounting for the minimum time required to earn income, care for dependents and for him or herself. To operationalise the measure, the authors set a minimal socially acceptable amount of time, which they define in relative terms as half of the median time allocated to unpaid household labour or to work in a given country. They go on to compare different welfare regimes in a calculation that converts monetary redistribution through subsidies and taxes into hours worked at minimum wage. The many assumptions underlying this operationalisation have been criticised

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[17] Also see: (Gershuny and Robinson 1988; Hamermesh and Lee 2007; Vanek 1974).

(Bavetta 2009; Esquivel 2010), but the conceptual shift from quantifying time to assessing control over time remains a landmark (Bittman 2011).

For Tania Burchardt, the focus on temporal freedom can be situated within the broader shift inspired by Amartya Sen (2001) 'from the resources themselves to what people are able to be and do with the resources available to them—their substantive freedom' (Burchardt 2010, 320). In ways that speak to the multidimensional emphasis of the capability approach, she outlines the bundle of resources and constraints that shape a person's freedom to choose between different time allocations for personal care, paid and unpaid work: human, economic and social factors, as well as entitlements framed by social policy find themselves tied around a person's temporal freedom.

Both the notion of temporal freedom and the multidimensional account of temporal choices are an important inspiration for this thesis. One divergence, however, is worth spelling out to situate my own contribution. Not everyone suffers of time scarcity, there are also anxious young men whom the lack of employment possibilities forces into prolonged waiting (Honwana 2012; Jeffrey 2010a; Mains 2007), or people claiming benefits reduced to being 'patients of the state' (Auyero 2012); there is the 'temporal limbo' created by new organisations of work (Mains 2007; Ozoliņa-Fitzgerald 2016), lengthy immigration procedures (Fassin, Wilhelm-Solomon, and Segatti 2017; Haas 2017). These are situations where the feeling of not knowing what to do with one's time becomes an expression of lesser temporal discretion.

The logical conclusion of a shift from time poverty to temporal freedom should be to consider both these situations of forced waiting and situations of scarcity as two facets of one same problem of powerlessness within time. This is not what we find in time-use research, however. Goodin and co-authors (2008), for example, build the focus on scarcity into the operationalisation of their measure of discretionary time when devising the thresholds of minimum necessary time. In my opinion, this focus on scarcity is what condemns the operationalisation of the measure to fall short of its ground-breaking theoretical implications rather than other assumptions for which the authors have been criticised (Bavetta 2009; Esquivel 2010).

To illustrate this critique, one could evoke the often-mentioned example of the single-mother who has to juggle between low-paid jobs to make ends meet and for whom measures of discretionary time allow a distinction to be made with the no less time-pressed highly-qualified professional who would still be well-off even if he or she spent less time on the job. Others might dwell on the fact that even qualified professionals today are rarely given the freedom to reduce their working hours, and that the difference therefore is not related to time itself. Here, though let me focus on another dimension and observe that the single mother juggling between jobs is not the only example of vulnerable individuals struggling with time. There are also the unemployed, people working on call, those forced to wait by long-drawn immigration procedures, the elderly idling away in a home. In a context where we are moving towards a dichotomy between those who have too

much work and a growing number of people who are either unemployed or under-employed, the neglect of these situations of waiting and temporal limbo arguably leaves aside many aspects of precariousness within time.

Accounting for powerlessness within time calls on us to complete the shift initiated by the discretionary bend in time-use research. Extending the Senian reference in Burchardt's paper (2010), a focus on substantive freedom invites us to consider 'the capabilities of persons to lead the kind of life they value—and have reasons to value' (Sen 2001, 18). Transposed to time, this intuition suggests that we should do more than merely focus on whether a person has enough time to engage in the activities he or she values and has reasons to value. Instead, we should consider the extent to which this person throughout his or her day is able to engage in meaningful activities. A measure of discretionary time, from this perspective, becomes a measure of the value attached to a time-lapse by the individual involved. Of this value, the amount of money earned during this time can be one yardstick, but it is in no way the only one.

Is it worth the while? The question that runs through this thesis is an attempt to summarise the value judgment that lies at the heart of my understanding of temporal choices. In light of what the previous paragraph has anticipated, we understand that it supposes a second question about the worth of '*that while*'—that is to say, for the subject asking this question, the worth of a fragment of his or her life. Quite logically for what is after all nothing but 'the currency of life' (Krueger et al. 2009), this question links a person's judgment about whether something is worth devoting his or her time to and the self-worth of the person judging.

The empirical discussion to come will provide multiple examples of how unpredictable basic services affect this temporal judgment by reducing people's ability to devote time to things that matter to them. We will see how the institutions of the Indian welfare state interact with informal practices to create relations of power that feed into these situations of unpredictable waiting. We will see how gendered norms that attribute a lesser value to female unpaid work add to these factors in ways that have women waiting at a subsidised food shop whose owner is 80 minutes behind schedule saying: 'what does it matter whether we wait here or there anyways, it's just *timepass*?'[18] Lastly, we will see how this quote echoes in the pattern of under-reporting the cost in time and opportunities of such moments of temporal drudgery. Judgments about time and their reporting will become part of a relation that the thesis sets out to explore.

1.5 India and the Geography of Time-Use Research

This thesis coincides with a change in the geography of time-use research. Several founding contributions on time scarcity are due to scholars based in the US (Hochschild 2000; Schor 1991;

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[18] Madanpur Khadar, 4.11.2016.

Vickery 1977), where work-days are longer than in the countries of northern Europe and Australia that are the other historical home of time-use research. Mostly, researchers working in this latter part of the world have kept the focus on scarcity, albeit with some nuances. It is, for example, in this latter part of the world that the notion of 'time-pressure illusion' has been coined to describe the effect of diversifying leisure (Goodin et al. 2005). The real change in recent years, however, is that time-use surveys are spreading among middle and lower-income countries. A new geography of time-use research is emerging, which brings up new perspectives and new questions.

In India, the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation is about to conclude a lengthy process of survey development and testing. At the time of the research, technical experts in the administration were waiting for an executive go ahead to start the process of conducting regular time-use surveys.[19] Unlike in rich countries, the focus in lower and middle-income countries has not been so much on scarcity as it has been on forms of work that yield limited benefits of money, recognition and decision-making (Chopra 2018; Olsen et al. 2018). Indira Hirway, for example, has written about how time-use statistics help to understand the condition of people 'trapped in the vicious circle of unpaid work and poverty' (2009b, xxv) in a formulation that bring us closer to the final paragraphs of the previous section.

The other major difference with the rich and predominantly formal economies that form the earlier geography of time-use research is that the stakes of the time-use survey are not just to understand time allocations beyond paid work, but also to gain a better grasp of the many forms of work that contribute to India's economy (Hirway 2007, 2009a). Even before the first pilot survey, Devaki Jain had concluded from her own smaller survey among rural households that time more than money is an 'appropriate measure for evaluating work' among 'asset-less women workers' (1996, 47). Researchers in her wake have drawn on time-use statistics to capture the female unpaid work that is left out by labour surveys (Hirway and Jose 2011; Kannan and Raveendran 2012; Sudarshan and Bhattacharya 2009). Time-use statistics, they have argued, are also more immune to the gendered norms that qualify even paid work done at home as somewhat less than work (Hirway 2007, 6; Sudarshan and Bhattacharya 2009). They help grasp how much of the sharp decrease in women's labour force participation recorded by official statistics over the past thirty years (Mehrotra and Parida 2017)[20] is really about women withdrawing from the workforce and how much of it is about reporting issues.

Of the unpaid work highlighted by time-use statistics, procuring water and food from government sources represents a share that, in poor urban households at least, is not negligible. These activities are the focus around which this thesis meets wider research on time use, broadening to

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[19] Nodal Secretary, Ministry of Statistics and Implementation, Rama Krishna Puram, 24.10.2016.

[20] Also see: (Bhalla and Kaur 2011; Himanshu 2011; Kannan and Raveendran 2012; Rangarajan, Kaul, and Seema 2011).

include paid work in as far as it allows people to pay for private sources or bribe their way through a queue. The focus brings back the state and politics at the heart of a question that Indian time-use research has approached from an economic perspective. When bringing to the fore discrepancies between quantitative markers and ethnographic observations, the thesis makes one further contribution to the tradition above. It suggests that while an improvement compared to labour statistics, time-use surveys might themselves under-value exactly those behaviours they were meant to highlight.

More broadly, these discrepancies tie together the methodological and the analytical contribution of my thesis. Progressively, they will bring us to the paradoxes laid out in the opening lines of this introduction and to the long and under-reported hours people spend informally negotiating with providers, joining committees or attending the meetings of strong men exactly where political accountability is weak. For this introduction, meanwhile, these discrepancies and paradoxes mark the moment when we have come a full circle, from an atemporal everyday state, to the politics of time, to a conception of temporal choices drawn from a largely apolitical literature on temporal choice. Closing the circle, we can bring time and the everyday politics of service delivery together around this question: is it worth the while?

1.6 Conclusion and Outline

Let me summarise the chapter by walking the circle the other way around, starting with temporal choices and making the way back to everyday interactions with the state. When a person asks: 'is it worth the while', he or she judges whether an activity is worth a segment of his or her life. For us to ask this question is also an attempt to synthesise a conception that builds on the discretionary shift in time-use research (Goodin et al. 2008), and on the Senian (2001) focus on substantial freedom (Burchardt 2010). We broaden beyond temporal scarcity to consider whether a person can do things that matter to him or her with his or her time. The resulting value judgment engages some rational calculation but is also profoundly shaped by emotions and structural constraints. My referring to a judgment, therefore, is a simplification for something that hovers between an actual choice, a reaction and a behaviour dictated by constraints—all shades of freedom the discussion to come expresses in terms of strategies, tactics and behaviours (Certeau 1980).

More than in many of the richer countries where time-use research has emerged, the role of physical factors—extreme heat and floods, as well as the material scarcity of resources like water, money and food—will run through the pages to come. I follow a wider tradition of research, however, when focusing on how such physical fundamentals interact with gendered institutions straddling state, family, labour markets and society. In this polygon of interdependent institutions, I focus on the one corner—around the state—that has arguably received less attention in research on temporal choices, where it features as a thin framing condition for behaviours evolving between

family and workplace (Rice, Goodin, and Parpo 2006). In this corner, we will find behaviours that straddle the domestic and the public, the economic and the political, individual behaviours and collective mobilisations.

In this corner again, research on temporal choices opens onto a body of research where waiting reveals entrenched relations of power (Auyero 2012; Haas 2017; Hyndman and Giles 2011; Schwartz 1975). It can go as far as to pit those made to wait in conflict against each other and undermine their ability to come together, yet it can also become a space where solidarities and political practices that are not supported by dominant institutions emerge.

More broadly, literature on waiting and power opens onto a larger strand of research, which fleshes out the politics of time by showing how intimately implicated the state is in the everyday life of India's poor citizens. Far from the thin set of framing institutions we find in literature on temporal choices, the state is here thick with the practices of frontline officials, politicians and middlemen who have a hand in interpreting, tweaking or distorting the institutions that define who is entitled to what basic service.

Outlining the options at hand for ordinary citizens in their interactions with officials, politicians and middlemen brings us to one last classical reference that features too prominently in the pages to come not to be evoked here. In Albert Hirschman's (1970) *Exit, Voice and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organisations and States,* 'exit' is the less burdensome 'response' available to those who can pay for better services, 'voice' is the political option left to those who cannot afford or do not want to 'exit' nor wish to bet on 'loyalty'. As many other researchers, I find that this typology is a powerfully simple foundation to express the options at hand. Hirschman's ambition to bind the political logic of 'voice' and the economic logic of 'exit' around one choice also is an objective that speaks to my concern. I will ask what each of these terms entail for residents of Sunder Nagri and Madanpur Khadar as they go about accessing different services. What costs of time and other burdens do they involve?

While Hirschman's triad is a source of inspiration across the thesis, I will ultimately distance myself from his emphasis on the three terms of 'exit, voice, and loyalty'. Quite simply, for a person to respond to the decline of a service by opting for any of the three terms, he or she needs to have access to that service. When we lose sight of this, we fail to pay sufficient attention to people who are deprived of access altogether or forced into adverse forms of 'exit, voice or loyalty' by the threat of exclusion (Schaffer and Lamb 1974, 87).

The dialogue between the two traditions above is lastly a dialogue between a largely quantitative time-use research and a predominantly ethnographic research on the everyday state. In this thesis, this dialogue takes the form of critical back and forth between a few quantitative markers of time and extensive ethnographic evidence. It is a dialogue that revolves around a series of discrepancies that will bring us to the heart of the contribution I hope to make to theories of temporal

choices by showing how people's behaving in time and their reporting of time are bound by the same set of constraints. It will bring us to the heart of the paradoxes that challenge my starting premise about time and politics and around which I will develop what I hope to be my contribution to the politics of time and to literature on the everyday state.

Chapter two starts with an attempt to define the object of this research: 'What is time?' it asks, only to acknowledge defeat for anything else than pointing at the multiple changing facets that constitute the social reality of time. The discussion goes on to explore the method that best suits this protean object, then comes back to the premises that link time and politics in this thesis, here again laying out the methods before concluding with a few ethical considerations about 'asking for time' and 'doing no harm'.

Chapter three takes a tour around Sunder Nagri and Madanpur Khadar, broadening beyond time and politics to do justice to the multidimensional nature of temporal choices and to the particular history of the two places.

Chapter four narrows down again with an overview of how time features in behaviours around basic services. It brings out a first series of discrepancies between survey findings and ethnographic observations; along with these discrepancies giving a first glimpse into the paradoxes around which later chapters evolve.

Chapter five dwells on people's behaviours around political parties. It looks at how trajectories of involvement emerge and fall apart. It asks why people are drawn to parties that do not tie accountability to basic services, and why they do so in Madanpur Khadar where all odds seem to be stacked against such involvements.

Chapter six pauses on women's behaviours around basic services. It asks why, despite constraints that limit their movements, they are the ones putting in the hours. Why are some of the most striking figures of involvement women from the Muslim minority, and how do they negotiate multiple constraints of gender and politicised religious identity? What, furthermore, does it say about our representation of politics that these behaviours go under-reported in literature on the everyday state? What, finally, should we make of violence in these behaviours?

Chapter seven asks why despite expecting and receiving so little from the state do Madanpur Khadar's slum dwellers deem it worth their time to make the long journey back to their villages in order to cast their vote? Why, when asked about transferring their registration, do they put forward their attachment to the village rather than administrative hurdles? What does it mean for politics when the practice of voting is rooted in compulsion, whereas the informal politics of survival becomes the fragile assertion of belonging to the nation?

Chapter eight concludes by tying the threads of the empirical discussion around seven main findings and drawing them together around the two main concepts of temporal integrity and temporal alienation.

2   Methods

'What then is time? If no one asks me, I know what it is. If I wish to explain it to him who asks, I do not know', states Augustin (1995, xiv, 17) some 16 centuries ago in what has since been echoed by countless attempts to come to terms with this mysterious familiarity. In spite of these many attempts, the question still stands today for observers of the natural world, as for observers of the social world. In the words of one physicist who recently summarised his discipline's knowledge about time: 'it is like holding a snowflake, gradually, as you study it, it melts between your fingers and vanishes' (Rovelli 2018, 3)—a melting snowflake, that is, an object presenting seemingly different facets to the main theories in which it features as one nodal variable, while these facets are incompatible and therefore melt as we ask: what then is time?

Even without venturing into the dizzying mystery of its physics, time has multiple facets for social scientists.[21] While this is not the place to attempt yet another overview of these facets, I want to pause for a moment as I open these methodological considerations, and stress just how complex an object I have set out to explore.

Writing about the Nuers of the Upper Nile, Evans-Pritchard famously observed 'they do not speak of time as though it were something actual, which passes, can be wasted, can be saved, and so forth… Instead of having to coordinate activities with an abstract passage of time… their points of reference are mainly the activities themselves' (1940, 103). The experience of interacting with people who do not think of time as abstract chronologies has much in common with the experience out of which the idea of this thesis emerges. I was then involved in a diary-based time-use survey for which we asked respondents to recall and time each activity of the previous day. Often, remembering the specific timespan was a challenge, because irregular services and work hours blurred the day's chronology. For many respondents, the question itself seemed like an aberration: 'what kind of question is that? I took a bath, that's it',[22] someone commented half amused, half annoyed after our probing about the duration of the activity. Repeatedly, respondents baulked or laughed as we tried to steer the discussion back from their considerations about the activity they were doing to its unrolling in time.

It was not that abstract markers of time were alien to the worldview of our respondents as in Evans-Pritchard's interpretation, but these markers frayed around many moments of the day: they frayed less for respondents and activities linked to regular work; they frayed more as work and service delivery became more irregular and activities more private. The perception of time we were confronted with was partly framed by set chronologies, partly eluding them.

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[21] For a few entry points: (Adam 1994; Gell 1992; Munn 1992).
[22] Jamia Nagar, 15.03.2013.

We are back to where the section started: time is a multi-faceted object. Usually, it is a dimension underlying our movements and as such at the background of our mind. This is not the space to situate this observation in the debate between philosophers for whom time is a category of understanding (Kant 2009) and those for whom it is a 'measure of motion' (Aristotle 2008). Instead, let me evoke more straightforwardly the quote in which a respondent cried out at our probing about the timespan of an activity: 'What kind of question is that? I took a bath, that's it'. Because time is a dimension of the world we perceive, our thinking of a time-lapse naturally tips into thinking about the things that happened during that time.

If we turn to the embodied subject, time evolves into something that engages both the physical and emotional intimacy of an individual who is moving and interacting with others in a given setting. If for economists time is the fundamental 'currency of life' (Krueger et al. 2009), it is quite simply because time is not a natural resource, but the commodification of life (Polanyi 2001, 75–76). It is what, in our body, defines the race of a life from birth to death, as sociologists of the life course recognise when they study the major existential events that form the landmarks of this race (Ghez and Becker 1975).

Perhaps because it so central to our lives and yet so mysterious, time is also, somewhat like a magnet near iron powder, a dimension that attracts the many social institutions through which we make sense of the world and order it. Here, one could cite a rich strand of studies by historians and ethnographers of the economy about how, as societies shifted from subsistence communities to market societies, time was progressively instituted as a commodity that could be abstracted, counted, accumulated and exchanged (Polanyi 2001; Taussig 2010). One could cite yet other contributions concerned with how religion through the recurrence of its 'rites, feasts and public ceremonies' define the rhythm of life (Durkheim 2008, 22–23), as did the calls to prayers that five times a day rang in parts of Sunder Nagri. A bit like the iron powder clinging onto their magnet, these institutions clad around time and double it with shapes that differ depending on given institutional settings.

If we ask once again: 'what then is time?' we find ourselves, not much ahead of the 16-century old starting point: 'If no one asks me, I know what it is. If I wish to explain it to him who asks, I do not know' (Augustin 1995, xiv, 17). Rather, we find ourselves embarrassed by plenty, as we try to come to terms with facets as multiple as there are sub-strands to the social sciences of time. Time is a protean social object: a chronology, it opens onto existential questions of life and on the main institutions ordering our societies.

It would be simple yet if we could focus on just one of these facets, but all of them came bound together in the answers of respondents. As background dimension, it wasn't the time lapse itself they paid attention to, but its content—not the hours of waiting at the ration shop, but the waiting itself. Time became an issue when there was a break in the routine or when the routine was seen as excessive in itself. Demanding from respondents that they focus on chronologies alone turned

the interview into a sterile exercise.[23] When I was not doing so, discussions opened naturally on the big questions of life and many of the deep sentiments that drive us—life, aging, death, the feeling of loss and hope. Considerations about present choices invariably involved others about the past and the future, which engaged the landmark events of a life and came clad with nostalgia and longing. Nor did it make sense to ignore the social institutions that define how, as social being, we relate to time. I chose not to leave out any of these facets, but to approach them progressively, starting with a fairly thin account of the chronologies surrounding daily routines around services, then digging deeper to explore the institutional factors involved, and in later chapters opening to temporal subjectivities.

2.1 Methodological Impurity and Fertile Discrepancies

What method can suit this complex object? The interrogation is behind what became this thesis. It started with the prior experience of administrating the time-use survey mentioned above. The research conducted by Oxfam India in partnership with Delhi's Ambedkar University in several regions of northern India including Delhi used a 24-hour recall-period diary. It was the same method that India's national statistical office had used for two pilots ahead of the regular time-use survey it planned to conduct. It is furthermore, the same method a growing number of studies have used since to assess patterns of unpaid work in India and other lower and middle-income countries (Chopra 2018; Olsen et al. 2018).

Problems of reliability involved in such recollections are notorious. In rich countries, surveyors have sought to address these limitations by asking respondents to fill up time diaries themselves in real time (UNECE 2013). Others have reduced recall periods by calling people multiple times in a day (Krueger 2009). Both these methods, however, are impractical in a country such as India, where one third of the population is illiterate and one fourth of all households have no phone (GOI 2015). Any attempt to bypass these challenges, by asking literate kin to fill up diaries for respondents or multiplying visits can only be done at a limited scale. As a consequence, most time-use surveys in middle and lower-income countries have stuck to the same 24-hour recall period method in which I was involved. Given the constraints above, there simply seems to be no ready alternative.

My experience of conducting the survey was one of dealing with uncertainties and lacunae. Among poorer sections of the sample, in particular, the reliance on unpredictable services and irregular work complicated the task. The fact that many respondents had no individual time-marking device added to the challenge. Did the tanker-truck come at 10AM, or fifteen minutes later, or was it half an hour later? Often, the details were simply out of reach and we found ourselves clarifying

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[23] For a similar observation: (Munn 1992, 93).

our respondents' memory with approximations. On other moments, such as the one mentioned above, respondents baulked. They trailed off, and these tangential discussions gave substantial pointers to how they thought about time and chose to allocate it. We could, of course, register these discussions, but other methods seemed more appropriate to capture the nuances.

Out of this experience emerged the idea of systematically contrasting quantitative markers of time with extensive ethnographic research. It became my thesis. For this new research project, I decided to start with one more survey module, which was to serve as foundation for the extensive ethnographic research that would follow: it would help select the families included in this second component and provided the quantitative markers that could then be contrasted with observations and responses to in-depth interviews collected during the second phase of the research. Included in the survey was information about the population's social and economic profile; information about service availability and initiatives taken about these services.[24] There were questions about the distance to service points, queues and opportunities lost during the time spent on the task. A final set of questions mapped political behaviours and interventions relating to services.

Aware as I was of the difficulties of obtaining reliable quantitative data on time, I decided to omit the temporal variable altogether from my survey module, and instead use proxies for time such as number of people in the queue, distance, regularity, as well as opportunities lost. Where temporal dimensions were required, I used milestones such as days and months. While this was a limitation, I had the time-use survey conducted by Oxfam India and Ambedkar University in multiple sites including Madanpur Khadar and Sunder Nagri. While the government pilot time-use survey did not cover Delhi (GOI 1998), official data on time involvement in services such as water and health provided additional references (GOI 2011). Omitting time in these conditions seemed like the best way to do the most with limited resources and focus on the comparison with extensive ethnographic evidence, which was to become the main contribution of the thesis.

As I moved from one method to the other, it did not take long for the first divergences to surface. Even in the survey, respondents' assessment of their own involvement in accessing services differed from their family members' assessment. As I dropped the survey questionnaires for the ethnographic enquiry, more divergences emerged. Answers did not match my observations at service points. They changed depending on whether my respondents spoke in the presence or absence of spouses and neighbours. As a result, I found myself seeking to alternate situations where respondents were alone and others where they spoke in the presence of family members and neighbours. Not only did I contrast survey findings and ethnographic material, as I had initially planned to do, but I also contrasted ethnographic interviews conducted in one setting or another.

The results were more discrepancies, which the discussion to come seeks to identify, describe and interrogate. I will show that the time women devote to accessing services was under-reported by

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[24] For more details, see the questionnaires in Annex 1, p. 247.

them, while men's involvement in such tasks appears to be over-reported. I will make the link with my starting hypothesis, where time allocations engage a judgment about the worth of that time, itself linked to the feeling of self-worth of the person whose time is at stake. I will explore the factors underpinning these judgments.

The approach speaks to a nascent critical bent in time-use research and debates about reporting biases. Some experts have argued that existing data systematically undervalue time scarcity because the only respondents who are likely to engage in such demanding questionnaires are those with plenty of time at hand (Schor 1991). Others, meanwhile, make exactly the opposite argument: only individuals for whom time is a scarce resource would care enough to engage with the research (Goodin et al. 2005). To decide in favour of one or the other hypothesis, however, evidence other than the time-use surveys is required, which is what my research engages with.

Meanwhile, in India, the time-use survey is seen as a means to address yet another evidence gap, linked to the systematic under-reporting of unpaid work mostly done by women (Hirway and Jose 2011; Jain 1996). Here too, however, empirical data other than existing labour and time-use surveys is scarce. In my own research the contrast between quantitative markers suggests that, while a progress compared to labour surveys, time-use surveys might be reproducing some of the biases of the latter towards under-reporting unpaid work.

Time-use surveys, I find, are particularly poor at capturing temporal features other than mere quantity. Irregularity and unpredictability, for example, can force people to plan an entire day around a task that takes just a few minutes. In principle, survey formats address this problem by asking people to report primary and secondary activities. Evidence in chapter four, however, suggests that this methodological precaution does little to address the problem for precisely those activities that have the largest impact on people time use. Among the examples considered in this chapter is the necessity to wait for a water-tanker that could arrive between 10AM and 3PM, or the need to be around for several days in a month in order not to miss irregular rations of subsidised food. Often, such occupations cease to be considered as a secondary activity and appear to be among the constraints that shape a life.

These concerns take on the 'soft' underbelly of a quantitative tradition associated with methodological rigor and 'hardness' (Harriss 2002, 488). I am taking seriously the approximations involved in the process of transforming actual social realities into data. Not that I question the value of time-use surveys, but that the lack of evidence allowing us to assess their limitations seems problematic to me.

After swapping questionnaires for the ethnographic approach, other concerns surfaced. Initially, I had conceived the process of judging whether a task is worthwhile as a rather thin one engaging a fairly rudimentary cost and benefit analysis. In interviews, I was reminded about the complex set of factors that defines people's thinking about time. Judgments became rooted in a

specific context, and shaped by factors that are typically lost in larger studies.[25] Being a Muslim, to give just one example, meant something very different in Sunder Nagri, where Muslims were a majority, and in Madanpur Khadar, where they were a minority, if only to give one plain illustration because there were no daily calls to prayer in the latter.

Just as important were subjective factors. With each new interaction, temporal judgments grew thicker with emotions, memories and aspirations. They were shaped by the recollection of individual and collective losses such as the one that accompanied resettlement. They engaged existential considerations about what it takes to live a decent life in the face of adversity. Around time, emotions and ethical concerns met with the organic reality of a body exposed to diseases and aging. Individuals whom we had approached as 'respondents' when we knocked on doors with our questionnaires, became social actors whose behaviours pointed to a certain way of making sense of the world (Harriss 2002, 489). As these aspects rose to prominence, so did ethnographic qualities in the practice of research: detailed descriptions revealed poignant moments that pointed to aspects I had not expected; there were enigmas and paradoxes (Katz 2001, 66). All these descriptive qualities were orienting my questioning about why people thought, felt and behaved within time the way they did.

The discrepancies I had observed also echoed the work of ethnographers such as James Scott's account of how, in a Malay village, rich and poor are speaking differently when in the presence of each other. The less powerful, in particular, develop 'hidden transcripts' (1990) that only surface in rare moments of defiance. Having observed these divergences he recalls: 'I found myself creating settings in which I could check one discourse against another and, so to speak, triangulate my way into unexplored territories' (Scott 1990, ix). The practice described by Scott has much in common with what, I too, found myself doing. I tried to alternate situations where people spoke to me in the presence of family members and neighbours and situations where they spoke in their absence. This, in turn, revealed more discrepancies, some of which are described in chapter six.

As had happened when shifting from survey to ethnography, more discrepancies emerged when making the way back from ethnographic observations to survey findings. There is, for example, this moment in chapter four, when survey figures invalidate the assessment that caste diversity prevented them from uniting in collective action. The way in which residents expressed these convictions and the scenes exemplifying their claims were powerful enough to back this hypothesis. The caste profile of the two neighbourhoods' populations, however, seemed to contradict their claims, instead pointing to another set of issues linked to governance and to the distribution of resources.[26]

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[25] For a larger methodological point on such contextual analyses: (George and Bennett 2005, 19).

[26] This echoes a classical critic against inductive approaches: (Geddes 2003, 5; King, Keohane, and Verba 1994, ix).

The result is a research that draws on the contrast between a few quantitative markers and extensive ethnographic evidence to peel-off the misled assumptions drawn from each of these methods. This, however, is not the critical inclination that led me to avoid measures of time and instead use proxies for time in the survey module. With the benefit of hindsight, the decision was still too close to a form of methodological radicalism, where the weaknesses of one approach would prompt a move to another more reliable one. Instead, I have come to adopt a more pragmatic criticism, which recognises the limitations of each method, and seeks to shed light on them by multiplying comparative edges. Methodological impurity, here, does not denote a lack of rigour, but an honest recognition of the limitations of any attempt to grasp an object as complex as the ones we deal with in social sciences—let alone the protean object that is time.

Cross-disciplinarity is a defining feature of development studies. The above speaks to a form of cross-disciplinarity that seeks in one approach a means to highlight the weaknesses of the other. It is, in the words of John Harriss, the practice of a 'tension between "discipline" and "anti-discipline"' (2002, 487), rooted in a recognition that each discipline has its untested assumptions and blind spots (Hulme and Toye 2006).[27] By speaking to this strand, I would hope that I am also being loyal to the self-critical strand of development studies—the same that has seen researchers interrogate the founding assumption in the field, starting with this notion of development itself (Ferguson 1999).

2.2 Cases and Political Societies

For the second characteristic of my methodological design, my starting point was not inductive restlessness, but a deductive curiosity. In time-use research, the role of the state is understudied: when it does feature, it is a framing condition for negotiations occurring in the household (Burchardt 2010; Rice, Goodin, and Parpo 2006). In contrast, studies in ethnography and related disciplines show that time and power in everyday interactions with the state are a fertile field of investigation (Auyero 2012; Haas 2017). These studies, furthermore, speak to a larger strand of literature about the relation between citizens and actors involved in delivering public goods. Out of these studies, other hypotheses can be derived about the politics of time. Though they were briefly mentioned in the introduction, the references on which I draw for my hypothesis about the relation between time and politics are worth mentioning again here.

Jos Mooij's (1999) comparative case study of the public food distribution systems in two Indian states contrasts a situation where promises to deliver subsidised food play an important role in the electoral competition between political parties in Tamil Nadu and a situation where political parties appeal to voters through patronage in Bihar. In the first case, citizen demands, the competition

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[27] For a well-known example, see the *Conversations Between Economists and Anthropologists* edited by Pranab Bardhan and Isha Ray (2008). If I favour other references in the main text, it is because they capture the critical side of cross-disciplinarity more than the Conversations, which seeks to 'combine the strengths of each discipline' (Bardhan and Mookherjee 2006b).

between political parties and the performance of public services are bound in a virtuous circle, while the opposite applies in the second case. The finding that poor people reach out to their party representatives more than to anyone else when their basic entitlements are compromised (Chandhoke 2005; Harriss 2005; Witsoe 2013) completes Mooij's argument by highlighting that political parties play a central role in tying citizen demands and accountability around basic services not just at the time of elections but for everyday concerns between elections as well. For this integration to occur within political parties, write Stuart Corbridge and co-authors, the horizontal relation to voters has to combine with a vertical accountability to leaders committed to delivering services to the poor (Corbridge et al. 2005; Véron et al. 2006).

Citizens, in sum, would be able to make claims on basic services from the state when political parties organise accountability around this issue of service delivery. Extrapolating, the conditions above would create a conducive environment that tilts incentives for citizens towards reaching out to their political representatives. The functioning of party politics, the working of services and citizens' willingness to devote time to hold the state accountable for shortfalls would be linked in one triad. This triad, one might expect, explains variations between political constituencies, but also between individuals more or less able to activate channels of accountability rooted in political parties.

For this starting point, the case study design seemed to impose itself. It allowed the intensive qualitative exploration called for by my starting reservations about time-use surveys. The 'very fuzziness' (Gerring 2004, 350) of the method and its tolerance to testing multiple hypotheses fitted the nature of my premises. I took care to break them down into identifiable processes to avoid taking on explanations so big and untested that they turned the research into an exercise in building 'sand castles' (Geddes 2003, 40). Reducing them further into specific variables, however, was not suited for the relatively fresh ground I had set to explore. Besides, enough research on temporal choices had highlighted the multiple factors involved (Burchardt 2010) to warn against the risk of omitting important dimensions if I narrowed down too soon around a few variables. The case study helped avoid explanatory bottlenecks, even as the contrast between cases allowed exploring, if not the actual variables of a causal relation, then at least the complex mechanisms linking my premises about the working of politics and the temporal choices of residents (George and Bennett 2005, 21).

The case study design seemed all the more attractive because the two neighbourhoods of Sunder Nagri and Madanpur Khadar, which had featured in the larger time-use survey, were a good fit for the premises I wanted to explore. Sunder Nagri had better services than Madanpur and a history of political mobilisation around basic services. Before founding the AAP, Delhi's Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had spent years in the neighbourhood mobilising residents in struggles against corruption in service delivery. Having been elected, he had pledged to make services work for the poor and to increase transparency by fostering political decentralisation. Several residents of Sunder Nagri still called the man and his closest aids by their first name, which augured well for their ability to call them to account. Lastly, while Sunder Nagri was home to many Muslims, media

coverage had at no point focused on this dimension. Instead, the neighbourhood featured for its history of mobilisation and its links to Kejriwal.[28] With regards to my premises about the relation between time and politics, Sunder Nagri seemed like a best-case scenario.

In contrast, Madanpur Khadar had remained in a political limbo for years, without even an attachment to a municipal council until 2008. From then on, it fell under a ward that had been run for decades by members of one family who had shifted party allegiance over time. Multiple disputes about land opposed the powerful Gurjar caste of the Councillor and the diverse population of the resettlement colony. With regards to my premises, it seemed to exemplify multiple vulnerabilities.

Several common features ensured a reasonable level of homogeneity between the two neighbourhoods. Both locations were situated in the same larger political unit, the National Capital Territory. Both locations were resettlement colonies, planned by government agencies to accommodate populations evicted from central slums. They were entitled to the entire range of basic services provided by Indian laws. Their residents being former slum dwellers from surrounding states, their socio-economic profile was comparable.

Of course, the reality was not as neat as this: in both neighbourhoods, services did not meet expectations that could reasonably be formed if considering promises from major political parties, or simply looking down the road towards the nearest lower-middle class neighbourhood. Neither was Sunder Nagri exactly a paragon of clean politics: there too, residents spoke of land and subsidised food mafias. Nevertheless, on a scale of greys, one was substantially darker than the other.

There were also differences in the profile of the two populations, all of which are detailed in the next section. These, however, could be dealt with by adding a second comparative layer, and focusing on families and individuals more or less endowed with the ability to activate mechanisms of accountability. For the ethnographic core of the research, in particular, I could draw on the background information collected during the survey to select individuals who would be representative of differences in gender, religion, caste, work status, education, health and wealth.

The presence of informal clusters along the main resettlement colonies added another layer of complexity. In Sunder Nagri, the unauthorised settlement's social and economic profile was similar to the main colony. Most residents had come from the same villages and communities as those from the main colony. The place was established enough for most basic services to be provided. It was, in sum, a variation on the two cases above, with an additional contrast between the planned resettlement colonies and the unauthorised cluster where, according to existing research (Harriss 2005), residents would be more inclined to intervene when faced with shortfalls in service delivery.

Madanpur Khadar's slum was a case apart. There were no public services in the cluster, just shacks on disputed private land set around a waste segregation site. Residents belonged to the Indo-

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[28] Among other: (Hindu 2013; Indian Express 2014; Outlook 2012).

Bangladesh borderlands: they had no political rights in Delhi, and even their claims to citizenship were disputed. The cluster was an outlier, where all possible odds seemed stacked against devoting time to the politics of basic services.

The design, in sum, was complex, but fairly neat. I had four settlements, which I treated as four distinct cases:

1. Sunder Nagri resettlement colony

2. Sunder Nagri slum

3. Madanpur Khadar resettlement colony

4. Madanpur Khadar slum

Case one and three were the main units of comparison. Case two was a variation on the two others, with the additional variable of informality. Case four was an outlier, but it fitted my explanatory model where it featured as an adverse case. Time was the dependent variable. Politics was the independent variable. The clusters featured a variation on the independent variable, in that fitting what an influential methodological strand has defined as best practice (King, Keohane, and Verba 1994, 129).

The focus on households and individuals added a comparison between units within the case, and it was complemented by several more comparative edges, which are merely introduced here before being developed in later parts of the thesis. A first such edge is the contrast between the two neighbourhoods and research on related issues in other samples across India. A second edge is the contrast between male and female residents. The contrast between the three basic services of water, subsidised food and waste is a third edge. The contrast between the BJP, which was at the time of research ruling at national and municipal level, and the AAP ruling over the National Capital Territory of Delhi is a fourth edge. These multiple dimensions, however, were merely adding facets to the founding case study design described above. Suffice it to say, for now, that the foundation itself with its cases and units corresponds to what, as far as case studies go, is best practice to increase theoretical validity (Mahoney and Goertz 2006) and maximise the possibility of drawing inferences (George and Bennett 2005, 18; Gerring 2004, 343).

The only thing that was not quite as neat was that I was soon confronted with findings that seemed to contradict my starting hypothesis about the relation between time and politics. Worse, parts of this material seemed to contradict other parts. While survey figures did picture residents of Sunder Nagri as more involved than those of Madanpur Khadar, ethnographic research suggested the opposite. Even in survey figures, more people were affiliated to political parties in Madanpur Khadar than in Sunder Nagri. The AAP seemed to be struggling to mobilise people around its programme of participatory service delivery more than the BJP was around its programme focused on national and identity issues. Women, whom the survey depicted as less politically active, were in

ethnographic observations devoting long hours to the networks of power that emerged around basic services. Madanpur Khadar's slum dwellers, who did not access basic services, were devoting considerable time and money to go back to their village and vote.

When I looked for alternative explanations, the neat frame of the case study ceded to a messier exploration for which the multiple methods introduced in the previous section became a precious tool. Whereas initially, the contradictions and discrepancies emerged from challenges involved in researching time, they became, with the hypothesis about the relation between time and politics, a way to peel-off mistaken causal inferences. I was reconnecting with the critical inclination that had been my starting point, and researchers who highlight the limitations of an epistemological paradigm that neglects descriptions and jumps too quickly to the search for causal explanations (Gerring 2012). While the paradoxes briefly introduced above will lead me to make some alternative hypotheses about the complex relation that links politics and time, this thesis is therefore no less essentially an effort to develop thick descriptions, without which there is no making informed inferences.

2.3 Decentring the Perspective on the State

Responses about time were not the only ones characterised by apparent discrepancies, those concerning the politics of basic services were too. Unlike for time, the divergences had less to do with how respondents recalled the object of my questioning than with what they knew and were ready to tell. More even than the physical resources that were channelled through distribution chains, information was a scarce and unequally distributed resource. Often when enquiring about how residents approached the state we were directed to intermediaries, among whom hoarding, tweaking, truncating and retaining information was common practice. Approaching these intermediaries, I often felt that I was being drawn into this shroud of politicised information, lightly at first, but with growing seriousness as months went by.

One person who illustrated the challenges involved and also provides unique insights into the social and political fabric of Madanpur Khadar was the local BJP convenor, whom I will call Anand Kumar. On one of our first interactions, he broke off a discussion about the party's organisation: 'I don't have problems with Muslims.[29] I even campaigned for one Muslim candidate a few years ago'.[30] He trailed off, but later came back to the topic: 'I have been excluded from the party for a few years, you know'. Again, he trailed off and it was only later that we got to ask him why he had decided to support the candidate: 'He is from here. I thought he would be good for us. Just ask anyone', he concluded after having declined to introduce us: 'Zaharuddin is the name. They will direct you'. For a reason that seemed less obvious, he was just as reluctant to put us in touch with his senior

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[29] Madanpur Khadar, 24.02.2016.
[30] Madanpur Khadar, 9.03.2016.

in the BJP, the Councillor. Initially, he was elusive, then promised to help, then gave us a number that was out-of-order, then another that directed us to the Councillor's brother, and finally told us: 'Just go to his house'.[31]

Months went by. We had gained a first partial idea about the area's 'open secrets' (Skidmore 2009, 321). Increasingly, interviews with politicians and powerbrokers felt like a kind of hunting game, where baits were dropped to see whether the prey was biting. When we bit, respondents indulged in long explanations. One person, however, who was getting impatient with our slow-witted efforts was Anand, the BJP convenor, who had by then seen us through months of questioning: 'You should ask me proper questions',[32] he once commented visibly exasperated when we enquired about a meeting he had organised after what must have been yet another hint we had missed.

And yet, we were accumulating information. We knew about Zaharuddin's reputation for being associated with illegal alcohol trading, lotteries and shady real estate deals. We met Zaharuddin and his wife, who greeted us with these words: 'People must have told you terrible things about us'.[33] We had also seen enough local politicians to realise that most of them across all main parties made a living from dealing with real estate. And yet, we seemed to be evolving around a core that remained perpetually hidden. Hint by hint, respondents drew us around that circle.

I had planned to reason in terms of saturation, progressively moving towards a point where more interviews would bring no new information (Small 2009). But the meaning of the term saturation became increasingly uncertain as we dug deeper and the obscure side of political society in the areas loomed larger in conversations. Respondents multiplied hints, without those hints ever amounting to a resolution. A topic that after all was tangential to my research seemed to be taking over in conversations with service providers and party members. It prevented saturation, because temporal strategies played against a background that remained incomplete.

Until finally the fragmentary information we had collected seemed to come together. We had been doing a few interviews in the older urban village where the Councillor's house was located, and for the first time had been pointed towards the caste divisions that organised politics in the village: the dominant Other Backward Caste group to which the Councillor belonged, the Gurjars, were in conflict with their upper caste neighbours, the Chauhans, who had allied with the poorer and more diverse inhabitants of the resettlement colony. Both the Gurjars and the Chauhans owned large swaths of land around the resettlement colony. We had also learned that Zaharuddin was in open conflict with the Gurjars over land deals and rights over cable television: 'people were killed', one man concluded.[34]

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[31] Madanpur Khadar, 29.09.2016.

[32] Madanpur Khadar, 29.09.2016.

[33] Madanpur Khadar, 14.03.2016.

[34] Madanpur Khadar, 9.10.2016.

A few days after a visit to the Councillor's house, we met Anand Kumar wanting to clarify a harmless question about the number of electoral wards. When I referred to the electoral commission's website, Anand whose face had turned serious when I mentioned the visit to the Councillor nodded, looking pleased with our progress. He explained the matter at length, then for no apparent reason came back to Zaharuddin: 'It's funny', he smiled, staring at us with a hint of superiority: 'I don't know why everyone calls him Zaharuddin, when his real name is Iqbal Hussein', then he trailed off as often when he said something that really mattered.[35] It was only later that I realised that the name was the one I had seen the day before on the electoral commission's website listing all candidates in the previous municipal election—the one name I did not know, with the figure eight in the column where the numbers of criminal cases stood. It was the first time I mentioned the website, and the first time Anand called Iqbal Hussein the man he had until then referred to as Zaharuddin. 'I supported him, because I thought he was the only one who could take on the Gurjars',[36] he would add a few days later. The open secrets and the contradictory versions had turned into a criminal plot where there was no resolution, just the reality of people's manoeuvring unequal power relations and conflicts around land and other resources, politicised caste and religious identities.

Meanwhile, more and more, discussions started with a question along these lines: 'So you met this person, what did he tell you?' 'Don't trust him',[37] we were warned when crossing the line from one respondent to another. With Anand Kumar, the gentle impatience of the beginning occasionally ceded to a rougher one. Among our humbler respondents, crossing from one side to the other of the networks that organised solidarities and antagonisms in the lanes also became a problem. In one lane, a relatively well-off family with whom we had established friendly relations, became edgy about us spending time with another respondent who happened to be among the poorest in the lane: 'why do you speak to him, he just sits there and drinks?' the smart daughter asked.[38]

Sometimes fear surfaced in interviews, as on this day, when following up on a donation drive, which a man had organised for residents of the nearby slum after a fire that burnt the area to the ground. The man we were meeting had fixed the time and place, but when we knocked at his door a tensed female voice asked who we were. We had to repeat our names and the reason for our coming several times before the door opened: 'we were expecting someone else',[39] she said looking anxious, while the man invited us in. He too was dealing in real estate, and he knew Zaharuddin, with whom he had organised the donation drive. 'These days, we live in fear. We don't go out anymore',

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[35] Madanpur Khadar, 26.10.2016.

[36] Madanpur Khadar, 30.10.2016.

[37] Madanpur Khadar, 9.10.2016.

[38] Sunder Nargi, 10.11.2016

[39] Madanpur Khadar, 4.11.2016.

the wife said suddenly as if out of nowhere. 'Stop it', the husband said brusquely, then jovial: 'Come again', he said before sending us off to another man who had helped with the drive, and was it turned out another aspiring candidate to the post of Councillor and another person who dealt with real estate.

We followed the man's instruction, walking straight through the motely landscape of waste segregation sites beyond the resettlement colony without finding the place, stopping at last and ready to return, when three children surrounded us: 'Go straight, then right', they shouted. We had walked more than a kilometre by then and we had not asked anyone for directions, nor did we notice the children following us.

It seemed like we knew too much about the place and people knew too much about us. The obscure web of relations where we had once featured as naïve outsiders now threatened to close up on us. People still seemed glad to speak with us, but I wondered for how long. Saturation, then, was more like the experience of having to choose between leaving the place for long enough to really become an outsider again or the place closing up on us.

The danger was not so much to be handed down through one referral chain and seeing the neighbourhood through the perspective of one network. Partly, the initial survey mitigated this risk. Less intuitively, the density and changing nature of political relations in the two areas did too. Most political actors knew each other and were bound to one another by relationships of inter-dependence and antagonisms. As old loyalties turned into recent feuds, and vice-et-versa, multiple and often contradictory versions of an event surfaced, which provided precious clues about hidden conflicts.

More than being caught in one network of power, therefore, the risk was that the shroud of politicised information to which we had become a party would grow so thick as to sideline the perspective of residents who did not spend their day hording information about the 'who-is-who' of political society in the area. This raised another challenge linked to decentring the perspective on the state. Literature on the state today directs us towards leaving off theorising a 'master concept' and instead study what the state 'means and does for people' (Fuller and Harriss 2009, 10), but decades of knowledge accumulation nevertheless carry a force of gravity. When leaving literature behind, it is hard not to be drawn towards 'seeing like a state' (Scott 1998) because the state's statistics, reports, maps and archives provide us with ready-made pictures of the world.

Even when attempting to leave these pictures behind and learn how ordinary people 'see the state' (Corbridge et al. 2005), I found that I was being directed to one of the intermediaries on which these people relied to approach the state. The force of gravity was even more overwhelming among these intermediaries, because their survival depended on their accumulating knowledge about the state's actual working. These were people who spent their day gathering information that gave them leverage over others who had a hand in activating or divesting channels of delivery. At first, we were merely an object of their curiosity, but as we started to know more, we too became a potential source

of information in ways that only emphasised the forces drawing us into this layer of politicised information about the state.

In these conditions, viewing the state from the perspective of residents meant stepping back to observe how they behaved or to listen as they remained silent in its surroundings, spoke and argued at a counter or protested at its doorsteps. I found no better way of doing so than to weave the analysis around detailed descriptions such as the opening scene and many more to come. These passages are moments that balance the force of gravity that in this thesis as in much existing literature orients the perspective towards the working of the state and political society. They ensure that the discussion is regularly re-anchored in those sites where the state, in Madanpur Khadar and Sunder Nagri, was 'implicated in the texture of everyday life' (Gupta 1995, 375).

2.4 The Research in Practice

The research started with a survey covering 161 households and their 210 adult members, half of them men, the other half women. These respondents were asked to give basic work and demographic information about their 952 family members and detailed information about their own behaviours while accessing basic services and engaging in politics. I used satellite maps to randomly pick 10 lanes in each of the 4 clusters. With a team of 9 students from Ambedkar University, whose names feature in the acknowledgments, we then covered every fourth house. We interviewed the adult male and female heads of household wherever this applied. When one of the two could not be met after repeated visits, we compensated by adding another household.

When an extended family of more than two generations shared the same kitchen, we focused on one of the two adult couples. This could have biased the sample towards retired people, but it ended up having only a marginal effect if considering that just 4 per cent of all individual respondents were retired compared to 3 per cent of the wider sample of all adult family members. While not perfectly random, the sampling method seemed rigorous enough for my purpose of generating a point of comparison for the intensive ethnographic research that would follow. Since any further randomisation would have involved a baseline of two areas of 150,000 and 75,000 residents respectively,[40] the compromise imposed itself.

On a given day, we were typically four people split into two pairs. The small size of the team favoured constant exchanges: after every few households, we gathered to review surveys, clarify what needed to be clarified and discuss each interaction. I entered data while collecting it to avoid having to guess my way through them subsequently. A final test of consistency on some 20 questionnaires ensured that nothing had gone wrong while entering survey answers on excel sheets.

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[40] Head of Saint Stephens Dispensary, Sunder Nagri, 30.10.2016; as well as: (Heller and Mukhopadhyay 2015, 4).

For the second ethnographic component, I approached some 39 men and 38 women, most of them spouses interviewed for the survey. Among the group, some had reported political connections and others had not; there were Muslims and Hindus, upper castes and lower castes, literate and illiterate, relatively better-off and worse-off, employed and unemployed. Some had health problems, but none were bedridden or disabled.

By then, I had realised that observing behaviours around services of this smaller number of respondents could not be done without intruding in their private lives, which apart from being ethically questionable would have altered their routines. Instead, I started by dissociating observations at service points and in-depth interviews with respondents. Eventually, the two threads often converged again, but this initial dissociation helped reduce intrusiveness.

Along with one of the four who assisted me through the second half of the study,[41] I spent time around three points where the tanker-truck came to deliver water. We lingered around a public tap, and we sat around two subsidised food shops in each neighbourhood. The rooms, offices, courtyards, lanes and meeting grounds where politics took place were another focus of attention.

For the interviews, I found that 'life histories' worked best to start the conversation. It was a thread on which we could build with questions about how routines had changed around nodal moments: the migration from the village for those who had done so in their lifetime; the forced resettlement for those who were old enough to remember; education and entry into the workforce; getting married and having children; illnesses and deaths in the family. Discussing changes in routines provided insights about temporal choices without imposing a rigid chronology. From there, probing about how services had improved or deteriorated came naturally, as did questions relating to the circumstances of a person's involvement in the politics of basic service delivery. The life course format was also well suited to explore the link between present choices about time and imaginations of past and future.

Other discussions followed, which probed aspects that called for further elaboration. Whenever possible, we alternated situations where the person was alone and others where we met in the presence of family members and neighbours. Progressively, discussions mixed with interactions; the interview format blurred into observations. Often, a discussion was broken off to attend water or food chores; often, at a service point, we came across some of our respondents.

While these approaches were precious to describe temporal choices, they left many aspects of the political setting in which these choices were made in the dark. To shed light on this backdrop, I interviewed the main actors involved in planning and delivering services: bureaucrats and engineers in relevant government departments, frontline officials, private providers and middlemen. I spoke to cadres of the main political parties, moving upwards from the street leader to the Councillors,

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[41] Again, see acknowledgments for names, p. 8.

Members of Legislative Assembly and Members of Parliament. I spoke to activists and members of civil-society organisations. In Madanpur Khadar's slum clusters, I spoke to contractors and site supervisors.

I did not record interviews because a previous experience had taught me that taking out a recording device among poorer respondents and politicians alike stokes suspicions and self-awareness. It also did not fit the informal blending of interviews and observation into which the research eventually evolved. Instead, my research assistants and I took notes, which we compared every day when leaving Sunder Nagri and Madanpur Khadar. Back in my room, I compiled the notes into a document that ended up being 320 pages long.

2.5 Identity and the Research

To complete this description, let me revisit the pronouns 'I, we, and them' that featured in the text so far, and take this as a chance to unpack some of the identity dynamics involved in the research.

I was the odd character in the lot, the one who stood out in the two areas and who attracted comments during the first few days: 'Foreigner! What is she doing here? Are you from the government?' As weeks and months went by, people grew accustomed to having me around. The fundamentals, however, remained: I was a woman, I was white, privileged and, through my university affiliation, linked to the former colonial power. The fact that I was married to an Indian and had lived in the country for five years smoothed the edges but did not change the basics.

It did not help that during the first few weeks we were walking around with survey questionnaires. Residents were used to seeing pairs walking down the lane with a folder and a pen. They were seeing the monthly polio and tuberculosis prevention surveys, occasional NGO surveys, and more exceptionally yet, but in ways that had struck imaginations, the surveys that preceded forced evacuation in the slums. The sight of a questionnaire conjured ideas of entitlement, disappointment, defiance and, for some of Madanpur Khadar's slum dwellers, outright fear. Repeating that I had no links with either government or NGOs went some way to fight these preconceptions, but it was only when we dropped the survey forms and started engaging people on their own terms that these associations moved to the background.

Along with me were Indian students, mostly women, a few men. I had given up working with young people from the neighbourhood, because an initial attempt to do so through a youth group had seemed to put them in an uncomfortable position. Instead, I worked with the group of students from Ambedkar University in Delhi whose names are acknowledged at the beginning of the thesis.[42] The research would not have been possible without them—the four who took turns at my

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[42] Pay was aligned with the Indian University Grants Commission's junior fellowship.

side for the ethnographic component, in particular, had each in different ways a truly remarkable ability to stir through long and often sensitive discussions, humanly, delicately and yet firmly.

They played an essential role in overcoming the distance that surfaced in the comments that opened this section. They also helped with language. I understand a fair deal of standard Hindi and was able to discuss straightforward issues of access to services. But my Hindi was not good enough to interact freely on many subtle and often painful issues brought about by life course interviews. The other major challenge was that most of my respondents either spoke a form of Hindi heavily coloured by Urdu or came from parts of India where other dialects are spoken. As a result, my understanding varied from just about everything with the Hindi speaking middle-class respondents in the administration or civil society, to just about nothing with a handful of respondents in the resettlement colonies and slums.

Being two women researchers, as was the case on most days, had an impact on the responses we were receiving. I had hoped to get a gender-balanced team but my diverse attempts to enlist male assistants were unsuccessful. In the end, there were four men who ended up being a lot less available than the women. About their personal lives and gendered violence in particular, women residents spoke with a surprising openness. For these private questions, our discussion with men was usually less substantial, despite a few very remarkable exceptions. The result for the research is that, though gender neutral in its design, the perspective is increasingly gendered as we delve into intimate matters.

The effect of gender was more ambivalent for interviews with politicians, powerbrokers and activists. On the one hand, we were the unknowing female researchers listening to older male politicians in a starkly gendered landscape. On the other hand, my being a foreigner with an affiliation to a London university sometimes seemed to trump the gender card. Like other women researchers working in starkly stratified gender environments (Viterna 2009), I found that the role of harmless female listener could even be an advantage when engaging with issues like political violence. More than for the research itself, being patronised because of gender was a problem for my ego, and it was up to me not to let this interfere with the research. Doing so was not difficult in Madanpur Khadar and Sunder Nagri. It became more difficult in interviews with people whose socio-economic background was closer to mine.

Being women researchers also raised an issue of safety, which in turn had consequences for how we went about doing fieldwork. Starting the research, I had been warned repeatedly, and though we ended up not facing any problem there was a moment after four o'clock when the atmosphere seemed to turn and fewer women could be seen in the streets. We did not stay after that, which limited the timeframe of the observation. By that time, however, service points were closed and political rallies over.

Overall, though, the experience was one of surprising openness: most people in Madanpur Khadar and Sunder Nagri spoke at length and on very personal issues. Much of the credit for this

goes to the four who were with me but being outsiders to the area probably helped as well. When we would ask someone whether he or she had spoken before about the sad, at times traumatic, things they had mentioned, many would say that they had not, adding something about neighbours or family members being there only when things went well. As outsiders who took the time to listen, we were usually welcomed; at times, effusively.

What though about my own perceptions? Clearly, my own gaze was not free of the differences that shaped how residents saw me. By mentioning Evans-Pritchard's (1940) writing about the Nuers early on in this chapter, I was setting foot on a very loaded ground. Even if it was to distance myself from his idea of a temporal experience that would be altogether different from ours, was I not just an actualised version of this? To some extent, of course, there is no denying it, but I hope that, just like the understanding of time in this research is more diverse than his, so is the understanding of identities. There is also, and perhaps more importantly, the fact that when speaking about time the universal experiences that make the canvass of a life keep on surfacing through the layers of particular cultures and institutions. More than religion and culture, for example, I found that a birth, a death, an illness, the feeling of aging mattered to how residents of the two areas spoke about time. Because my life had been more sheltered, I had not experienced these life events the way many of them had at a similar age, but they certainly were part of my horizon too.

2.6 Doing No Harm

How could we avoid exposing respondents to any harm? More than tensions around resources and caste, the risk that loomed largest in the day-to-day practice of research was violence against women. Many women respondents spoke about it being part of their everyday life. Some did not want us to speak with their partners. Others broke off the interview when they expected their husband or asked us to meet somewhere outside their home. All gave different accounts in the presence of their husbands and neighbours. Doing no harm, then, was first and foremost to avoid exposing respondents as they navigated constraints in which gender often interacted with communal dynamics. It meant matching the silences of respondents when we were in the presence of partners or neighbours. Since we did not know what exactly could be said or not, avoiding references to whatever the partner had said in other interviews was the only safe bet.

With regard to the murkier aspects of political society, collecting information did not, in itself, entail risks for respondents, as long as we stuck to vague generalities when asked: 'so, what did he say?' Though we did hear about violence in conflicts over resources, or against individuals who had shed light on corrupt practices, such cases were always related to their challenging undue benefits. These were not settings where residents were targeted for speaking to outsiders.[43]

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[43] Unlike in conflict areas: (Smyth and Robinson 2001; Viterna 2009; Wood 2006).

More sensitive was the decision about how much should be published. My respondents themselves did not object to being identified by name, nor did the naming entail any risk for most of them. Nevertheless, I wanted to avoid taking any chance with the handful of those who had provided compromising information. Since naming respondents did not seem to be a major added value, I decided to identify only those politicians whose names were out in the public. For people lower down in the party ranks, I used generic identifier, and anonymised names for them and residents.

Deciding on whether to name the two neighbourhoods was harder. On the one hand, not doing so was a loss, even towards respondents, several of whom had spoken about the value of telling their story in response to our warning them that the research would not bring any direct benefit. On the other hand, I did not want to take any risk, with Madanpur Khadar's slum dwellers in particular who found themselves caught in a nasty political battle about borderland belonging. After much hesitation and asking around, I have come to the conclusion that I was not exposing them beyond what they already endured by identifying the place by name.

Harder than doing no harm was dealing with the painful memories—accidents that left a whole family with no income, diseases, deaths that could have been avoided, or violence. The life course format called for such testimonies. There was little we could do to help except inform about available support, which we did. Still, our listening often felt uncomfortably akin to voyeurism. Progressively, however, as is the case with many researchers confronted with hardship (Das 1991; Wood 2006), I grew convinced that the right thing to do was to listen. As Veena Das writes in 'Our Work to cry: Your Work to Listen', survivors of the Sikh riots in Delhi 'eagerly accepted the opportunity to simply talk…to construct the events as they remembered what had happened, and to help in the writing of these events. All this signified the fact that their lives had a meaning and that their suffering would not go untold' (1991, 395). The stories I heard were not about overt and traumatic violence, but about lives truncated or cut short by illnesses that could have been avoided. They too were people who felt that 'no one listens',[44] and among whom some referred to the act of narrating as a means of giving a meaning to their hardship. I will not forget a man with an untreated tumour as big as a fist who answered again and again our repeated enquiries about whether he wanted to be left to rest: 'It's good to speak. Otherwise, I have no one to tell this to'.[45]

In these moments, it felt like the actual harm would have been to shy away from listening and asking the questions that needed to be asked. Neither were the real stakes in these situations to avoid harm, but the much broader and harder question of how, as researcher, I should behave when faced with avoidable harm and the scandal of existences that were needlessly cut short. In every encounter, the question remained unresolved. It felt like the resolution would have to be sought over

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[44] See chapter four, section one, where this answer to a survey question is discussed, p. 83.
[45] Madanpur Khadar, 15.10.2016.

a life course, in the topics chosen, a loyalty to respondents and a commitment to prolonging research with impact.

2.7 Asking for Time

The other ethical question that remained unresolved was more than any others related to the founding interrogation of my thesis: was the time residents of Madanpur Khadar and Sunder Nagri spent speaking to me worth it for them?

Paying to compensate people for their time was an option, but it raised several problems. More than anything, they seemed to fear their neighbours' gossip and envy. Because economic opportunities were limited and usually dependent on outsiders, there was a real risk of stoking tensions. More than once a respondent complained about how, after seeing us together, neighbours had come to enquire about benefits. Several of them reported about how one neighbour had stopped speaking to them since. One day, as we spoke to one woman, no less than four members of the same family whose house was located a few hundred meters away stepped by one after the other as if by chance: 'They are making sure, I am not getting anything from you',[46] the woman explained. It came to the point that we decided to spend as much time as possible in public spaces, and limited private interactions to the minimum required for the interviews. Had we paid respondents, neighbours would have gotten to know, which would have stoked tensions and confronted us with unmanageable expectations. Neither was it clear who should have been compensated given the fluid design of the ethnographic enquiry.

Over the course of the research, furthermore, the question about compensating residents for the time they spent speaking to us lost prominence, for the reason mentioned above: those who did agree to spend time interacting with us seemed to value the fact of being listened to. Provided respondents gave their informed consent to a study that would have no direct benefits to them, it seemed that their willingness to engage with us was enough.[47] It is now, as I write up the thesis that the question surfaces again in a different way: to what do these hours residents spent talking to me engage me?

One form of reciprocity applied in ethnography is to return materials gathered to the community of origin (Wood 2006, 382). Interpreted broadly, as the necessity to make that material available to researchers from the country, it involves favouring open source publications, attending workshops in India and for future work engaging in partnerships with researchers based in the country.

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[46] Madanpur Khadar, 9.9.2016.

[47] Since many respondents were illiterate, consent was taken orally.

Interpreted more tightly, as making research findings available to residents of Madanpur Khadar and Sunder Nagri, the task is more challenging for a research such as this that has only a limited number of actionable findings. Besides, having tried to share some early findings, my feeling was that this was not what interested residents. They did not need to be explained the subtleties of the power imbalances that undermined their ability to demand better service delivery, forced them to wait and cut short their lives. They wanted to be listened to, and they wanted their words to be registered and remembered. 'It's all right, you will tell our story',[48] said one respondent of Madanpur Khadar's slum who features centrally in the last empirical chapter. 'Don't forget us',[49] said another respondent of Sunder Nagri. Telling their story, returning to take stock of how they are and building on this thesis with more research: this, more than an attempt to return knowledge, to me, seems like the form of reciprocity to which I am bound.

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[48] Madanpur Khadar, 7.11.2016.
[49] Sunder Nagri, 17.11.2016.

New Delhi

Uttar Pradesh

Haryana

Sunder Nagri ●

Red Fort ★

★ Turkman Gate

Madanpur Khadar ●

Sunder Nagri

Nand Nagri

Uttar Pradesh

Court
(MLA)

Madanpur Khadar

Canal

MLA (8 km)

Yamuna
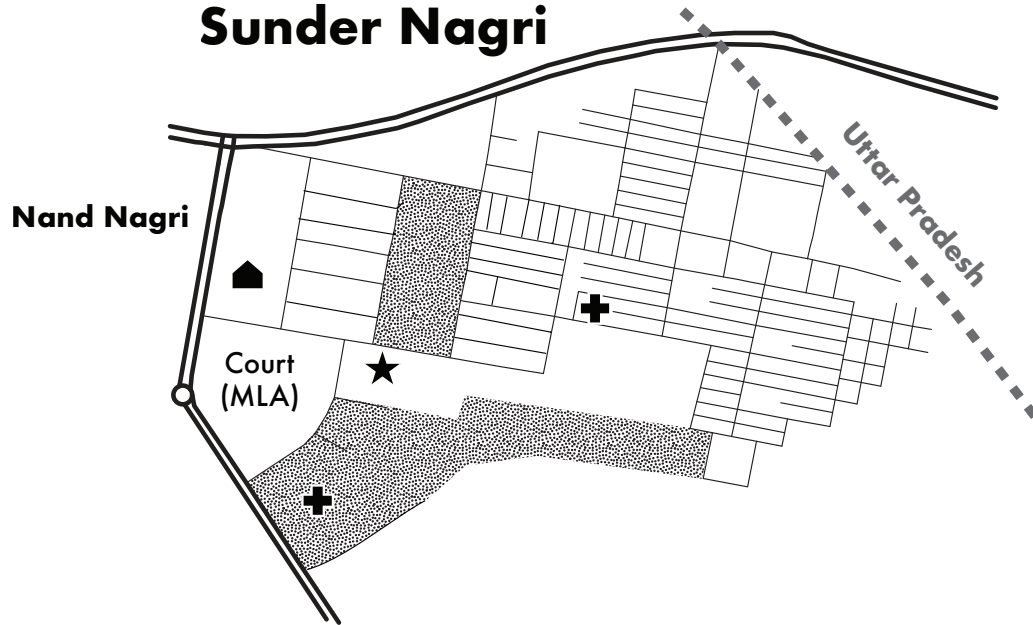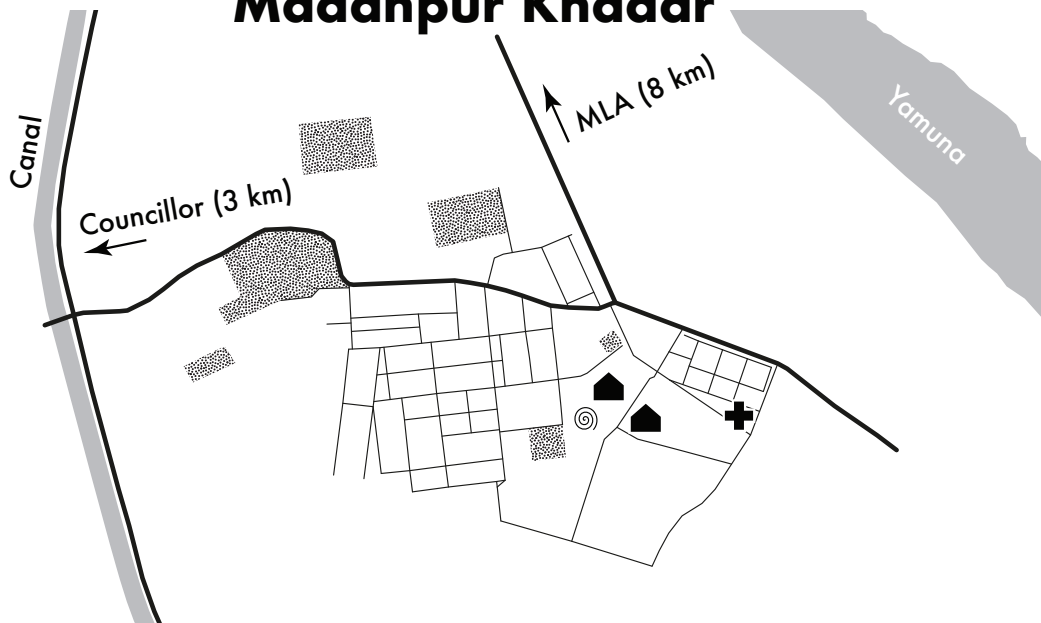
Councillor (3 km)

▦	Slums
✚	Dispensary
★	Councillor
⬟	School
◎	Unauthorised building

The way into Sunder Nagri's slum.

3   Sunder Nagri and Madanpur Khadar

Looking up from most places in Madanpur Khadar, one can see two buildings rising high above the low roofs of the resettlement colony.[50] They stand facing each other at a distance of a hundred meter. The first is the new secondary school, its immaculate walls of pink sand stone dazzling during the day, glowing orange in the evening sun. The other building is grey, made of concrete, each floor gutted after the authorities cracked down on its illegal promoters: 'it will stay like that for some time, and then they will start again' one resident commented bitterly.[51] The buildings, in my view, are emblematic of the kind of political territory Madanpur Khadar and Sunder Nagri comprise, set as they are at the frontline between the making of an intricate web of laws and the fraying of these laws.

Introducing these territories is an opportunity to describe the two political landscapes. It is also an opportunity to broaden beyond political dimensions and include the multiple factors shaping temporal choices—apart from services and politics, the physical environment, work and income, education and health (Burchardt 2010). The section, in sum, sketches out the full circle panorama dictated by the multidimensional nature of temporal choices before narrowing down in the chapters to come.

Lastly, the chapter is a chance to pause on the distinct trajectory of the two neighbourhoods. It allows a foray into the story of two places and adds to a strand of studies that tells the story of India's urbanisation through the perspective of poor residents in their encounter with the governing state. Like the physical equivalent of the two buildings above feature as landmark for the person walking around in Madanpur Khadar, their evocation will serve as a landmark for this discussion, which sometimes will lose sight of them, only to come back to them later.

3.1 Villagers and the City

Residents of Madanpur Khadar and Sunder Nagri did not identify as being from Delhi. Usually, their hand rose in a vague sign towards somewhere that seemed to be neither here nor there as they mentioned 'a village' from where they, their parents or grandparents had come. Mostly, these villages were located in the poor northern states of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and more rarely West Bengal. The slum dwellers of Madanpur Khadar alone, spoke of villages in Assam. In Sunder Nagri, too many years had gone by for this diverse origin to be immediately noticeable in the organisation of the colony, but Madanpur Khadar bore it like a flag. Here, a group of fifteen women clothed in the colourful dresses typical of Rajasthan were sitting on the bare ground of a busy

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[50] See the picture of the tanker-truck on p. 10, where the two buildings can be seen at the background.
[51] Madanpur Khadar, 11.11.2016.

crossing: 'It's nice to speak our language', they said, 'we live spread all across, and since there is no place to meet elsewhere, we gather in this spot'.[52] A couple of lanes further stood a temple, which our guide that day introduced as the Bengali temple. Still further away stood what was known as the Bihari temple, around which a few men could usually be met chatting in their local Bhojpuri dialect.

The connection with the villages also translated in the large floating population of the two areas—some 10,000 to 15,000 in addition to the 60,000 regular residents in Sunder Nagri,[53] and more in Madanpur Khadar, where the population was estimated at 150,000 (Heller and Mukhopadhyay 2015). Families in the two neighbourhoods went back during festivals, harvest, or when someone in the village fell ill. They hosted relatives from the village, and those who owned land went back when an accident or a disease left them without livelihoods.

Less immediately visible in the texture of the two places was a second layer linked to the communities that had emerged in the slums. Asked about whether they had someone to go to when faced with problems, neighbours from one pocket often pointed to the same man who had been their slumlord, their intonation ranging from respect to bitter derision depending on the man's ability to reinvent himself as powerbroker in the new setting. In some parts, residents from smaller slum pockets were relocated together, carrying along the organic social structure of the slum. In other parts, resulting from the evictions of larger slums, people who had once lived side by side were separated and mixed up. Madanpur Khadar and Sunder Nagri, in sum, were multi-layered mosaics that bore the mark of the different communities in which its residents had spent time as they moved from the village to the slum, and from the slum to the resettlement colony.

These layers were one particular thread of a larger history in which human movements from poorer rural areas meet the city and the state as urban planner. While the wider modalities of this encounter and the rich literature that has emerged around them are beyond the scope of this thesis,[54] a few aspects specifically related to the two sites are worth mentioning. Both neighbourhoods are located in India's National Capital Territory, an area whose population was estimated at 17 million in the 2011 census, surrounded by a larger urban agglomeration of 24 million people in total. It is a territory that has India's highest per capita income after Goa, and which is neighboured by some of the country's poorest regions. In spite of this, migration has remained low compared to other parts of the world (Kundu and Saraswati 2012; Munshi and Rosenzweig 2016), for reasons that are at least partly related to obstacles faced by newcomers in a city where affordable housing is scarce, and where rights to services are restricted for those who have no dwelling (Dupont 2008; Kundu 2004).[55] Those

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[52] Madanpur Khadar, 03.03.2016.

[53] Head of Saint Stephens Dispensary, Sunder Nagri, 30.10.2016.

[54] Among other, see: (Dupont 2016; Turner 1968; Werlin 1999).

[55] Other studies have emphasised the role of informal caste-based networks of solidarity in the villages (Munshi and Rosenzweig 2016) and of public work programmes in rural areas (Imbert and Papp 2016) although this latter finding is disputed (Novotný, Kubelková, and Joseph 2013).

who had made it into slums of central Delhi were pushed to the fringes, in a series of eviction drives that between the 1970s and the 2000s saw the creation of some 55 resettlement colonies (Heller and Mukhopadhyay 2015).

Sunder Nagri was founded in 1976, during the first wave of evictions that coincided with the heavy-handed city-beautification programme that accompanied the 21-month state of emergency declared by India's Prime Minister at the time, Indira Gandhi. About the brutalities that accompanied this first wave, Emma Tarlo's (2003) *Unsettling Memories: Narratives of the Emergency in Delhi* provides a powerful account. Drawing on research in a resettlement colony near Sunder Nagri she describes a time when forced resettlement became linked to another aspect of the 20-point programme that became the flagships of these years of emergency: targets of family planning became quotas of sterilisation. As quotas grew, so did pressure exerted by seniors over juniors and by juniors over everyone they could lure or force into sterilisation camps. Slum dwellers became privileged fodder for a machine that had turned mad: threats of eviction and promises to regularise their dwellings were exchanged against sterilisation certificates; these promises undone soon after and new promises exchanged for more certificates. The slum dwellers tried to limit the damage as best they could: elderly men lay down on the operation table instead of their sons, some went twice, better off neighbours and kin threatened others into providing the certificate that was demanded from them.

In this grizzly story, the demolition of the Turkman Gate slums,[56] once home to many of Sunder Nagri's first residents, was a particularly dark moment, albeit one that until today remains clouded in uncertainties because censorship applying at the time meant that accounts had to be reconstructed later. As Tarlo writes, however, 'the overall theme is clear: local resistance to family planning and slum demolitions precipitated a brutal massacre of innocent citizens' (2003, 38).

The slums around Turkman Gate were located at the heart of the historic centre, not far from Delhi's largest mosque. Just a few hundred meters away was the Red Fort, the Moghul palace turned prison during the British rule and later turned venue from which every year on Independence Day the Prime Minister raises India's flag. Demolition squads were squatting around the area, when a sterilisation camp was set up and residents were given the choice between providing a voluntary quota of men for sterilisation and facing eviction. There were clashes, during which the police opened fire, killing 6 people according to a commission of enquiry set up by the government (Shah 1978, 141), more than 12 according to one reconstruction of events (Dayal and Bose 2018, 446/3642), and more than a thousand according to rumours spread at the time. Those who survived were resettled across several locations on the north-eastern fringe of Delhi, and given a 99-year lease for a plot ranging between 12 and 18 square meters, of what was then nothing but 'wilderness'.[57] Nand Nagri

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[56] See map of Delhi, p. 57.

[57] Madanpur Khadar, 15.02.2016; Sunder Nagri, 3.3.2016; as well as: (Tarlo 2003, 139).

and the neighbouring *Sunder Nagri* [in English the beautiful city] were two such sites (Dayal and Bose 2018, 317/3642) along with Trilokpuri and Welcome Colony (Tarlo 2003, 64).

Forty years after Sunder Nagri's creation, the wilderness of the beginning was just a memory. All basic services were available despite well founded grievances about their quality. Houses were connected to the water and electricity grid, and while there were no sewers in all except in the oldest and most established blocks, other areas were equipped with covered gutters. There were subsidised food shops, a government dispensary and schools. On all but one side, the neighbourhood was surrounded by dense settlements. Its western side was flanked by the district administration's compound, which residents of Sunder Nagri called the *Court* in English. Departments responsible for providing subsidised food, water and documents all had their office on site, as did the local arm of the judiciary and the elected MLA.

From the 1980s onwards,[58] unauthorised slum clusters were built on land adjacent to the planned colony by people who were often the kin or village men and women of the main colony's residents. As is common for such unauthorised settlements, entitlements were obtained progressively, through a process of political negotiation that was reaching completion by the time I visited the area. Residents expected the colony's regularisation any time. They had a legal electricity connection. Their children went to government schools. A dispensary and subsidised food shops had been built in the unauthorised settlement. Though the water grid did not cover the area, a tanker-truck came door-to-door and filled the inbuilt tank with which many houses were equipped. The biggest difference with the main colony was sanitation, since open gutters were the work of residents and most houses relied on common toilets outside the slum.

In contrast, Madanpur Khadar where resettlement took place between 1998 and 2006 was part of the last wave of forcible relocations before the AAP government shifted to a softer model of in-situ slum improvement for the few remaining pockets in central Delhi.[59] Relocation took place on farmland that had once surrounded a village near the Yamuna. At the time of the research, fields still flanked the colony's eastern side, while its western side opened onto a motely landscape of waste segregation sites and petty industries. The state in Madanpur Khadar was distant and scattered: it took 15 minutes by rickshaw to reach the Councillor's office, 40 minutes by bus to reach the food office and a lot longer to reach the MLA's office. All but the most informed residents ignored these places, instead relying on local intermediaries.

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[58] Sunder Nagri, 6.2.2.2016, 20.09.2016.

[59] Senior advisor, Delhi Urban Improvement Board, Government of Delhi, Delhi Secretariat, 26.02.2016; and as spelled out in the government's new resettlement guidelines (GOD 2015a).

A park in Madanpur Khadar.

A park in Sunder Nagri.

Amenities and services were recent and patchy. Residents recalled a time a few years earlier when they relied on illegal water pumps bored into groundwater reserves too polluted to be safe (GOI 2016). 'People died of diarrhoea',[60] someone said, echoing a collective memory of illnesses and morbidity. Gutters were open and filled to the brim with solid waste. For some time, school was held under tents,[61] and the road connecting the area to the traffic knots some four kilometres away was just a few years old. The year of the research, however, saw two remarkable developments, one of them being the opening of the large government school mentioned earlier, the other being the opening of a dispensary soon to be followed by a second. There was also, though this was still a distant project unknown to even frontline political representatives, the project to connect the colony to the water grid.[62]

In Madanpur Khadar as well, slums had sprung up near the colony's western tip. They were not the solid brick slums of Sunder Nagri, but shacks of corrugated iron or of cardboard and plastic whose inhabitants accessed no other public services than drinking water from a common tap several hundreds of meters away. Residents said they were from Assam, but for many neighbours, they were foreigners. They had no political rights in Delhi and their presence would not have been tolerated had their landlord and contractor not bribed the police. There seemed to be no prospect of stabilisation for them; on the contrary, the threat of being stripped of their citizenship hung over them, as chapter seven develops.

3.2 Services and Mazes

From the initial 'wilderness' to the situation described in the previous section many years passed during which residents interacted with a complicated system of governance. While the everyday strategies that made up this interaction are the object of other chapters, the context is worth introducing here.

As a federation, India has a system of power devolution in which responsibility for most basic services, among which drinking water, food, health and secondary education, fall under the primary purview of the state administration, while the municipal council is responsible for waste collections and primary education. In Delhi, the organisation is complicated by the city's status as union territory rather than full state. Here, the police and a large amount of land fall under the central government's purview. The centrally nominated Lieutenant Governor, whose function in the union territory government is roughly equivalent to the one of president in the federal government, has

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[60] Madanpur Khadar, 2.10.2016.

[61] Youth group, Jagori, Madanpur Khadar, 13.02.2016; residents, Madanpur Khadar, 15.2.2016, 2.10.2016, 11.11.2016.

[62] Interview and maps, Engineer, Delhi Water Board, Sarita Vihar, 16.09.2016.

more power to intervene. He can transfer bureaucrats, block laws tabled without his approval or demand clarifications that can bring the process of policy making to a grinding halt.

At the time of research, the situation was no less than a stalemate: the governor had blocked all major legislations tabled by the union territory government, 14 in all. Meanwhile, the union territory executive was also in conflict with a large section of the administration, which it accused of slowing down delivery. Even the judiciary became part of the struggle, when the union territory's executive filed a legal case against the Lieutenant Governor's interference. Meanwhile, multiple criminal complaints, most of which were eventually dismissed, were filed against Delhi's representative.

Underlying this situation was a bitter power struggle over the capital territory, which the Congress, once India's main party, lost to the AAP in 2013. The AAP emerged out of largescale anti-corruption demonstrations that marked the Congress' final years in power. Beyond these demonstrations, its founders came with a history of mobilising poor urban dwellers in which Sunder Nagri featured prominently, as coming chapters will narrate in more detail. Barely 11 months after its creation, the new party won enough seats to form a coalition government in Delhi. Once in power, the AAP's programme of radical reforms clashed with the slower pace of policy-driven change. When the law meant to institutionalise power-devolution to neighbourhood assemblies was diluted by the union territory's elected assembly, the Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal announced his resignation merely 49 days after ascending to power and called for new elections. The victory that followed in 2015 was even more resounding, with 67 out of 70 seats in Delhi's assembly, but it was once again followed by difficulties of which the stalemate above was a reflection.

Meanwhile, the federal election of 2014 saw Narendra Modi's BJP form the first-ever non-Congress majority at the centre. Subsequently, victories in major states brought the party closer to a complete domination over the political landscape, which it went on to pursue in starkly uncompromising ways. At the national level, Modi (2014) promised to 'rid India of the Congress'. In Delhi, where it faced a younger adversary, the struggle was just as stark. It was clear to all that the BJP-appointed Lieutenant Governor's blocking of major laws passed by the union territory's government was not alien to this struggle, nor were the multiple judicial cases against AAP representatives.

If Delhi's governance is a maze, then resettlement colonies are mazes within a maze. In Sunder Nagri and Madanpur Khadar, part of the land was owned by a central government agency, while another part fell under an agency from the union territory government. Each level was responsible for doing the groundwork, but maintenance was done by relevant administrations, some of which fell under the BJP-ruled municipality, others under the rule of the union territory. The transfer from the agency owning the land to the agencies responsible for running basic amenities hardly went smoothly: in Madanpur Khadar, for example, a water treatment plant built by the central

agency soon fell into dereliction and was never repaired because federal and union territory administration disagreed about who should foot the bill.[63] Nor did it help that, until 2008, Madanpur Khadar's resettlement colony was not formally attached to a municipal corporation and only loosely linked to a union territory representative. Without these two tiers of representation, the channelling of funds and political incentives to work for residents were muddled, adding to the administrative blockages above.

The different government agencies were not the only ones claiming land as their own, landed families did too.[64] The backdrop to this was a weak land register and a territory where the city was meeting farmlands. It was a setting similar to the one Aseem Prakash (2015) has studied in a nearby satellite town, where planners proceed with reclassifications based on an uncertain legal ground and under the pressure of considerable private monies, much of them black. It is on this ground that relocation took place, resulting in a multiplicity of lawsuits and in disputes about land becoming fodder for local political rivalries.

While the transactions themselves were obscure, their consequences were for all to see. Even in Sunder Nagri, where such disputed patches were more limited in size, informal buildings had sprung up on an area earmarked for a school.[65] Promoters known as 'the land mafia' had stepped into the vacuum opened by a protracted judicial battle. Meanwhile in Madanpur Khadar, vacant areas flanked the colony's northern and western side. Inside the colony, disputed land flanked the new school or spread to its very heart on an area equivalent to 600 plots. In the most central locations, these grounds were empty, but in peripheral locations powerbrokers bribed their way into setting up informal slum clusters, where the most vulnerable among my respondents found a precarious dwelling.

In light of the above, the two buildings described in the opening lines of this chapter illustrate the nature of the two territories that were Madanpur Khadar and Sunder Nagri: the large school beautifully built in pale pink sandstone and the grey gutted vestige of some ill-advised real estate scam nearby. Slowly, but with consequences that were for all to see, the mechanics of service delivery fell into place and basic constitutional rights stabilised. This occurred even as real estate speculation exposed this mechanics to unprecedented corrosion. The two places were really two of the innumerable and evolving frontlines where the governance of laws meets with the forces that are responsible for its fraying. The many behaviours we will see in the coming chapters feature the day-to-day negotiation of people who find themselves set on this frontline. They are this frontline seen and made from below, by ordinary people, based on partial and frequently inaccurate information provided by those higher up in the chain of delivery.

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[63] Engineer, Delhi Water Board, Sarita Vihar, 16.09.2016.

[64] (Bidhuri 2015a, 2015b); as well as activist, Madanpur Khadar, 11.11.2016.

[65] MLA, Sunder Nagri, 5.10.2016; Councillor, Sunder Nagri, 28.10.2016.

3.3 Identity and Politics

In Madanpur Khadar, caste was a determinant feature of the political territory above, as the previous chapter points to. It organised the conflicts over land and power that ran along the canal between the colony's poor and diverse residents and the dominant caste of the Councillor.[66] Inside the colony itself, heterogeneity dominated.[67] Among the many represented groups were the Valmikis, a scheduled caste group traditionally involved in sweeping. Upper caste Thakurs formed the second largest group, followed by the Other Backward Class Yadavs, whose emergence as a political force has transformed the landscape of neighbouring states (Jaffrelot 2003; Yadav 2000). Unlike in Sunder Nagri, where an organic reconfiguration had occurred over time, it was not rare for a Thakur family to share the doorstep with a Valmiki or a Yadav household. Here again, Madanpur Khadar' resettlement colony bore its diversity as a flag in ways that turned it into something like the opposite of a village, where these groups are typically located in neatly distinct quarters.

Of all four clusters, the nearby slum was the most homogenous. Here were people who did not identify with the system of social stratification, which many South Asian Muslims have adopted under the influence of the Hindu caste system. Meanwhile, In Sunder Nagri's main colony, two sister weaver communities dominated among the diversity, the Muslim Ansaris and the Hindu Kolis. For the government's politics of affirmative action aimed at compensating for caste-based discrimination, the Hindu Kolis fell within the most disadvantaged group, the Scheduled Castes entitled to the entire gamut of affirmative action in education, government jobs and politics. The Muslim Ansaris, meanwhile, who were similarly situated in the looser system of social stratification followed by Muslims, fell under the Other Backward Class category where they had to compete under India's policy of affirmative action with powerful intermediary Hindu castes.[68] In the nearby slum, finally, the Kolis were more represented than the Ansaris amidst a population that was otherwise more heterogeneous.

More than these stratifications, however, the feature that characterised the two neighbourhoods was the large share of Muslim residents—63 per cent of the sample across the four clusters, compared to 13 per cent in Delhi, where confessional representations are roughly equivalent to countrywide shares (table 3.3.1.). At cluster-level representations varied: Madanpur Khadar's slum was nearly entirely Muslim, and the few non-Muslim residents lived in distinct brick houses around the actual shacks; in Sunder Nagri Muslims were a majority; they were a minority in Madanpur Khadar's resettlement colony alone, but even there were more represented than in regional and national averages.

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[66] See map p. 58

[67] For the list, see annex 2, p. 254

[68] For the politics behind this unequal treatment: (Fazal 2007; Hasan 2011).

Table 3.3.1 Religious Composition

Percentages of respondents (reported by row)

	Hindus	Muslims	Christians	Other	Sample size
Sunder Nagri					
Resettlement	33%	66%	1%	—	264
Slum	35%	65%	—	—	255
Madanpur Khadar					
Resettlement	69%	30%	1%	—	234
Slum	8%	92%	—	—	199
New Delhi	82%	13%	1%	4%	16,000,000

Sources: own survey; census 2011.

More than caste, religion was the social cleavage around which polarisation set in. While I did not witness any case of communal violence, signs of lingering tensions were widespread. Among Hindu residents, in particular, gossip and rumours abounded that evoked Mary Douglas' (1991) famous analysis of how the expression of social taboos tends to follow a few typical symbolic associations where disorder collides with ritual pollution and threat.

In Sunder Nagri, one man spoke of how Muslims were littering, then went on to mention how everyone had been ill with waterborne diseases: 'you know, they have these buffalos, mosquitoes bread in their blood when they kill them', he added.[69] He and others dwelled on how Muslims ate meat and spoke about an imagined hyper-fertility of their Muslim neighbours, whose supposed expression was the disorderly building of one floor after the other: 'you see, all these buildings', the same man concluded, 'the air can't circulate anymore, so the atmosphere gets vitiated'. All of this, furthermore, mixed with complaints about how a Muslim-dominated scrap business spread on the streets in a disorderly manner, and how a Muslim mafia boss was behind the illegal occupation of land meant for a school ground.[70] Norms on purity, concerns about health and crime blended with wider debates that amplify the slightly faster growth of India's poorer and on average less educated Muslim population into a threat for India's Hindus, never mind that according to my sample, Muslim families were smaller in the neighbourhood than Hindu families, with six members against seven for the latter.

In Madanpur Khadar, rumours circulated around a small unauthorised Muslim colony on the western edge and around the slums where the Borderlanders lived. Repeatedly and with colourful details, we were told that they were a ground for prostitutes, drug addicts and criminals, whose

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[69] Sunder Nagri, 29.10.2016.
[70] Sunder Nagri, 26.02.2016, 29.10.2016, 11.11.2016.

insalubrious activities left their marks on the roads of Madanpur Khadar every morning in the form of used syringes, condoms, bottles mixing with waste of all kinds. These images came with warnings that amplified well-founded concerns about the potential danger of the medical and toxic waste that slum dwellers segregated for a living.

The backdrop to these rumours was a history in which outside hands had often exploited existing tensions. The violent politicisation of religious identity appears to have been part of Sunder Nagri's origin. In their reconstruction of the Turkman Gate demolition John Dayal and Ajoy Bhose quote Jagmohan Malhotra, who was responsible for Delhi's urban planning at the time: 'do you think we are mad to create another Pakistan' (2018, 417/3642). After the demolition of their houses, residents of the Turkman Gate slums were broken down into smaller groups and resettled along with Hindus, Sikhs and Christians in Sunder Nagri and its direct neighbour Nand Nagri, as well as Welcome Colony and Trilokpuri, the latter in particular making the headlines for recurrent communal violence.

In Trilokpuri, the 1984 anti-Sikh riots took a particularly heavy death toll, and it is clear despite the absence of official enquiries that outsiders linked to the ruling Congress had a hand in instilling the violence (Das 2007, 207; PUCL and PUDR 1984). While Sunder Nagri and Nand Nagri do not feature as centrally in this dark history, older residents did remember a time when there were still Sikh families in a place where at the time of research there were none.[71]

Ever since the neighbourhood's history has evolved around the cleavage between Muslims and Hindus, one aspect of which was an incremental trend towards urban segregation that sees India's largest minority responding to widespread discrimination by moving together (Gayer and Jaffrelot 2012; Susewind 2017). It was frequent for Muslim respondents to point to a family member who had bought a house nearby,[72] while Hindu respondents complained about feeling increasingly isolated.[73]

In recent years, this progressive transformation gave way to several clashes across resettlement colonies in east Delhi. Again, the worst and most frequent incidents took place in Trilokpuri, where Muslims are a minority. Sunder Nagri, where they are a majority, remained largely peaceful, except for one clash over a Hindu temple's loud music during a Muslim religious procession in 2013. The police along with religious leaders intervened, and the conflict soon calmed down. While I was researching the area, however, a man who called himself a nationalist Sikh posted a video (Singh 2016) titled 'Sunder Nagri: are Hindus at risk?' The documentary, which claims to tell the 'truth' about the temple incident and about how daily harassment was driving out Hindu families, had been viewed 145,939 times when writing these lines. It had received 1900 'likes' and 1105 comments, an overwhelming majority of which were hateful: 'they give birth like pigs, that's why they spread like

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[71] Sunder Nagri, 17.11.2016.

[72] Sunder Nagri, 3.3.2016, 17.09.2016.

[73] Sunder Nagri, 18.09.2016, 29.10.2016.

pigs', someone wrote about Sunder Nagri's Muslim population. There were dozens of calls to 'fight the mullahs' and 'finish them all off'. Others yet praised Narendra Modi for resisting the insidious spread of India's minority.

Madanpur Khadar resettlement colony itself remained peaceful. But in the slum cluster near the one I studied, a group of Rohingyas had found a precarious shelter, which a fire burnt to the ground in April 2018. Just when the police were concluding that the fire had been an accident, a young man whose Twitter profile described as 'Gurjar leader' and member of the BJP youth wing tweeted: 'Yes we burnt the houses of Rohingya terrorists'. And again the next day: 'Yes, we did it and we do *[sic]* again #Rohingya quit India' (NDTV 2018b; TOI 2018). The incident might have been a case of sinister boasting. In light of the history above, however, both this tweet and Sunder Nagri's video fit in a much graver pattern that has resettlement colonies become playing grounds for instigated communal violence. Whether part of a larger design, or the action of isolated individuals, these acts can hardly be dissociated from this loaded historic background.

These events are, furthermore, emblematic of a larger political context. Narendra Modi's BJP was elected on a political programme that combined a promise of accelerated development with a hardened Hindu nationalist line. A man of modest origin, Modi had risen within the ranks of the BJP's ideological founding organisation, the *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* (RSS) or National Volunteer Organisation, before ruling over a state that saw the deadliest anti-Muslim riots in India's modern history. In his speeches, Modi himself stuck to a softer nationalist stance. Among cadres surrounding him, however, and in a nebula of party members and sympathisers, the tone was cruder: party messages blurred with individual opinions, the factual blurred with the fake, politically correct messages blurred with hateful comments and appeals to violence.

While this is not the place for a substantial engagement with wider literature on rumours, it might be worth situating the above on the darker side of this literature. Seen within the political context, the rumours around the video or those among residents emphasising social cleavages are not the ones that unite disenfranchised crowds and mobilise them in collective demands for greater justice (Rudé 1959), but rumours of a majority united behind the ruling elite against a minority group. They are rumours that spread around social cleavages and amplify them with negative stereotypes, fear and hatred (Das 1998; Knopf 2017; Nordstrom and Robben 1995). Neither are they merely a matter of a 'pre-literate culture' (Guha 1983, 226), but one where the oral communications of a section of illiterate residents interacts with the technologies of communication of another perfectly literate section. While I did not purposefully delve into these rumours, they were a part of the landscape. The discussion of temporal choices, therefore, offers a few insights into the day-to-day working of the organisation underlying this nebula and into the impact of such lingering tensions on behaviours around services.

3.4 Work, Poverty and the State

Whether they lived in the resettlement colonies or in the slums, whether they were Muslims or Hindus, all but a handful of people in the sample fell below the internationally recognised poverty line of $ 1.9 a day—roughly Rs 130—and above the very minimal Indian official poverty line of Rs 20 a day (table 3.4.1).[74]

Table 3.4.1 Average Daily Per-Capita Income by Religious Group

	Hindus	Muslims	Christians	Sample size
Sunder Nagri				
Resettlement	Rs 84	Rs 72	Rs 283[1]	264
Slum	Rs 89	Rs 52		255
Madanpur Khadar				
Resettlement	Rs 104	Rs 75	Rs 156[1]	234
Slum	Rs 80	Rs 58		199

Source: own survey.
[1]Less than five individuals in the category.

Within this range, however, were noteworthy differences. Muslims were poorer overall, in line with averages across Delhi and India (Asher, Novosad, and Rafkin 2018; Basant and Shariff 2010; Sachar 2006). While this is consistent with income being lower in Sunder Nagri than in Madanpur Khadar, it contrasts with the depiction so far: the same colony of Sunder Nagri where services and life overall was described as somewhat better is here the poorer of the two. In the chapters to come, this finding will question the extent to which additional money can replace public services. It will highlight the cost of having to 'exit' (Hirschman 1974) such services and relying on adverse fringe markets (Schaffer and Lamb 1974, 87). No sub-group raises this question as acutely as the slum dwellers of Madanpur Khadar. Their living conditions were by far the worst, and many of them were trapped in cycles of debt. Their income alone, however, was not considerably lower than the rest of the sample, and in fact marginally higher than Muslims in Sunder Nagri's slum.[75]

Behind these figures are patterns of work, where the wider regional context interacts with the history of each neighbourhood. In both places, forced relocation collided with scarce opportunities available to men with limited education.[76] Underemployment combined with a trend towards casual labour in low-skilled service and manufacturing jobs affecting workers across urban India (Breman 2004; Chen and Raveendran 2012; Gooptu 2007, 2013; Neema and Baneria 2005). In

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[74] For details about the line: (GOD 2018, 13). As many researchers have noted, this line says less about a pattern of upward mobility in Madanpur and Sunder Nagri, than it does about just how radically poor the 10 per cent of Delhi's population who fell officially under this line at the time of research were. See, for example, the pages Jean Drèze and Amartya Sen devote to India's 'destitution line' (2013, 189–91).

[75] For an analysis of similar findings in another group of Delhi waste pickers: (Gill 2012).

[76] On unemployment in resettlement colonies: (Coelho, Venkat, and Chandrika 2012, 138).

the two resettlement colonies, and in Sunder Nagri's slum where employment conditions were similar, this configuration resulted in male unemployment rates that were high compared to averages in Delhi and for a setting where the absence of safety nets pushed into marginal jobs even those least endowed with the skills and contacts needed to enter the labour market (table 3.4.2). The share of casual workers, among whom underemployment was widespread, was again much above average.

Table 3.4.2 Work Status by Gender
Percentage of 15-59-year-old (reported by row)

	Regular	Self-employed	Casual	Unemployed	Out of labour	Sample size
Own Survey						
Men	21%	29%	22%	12%	18%	326
Women	3%	13%	15%	2%	63%	273
Delhi						
Men	40%	30%	3%	3%	24%	1149
Women	13%	3%	—	1%	83%	986

Sources: own survey; National Sample Survey 2011-2012

In Sunder Nagri, the trend towards casual labour was most obvious in the transformation of the weaving handicraft that had once been the main source of livelihood for the Koli and Ansari communities. The only remaining trace of this activity was a cluster of shacks where some three old men could be seen working on their handloom near a government stone plate informing the passer-by that he or she was stepping into a traditional weaver village. Already at the time of resettlement, manufacturing units were replacing handlooms. For young men, small units around the neighbourhood became the main source of work. The units, however, closed down when a 1996 court order banned industries from residential areas in a judgment that blended pollution and population controls (GOI 1996). For those who lost their job, piece-rate work provided a precarious alternative exposed to seasonal fluctuations and economic downturns. Urban planning combined with changes in the production chain to push men into precarious home-based work (Boeri 2018; Breman 2004; Hill 2010).[77] Again, the neighbourhood was not an exception, if considering that the share of home-based work among men employed in the manufacturing sector across urban India was estimated at 32 per cent in 2009 compared to 19 per cent in 1999 (Chen and Raveendran 2012, 165).

In Madanpur Khadar, underemployment affected a population involved in construction work and low-skilled service jobs. Not that there were no industries around—Madanpur Khadar was situated near Okhla, one of Delhi's large industrial areas and the colony's eastern side was flanked by the high walls of a water bottling plant. But these jobs remained out of reach for residents, who lacked the contacts to break into these labour markets. Those reporting regular jobs often had made

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[77] As featured in the documentary by Rahul Roy, *The City Beautiful* (2003).

it into government positions, for which affirmative action appears to have played a role since most of them were from Scheduled Caste groups.

One noteworthy exception to the pattern of under-employment above was Madanpur Khadar's slum. Those who had made it into the cluster had bought their way into a section of the informal market of waste segregation.[78] Having done so, the issue was not so much the amount of work available, as its limited returns compared to other monetary and physical costs. It is worth noting finally that Madanpur Khadar's slum dwellers, who feature among the self-employed in the table above because of their adamantly identifying as such, had in fact a more ambivalent status. They were self-employed in the sense that they made a living from the waste they sold to the contractor, but the contractor was also the person serving as their landlord. In many cases, he was also their bank, the mediator of services, and their political patron. In reality, they were self-employment when it came to the risks of the trade but bound to a highly unequal relation of patronage for most other aspects of their life, with consequences for their temporal choices explored in chapter seven.

Madanpur Khadar's slum was also exceptional because most women worked (61 per cent), segregating waste that their husbands collected from middle-class neighbourhoods. In other parts of the sample, women's reported labour force participation was lower (31 per cent), albeit even there, high for a region where participation is notoriously low and declining sharply (E. Chatterjee, Desai, and Vanneman 2018; Jejeebhoy and Sathar 2001; Mehrotra and Parida 2017). This remains true even if comparing with poorer sections of the urban labour force, among whom women work in larger numbers (Andres et al. 2017, 24). Women, in other words, were attempting to cope with high male unemployment by taking on piece-rate work, most of it done at home. With the emergence of nearby middle-class settlements, there had also been increasing demands for female housekeeping personnel. NGOs were setting up savings groups and training programs.

The situation was striking considering that the sample was dominated by India's Muslim minority, among whom women are less likely to engage in waged work (Basant and Shariff 2010; Desai and Temsah 2014; Sarikhani 2008). The situation in Madanpur Khadar and Sunder Nagri had one more twist: even if leaving out Madanpur Khadar's slums where most women worked, the share of Muslim women who reported working in the three other clusters was nearly double (37 per cent) the share of Hindu women (21 per cent). Muslims, as already mentioned, were also poorer (table 3.4.1), which is consistent with research that stresses the role of compulsion in India's female labour force participation (Hirway 2009a, 2012; Jain 1996). If considering, in addition, that Muslims dominate sub-contracting chains for piece-rate work in the neighbourhoods, high work participation among Muslim women points to a micro-economy of 'distress employment' (Hirway 2012, 68). In the polarised context described previously, this could hardly be innocuous, as many of the situations depicted in the chapters to come will show.

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[78] On this informal economy of waste, see: (Beall 2006; Gill 2012; Harriss-White 2017).

None of these amounted to favourable conditions. Jobs available to women were typical of a pattern of pauperisation others have analysed about home-based work (Boeri 2018; Breman 2013; Kantor 2003). Nevertheless, in a context where men's position in the labour market was weakened, such tendencies stood out and were part of a situation where gendered norms around work and the freedom to move around were destabilised by economic realities. It is against the backdrop of this destabilisation that the everyday negotiations around basic services described in the coming chapters take place, with consequences for gendered role distributions that will at times seem contradictory.

Beyond such gender dynamics, Madanpur Khadar and Sunder Nagri were places where access to work and therefore money was scarce. As a result, free or subsidised goods such as food and water supplied by the government played an essential role in the economy of households. More than many other settings of Delhi, they were a largely demonetised economy, which however evolved in the margins of an urban territory where money plays an essential role, not the least to access sought-after private education and healthcare.[79] It was an economy where attempts to change time into money were on everyone's mind, but where possibilities to do so were rare and free goods from the state essential. As a consequence, incentives to get involved in the politics of basic service delivery were powerful. The political economy out of which the behaviours analysed in the coming chapter emerge, in sum, was one where powerful compulsion destabilised a landscape that was itself cross-cut by stark cleavages of gender and religion.

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[79] Among other: (Drèze and Sen 2013, 107–81; Gandhi Kingdon 2017; Rao 2017).

The weaver colony, Sunder Nagri.

3.5 'I Am Blind, But I Don't Want My Child to Be'

Let me briefly complete the overview above with the two dimensions of health and education, which feature prominently in research on temporal choices (Burchardt 2010) as in research on political behaviours of poor people in Delhi (Harriss 2005). Asked to situate themselves within categories ranging from good health to bedridden, most respondents spoke of being in good health (87 per cent). This share was highest in Madanpur Khadar's slum (89 per cent), and it was lowest in the adjacent resettlement colony (82 per cent). For a sample as small as mine, these differences are not significant. Nevertheless, the overall figures are surprising when contrasted with complaints about health in discussions and interviews.

Residents of all four clusters complained about the health toll of lacking services and amenities. 'By the time you reach the front of the queues, you are ready to be buried' someone joked about waiting times at the hospital,[80] while others spoke about weeks and months of work lost to ailments. Waterborne diseases were a problem for all, but there were variations between clusters. In Sunder Nagri's main colony, where gutters were covered, the risk was reduced compared to the adjacent slum, where they were not. The situation was even worse in Madanpur Khadar's resettlement colony, located in the Yamuna floodplain and whose drains were forever clogged. It was worse in the nearby slum, where the absence of drainage systems and a location three meters below the main colony turned the area into a swamp after every spell of rain. In this cluster, everyone we spoke to had been ill during the monsoon, with dire consequences for temporal choices explored in chapter seven. Beyond such waterborne disease, several respondents suffered from walking impairments after road accidents. Breathing disorders were widespread and tuberculosis endemic.[81] There were skin diseases and tumours left untreated for too long.

One consequence of this situation was that an illness in the family was often among the first nodal events in a life course, unlike in richer countries where they typically come after most major life events (Ghez and Becker 1975). Among older people, in particular, the loss or impairment of a father or a mother was the most common reason for dropping out of school.

Compared to this reality, my respondents' own assessment of their health seemed excessively positive. Reflecting on why people under-report the cost in time and opportunity of certain tasks in other parts of the thesis, I argue that the pattern reflects their internalising the lesser worth of their time. While this is not a point I can develop, it is worth asking whether a parallel exists between their under-reporting such burdens of time and opportunity and their under-reporting ailments. If the parallel applies, we would see them internalising the lesser worth of their health in this section, in the same way as we will see them internalising the lesser worth of their time in the next chapter.

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[80] Sunder Nagri, 13.10.2016.
[81] Head of Saint Stephens Dispensary, Sunder Nagri, 30.10.2016.

Education outcomes were low compared to averages for Delhi. Women, in particular were at a disadvantage and the gendered literacy gap was more important in my sample than elsewhere (table 3.5.1). Unlike wider trends, however, where Muslim women are left behind in education (Hasan and Menon 2005; Sachar 2006; Sengupta and Rooj 2018), the gender gap was largest among Hindus. More men were literate in this group than in any other, and they were more likely to transition towards secondary school and college. Among those who had attended college, Scheduled Caste groups were disproportionately represented, a fact that probably reflects the supportive role of affirmative action in education. Somewhat lower than among Hindu men were the literacy outcomes of Sunder Nagri's Muslim women and men, lower yet were Hindu women overall. Madanpur Khadar's Muslim slum dwellers featured once again as outliers, among whom even the younger generation was often illiterate. This was also the cluster where children aged 6 to 14-year were more likely to be out of school (62 per cent) than across other clusters (27 per cent).

Table 3.5.1 Literacy by Gender

Percentage of above 7-year-old (reported by cell)

	Men	Women	Sample size
Sunder Nagri			
Resettlement	88%	71%	264
Slum	73%	68%	255
Madanpur Khadar			
Resettlement	84%	66%	234
Slum	49%	50%	199
Delhi	91%	81%	16,000,000

Sources: own survey; census 2011.

The difference between averages for Delhi and my sample should not obscure just how significant the changes had been in this area, as this one figure illustrates: 81 per cent of the 5 to 18-year olds in the sample were literate, against 35 per cent of those reaching the official age of retirement at 58 years. This expression of progress was also the one parents emphasised most, as the quote cited as title of this section illustrates: 'I am blind, but I do not want my child to be'.[82] I heard the sentence three times, twice in Madanpur Khadar's slums, which goes to say that even in this cluster where school drop-out rates were high, education was the one idea of progress that was shared by all. As the thesis will show, the generational difference linked to education influenced interactions with the state. Children wrote or translated letters for their parents and the ideal of upward mobility associated with education shaped how parents thought about the future and organised their time. For them and children alike, education carried an unmistakable sense of pride and the hope of a social order where they would escape the situation of economic, social and spatial marginality that entrapped them.

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[82] Madanpur Khadar, 09.09.2016, 20.10.2016, 21.10.2016.

As expectations rose, so did the possibility of being disappointed, however. Access to education was still too recent to speak of a 'crisis in educated people's access' to opportunities other researchers have found in villages (Jeffrey, Jeffery, and Jeffery 2004, 961), and towns (Jeffrey 2010a) around Delhi. Still, the limits of what a highly unequal education system could provide to people from underprivileged backgrounds were being felt. Gupta's call to 'complicate the straightforward narrative' (2012, 231) that education defines who, among the poor, is helped by the state, from that perspective is useful. Many poor people did not have the proficiency required to read or write the scripture of bureaucracy, despite being literate (2012, 196). Nor was literacy enough to empower poor people in their interactions with the state, unless it is part of a wider social mobilisation (2012, 217).

While these are useful nuances, their implication for my research does not bring us anywhere near the conclusion Gupta draws based on his rural field site that 'the political importance of writing to subaltern peoples is misinterpreted by a strong tendency in academic theorising' to view 'the movement from illiteracy to full literacy as a natural and desirable progression' (2012, 37). Applied to Sunder Nagri and Madanpur Khadar, this argument would have failed to recognise just how drastic an obstacle illiteracy was for poor people's interactions with the state. Neither were these obstacles rooted only in the bureaucracy's use of writing as means of domination (2012, 214). It started with taking the bus to government offices, which several people said they did not dare doing because they were unable to recognise bus numbers and too ashamed to ask other travellers.[83] At this level of limited literacy, even small gains in proficiency made a big difference in how people approached the state. Neither do I find, anticipating on an argument made in chapter six, that involvements in political mobilisation compensate for these obstacles. They can empower illiterate people, but the ability to write remains a crucial advantage, which again shows in things as basic as finding one's way to a politician's office or a rally, or in things as demanding as writing a complaint to a political representative and understanding the English parlance of the political elite. The discussion to come explores some of these nuances in a setting where widespread access to education was still recent. It provides an insight into the premises of an evolution whose unfolding lies ahead.

3.6 Conclusion

Having taken a tour around the neighbourhoods, we find ourselves standing under the two buildings whose evocation opened the chapter once again. The lighter of the two became the emblem of a system of service delivery that, in spite of the challenges, was progressively falling into place and delivering more of the basic constitutional rights to which residents were entitled. We saw that this was partly linked to how progressively the nuts and bolts of the complicated state machinery were falling into place: after years of floating at the margin of the city's electoral map, a territory was

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[83] Madanpur Khadar, 9.9.2016, 7.3.2016, Sunder Nagri, 28.10.2016.

attached to a political constituency, some of the many bottlenecks of a long-drawn transfer from one governing body to the other were progressively overcome.

Meanwhile, the darker of the two buildings became an emblem of all that contributes to undermine this hopeful trend. It evoked an intricate and confrontational system of power sharing. Accessing services became a matter of manoeuvring amidst these intricacies and the multiple intermediaries who thrived on them. It entailed manoeuvring among the social cleavages of caste and religion that from their origin had interacted with the politics of the two neighbourhoods in ways that turned them into playing fields for wider communal tensions. Beyond these features, we saw how the temporal choices of residents were constrained by multiple social and economic disadvantages: poverty and disadvantages on the labour market collided with disadvantages of caste, religion and gender.

The two buildings, in sum, became a reflection of the two places' ambivalence, even as the peripheral location of the two areas became the reflection of their inhabitants' situation in society. 'We are like animals in a zoo, here, caught in our cages, looking at each other without being able to get out', one man from Madanpur Khadar said, illustrating what this condition might have meant for residents. The cramped houses in which families lived and often worked became in this quote a cage in which the private routines of inmates are exposed to the outsider's gaze. In the 'cage', the economic conditions that kept people stuck in their tiny houses combined with social constraints. Foucault's (1975) panopticon was turned upside down and fragmented: unlike the institutional design of the surveillance of all by one single observer described there. It was the multi-sited surveillance of every inmate by every other; all these gazes together implementing a social control that was neither designed, nor planned.

For this male respondent to speak of being locked in a cage, lastly, turns upside down the traditional distribution of roles in which men are out working, while women are inside taking care of the household. It means that the space associated with female domesticity has to be negotiated afresh, as men step into this domestic sphere, and women within that sphere try to negotiate some additional leeway to generate income, step out to access basic services or join saving groups.

And yet, within these multiple constraints many did find time to take action against unreliable basic service delivery. They did so in an environment that was anything but static—economic necessities destabilised norms in which gender and religion interacted, even as unprecedented access to education opened breaches in what contributed to lock people in. What against this background, as people went on manoeuvring and negotiating constraints in their everyday efforts to secure basic services, was deemed worth their time? The question is the one we turn to for the rest of this thesis.

A lane in Madanpur Khadar.

4   Time, Basic services and Tactics

This chapter returns to the main question of the thesis, with a first overview of behaviours around basic services. How does time feature in these behaviours? The question provides a chance to revisit the conception of temporal choice outlined in the introduction. Emulating a recent discretionary shift in time-use research (Goodin et al. 2008), I defined temporal freedom as a person's ability to do things that matter with his or her time (Burchardt 2010; Sen 2001). Temporal choices became a judgment amidst constraints summed up by this question: is it worthwhile?

This chapter starts narrowly by estimating how much time people devote to accessing basic services, only in later parts turning to social institutions and symbolic features that surface in these situations. Even this attempt to measure the time involved, however, is hardly straightforward. Compared to my observations, people will seem to under-estimate exactly those moments where they are forced to wait for unpredictable supplies, or when they are involved in routine unpaid work whose contribution to the household and society is typically undervalued. Attempting to interpret these apparent contradictions, we will revisit the conception above, and we will explore how choices and reporting are bound together.

The exploration is also a chance to begin questioning my hypothesis about the relation between time and politics. The readiness to devote time to initiatives about basic services, in this hypothesis, was linked to the integration of political accountability around basic services. The premise, I expected, would account for differences between neighbourhoods and between people more or less equipped to hold political parties to account. While findings from the survey will seem to confirm this hypothesis, a first series of ethnographic observations will nuance the picture and point towards the paradoxes whose exploration fills the remaining chapters of the thesis. Residents will be seen devoting considerable amounts of time to the informal networks of power that emerge exactly where the relation of accountability frays around basic services—in Madanpur Khadar more than in Sunder Nagri, women more than for men.

Because such interventions are mostly collective, the chapter is lastly a chance to start exploring the conditions that allow people in the two neighbourhoods to come together and challenge what keeps them waiting for unpredictable supplies. What can loosen the constraints that pit people queuing in conflict against each other (Corbridge 2004; Helweg-Larsen and LoMonaco 2008; Larson 1987; Schaffer and Lamb 1974)? What can shift incentives to devote time towards collective aims?

I will start broadly, drawing on survey finding to give an overview of behaviours around basic services, and draw on this foundation to select the three services considered in the second half of the chapter—water, subsidised food and waste collection.

4.1 Basic Services and Behaviours of Access

To start the overview, one survey question asking respondents to list all actions they took to improve access to basic services offers a helpful entry point (4.1.1).[84] Cleanliness, which includes waste collection and drain maintenance, topped the list of interventions in all locations. Drinking water came second in Madanpur Khadar's resettlement colony and in Sunder Nagri's slum. Subsidised food came high in all locations and it was this issue that was the target of the only two interventions reported by Madanpur Khadar's slum dwellers, both of which were unsuccessful. 'Encroachment', which came third in the list, was not an issue I had included initially, but one that came up while piloting the survey to describe the pavement traders who had set up shop on Sunder Nagri's roads or on ground earmarked for a school, many of whom were dealing in a scrap trade that recycled parts of broken cars.

Topping the list, in sum, were three interventions about very basic needs that point towards some sort of prioritisation, if not in people's minds, at least in their behaviours.[85] They were followed by another intervention the motives for which were more complex. While the last of the four is not an aspect I will focus on at length, it will surface again towards the end of this chapter when discussing interventions that mobilise the divisions between Muslims and Hindus.

Table 4.1.1 Actions to Improve Access to Services

	Number of all action
No action	179
Waste collection	34
Water	26
Subsidised food	13
Encroachment	11
Electricity	9
Toilets	9
Education	8
Parks	7
Crime and safety	3
Other actions	13
Total responses[1]	312

[1]More than one possible response.

More striking than this order of priorities, however, is the share of people who did not report any intervention, and whom the table below breaks down by location, gender and religion, and contrasts with a wider study in eight neighbourhoods across Delhi (Harriss 2005).

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[84] Question 84 of the survey, annex 1, p. 247.

[85] On that articulation of basic needs and aspirations: (Chambers 1989; Maslow 1943; Stewart 1985).

Table 4.1.2 Respondents Who Took Action by Gender and Religion

Percentage (reported by cell)

	Total	Men	Women	Hindus	Muslims	Sample size
Sunder Nagri						
Resettlement	44%	54%	33%	59%	39%	73
Slum	42%	47%	36%	42%	41%	72
Madanpur Khadar						
Resettlement	35%	45%	26%	31%	50%	65
Slum	19%	24%	13%	17%[1]	20%	67
Delhi	56%	66%	43%	76	18%	1401

Sources: own survey; Harriss 2005, 1051.
[1]Fewer than 10 individuals in the category.

Overall, the share of people who reported taking action was lower in my sample than in Harriss' (2005) wider sample.[86] The difference is consistent with residents of Madanpur Khadar and Sunder Nagri being on average less educated, poorer and in more unstable work-arrangements, all features that were linked to fewer interventions. Among residents of Madanpur Khadar's slum, interventions were even fewer, which fits the pattern of marginalisation we saw emerging in previous chapters.

Within my sample, the higher share of people who reported having done something about services in Sunder Nagri compared to Madanpur Khadar fits my starting hypothesis about the relation between time and politics. The fact that more men than women reported having taken action is again consistent with wider trends (Harriss 2005) and with the hypothesis linking such initiatives with the ability to hold political parties to account. The same applies to the difference between the share of Hindu respondents who reported having taken action compared to Muslim respondents across the sample.

The picture starts differing, however, if looking at cluster-wise figures. If, for example, we keep Madanpur Khadar's slum out of the picture, Muslim respondents of the sample were marginally more likely to report having taken action than Hindu respondents. It is also surprising that both Muslims and Hindus were more likely to report an action in clusters where they were a minority— Madanpur Khadar for Muslims and Sunder Nagri for Hindus. Furthermore, it is striking and contrary to regional trends (Desai and Temsah 2014; Sarikhani 2008) that in all except the Muslim-dominated resettlement colony of Sunder Nagri, Muslim women were more likely to report an intervention than their Hindu counterparts.

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[86] The phrasing of the two surveys could be another reason. Mine starts with a general question about whether the respondent has taken any initiative, then goes on to list the type of action and the people approached for it. Harriss' (2005) survey, in contrast starts by listing different ways of solving the issue. While this variation might a play a role, it is unlikely to be very big, given how close the two approaches are.

These particularities will be analysed in sections and chapters to come, sticking to generalities for a moment longer, however: a large majority of interventions relied on representatives from political parties (61 per cent), which once again backs my starting hypothesis and wider literature (Chandhoke 2005; Corbridge et al. 2005; Harriss 2005; Witsoe 2013). The police, next on the list, came nowhere close (8 per cent), nor did lawyers (6 per cent), bureaucrats (5 per cent), union leaders (5 per cent), or NGOs (4 per cent). Madanpur Khadar's slum dwellers alone relied on their landlord and contractor, which again fits the profile of dependence and vulnerability that emerged in the discussion so far.

Taking action was a lengthy process—on average, respondents reported that 16 months had gone by between their first intervention and the moment when they gave up or obtained satisfaction.[87] Time, however, was not the main reason invoked by those who did not intervene: instead, 27 per cent of them said there was no point, often concluding 'no one listens'; 16 per cent did not know how to intervene; 15 per cent, all of them women, spoke of family restrictions; 12 per cent said they did not have enough time; 11 per cent said they were unable to unite with neighbours and that there was no point of attempting anything alone; 6 per cent lacked the contacts required; 4 per cent, all of them in Madanpur Khadar's slum, felt they were not entitled to any better: 'Why should they give us anything? We are not from Delhi', several of them said, in a formulation analysed in chapter seven.

Each of these reasons for not taking action will be discussed at length in light of ethnographic evidence, but already a few observations are worth making. First, the lack of time comes fourth in the list, which yet again points to the necessity of broadening the focus beyond time scarcity alone. It speaks in favour of this broader question: what is deemed worthwhile against the backdrop of disillusion, disempowerment, limited information, gender constraints and social divisions? Second, these reasons once again fit with the hypothesis of a vicious cycle of powerlessness, disillusion and poor governance that my starting hypothesis borrows from Jos Mooij (1999). The overview, in sum, backs the shift from time scarcity to the broader issue summarised in my main question. It confirms the central role of political representatives in the initiatives reported by residents. It backs my hypothesis about the relation between time and politics when showing that fewer residents of Madanpur Khadar reported an intervention, fewer women and fewer Muslims.

Lastly, the above helps select the three services taken as focus point for the in-depth discussion to come: drinking water, subsidised food and waste collection. I should say, however, that the main lesson I drew from administering the survey is to warn against the artifice of narrowing down too strictly to a few services. Often one initiative concerned more than one service, and its evocation called forth other initiatives about other services. While I will focus on water, food and waste in this chapter, other services will surface again in later parts of the discussion: education and

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[87] Question 86 of the survey, annex 1, p.247.

healthcare for example, will feature in the temporal horizons explored in chapter seven, while issues of crime and safety will feature in chapter six on women.

The three services in this section also present a set of contrasts that matter for the analysis. Accessing drinking water and subsidised food is time-consuming. While the first is a daily task, the second is monthly. In contrast, problems of waste collection do not have immediate temporal impacts, unless a person chooses to intervene. Modalities of access differ as well, since drinking water and waste collection are distributed to an entire area, while subsidised food is granted separately to each family and to individuals within a family. As noted in the introduction, the services moreover differ in how private actors and government officials interact around them. The discussion to come, therefore, is also a chance to explore the impact of these modalities on people's temporal choices.

4.2 Waiting for Water, Waiting for 'Dalmia*ji*'[88]

Among all services, drinking water was the one whose shortcomings had the most direct temporal cost for those who did not have adequate supplies. This applied mainly to Madanpur Khadar's residents, since most households in Sunder Nagri were equipped with a tap or were supplied by a tanker-truck that delivered water to their doorstep (table 4.2.1). In contrast, Madanpur Khadar had no such infrastructure: parts of the colony were supplied by tanker-trucks, which stopped at some 28 points across the colony. Other parts of the colony were supplied by common taps, where supplies ran twice a day. The fact that nearly half of all households of the cluster bought water for an average of Rs 450 a month, or 5 per cent of household income, is an indication of just how burdensome the common options were.

Table 4.2.1 Sources of Drinking Water
Percentage (reported by row)

	Private tap	Shared tap	Tanker-truck	Bottles	Pump	Sample size
Sunder Nagri						
Resettlement	98%	—	—	—	2%	73
Slum	—	—	95%	—	5%	72
Madanpur Khadar						
Resettlement	—	23%	30%	47%	—	65
Slum	—	83%	2%	15%	1%	67
Delhi	61%	19%	4%[1]		16%	16,000,000

Sources: own survey; census 2011.
[1]Figures for the two sources are clubbed together in the survey.

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[88] 'Ji' is an honorific suffix that is commonly used in Hindi.

For people who did not have a connection at home, fetching water entailed carrying heavy loads, and when water was scarce in the summer, it meant confronting fights. More than any of these, however, time was the most obvious burden involved. Pausing on this dimension is a chance to flesh out the cost of remaining 'loyal' (Hirschman 1970) to public supplies of water and to explore a first set of discrepancies.

My own observations at three different water points put the figure at 35 minutes for the tanker truck and 25 minutes for the common tap. Meanwhile, official figures from the government's National Sample Survey Organisation estimate that people in Delhi who do not have access to water inside their premises spend an average of 25 minutes on water chores (GOI 2012, 28). In contrast, the diary-based survey in neighbourhoods of Delhi including Sunder Nagri and Madanpur Khadar conducted by Oxfam and Ambedkar University estimates that people who do not have in-house connections spend 60 minutes on the task.

Neither the official figure, nor my own estimate, include the time spent waiting before the tanker-truck's arrival or before the tap's activation. In the opening scene, the horn announcing the arrival of the truck blew 45 minutes behind schedule, and it was not exceptional for that delay to be longer: 'it might come at 11AM, sometimes it comes at 3PM', said one of the three women at the scene.[89] In Madanpur Khadar's main colony, most respondents (78 per cent) complained about irregular water supplies, and those who did not relied on one shared tap equipped with a large tank that could stock water between supplies. Even this large tank was gutted during the year I spent on site, leaving residents around to wait for the same irregular supplies as their neighbours.

While they waited, people could do other things around their house, but they could not leave the lane to shop in the market street at the centre of the colony, let alone leave the neighbourhood. Even working inside the house could mean missing the horn announcing the truck's arrival for all but those who were closest to the water point. They were bound to their doorsteps until the horn blew, and since the tanker-truck could arrive anytime between 10AM and early afternoon, they were prevented from planning anything during much of the day. The water task, in other words, had a temporal shadow that far exceeded the actual duration of the task and in fact engulfed much of a day.

The difficulty of capturing this shadow might explain the divergence above. The time-use survey conducted by Oxfam and Ambedkar University alone allows listing a parallel activity, which in principle should have addressed the challenge.[90] In my experience, however, most respondents do not naturally report such parallel activities unless specifically asked. Because the difference between primary and secondary activity is slippery, furthermore, asking about these activities can blur the line

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[89] Madanpur Khadar, 21.10.2016.

[90] Official time-use surveys do as well, but the pilot surveys do not cover Delhi. The data quoted here focuses specifically on water.

in ways that might explain a one-hour estimate that seems too high if focusing on the task alone and too low to capture the task's temporal shadow.

While such technical questions of reporting format go some way towards explaining the findings above, they do not explain the broader pattern that emerges if completing these temporal aspects with a few non-temporal dimensions. According to respondents, an average of 23 persons lined up at the tanker-truck, 17 around the shared tap. My own observations at three water points put the figure at 50 people at peak time, progressively decreasing after that. This is consistent with the figure arrived at through some basic arithmetic: one 10,000-litre tanker-truck supplied about 300 families,[91] and stayed for about 30 minutes. If we consider that people come and go at least twice, the estimate we arrive at is closer to 50 people than to the lower figure reported by residents.

Another aspect that seems underestimated in light of the above is the assessment of trade-offs involved in the task. Asked about whether they lost out on any other activity, a majority of respondents who relied on tanker-trucks and public taps answered that they did not (54 per cent). Just 14 per cent mentioned household chores, 12 per cent mentioned work and even fewer spoke of other tasks. These shares were even lower for the common taps. In sum, there appears to be a pattern of under-reporting time and other burdens involved in accessing water. As we will see, other behaviours around water will add a further facet to the pattern, whose interpretation I therefore leave to later parts of the discussion.

Among those who did not rely on public sources, a handful relied on pumps drilled into groundwater reserves too polluted to be fit for drinking (GOI 2016). For those who paid for water, the cheapest option at Rs 5 a bucket were small illegal filtering plants inside the colony. More than this option, however, respondents who bought water on a regular base resorted to the 20-litre jerricans sold at Rs 10 each. Both provided groundwater with minimal checks of safety, but the cheaper option had to be sourced outside home, while the more expensive one was delivered at home.

These were hardly expressions of people choosing to 'exit' (Hirschman 1970), most obviously not for those who relied on unsafe pumps. The plants as well were a fall-back option to which household resorted when the truck did not come. Even the bottles were not very different, as the contrast with Sunder Nagri where no one bought water makes clear. These were, in sum, 'people in need counting themselves out seeing the access experience as too painful, the voice requirements too demanding, the outcomes too uncertain and frightening' and instead opting for a 'degraded exit' into an adverse fringe market (Schaffer and Lamb 1974, 87).

Beyond remaining loyal, or being pushed into 'adverse exit', we saw that water was one of the main reasons for intervening, mostly through political representatives, with isolated cases of

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[91] Tanker driver, Madanpur Khadar, 16.10.2016.

people going to the water department or contacting an NGO. If, however, we go beyond these headline figures with insights from ethnographic observations, a complex political landscape emerges. In most settlements this landscape was the same as for every other service—the contractor as main powerbroker in Madanpur Khadar's slum and party representatives in Sunder Nagri. In contrast, Madanpur Khadar's resettlement colony stands out, with its water committees being just the first link in a much broader chain. It is this landscape I want to pause on here by completing the opening scene around the tanker-truck with another excerpt figuring another member of the water committee.

We are in Madanpur Khadar's most recent south eastern part, some two blocks away from house D-286 where Rama is staffing the committees.[92] Five women are seated around us as we ask one of them:

'Who do you go to when you have a problem with services? A political representative, a street leader…'

'No one'.

As we speak, a woman comes closer, then sits down on the chair that the other five have taken out for me and which has been standing empty, towering above us after I joined them on the ground.

'Here comes our leader', says one of the five as she gestures towards Firdoz Begum, who sits peering at us from above while we go on with the survey. Eventually, she interrupts:

'You think they are idiots or what?'

'Why?'

'You are right, they are idiots, they don't even know their rights, they will just take whatever they get. You should ask me if you have any question'.

A few tense interactions later: 'I will tell you: everything good here comes from Dalmiaji. He is the one who is behind the committees. Whenever we have a problem, we just call him'.

'Who is Dalmiaji?'

'He is a big man. From the BJP, they say. I tell you, any problem, we just call'.

And off she is, the chair above us empty again, until on our way back, she is there again walking at our side, as if her way has crossed ours: 'You might be

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[92] Madanpur Khadar, 14.2.2016.

interested, Dalmiaji is organising a health camp soon', she says before turning into a lane on our left.

By the time we meet her next, we have spent a few days asking respondents about whether they know Dalmiaji: 'Never heard the name', says someone.[93] 'You mean the guy from the tanker mafia'[94] others enquire. In what was presented to us as the local Congress office, we have heard the wife of Iqbal Hussein, alias Zhaharuddin, telling us about how her NGO organises women into savings groups and water committees.[95]

'Do you know Dalmiaji, then?'

'Of course, we used to be associated'.

We have heard neighbours of the woman saying: 'Those who don't want to join are threatened with cuts in water supplies. Everyone attends. You need water, isn't it?'

That is how far we have reached when we come across a health camp run by an organisation presented to us as a charity, but whose references on the Internet point towards a company, part of one of those large conglomerates typical of India's business landscape.[96] We are speaking to the organiser when Firdoz appears.

'Satishji', she says bowing, her hands joined in greeting. As the man turns away to give some guidance to his helpers adding: 'He is the one who gets us organised'.

She hushes as the man turns back to us and stays muted while he goes on explaining the health camp, until finally:

'I'd better be off. You will excuse me'.

While Satish Yadav goes on explaining that he works as a driver for Dalmia's head of CSR and has managed to convince 'Madam' to channel some of the company's CSR activities to the area. This provided some resources for the water committees and occasional cleaning drives—in effect 40 people walking through the colony, brooms raised above their heads, shouting slogans about cleanliness and civility, before getting together for some drinks and food. 'Madam' also paid lawyers to file a case in the Delhi High Court and used her boss' political clout to get the Delhi government to send regular tanker-trucks. All we ever learnt about this case was that it was directed against the water board for failing to provide water. An

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[93] Madanpur Khadar, 15.2.2018.

[94] Madanpur Khadar, 15.2.2018.

[95] Madanpur Khadar, 24.2.2016.

[96] Madanpur Khadar, 15.02.2016.

agreement was met, around which the water committees emerged. When we asked whether we could meet any of the people Satish had mentioned, he told us we could meet 'Madam' at the next health camp, but the camp was postponed, again and again. Satish was not allowed to pass on contacts, nor was he in a position to pass on my request for an interview. As Satish's picking up our calls became more erratic, I decided it was not worth jeopardising the relation. The truth is, no one had met Sanjay Dalmia, except perhaps Satish through his former boss, though even of that I am not certain. And so, we were like everyone else: waiting for Dalmiaji.

Firdoz, meanwhile, as we left the health camp that day appeared seemingly out of nowhere again: 'What did he tell you?' she asked then, as we offered a semblance of synthesis, concluding: 'I told you', and off she was.

I did not meet 'Dalmiaji', but a search on the internet revealed a few more facets of the person. Sanjay Dalmia's grandfather had been one of India's wealthiest and most influential businessmen, before falling out of grace in 1955 during the first major scam of India's modern history. The empire was broken into two, the cement company going to three brothers, among whom the Dalmia of Madanpur Khadar. Under their leadership, the group diversified, into tobacco and Ayurveda medicines. Apart from his business enterprise, the Sanjay Dalmia of Madanpur Khadar had become an influential Member of Parliament with the *Samajwadi Party*, then the main opposition party in Uttar Pradesh, India's biggest state known to be the ground where India's national politics is made. Sanjay Dalmia again is said to have brokered a short-lived peace between the leader of the *Samajwadi Parti* and Laloo Prasad whose *Rashtriya Janata Dal* ruled over Bihar, in doing so brokering a temporary truce between two of the major intermediary caste and class parties that transformed the politics of north India (Jaffrelot 2003; Witsoe 2013; Yadav 2000).

Having left politics since, he remained influential and made the news in 2017 after the Modi government decided to entrust the care of heritage buildings to private philanthropists. Dalmia's name became associated with the one historic building that more than any other represents India's national identity: the Red Fort, turned symbol of the Sepoy mutiny against the British colonial power in 1857, turned prison for the leaders of the unsuccessful revolt and finally turned rallying ground from where Jawaharlal Nehru on 15 August 1947 held the first independence speech, followed since on each 15 August by the yearly address to the nation of successive Prime Ministers.

This Red Fort was in 2017 entrusted for maintenance and valorisation to the Dalmia group represented by his chairman—the same 'Dalmiaji' whose name in the lanes of Madanpur Khadar resonated sometimes as benefactor, sometimes as boss of the tanker mafia, and whom residents linked to all but the party to which he had actually been affiliated. Waiting for 'Dalmiaji' in the lanes of a colony surrounded by nothing but fields and waste segregation sites was one of these instances

where the margins of the state seemed to blend with this core, where big business interests mingle with political power (Jaffrelot 2003; Witsoe 2013; Yadav 2000), the two together meeting somewhere around the Red Fort where they mingled with the symbols of the nation.[97]

I would not claim to have seen through the rumours and silences surrounding the water committees. Gathering the threads above, however, we understand that they were set up as part of a company's CSR activities, which at the time of the research had just been made mandatory (GOI 2013). This background collided with the human connection between a driver and his 'Madam', who brought with her the tremendous economic and political clout of her boss, Sanjay Dalmia.

The committees themselves, meanwhile, were an example of that model of community involvement in the last mile of a partly privatised chain touted as means to 'make services work for the poor' (World Bank 2004). They were the ambivalent real-world equivalent of this model: they were means of empowerment and tools of capture; they obscured the state in the eyes of Madanpur Khadar's residents even as they brought it closer to them. They were networks of power, which bridged the gap between the women lining up for water and the source of that water through a series of intermediaries. High above the embodied first echelons of these networks of power, the state blended with these two figures of 'Madam' and 'Dalmiaji' who, seen from below, combined an awe invoking power and very modest actual improvements.

So limited were the improvements, in fact, that Rama in the opening scene decided to move on. Like the *Godot* of Samuel Beckett (1953), they were figures in whose shadow one waited hoping for great things with little more than the equivalent of an old stump of carrot and a radish to distract oneself. Not that Satish, Firdoz and Rama were like the Samuel and Estragon of Samuel Becket forever chewing their stump of carrot and radish: 'Dalmiaji', for them, was not the imagined companion of passive waiting, but a means to navigate the political landscape that emerged around water supplies.

The water crisis in Madanpur Khadar claimed time from everyone, but not equally for all. In the opening scene, a woman was told off for trying to reopen the tap. 'You are slowing down the driver',[98] said Rama, who spelled out a stark temporal stratification that had residents waiting for hours while the driver's time was too precious to even reopen the tap. It is the same stratification Schwartz (1975) theorised when observing that waiting times reflect and entrench a person's commands over valuable resources. Note, furthermore, that the person enforcing this temporal hierarchy was not the driver but Rama, who simultaneously reasserted her position as intermediary. Just as important as the duration of the tanker-truck's visit in establishing Rama's authority was the ability to predict its arrival time by calling the driver on the phone. Duration and predictability, in sum, became two parameters based on which Rama routinely re-established her authority.

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[97] On this relation between margin and centre: (Das and Poole 2004, 3; Johnson et al. 2011).

[98] Madanpur Khadar, 21.10.2016.

Being in a position to do so entailed spending considerable time on the task, being there when the tanker arrived and staying on until it left. It also entailed a fair deal of luck. Rama and Firdoz were invited to join the committee when their path crossed Satish's while fetching water in a neighbouring block. Satish himself derived his power from the circumstances of his employment. Beyond this, we saw how Firdoz seemed to be constantly at the right time and place to silence a potential challenge, glean a piece of information or pay respect to a powerbroker. Hers was a poor woman's version of a 'micro-geography of local politics' whose equivalent among Jat landowners in Uttar Pradesh is described by Craig Jeffrey (2010a, 61). Among these Jat families, the ability to be there at the right time and place to meet a politician or an official was conditioned by the possession of material goods such as a phone, a car and gifts. Firdoz, in contrast, had nothing but an old phone, her ears, feet, acumen and time to nurture these chance encounters. Being there at the right moment to silence a challenge to her authority and renew a loyalty was all the more necessary for her that, being at the very bottom of a chain in which each echelon added a bit of obscurity and unpredictability, her powers were limited and contested. In effect, serendipity for her meant nothing less than tending towards ubiquity in her lane-sized political territory

Rama's example provides one further insight into the tactics deployed by residents. While Dalmiaji's committees got her involved in the politics of water, she did not stop there. The tanker-trucks, she said, were not reliable and water was often dirty, which eventually prompted her to write to the MLA. This points to the existence of multiple competing networks of power, some of which were rooted in the formal institutions of representative democracy, others in private-public partnerships, others yet in informal committees such as those set up by Zaharuddin's wife.

Coming back to Hirschman (1970)(1970), the above calls for a few additional observations about the nature of 'voice' and its relation to 'loyalty' in complex access situations. It exemplifies the 'pervasiveness of voice' (Schaffer and Lamb 1974, 79) in situations where access always has to be renegotiated. It also exemplifies how 'voice and loyalty' blend when community participation is part of the design and when an element of 'voice' is expected from those who opt for 'loyalty'. When, furthermore, spaces of participation become a playing field of competing networks of power, this blending of 'voice and loyalty' becomes a constant shifting of allegiances. Lastly, we see the temporal consequences of this: each combination of 'voice and loyalty' entailed a new investment of time, which, as we saw in Firdoz' case, could be all encompassing.

The discussion above pointed to some of the benefits Firdoz and Rama drew from these time investments: the truck stopped in front of Rama's house, some neighbours suspected her of receiving a cut from the tanker driver and both Firdoz and Rama gained authority in the lane. Still, these benefits hardly seemed to balance the long hours spent by the two women. Why they deemed it worth their time nevertheless is a question we come back to in chapter six, where we will find Rama and Firdoz again; here though let me conclude the discussion with this observation: the water committees were not reported in the survey of actions taken by residents of Madanpur Khadar to

improve basic service delivery. While Firdoz and Rama were not survey respondents, there were several other members of water committees, none of whom mentioned their involvement. Along with the water committee, the survey was also blind to everyday enquiries about the truck's arrival time escalating into arguments about time, or about the water's cleanliness and scarcity. All these routine acts of 'voice' that were part of people's everyday behaviours around the service were left out.

In sum, not only do responses to the survey appear to minimise the burdens involved in relying on unpredictable water supplies, they also do not seem to capture certain forms of 'voice' that are among the most widespread for some, and among the most time-consuming for others. If there is a pattern, what can explain it? Already, we saw that the methodological challenge of capturing the time people spend waiting for an unpredictable supply is likely to play a role in the findings above. If, moreover, we make the link with literature on temporal freedom (Burchardt 2010; Goodin et al. 2008) and with the focus on being able to do things that matter during a time lapse, the issue ceases to be a technical one. For the women we saw waiting in the opening scene, the ability to plan and do things of importance to them was hampered. A significant part of the day, from that perspective, lost some of its value. As a consequence, the cost of devoting a specific amount of that time to a given task also decreased. If this interpretation holds, the under-reporting would reflect how these women interiorised factors undermining the value of their time.

Anticipating the discussion in chapter six, one could add that fetching water is one of these unpaid female tasks whose contribution to the household is routinely under-valued and under-reported. Similarly, the kind of actions taken to improve access to basic services that did not feature in the survey were typically routine informal female actions occurring in the margins of male-dominated political parties, bureaucracies and informal networks of power. Unpredictability would, in these cases, collide with gendered norms ascribing a lesser value to certain activities. More broadly, these temporal outcomes are, in the above, linked to relations of power reflecting people's unequal command over the resource and over means of holding suppliers to account. Here again, the minimising of temporal trade-offs would be an example of how people interiorise the lesser value of their time, but for reasons that tie into gendered relations of power rooted in issues of governance.

Later parts of the discussion will continue exploring these facets, here let me note only to conclude that the landscape we saw unfolding in the section differs widely from the one we ended on in the previous section. Actions taken to improve basic service delivery were more widespread overall than the survey suggested. They were also more common in Madanpur Khadar and among women. Already, we saw some of the consequences of these findings for our understanding of how people think and speak about their time. What, though, are we to make of my starting premises about the relation between time and politics? The question follows us through one more empirical immersion into behaviours around food.

4.3 Food, Queues and the Collective

Subsidised food is the other of the three services that had a direct temporal cost. Unlike for water, infrastructure was the same in both areas where one shop covered around 300 households. The difference crept back in with the necessity to apply for a card and get family members registered, which could only be done with a proof of residence. In a pattern that illustrates Madanpur Khadar's disadvantage, the share of respondents who had no food card stood at 25 per cent in Sunder Nagri's resettlement colony, 7 per cent in Sunder Nagri's slum, 42 per cent in Madanpur Khadar's resettlement colony and 100 per cent in Madanpur Khadar's slum. More tangibly even than for water, the temporal implications of accessing food could be observed in the queues that formed around the food shops every month when supplies arrived.

It is 2.30PM in Madanpur Khadar,[99] a handful of people are standing near the closed shutters of the food shop, some 40 others are sitting on porches and walls around. Some have arrived in the morning, and people are still coming. There is no sign of a queue.

'First come, first served'.

'Once we are done with the household chores, what does it matter whether we wait here or there anyways, it's all just *timepass'*.

'No one ever complains?'

'They cut our ration if we do'.

'But you know where you would have to go?'

No one answers and we go on questioning: 'What about the cards, where do you get them done?'

Again, no one answers, until eventually someone points towards the northwest: 'It used to be near the metro station, but it has moved further'.

'How do you know about these places?'

'The shopkeeper tells us'.

By 2:45PM, some 70 people are waiting, when there is a commotion. Some people get into a line, others gather around the shutters. A door bangs. The crowd moves aside, and a man walks away slowly: he is the assistant; the shopkeeper has

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[99] Madanpur Khadar, 4.11.2016.

not finished his lunch. Most of the 30 people in the line remain standing silently. Eventually, a few sit down, their legs crossed in a tight bundle.

At 3:20PM, the shop opens and again people rush, the crowd bulky around the initial line, but largely silent still. One after the other, residents leave their card with the shopkeeper, then are called inside where the helper fills their bag. Mostly, there is no discussion at the counter, just the shopkeeper telling people to move on and people muttering about cereals being dirty once again as they leave the shop.

By 4PM, the shutters have been pulled-down but people keep on coming, two or three more are let in before the shutters close for good. A few women linger on, enquiring quietly until one of them sees us, her voice at this point swelling.

'I came this morning, but it was closed. Now I rushed as soon as I was told the shop had opened. It's always like that, he opens late, he closes early'.

The shop owner is ready to leave. He tells the woman to come the next day, but the woman would not let go.

'Come tomorrow', he says in a harsh tone, while the woman repeats.

'It's always like that'.

Looking at us briefly, he adds with a nod towards the board announcing his name and the shop's opening time: Monday to Friday, 10AM-1PM, 2PM-4PM.

'Any time from 10AM to 4PM, we will be open'.

He is gone, but the woman stays back, all her features expressing violent anger, her eyes rolling, her arms gesticulating, her voice growing louder and louder: 'And the food is dirty. He closes early…'

The scene features people waiting for a task that would be quick if it were not for the irregular opening times. Because food is sourced once a month, neither official statistics related to the service, nor the time-use survey, provide an adequate point of comparison to trace discrepancies in the reporting of time. The wider pattern of minimising time costs, however, echoes in the large share of respondents (48 per cent) who did not identify any trade-off for the long hours they spent at the subsidised food shop. It echoes again in this quote: 'what does it matter whether we wait here or there anyways, it's just *timepass'.*[100] More obviously than in the scene of water, the pattern was in this scene rooted in relations of power undergirded by issues of governance.

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[100] Madanpur Khadar, 4.11.2016.

Officially, shops are supposed to open five days a week throughout the month. In reality, they opened after the arrival of fresh supplies, for one week a month, which was broken down into days for each category of beneficiaries—one day for the extremely poor entitled to more items at cheaper rates, two days for those falling below the poverty line, two days for those above it.[101] These time slots were short. They could also be pushed back or forward by a few days despite government efforts to reduce this irregularity. After supplies had arrived, opening times at the shop also varied. Frequent instances in which people waited only to be told that the shop was closing down, led many residents to come before the actual opening time. As for water, the result was that a task that would have been quick took much of a day and had a shadow of lesser discretion for several more days every month.

In themselves, these departures from the rule did not obfuscate: buyers,[102] activists and political representatives agreed that it made no sense for the shop to remain open throughout the month if the ration came only once.[103] Margins were too low for it to be a fulltime job, they observed, pointing to the systemic problems underlying the malpractices of individual shopkeepers. It started with corruption in the system of franchises under which the private shops operated. Low legal margins added to the problem, as did the possibility of selling food on the black market where prices were higher: 'the less rations he sells, the better off he is',[104] one resident explained about the practice of cutting short opening times.

The administrative practice of deregistering people who failed to pick up their ration three times in a row also did not help. The guideline was supposed to clear deceased recipients from the lists and prevent the living from registering in different locations. Combined with irregular opening hours, however, it turned the ability to take time off during a bracket of a week every month into a condition of access. Since poorer households also tended to be the ones where both adult members worked, this temporal constraint collided with other conditions of access to create a situation where better-off families across the four clusters were more likely to have access to subsidised food than poorer families: 46 per cent of all families below the median income threshold of Rs 10,000 had a food card, against 69 per cent of all families above the threshold.[105]

Witnessing people rushing when the door opened, then standing in a silent line while the shopkeeper's aid walked away, it was hard not to come to the conclusion that long waiting times

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[101] This categorisation and the system of coloured cards that distinguished types of recipients was being replaced by digital cards of two different kinds. The details of the reform, however, would take us too far into a terrain covered by experts on India's subsidised food system: (Drèze 2004; Himanshu and Sen 2013b, 2013a; Mooij 1999; Nayak 2017; Sinha 2015).

[102] Madanpur Khadar, 4.11.2016; Sunder Nagri, 13.10.2016.

[103] Dipa Sinha, Right to Food Campaign, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 3.10.2016; shopkeeper, Madanpur Khadar, 14.10.2016; MLA, Sunder Nagri, 5.10.2016.

[104] Sunder Nagri, 13.10.2016.

[105] This exclusion of the poorest was already observed in an analysis of a midday meal programme in South India some forty years back: (Harriss-White 1986, 407).

among users were about more than the problems of governance above. An assertion of domination and the banal ritual of a routine humiliation was what the scene felt like. The rushing and silent waiting combined in that with an unpredictability that deprived those waiting of the capacity to plan the immediate future (Schaffer and Huang 1975, 24; Schwartz 1975). It was a powerful example of how waiting reflects and entrenches power relations. Even tools of accountability like the board announcing the shop's official opening time were subverted to silence complaints.

Was there no way out of this trap of alienation? To explore this question, let me bring in another scene of queuing:[106]

It is 11:30AM in Sunder Nagri, a handful of people are standing in front of the open shutters, while some 50 others sit on porches around; their bags neatly folded in a line that runs from the shop's entrance towards the right along the two neighbouring houses.

'How do you make sure no one cuts the line?'

'We watch. What else should we do?'

There is laughter, eyes crossing, more laughter and complaints about irregular opening times, food being cut, soon spiralling into complaints about education, and health, and roads....

'They are supposed to open at 10AM, but they never come before 10:30AM' says a young woman beside me, her hand pointing towards an iron board with the name of the licence holder and opening times.

'When did you arrive?'

'5AM', says an elderly man.

'Sometimes we come at 3AM or even 2AM', a teenager pitches in.

'Stop talking crap!' says Kavita Koli, who a moment ago pointed to the board.

Someone nods towards the old man, then at something on the floor: 'You'd better look after your bag'.

There is more laughter while the man picks up his bag and looks through the line on the floor for a place where to tuck it in. Kavita is back to the topic:

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[106] Sunder Nagri, 13.10.2016.

'In his record, he will put 10AM. When we complain, they believe the record, but I know my way around. I don't even try to speak to this guy, I just go to the *Court* and complain'.

'You should see her, the way she fights!'

'He doesn't give rice, just wheat', someone interrupts.

'He will have wheat tomorrow'.

'Only next month'.

'I have seen people walking away with bags full of it'.

Meanwhile, in front of the shop, the same people are still waiting.

'He will close soon. I am telling you. We will have to come back tomorrow'.

Like the other, the scene, features people waiting for a task that could have been quick. It features people having to decide whether to stay on based on partial, uncertain information. Yet, beyond these commonalities, the contrasts are apparent. Even opening times were overall longer and more predictable in Sunder Nagri, as illustrated by the contrast between the 30-minute delay mentioned by Kavita in Sunder Nagri and the 80-minute delay in Madanpur Khadar. Differences in behaviour were even more striking. In Madanpur Khadar's scene, people were rushing and standing silently to maintain their position in an order of priority that was not organised by any queue. In Sunder Nagri, they were sitting around a line of bags, which acted as simple, but nonetheless demanding collective device to manage priorities.

Viewed from this perspective, the contrast raises a classical question of collective action: in what conditions does a group manage to develop the trust required to come together around basic rules or priorities, monitor them and discipline free-riders? It might be worth noting in passing that the ability to maintain trust and sanction deviances in Sunder Nagri's scene apply not just to priorities in the queues but also to truth, or more precisely to the amount of 'crap' teenagers are allowed to tell a stranger who asks questions. In a place where temperatures could reach the high forties, the advantage of having bags lined up in the sun while the bag's owner sat in the shade was substantial, and yet something prevented people in Madanpur Khadar from developing the same device as their peers in Sunder Nagri and in many other communities across India where such surrogate queues of bags or water buckets are common.

Taken alone, the scene in Madanpur Khadar would seem to feature the 'tragedy' (Hardin 1968, 1998) of individuals condemned by their own rational interest to adopt the collectively losing behaviours that force them to rush and stand in the sun. Somewhat like the notorious prisoners who in their isolated cell make the rational decision not to stand by each other even if they would be better

off doing so (Daws 1973, 1975), Madanpur Khadar's residents have to decide amidst tremendous uncertainty. And yet, the comparison with the second scene in Sunder Nagri suggests that the focus on individuals, forever doomed by their own rational egoism and ignorance, is insufficient. We should ask what in the two settings allows one group to organise around the bags, while preventing the other from doing so. To echo Elinor Ostrom, what gave Sunder Nagri's residents 'the capabilities' to shape 'the constraining rules of the game to lead to outcomes other than remorseless tragedies' (2015, 7)?[107]

Literature on queues is familiar with how unpredictability and long waiting times pit people in conflict against each other and against frontline bureaucrats manning the counter (Schaffer and Huang 1975, 27). The queues, it is argued, are social systems in which behaviours reflect people's feelings of being treated fairly, which in turn depends on being able to predict waiting times and understanding their logic (Helweg-Larsen and LoMonaco 2008; Larson 1987). Elsewhere yet, unpredictability is linked to underlying issues of governance and resource availability (Corbridge 2004; Schaffer and Huang 1975), both of which combine to undermine collaborative behaviours. Scarcity, poor governance and unpredictability would form a tight trap around residents of Madanpur Khadar, while loosening enough in Sunder Nagri to allow residents to come together around a set of common rules.

Beyond these elements the contrast between the two scenes lead us to echo Ostrom's quote above and to ask what could residents do to extricate themselves from these constraints? In that regard as well, the two scenes offer a striking contrast. In Sunder Nagri a woman spoke about going right to the nearby food office instead of arguing with the shopkeeper. Other women cheered: 'You should see how she fights!' Meanwhile, in Madanpur Khadar residents depended on the shopkeeper for information about the faraway and scattered offices where they might have sought redress. The scene closed on a complaint that had no leverage on the shopkeeper and found no expedient. We, strangers, became the echo chamber of an anger whose hyperbolic expression seemed proportionate to its powerlessness.

In ways that added to the hypothesis of a trap tightening around Madanpur Khadar's residents, the willingness to do something about the situation was linked in many responses to the ability to come together. Asked about why they had not taken action, 19 people said something along the lines: 'we cannot unite'. The answer was usually followed by a comment about neighbours speaking a different language and having different eating habits, which points to regional, religious or caste cleavages. Several Hindu respondents regretted: 'our problem, you see, is that we can't unite.

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[107] These parallels with literature on common resources are what Ostrom would have called a 'metaphor' (2015, 7), since the only actual 'common' featuring in the scene is the device to organise priorities around a resource that is itself delivered by the state. Since the only purpose of drawing the parallel is here to highlight some of the parameters involved in the situation, I hopefully do not betray her warning against erecting such metaphors into an image of 'helpless individuals caught in an inexorable process of destroying their own resources' (2015, 8).

When Muslims face a problem, they will get together, but we are divided'.[108] This was not a reason I had thought of while designing the survey, but one that came up while piloting it. Its repeated mention was striking, and since Madanpur Khadar was also the more diverse of the two neighbourhoods, the conclusion that seemed to impose itself was that diversity undermined collective action in ways that resulted in poorer governance outcomes. Compared to my starting premise, where the willingness to come forward and demand better basic services was linked to accountable political parties, this was a different explanation that contradicted literature on queues (Corbridge 2004).

When taking a closer look, however, the share of respondents who mentioned being unable to unite was the same in Madanpur Khadar's resettlement colony and in Sunder Nagri's unauthorised settlement (18 per cent of those who had not taken action). It was the same in Madanpur Khadar whose residents were most heterogeneous and less likely to report an intervention and in Sunder Nagri's slum whose residents were homogenous and most likely to report having done something about services. After that came Sunder Nagri's main colony (7 per cent), and finally Madanpur Khadar's slum, whose residents were most homogenous but had other reasons for not taking action. Another aspect that qualified the interpretation was that the lack of unity was a reason given by people who did not intervene. Rather than an actual obstacle, identity cleavages seemed like a justification for actions not taken.

If, as these final observations suggest, the actual obstacles to collective action were to be found elsewhere, the premises that inspired the choice of the two areas came to the fore again. Services worked better in Sunder Nagri, fewer people were excluded from accessing them, and political parties were better at ensuring accountable delivery. In Madanpur Khadar, in contrast, accountability frayed wider around services and their recipients, resulting in a greater impression of arbitrariness and unfairness in everyday interactions with the state.

As we saw in the previous chapter, identity cleavages really played a role in this landscape. Madanpur Khadar's political landscape was in fact determined by the cleavage opposing the dominant Gurjar caste of the Councillor to the more diverse population of the resettlement colony—caste in this case structuring a competition for power, land and other benefits in which residents of the resettlement colony featured as the weaker party. That cleavage, however, did not run inside the colony but along the canal separating the colony from the village. If tying these elements together, the residents who spoke of being unable to unite would be blaming their own heterogeneous identities for a powerlessness that was rooted in issues of governance. These issues of governance, in turn, did tie into dynamics of caste, which however had less to do with the ritual and cultural dimension of caste than with a competition for resources and power by the dominant group. It would be a case of people with little power invoking the ritual and cultural aspects of identity, while the rich would hold onto the power and resources which the caste cleavage organised.

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[108] Sunder Nagri, 29.10.2016.

Making the link with literature on queues once again, one could go one step further. If unpredictability and the scarcity of resources pits people in conflict against each other (Corbridge 2004; Helweg-Larsen and LoMonaco 2008; Larson 1987; Schaffer and Huang 1975), we might ask whether they fed into existing social cleavages. While I never witnessed any slur related to caste or religion among people waiting at the food shop or around the tanker-truck, tensions did surface around other problems of delivery, as examples in the section about waste and again in the chapter on gender illustrate. If the interpretation holds, we would have come full circle, from people blaming their own heterogeneous identity for a powerlessness that was rooted in deeper issues of governance, to these issues of governance feeding tensions around these identity cleavages.

We would have come full circle without making any progress on the question: what could residents do to extricate themselves from these constraints (Ostrom 2015, 7)? After all, the situation used to be worse Sunder Nagri. It did not take long when digging into the history of this transformation to come across the name of Santosh Koli, a young woman from the neighbourhood who emerged as one of Parivartan's leading figures and eventually became the AAP's candidate for the election. She died a few weeks before the election in a hit-and-run traffic accident, which most people in Sunder Nagri believe was a murder, invoking threats she had received after exposing scams in the food distribution scheme.[109] The 'girl was fearless', said people from all parties and political sympathies. Many of them repeated: 'How she fought'.[110] The three words evoked positive qualities of astuteness, fearlessness and a warning against those who would dare to do the same.

In a smaller group of former Parivartan members, Santosh's name was part of a larger narrative in which a small group of activists forced shopkeepers to show the register in which they recorded opening times and amounts of food sold. They recalled instances in which they used cameras to document abuses and fought shopkeepers. In their recollections, registers, boards and hidden cameras became part of a technology of activism, which a small group of locals opposed to the brute force of the 'ration mafia'. They too, repeated about Santosh: 'How she fought!'

'You should see how she fights', is also what the women in one of the scenes of queuing above say about Kavita. When we asked whether she had been involved in Parivartan, Kavita laughed shrugging off the question. 'I knew Santosh, though. Her sister is a friend of mine'.[111] A few years after Santosh's death, Parivartan had ceased to exist, and it was invoked with disillusion by its local members and its middle-class leaders alike.[112] In light of the above, however, it might be that Parivartan's greatest legacies were these looser practices rooted in networks of acquaintances, one example of which we saw in Kavita. Developing this point in the next chapter, I will argue that micro-

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[109] Sunder Nagri, 6.2.2016, 6.2.2016, 28.10.2016.

[110] Sunder Nagri, 5.2.2016, 5.2.2016, 10.09.2016, 28.10.2016.

[111] Sunder Nagri, 13.10.2016.

[112] Former members, Sunder Nagri, 5.2.2016, 5.2.2016, 12.2.2016; according to Kejriwal, 'as we moved on to the next issue, the old issue became even worse than before' (2012, 6).

communities of involvement emerged around this and other similar initiatives, in which information circulated and qualities like courage and astuteness founded an ethos of collective action. As these qualities were valorised in the small group of peers, so was the time devoted to collective action. With the decline of Parivartan and Santosh's violent death, these communities of involvement ceased to be active and a renewed sense of foreboding coloured attitudes towards certain forms of collective action. Even so, some of the friendships that had emerged during this history of collective action lasted. Beyond these friendships, information and values that had circulated in these communities had seeped into the social fabric of Sunder Nagri.

In Madanpur Khadar, meanwhile, residents turned to mediators, who formed an informal landscape that hardly surfaced in the survey but seemed to grow thicker with each ethnographic interview. The one person who kept on coming up in interviews was Asif Alam whose yellow slips were said to get shopkeepers to behave.

'I am the president of a "party-that-never-wins", a right to information activist and the director of a women's NGO', Asif introduces himself when we meet him first.[113] Having done so, he goes on speaking about the who-is-who of Madanpur Khadar's political society, looking increasingly gleeful as he enters murkier details. It has been two hours, nearly, by the time we manage to ask him about the subsidised food shops. He smiles, pausing for a moment, at last, while his hand drops the mobile phone with which he has been toying, rummages under his table, takes out a second phone and starts skimming through contacts.

'I record everything', he says pointing at a small webcam on the wall, whose eye on us I had not noticed.

'That's the one, listen!'

Out of the phone come shrill female voices punctuated by a grainy male voice. The recording goes on, so long and muddled that we are about to ask a new question.

'Listen!'

A second male voice starts yelling in the phone: 'Not next month, now'. The first male voice says something indistinct. The second male voice yells: 'Now! Now!', while female voices ring loud and shrill. Suddenly, it sounds as if someone is trampling the phone, over and over again, while across the table Asif is looking at us, his crisp shirt of tender pink fabric slightly rounded over his nascent paunch, smiling:

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[113] Madanpur Khadar, 9.10.2016.

'I beat the guy up. If people mess up with me, I threaten to pick up their children, cut them into pieces and chuck them into the Yamuna'.

Again, he trails off for some twenty minutes more before we manage to get him back onto the yellow slips.

'It's an arrangement with the Food Security Officer. I got it through political leads'.

'Political leads?'

'I thrashed the officer. He wanted to file a complaint, but I said I would file one against him and all the others. He got scared. They all are. I have been around for so long, you understand. He offered a bribe, but I refused, and instead we agreed on the yellow slips. If the slip comes back, meaning the shopkeeper has refused to act, it's war'.

Whether Asif really did beat up these people, I do not know. Undoubtable, however, is that shows of violence became for him one way of asserting his authority. The same technology that around Parivartan helped residents to document the violations of the shopkeeper became in his hands a way to document the violence he claimed to have committed. The civil technology of activism mixed in his practices with the uncivil staging of brute force. On his computer and in paper files stored in two large cupboards, Asif manically recorded threats he had received, cases he had filed and malpractices he had uncovered, over the years accumulating the knowledge with which he threatened people in and around the state. Unlike previously, where residents recalled how they had, as a group, fought with the shopkeeper and used their mobile phone's camera to capture corruption, the technologies of activism and the ability to inflict violence were in Asif's case used in ways that structured the relation of power between him and residents.

Asif was a typical ambivalent mediator who facilitated access to entitlements, even as he made sure to keep the individuals whose entitlements were at stake in a relation of dependence towards him (Schaffer 1980). The expression of this relation could be felt in the monthly meetings, which Asif depicted as moments of sharing with his 'sisters'.[114] A woman whose food card had been confiscated by a shopkeeper explained that she had tried to argue unsuccessfully. 'I told you, don't argue with them, come straight to me', Asif scolded her before softening again: 'Come and see me after the meeting, I will help you'.[115]

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[114] Madanpur Khadar, 9.10.2016,
[115] Madanpur Khadar, 1.11.2016.

Against the time they spent attending Asif's meeting, women were getting punctual help, but the information they gained was minimal. They did not learn practices of activism. Nor was the monthly hour they spent around Asif an effective way to build connections among themselves. From the perspective of doing things that mattered with their own time, the meetings only yielded limited returns. Asif, meanwhile, registered all women who attended his meetings as members of his party, which from Delhi had spread to the neighbouring states and beyond—in an odd twist for a party founded by a Muslim tying up with the very right-wing Hindu nationalist *Shiv Sena* to win over tribal populations in central India. When Asif spoke about his core constituency in Delhi, he referred to these women. Their time was the resource based on which he had built his awkward empire. If contrasting these benefits with the ones that women drew from the meetings, the imbalance was striking.

This observation echoes a question that was raised by the two figures of Firdoz and Rama in the previous section: why did they deem it worth their time? Here as there, the observation concluded a discussion that opened on a pattern of minimising the cost of a task. More than there, however, the observation in this section focused on the relations of power in which this minimising was rooted. More than previously, furthermore, waiting appeared here as a space where collective action could emerge.

4.4 Waste and the Politics of Temporary Fixes

Waste collection might have topped the list of actions taken but it did not have any direct temporal implications outside of these interventions, and its indirect implications linked to days lost to illnesses were not identified as such by residents. For this broader temporal shadow of discretion lost to illnesses, my approach was not the right one since it would have entailed engaging with medical conditions. Instead, behaviours around problems of waste collection are, in this final section, an opportunity to explore the temporal implications of taking action, along with this clarifying a few more dimensions of my starting premises.

Sunder Nagri once again stood out in the survey, with a total of 22 people reporting an intervention in the resettlement colony, 7 in the slum, against 4 in Madanpur Khadar's resettlement colony and none in the slum. Unlike for water and food, however, I came across nothing like the networks of power that developed around water and food. Not that this applied across Delhi—the slum dwellers of Madanpur Khadar, in fact, were part of a pyramidal organisation responding to the unmet need for sanitation in rich neighbourhoods. In Sunder Nagri and Madanpur Khadar, however, I found no sign of such structured networks. In the absence of an actual public resource that could be mediated and captured, the benefits involved seemed to be insufficient to attract intermediaries in neighbourhoods as poor as these. Instead, citizens were left to rely on the state or find a way of getting the work done themselves.

Waiting to speak to MLAs or Councillors, I witnessed several interventions about cleanliness—some of them pleading, others more forceful as this group of women who threatened the MLA's assistant to 'come and shit in front of the office' if a clogged drain was not fixed within the next two hours.[116] No one, though, had been as persistent as residents from one lane in Sunder Nagri, who had successively approached sanitation workers, bureaucrats, the MLA and the media.

'We tried everything, but you can see the result for yourself. When you want to complain, the guy is nowhere to be found, so you come back the next day. When you get hold of the guy, nothing happens, so you come back again, and when they send someone finally, it lasts a couple of days. Sometimes, I just clean up myself'.[117]

The disillusion that surfaced previously among people who had not intervened is here echoed by someone who 'tried everything', It is the consequence of a long- struggle whose best results were temporary fixes. This outcome brings us back to Delhi's intricate structure of governance in which sanitation workers fall under the municipal corporation while the union territory government is responsible for cleaning larger drains. The first accused the second of 'letting waste rot on the street' to undermine its credibility ahead of the election,[118] while the second accused the first of holding onto the money it needed to pay its staff members.[119] Informal sub-contracting in the administration further complicated the structure. While the job itself was hard and stigmatising, the position of sanitation worker came with sought after security guarantees (Beall 2006). People paid to obtain the job, and those who had done so, passed it on to a family member at retirement or sub-contracted it when they could afford moving on. The result was a puzzle that had the MLA's assistant confess 'even we get confused about whom to call',[120] while Sunder Nagri's veteran acting Councillor[121]—and husband of the elected Councillor—claimed to have given up altogether: 'We just pay someone to do the job'.[122]

This fragmented chain of delivery favoured unstable arrangements in both neighbourhoods, but outcomes differed substantially. In Sunder Nagri, teams of two sub-contracted workers equipped with shovel and a broom regularly toured the neighbourhood in a municipal truck. In contrast, the only person I ever saw collecting waste in Madanpur Khadar was a woman from the slum, who

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[116] Sunder Nagri, 20.09.2016.

[117] Sunder Nagri, 27.02.2016.

[118] MLA, Sunder Nagri, 5.10.2016; communications advisor, Chief Minister's office, Government of Delhi, Delhi Secretariat, 10.10.2016.

[119] Sunder Nagri, 28.10.2016.

[120] Sunder Nagri, 25.9.2016.

[121] More on this in chapter 6.

[122] Acting councillor, Sunder Nagri, 28.10.2016

worked with no other equipment than an old jute bag and two pieces of wood for a monthly salary of Rs 1500, about half what her peers in Sunder Nagri were getting and five times less than the salary of the person sub-contracting work to her. They were three like her from the surrounding slums, the woman said, but without gears, waste bins and insufficient visits from the waste truck, there was little they could do to keep the refuse from the neighbourhood's 150,000 residents piling up at every street corner and littering every open ground.

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The link between this situation and Madanpur Khadar's political landscape could be felt in responses to complaints. The BJP convenor whose party ruled over the municipal council called the local supervisor of the sanitation worker's team who, apart from doing nothing about the exploitative sub-contracting that took place in his team, did not have the power to obtain gears or increase the number of visits from the waste truck.[123] For this to happen, the complaint would have had to be channelled upwards across the divide opposing the party convenor and the Councillor, and more broadly opposing the Councillor's surrounding to the resettlement colony. Powerlessness and malpractice in the bureaucracy interacted with similar issues in political parties, in ways that bring additional clarity to the generic relation between poor services and political accountability assumed in my starting premise.

As a side-note, one could flesh out this relation with one further dimension. In both neighbourhoods, most of those who held the position of sanitation worker were a scheduled caste group, the Valmikis. In Sunder Nagri, jobs were passed onto extended family or fellow villagers. The homogenous group had emerged as a constituency which the BJP and the AAP were trying to win over from the Congress. One day, as we were talking to Sunder Nagri's BJP convenor an elderly man came by, and soon we heard the convenor declaring: 'It's easy to sit in an office and cut wages when the guy who is out there doing the hard work does not do his eight hours. If I get elected, I will stop these punishments'.[124]

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[123] BJP convenor, Madanpur Khadar, 29.10.2016; sanitation worker, Sunder Nagri, 29.10.2016.
[124] Sunder Nagri, 23.10.2016.

Sub-contracted sanitation worker with municipal corporation truck, Sunder Nagri.

Waste in Madanpur Khadar.

In Madanpur Khadar, in contrast, work was sub-contracted to people from the slum set on those same patches of disputed land that were drawing a cleavage between residents of the colony and the Councillor under whose supervision waste collection fell. The woman with her jute bag and pieces of wood had no political rights in Delhi. The first memory I have of her is her fear: 'She won't understand, she is not from here', said people who gathered around us while she kept on repeating: 'I am Indian, I can show you my voter card'.[125] Fear at that last level seemed to replace accountability higher-up the chain in ways that were not just punishing for this woman, but also ineffective for everyone.

While a politician's promise to look the other way when workers cut hours might not seem like the best recipe to solve a waste crisis, one might argue that workers with brooms, shovels and trucks cutting hours are still more effective than workers without equipment, hour after hour battling an impossible task. Against this latter ill, some accountability to those doing the hard work at the bottom of the sub-contracting chain is a necessary safeguard.

To conclude, I want to highlight one last facet of the social dynamics that distinguished the condition of sub-contracted workers in the two neighbourhoods. In Madanpur Khadar, residents of the resettlement colony linked the accumulation of waste in their neighbourhood with the livelihood of the slum dwellers. In reality, there was no direct relation between the composite waste scattered across the main colony and the dry waste that was being recycled in the slum pockets, but the two overlapped in the mind of many people as part of a larger field of associations that turned the slums into a hotbed of dirt, moral disorder, ritual impurity and otherness.[126] In Sunder Nagri, meanwhile, accusations that Muslims were littering were frequent among Hindu respondents and here too linked to ritual aspects related to the left-overs of meat, diseases breading in them, disorderly architectural expansion and imagined hyper-fertility.

One other term that entered this larger field of association was 'encroachment', which was used to complain about makeshift commerce set on public ground meant for a school or on the pavement of some of the colony's main roads.[127] Most of those involved were Muslims and poor, while most of those who brought up the issue were better-off Hindus, as were nine out of eleven people who went to lodge a formal complaint, three of them members of the RSS, two of them BJP street and block level leaders. If, in addition, we observe that encroachment was rarely mentioned as top grievance in response to another survey question,[128] we seem to touch on an intervention whose motives combined real concerns about the local government's inability to provide order and cleanliness and a form of politics that hardened identity cleavages.

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[125] Madanpur Khadar, 4.11.2016.

[126] See chapter 3, as well as: (Beall 2006; Douglas 1991).

[127] Sunder Nagri, 26.02.207, 27.2.2017, 3.3.2017, 5.3.2017.

[128] See question 56, Annex 1, p 247.

I was witness to one moment where these elements seemed to come into play. We were surveying near the line of makeshift houses built on land that the government had allotted to a school but whose ownership was caught in a prolonged judicial fight, when suddenly iron shutters were pushed down hastily around us, while some 50 policemen blocked the street. The man we were speaking to rushed us inside while the policemen made their way towards us: 'There's going to be violence'.[129] From his mother, with whom we had spoken a week earlier, we had heard that he was a member of the right-wing Hindu RSS, and one of those who lodged a complaint against the line of makeshift houses: 'See, they build mosques on school grounds',[130] she said to justify the intervention. One week later, the man's wife would confirm, but that day, while outside the police was reducing some 15 shops to rubble, the man denied having anything to do with the RSS or with the complaint.

The raid, it turned out, had nothing to do with the complaint, but with the closing of the long-drawn judicial dispute over the piece of land.[131] The mosque was left standing because it was built outside of the school's perimeter.[132] For this Hindu family and for the many Muslim families whose shops were destroyed, however, the raid became part of a struggle that opposed some residents' need for livelihoods to their neighbours' desire for order in a confrontation that overlapped with identity cleavages.

Perhaps, there is a link to be made with a question raised in the previous section. The inability to unite, which residents blamed on their own caste and religious divisions appeared there to reflect a powerlessness rooted in underlying issues of governance. Building on literature about how unpredictability pits people in the queue in conflict against each other, I suggested that these issues of governance might, in turn, harden these same divisions on which residents blamed their powerlessness. If any parallel can be drawn between the two sections, the final argument in this section would seem to back the hypothesis: not only does a shortfall of service delivery seem to nurture divisions, this shortfall can in turn be politicised in ways that polarise relations further.

4.5 Conclusion

Concluding this first immersion into behaviours surrounding basic services, we arrive at a contrasted picture. If focusing on survey data alone, most findings corroborated my initial premises about the relation between time and politics. Madanpur Khadar had less accountable political parties, worse services and fewer residents who reported having done something about the situation. In parts, ethnographic evidence also told a similar story. Initiatives around waste, for example, brought insights about the factors that link better services and more accountable political parties. Similarly, the two

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[129] Sunder Nagri, 27.2.2016.

[130] Sunder Nagri, 25.2.2016.

[131] MLA, Sunder Nagri, 5.10.2016; acting Councillor, Sunder Nagri, 28.10.2016.

[132] MLA, Sunder Nagri, 5.10.2016.

scenes of queuing at the food shop linked such issues of governance with the ability to come together in collective actions aimed at improving access to basic services.

On other aspects, ethnographic evidence seemed to contradict both my starting premise and findings from the survey. Precisely those people who should have been less inclined to take action were routinely arguing with providers and devoting long hours to informal networks of power. Residents of Madanpur Khadar were doing so more than those of Sunder Nagri, women more than men. For these people, who were often among those least endowed with resources required to opt for 'exit' (Hirschman 1970) and who faced the largest threat of being pushed out, access involved some form of 'voice'. Far from the picture of apathy we started with, we could go as far as to say that access, for many residents, demanded 'perpetual not occasional voice' (Schaffer and Lamb 1974, 79).

Such informal mobilisations were canalised into networks of power around water and food but not around waste, apparently because the potential benefits for intermediaries were too few in such poor neighbourhoods. Broadening this point, each service exemplified a different relation between models of governance, potential of resource accumulation and outcomes for users. Around waste, informal sub-contracting took place inside the government's intricate structure of power devolution in ways that left residents with the alternative of organising themselves or turning towards the state for outcomes that were long to obtain and quick to fall apart. Issues of water saw residents devoting long unreported hours to a committee above which towered the figures of 'Dalmiaji' and 'Madam'. Power relations were most ridden by violence around subsidised food delivered under a system of franchise. As residents turned towards strong men in search of solutions, their voluntary time became a resource on which these intermediaries established their authority.

The chapter also contributes with evidence about the effect of unpredictability on people's temporal freedom (Burchardt 2010; Goodin et al. 2008). It attempts to capture these effects with the idea that a task, when irregular and unpredictable, can have a temporal shadow that reaches much beyond the task itself. The other contribution of the analysis is to link these aspects with discrepancies. People seemed to under-report the costs in time and opportunity of irregular water and food delivery. According to my interpretation, this pattern reflected their interiorising the factors that undermined their ability to do things that matter with their time. It expressed their interiorising the lesser value of their time in ways that tied their thinking about time, their ability to do things with their time, and gendered relations of power around time around their reporting.

For researchers, the above points to the risk that time-use surveys will under-estimate the temporal burden of exactly those tasks that are most disempowering for people. By failing to capture the temporal shadow of a task, they might minimise its discretionary cost. Only by doing more systematic triangulations will we be in a position to assess the reality and extent of a blind spot that would play into exactly this 'vicious circle of unpaid work and poverty' (Antonopoulos and Hirway 2009, xxv) that researchers are working to uncover.

Beyond this, the discussion highlights the need to pay attention to the temporal cost of different models of delivery, by which I mean not just the direct cost but also the cost of irregularity and unpredictability. It drives home the importance of valorising time, if not by paying for it, then by linking it to other benefits among which, at the very minimum, is the benefit of recognition. Something goes wrong when a device of participatory governance supposed to improve the delivery of services goes unreported in questions about what people do about this service. It goes wrong, not just for the device itself, but also for the people whose voluntary time commitments are not reported. More fundamentally, the above emphasises the need to consider what can be done to break that trap where people are made to wait for unpredictable resources with limited possibilities to engage in things that matter to them. How can a positive cycle emerge, where time invested in something yields more freedom to engage in things that matter? The question follows us into the next chapter focused on collective involvements around political parties.

5   Time and Party Politics

In the discussion so far, political parties were an essential bridge between India's poor citizens and the state, not just during elections but also in their everyday efforts to access services and amenities. In one of the premises of the thesis, the readiness to demand better supplies depended on the extent to which political parties tie accountability to the delivery of basic services. The relation explained different patterns of involvement in Madanpur Khadar and Sunder Nagri, as well as between residents more or less endowed with the resources required to hold parties to account.

In the previous chapter, these premises seemed confirmed by findings from my survey, in which residents of Madanpur Khadar were less likely to report having done something about services than residents of Sunder Nagri, and women overall less than men. Already ethnographic evidence nuanced the picture by revealing the long hours devoted to informal networks of power exactly where relations of accountability frayed around political parties. A contrasted landscape emerged, in which political parties and their shortfalls featured as an essential link between a small formal set of interactions with the state and a large informal set of interactions.

This chapter digs further into this contrasted picture by asking: when do residents deem it worth their time to participate in political parties? In each of the two neighbourhoods, it explores behaviours around the two ruling parties: the AAP, which was elected on the promise of delivering accountable services through decentralised governance; the BJP, which won on a platform that combined Hindu nationalism and the promise of economic development. Here again, findings seem to challenge my starting hypothesis. More residents reported a political affiliation in Madanpur Khadar. The AAP struggled to mobilise its base and fight-off disillusion more than the BJP. Whereas my starting premise linked involvements in political parties to accountability, these findings confront us with another question: how do parties appeal to people's time when they do not deliver accountable basic services?

More fundamentally, these paradoxes provide a chance to explore some of the temporal challenges inherent in any democratic regime. How do parties convince their voters to devote time to politics? How do they resolve the tension between the impatience of their citizens and the slow processes of policy-driven change? How, within this tension, do they manage to foster political loyalties? With what implications for accountability?

To answer these questions, the chapter starts by following the trajectories of volunteers and sympathisers of each party. In ways that extend the discussion in the previous chapter, it considers what motivates the minority who gets involved, and it asks why such involvements persist or end. These individual trajectories are then complemented with an analysis of four issues that dominated the agenda during fieldwork. We see political parties struggling to resolve the tensions between their

voters' expectations and their own limited power to deliver better services. We see them seeking to transcend these expectations around religion and nationalism, and finally engulfing an entire nation in waiting for unpredictable cash-supplies after demonetisation. Again, we explore how these temporal regimes organise relations of power, but unlike previously where they organised power in interactions between users of services and suppliers, here they organise the relation between citizens and their political representatives in ways that either cement the political domination of one player or weaken its appeal.

The chapter provides a chance to explore a wider sequence that follows large scale middle-class demonstrations against corruption in the lead up to the Congress' double defeat in Delhi and at the federal level. It is a sequence marked by the AAP's rise to prominence in Delhi and by the BJP's domination over India's national politics. Here, the sequence is approached from the perspective of two neighbourhoods, one of which after having been a space at the margin found itself bound to the emergence of the same party that went on to win over Delhi. The pages to come recount the extraordinary collective adventure from the perspective of the ordinary women and men who routinely had to decide whether or not it was worth their time to engage with a movement that from the very beginning presented itself as a promise of transformation.

5.1 Time as Political Conundrum

Before engaging with the practices that made up the contrasted political landscape of Sunder Nagri and Madanpur Khadar, I want to define the challenge in somewhat more general terms. An exchange with Madanpur Khadar's BJP convenor offers an entry point for this.[133]

> In the BJP's office, Anand Prakash and a handful of volunteers are discussing the party's Dussehra[134] celebration when an elderly man steps in. A retired municipal sweeper, the newcomer has come to enquire about his monthly pension. Anand's right hand raises slowly, takes the man's pension booklet and looks through it:
>
> 'Wait until the 15th'.
>
> For some thirty seconds, the man hesitates then withdraws. They are still talking about the Dussehra celebration when another man comes in and enquires about his pension:
>
> 'Wait until the 15th'.

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[133] Madanpur Khadar, 9.09.2016.

[134] Dussehra: a Hindu festival that celebrates the victory of good over evil.

The man stands silently, his fingers fidgeting through the booklet of worn paper then steps forward: 'Will it come then?'

Again, Anand's hand reaches out towards the booklet: 'Show me'. A quick glance and he hands back the booklet: 'After the 15th, it will come', he says, his tone is paternal, before he breaks off and gets back to the Dussehra matter.

The man does not look convinced, but neither does he pursue. He stays on silently for some time, then walks away.

'I have no clue when the pension will come', says Anand after he is gone, 'they haven't been coming for three months now, but what can I do, politics is about managing expectations'.

How can a party manage expectations when it has such limited capacities to address its electors' concerns? Why would citizens care to devote time to political parties when their relation to their representative is so compromised that they neither believe their words nor press on about the words they do not believe? The case above is extreme and a result of the challenges evoked so far. The suspension of municipal pensions was one episode in the conflict opposing the union territory government to municipal authorities. The latter accused the former of withholding money, while the former accused the latter of delays and misallocations. This played out against the backdrop of a change in municipal tax allocations that left poorer regions starved of revenues. The scene, furthermore, takes place in Madanpur Khadar where mechanisms for resolving problems inside the Councillor's party were, as mentioned already, undermined by conflicts over resources and power. The challenge had wider implications. Whether in Madanpur Khadar or Sunder Nagri, political parties had limited capacities to meet expectations.

Timeframes clashed. Citizens wanted to see change that the slower rhythm of policy-driven reforms could not deliver, especially in a context of political stalemate. Their impatience undermined the slower sedimentation of political loyalties. Each political party had to find a way to square the circle if it was to convince people to get involved, vote and campaign for its candidate. While the conundrum was similar in each neighbourhood and in each political party, its modalities differed. The rest of the chapter looks at how these differences surfaced in the way citizens engaged with political parties in the two neighbourhoods; here I will briefly consider how each political party defined what was at stake.

The Congress manifesto promised continuity. It opened on a recapitulation of the party's 'seminal contribution' (2014, 2) to the making of India during sixty years of independence. Then followed a vision for the near future spelled out around the same agenda of 'inclusive and sustainable growth' that had defined the Congress' previous term in power. There were references to 'time bound

service delivery' (2014b, 13), but no specific timeframes. This was, in sum, a temporal regime characterised by continuity, with modern history serving as foundation for a vision articulated around general targets.

Citizens, however, wanted change. Taking a short time span, one might trace the demand for change back to the largescale protests of the 'India Against Corruption' movement that marked the final years of Congress rule. Middle-class citizens and a motley set of public figures converged with existing anti-corruption movements that until then had combined grassroots mobilisation and a policy advocacy that led to the creation of the Indian Right to Information Act (GOI 2005b).[135] Of these older initiatives, Parivartan in Sunder Nagri was neither the first nor the most influential, but its leaders would soon rise to the centre of attention by founding the AAP, which less than a year later would win enough seats to form a coalition government in Delhi.

'This is a moment to transform the politics of India…You hold the key to the future' (AAP 2013) read the opening sentences of the new party's first manifesto. Two short paragraphs later, the text spelled out the two measures meant to usher in a 'new era' of transparent and participatory politics: the AAP would pass an anti-corruption law 'within 15 days' and pass a law known as Delhi *Swaraj Nagar* Bill,[136] literally the law that would turn Delhi into a city of self-rule by institutionalising and empowering neighbourhood assemblies.[137] It was the promise of a radical break with the past, framed by ambitious temporal landmarks. For the first time, promise and timeline stumbled against the slower pace of policy-making: 49 days into term, the *Swaraj Nagar* Bill was still pending, and the AAP's Chief Minister called for new elections.

A second manifesto followed, where the *Swaraj Nagar* Bill featured along with a series of tangible outcomes among which were the cutting of electricity prices by half, providing 20,000 litres of drinking water for all, improving public health and education. Timelines loosened but did not disappear: the anti-corruption law provided for investigations to be performed in a lapse of 'six months' (AAP 2015, 10,12); another bill (GOD 2015b) amended a Congress-era Right to Services Act (GOD 2011) by tightening delivery timetables into windows of seven to thirty days. Time, in sum, became in the party's politics a marker of accountability. As we saw already and will continue to explore, timelines and promises stumbled a second time against the reality of Delhi's fraught policy processes, leaving the AAP government struggling to manage expectations and mobilise the base that could have engaged in its agenda of decentralised politics.

Meanwhile, in the 2014 general election, the BJP led by Narendra Modi obtained its first ever majority rule after its only experience of coalition rule in 1996. Beyond this first term in power,

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[135] About the wider movement: (Baviskar 2010; Goetz and Jenkins 2001; Jenkins 2004; Sharma 2015; Webb 2013).

[136] The bill was subsequently withdrawn to be revised before being introduced once again, which explains why there is no reference to the text.

[137] On this notion of *swaraj* or self-rule: (Kejriwal 2012).

the BJP's history could be traced much further back to the 1925 foundation of the RSS, which defined itself as a cultural organisation working towards the longer-term aim of a nation united in its Hindu roots. Over the years, a series of organisations had emerged out of this common matrix to form the *sangh*-family, of which the BJP in 1980 became the political wing. For years after its creation, it remained the main opposition to the Congress, ruling in states, then heading a coalition government at the centre in 1996, before forming a majority government in 2014, soon followed by multiple victories in state elections.

'India is the most ancient civilisation of the world' went the manifesto's opening sentence that year (BJP 2014). Then came a description of the abundance and unity of a golden age destroyed by a series of episodes of foreign domination ending with the 'decade of decay' under the rule of a westernised Congress elite. 'If India is to survive, which it has to in order to play its role in the community of nations', it is urgent for it to 'rekindle with its roots', the manifesto concluded.[138] The aspiration towards a future of prosperity, strength and unity was, in this vision, pegged to the imagination of a return to a mythological Hindu origin.

To these wider horizons, Modi's political offer added the promise that 'better days are coming'. More explicitly than ever before in the BJP's history, the organic vision of a nation reunited in its Hindu roots was combined with a programme of economic development that planned to cut red tape in the economy, unlock growth, job creation and productivity—all of these converging in the nation's reinstituted economic and geopolitical might.[139]

The imminence of the 'better days are coming' notwithstanding, there were no timeframes for results. Nor did the electoral programme tie accountable services with temporal markers. The only reference to 'reducing time-wastages' in service delivery was not linked to a timeline (BJP 2014, 10). References to a fixed delivery timetable came up three times, once about the digitalisation of services, and twice again about business clearances. In the Delhi elections of the following year, the party did not publish a manifesto at all, in effect not providing a document that could have spelled out even a loose timeframe for the term.

With its focus on long-term national-level goals, the BJP was not challenged by the slow pace of policy-driven change as directly as the AAP. Still, it was also struggling to deliver the 25 million jobs a year which, of all promises of the manifesto, mattered most to electors (Lokniti 2018, 10). To put it briefly, the 'better days' were not quite as good as they were announced to be, as was succinctly put by this man who cycled by one day on his old rickshaw, his voice a monument of sarcastic jubilation as he bent forward on his rusty, screechy pedal in the sweltering heat of a post-monsoon afternoon: 'See the good days have come, we have started to sweat profusely!' In

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[138] Crucial in this politics of history is a battle over history books and education policies, which I can only point to here: (Bénéï 2001; Sundar 2004).

[139] On the uneasy cohabitation between a Hindu organicist vision and a liberal economic programme in the BJP's history: (Corbridge and Harriss 2003; Hansen and Jaffrelot 2001; Jaffrelot 2019).

municipalities of Delhi, the BJP was responsible for sanitation, which was the first source of grievances among residents. In spite of all, the BJP managed to consolidate its domination over India and be reelected in much of Delhi's municipalities, including Madanpur Khadar but not Sunder Nagri where it lost to the AAP. Three years into term, Modi's popularity peaked (Lokniti 2017, 2), before starting to erode (Lokniti 2018).

The three programmes above, in sum, describe three different visions for the country famed by different temporal imaginations. In the Congress' proposition, the appeal to electors tied past achievements and promises for the future. The AAP defended a break with the past and the promise to do away with corruption in service delivery and politics. Tight temporal markers were a guarantee of accountability. In the BJP's programme, these defined timetables were replaced by the longer-term perspective of a country re-established in its past might. Already, election results gave an indication about how successfully each of these propositions responded to the tension between the impatience of voters, slow policy-driven change and the still slower building of political loyalties. The sections to come narrow-down the focus to explore these aspects translated in everyday practices in Madanpur Khadar and Sunder Nagri.

5.2 Participation and Disillusion

The sequence of events preceding the research recorded peaks of participation. In Delhi, largescale demonstrations during the anti-corruption movement were followed by a 12 per cent hike in voter participation in the 2014 general election compared to the election five years earlier. In union territory elections, the hike was 9 per cent compared to the previous poll five years earlier. This was true for Muslims and Hindus alike, whose commitment to polls was similar in all except Madanpur Khadar's slum, where there were many other reasons not to vote, as chapter seven explores in greater depth. By the time municipal elections took place, the dynamic was not perceptible anymore; this, however, might have more to do with participation being usually lower at this level. Sunder Nagri and Madanpur Khadar were no exceptions to this trend (table 5.2.1). It was, in fact, exacerbated in ways that reflect the widely commented on propensity of India's poorer citizens to vote in greater numbers.[140]

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[140] For a few entry points: (Ahuja and Chhibber 2012; Thachil 2014).

Table 5.2.1 Voter Participation

Percentages (reported by cell)

	National	Union territory	Municipal	Sample size
Sunder Nagri				
Resettlement	86%	92%	47%	55
Slum	96%	99%	61%	66
Madanpur Khadar				
Resettlement	73%	85%	27%	69
Slum	48%	56%	7%	40
Delhi	64%	67%	54%	13,000,000

Sources: own survey; electoral commission.

High rates of participation are consistent with wider trends, but nonetheless stand out when contrasting them with the disillusion and powerlessness described in the previous chapters. Even among Madanpur Khadar's slum dwellers who vote in lesser numbers, participation in national and union territory elections still seems surprisingly high if considering that the long journey to vote represents the equivalent of one month of income for people who do not use government services and hardly make ends meet. As on several occasions before, we find ourselves wondering: why do people deem it worth their time to engage in this fundamental act of politics?

Figures about affiliations to political parties and other organisations add one further dimension (table 5.2.2). Leaving aside Madanpur Khadar's slum, which here again features as outlier, affiliations in the three other settings contrast with much of the discussion so far. Residents of Sunder Nagri's slum were the fewest to report an affiliation to political parties despite being most likely to report having done something about services or voted in the previous election. In contrast, Madanpur Khadar's resettlement colony, where voter turnout was lower and interventions fewer, had a larger share of people reporting an affiliation than Sunder Nagri.

These differences are too marginal for a sample as small as mine to allow for any strong deduction. It is worth noting, furthermore, that affiliations to political parties were usually loose compared to affiliations to other organisations—they typically occurred less than once a year around political parties and related organisations,[141] while they were monthly for women and welfare organisations,[142] and more frequent for religious organisations.[143] In spite of these caveats, the figures suggest that the contrast observed previously about the likelihood of taking action in each cluster did not apply to party affiliation. Nor were Hindus more likely to report an affiliation to a political party, the two groups in that regard as well were on par in all except Madanpur Khadar's slum. The only

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[141] Because of the organisations' links with the BJP, I have also included three respondents who reported being part of the RSS.

[142] Neighbourhood associations, sports clubs, NGOs, unions.

[143] Congregations around mosques and temples, faith-groups, sects.

difference that did match expectations was that women (4 percent) were less likely to report an affiliation than men (10 per cent).

Table 5.2.2 People Involved in Organisations
Percentages (reported by cell)

	Parties	Women	Welfare	Religious	Sample Size
Sunder Nagri					
Resettlement	12%	4%	2%	34%	73
Slum	4%	6%	4%	31%	72
Madanpur Khadar					
Resettlement	15%	9%	8%	21%	65
Slum	1%	2%	2%	41%	67

Source: own survey

Once again, the modalities of participation seem complex. Voter participation was surprisingly high if considering the powerful feeling of disillusion, we discussed in an earlier section. Trends in voter participation across neighbourhood also contrasted with affiliations to parties in this section. One aspect, however, that unites all the figures above is that the sequence preceding my research was a moment we could term a 'participation explosion' in which there is a 'sudden…intensification of the preference' for 'voice' (Hirschman 1981, 215). In light of figures above, the question that confronts us is not the temptation of voters to abandon the democratic practice of voting or abstaining, unlike in many other parts of the world (Appadurai 2017). Instead, with renewed insistence, the findings raise the question: why do people deem it worth their time to vote for or participate in the organisations of representative democracy?

While I will briefly revisit some aspects of the literature devoted to the question of participation later in the chapter, the discussion here shifts the perspective away from the moment of elections to the everyday political practices that organise expectations and loyalties around political parties between elections. This takes us away from approaches that liken elections to secular rituals in which hierarchies of power are temporarily neutralised by the arithmetic of one vote one person (Banerjee 2014). Instead, the discussion takes us through political loyalties that are neither mere relations of patronage (Chandra 2007), nor mere rational choices between policy programmes (McGann 2016), but rather behaviours that combine an element of the latter with the dense social and economic relations that form the political texture of a place.

One specificity of the discussion here is that these motives of participation are explored from the perspective of neighbourhoods that are home to a large number of Muslims, whose under-representation in India's political parties and in elected positions is widely noted (Hasan 2011; Misra 2004). Little is known on the political behaviour of Muslims, who have often been described as non-assertive vote banks grouped around leaders concerned with identity matters more than with social

issues (Berenschot 2014; Chhibber and Sekhon 2018; Michelutti and Heath 2014; Muralidharan 2014; Susewind 2015, 8). In recent years, however, a nascent body of scholarship has nuanced this understanding, when pointing to a multiplication of Muslim parties and candidates in municipal elections (Jaffrelot and Verniers 2012; Verma 2012; Verniers 2014), or when highlighting a shift towards social and economic demands (Ahmed 2009; Chatterjee 2017) in the wake of a landmark report on the socio-economic status of Muslims commissioned by the Congress government of the time (Sachar 2006).

While not centred on these questions of minority political behaviour, the discussion here nevertheless adds to this literature. Already, we saw that the Muslim population of the two areas was as likely to vote and be involved in association as the Hindu population. Sections to come will add to this with examples of how one section of the two neighbourhoods' Muslim population broke away from its historic political loyalties to embrace a new-comer promising change and transparent basic services.

Broadening the perspective further, the sequence above can be linked to a longer-term trend in which non-elite groups that were once bound to the Congress through relations of patronage gained increasing political autonomy (Frankel 1990; Hasan 1998; Robinson 1988). Initially confined to intermediary classes and castes (Jaffrelot 2003), the 'democratic upsurge' (Yadav 2000) has spread since among poorer sections of the population (Witsoe 2013). As the trend unfolded, demands for equity and better services combined with 'resentment and anger stemming from condensed feelings of humiliation…Self-consciously plebeian political identities' were 'articulated with a crisis of the conventional paternalistic and clientelistic mobilisation of the masses by elite groups' (Hansen and Jaffrelot 2001, 9).

The BJP's victories, from this perspective, were also the result of the party's success in reaching out beyond its traditional upper-class and caste constituency and appealing to the ambivalent emotions described above. A man of modest economic and caste background, Modi himself symbolised this transformation whose implications for the party's everyday practices of mobilisation are explored in the pages to come. Similarly, the largescale mobilisation that accompanied the AAP's emergence and the Congress' fall could be taken as a symptom of this combination of vibrancy and distrust. Combined with the AAP's first years in power, it is also an expression of how difficult it is for a newcomer who channelled this demand for change into an electoral success, to transform a mobilisation against the status quo into political loyalty.

5.3 Trajectories of Involvement

The trajectories of individuals who devoted time to political parties is a first opportunity to explore the questions above, and a chance to extend the analysis about the emergence of collective action in the previous chapter. Because the AAP's emergence was recent and intimately bound to the recent

history of Delhi in general and of Sunder Nagri in particular, this is where I start, before turning to the BJP in the second half of the chapter.

The trajectories of the AAP's oldest sympathisers can be traced back before Parivartan to two NGOs whose presence in Sunder Nagri dates to the early days of the colony, Saheli and Action India. More than the organisations themselves, those who got involved at the time recall individuals whom the organisations had recruited among residents of the neighbourhood. Radha Koli,[144] who was quoted previously persuasively complaining about a clogged drain, was approached by a neighbour who worked as community mobiliser for Action India's savings groups. Nasim Ayub, whom the thesis' introduction cited saying 'I have time, but I don't feel like it anymore',[145] was inspired by a resident working for Saheli's health programme. Santosh Koli's mother also was a local staff member from Action India.

For these older sympathisers, getting involved was a slow process. Radha's husband was opposed to her joining the meetings as we will hear her saying in the next chapter, and she saw no point in an involvement that did not help them make ends meet. Progressively, her neighbour overcame her reluctance, at first by visiting her at home, then by taking her to a meeting, which eventually turned into regular attendance. Neither she nor Nasim were prompted by the need to solve a specific issue or obtain an advantage. It was not that considerations about benefits did not matter at every step, but that the human connection preceded them and reached beyond: 'I kept on going because I felt good with these women',[146] said Radha. Progressively, interactions in the group became incentives in their own right, even as informal interactions within the privacy of home ceded to group-meetings in a public space.

Parivartan drew on these networks to mobilise residents around the small team of middle-class activists who made up the organisation's founding staff, in effect cutting short the slow early phases of the process. Its first few meetings were held with Action India's sympathisers, former members recall.[147] Forms of action, however, differed: whereas Saheli and Action India had focused on health awareness and saving groups, Parivartan used legal and administrative tools provided by the Right to Information Act (GOI 2005b). It filed Right to Information requests (Peisakhin 2012; Rekha 2012) to challenge bloated electricity bills, checked registers in subsidised food shops and conducted social audits to show the embezzlement of public funds. It was more political and more confrontational. There was also a change of rhythm, regular interventions replacing the monthly meetings of the two older organisations. New members joined, most of them young men who

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[144] Among residents, Radha Koli is the only one whose name is not anonymised. Changing her name would have created confusion since later parts of the discussion quote a documentary (Roy 2003) where Radha is identified by her name. Radha was of course asked for consent.

[145] Sunder Nagri, 6.2.2.2016.

[146] Sunder Nagri, 23.09.2016.

[147] Sunder Nagri, 23.09.2016.

remember that period as one of freedom when they had no family to care for.[148] The result in Radha's recollection was that women involved in Saheli and Action India found themselves sitting in the backrows when attending Parivartan's meeting, while young people, most of them men, took up the front rows.[149]

For the new members, material benefits appear to have played even less of a role than for the older female crowd. 'I was young, I wanted to do something for the neighbourhood', one of them said.[150] Nasim, who had joined the small group of regulars, could spend hours recalling how they fought the 'ration mafia'.[151] Listening to him among a small group of pavement dwellers who sometimes nodded, sometimes pitched in with a question or to add a detail, felt like witnessing the narrative of a modern urban tale. This was a world in which a handful of activists fighting with their knowledge of the law and a hidden camera as their only weapons could win battles over the powerful and unequivocally villainous shopkeepers. It was a world in which actions could be meaningful, and in which outsiders listened. 'Media flocked to the neighbourhood',[152] Nasim and other former members recalled. It was, in sum, the opposite of that world we heard previously where 'there is no point; we can't unite; no one listens'.

In this world, Arvind Kejriwal seems to have played a pivotal role: 'he knew how to guide us, he told us where to go, what to do next', says Nasim, illustrating how the leader from outside helped residents to break the trap of lacking information and know-how. Kejriwal and a few people around him were also the ones who had the contacts in the media and the state, becoming a keystone of the small community of knowledge, values and practices that around Parivartan shifted incentives towards collective action. Looking back, former members regret not having done more to ensure that the practices of activism developed around Parivartan lived on: 'We would tell people, what you get in two months by paying a bribe, we get in one week.[153] It was so much quicker to file a Right to Information request ourselves and we were under such pressure to show results that we did not take the time to teach people how to do it themselves'.[154] Unlike many NGOs, Parivartan was not constrained by donors, since it was not registered as an NGO and financed the very low salaries of its core team with individual donations. Instead, the quote above points to the conflict between the longer-term aim of building their capacity and the necessity of responding to the expectations of residents whose time and good will Parivartan depended on for this aim.

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[148] Sunder Nagri, 25.02.2016.

[149] Sunder Nagri, 23.10.2016.

[150] Sunder Nagri, 25.2.2016.

[151] Sunder Nagri, 6.2.2016, 25.09.2016, 23.10.2016, 8.11.2016.

[152] Sunder Nagri, 6.2.2016.

[153] On the relative effectiveness of bribes and right to information requests: (Peisakhin 2012).

[154] Former Parivartan member, Trilokpuri, 4.2.2016.

For Parivartan, the departure of this small group of founders who moved on to work in other parts of Delhi and eventually joined the India Against Corruption movement marked a period of decline. While across Delhi, many of the middle-class people now staffing the ranks of the AAP were getting involved in the India Against Corruption movement, this wider mobilisation remained a distant inspiration for all but a few residents of the resettlement colony. The electoral campaign brought the mobilisation back to Sunder Nagri, after Kejriwal chose the neighbourhood to stage a hunger fast, bringing with him journalists and activists from across Delhi. This is when many of those who since became the AAP's most active members in the area got involved. It was also a moment when the local aspirations of Sunder Nagri's residents dovetailed into a much wider demand for change.

Santosh Koli who was chosen as the AAP's candidate became the public figure who embodied this moment—until she was killed a few months into the campaign in an accident many suspect of being a murder. Her brother was elected instead of her, but came across as incompetent,[155] and when the assembly was dissolved a lawyer unknown to Sunder Nagri's residents became the AAP's new candidate. The beautiful portrait of the 27-year old Santosh, fist raised, a radiant smile on her lips, could still be found in offices of the Delhi Secretariat. It was an image of the affinity that once existed between Sunder Nagri and those who became Delhi's rulers. Under the image, however, unease loomed large in the Delhi Secretariat as did resentment in and around Santosh's parental house.

For us, who look back at this collective history, her violent death—whether the accident of a candidate who travelled on a scooter where others used cars, or an actual murder—is one more reminder of the powerful forces undermining the emergence of collective action from within places such as Sunder Nagri and Madanpur Khadar. Santosh is also, however, a reminder of a moment that carried the hope of a local and female leadership since replaced by a male middle-class leadership. It could have been otherwise, the portrait reminds us, but the web of constraints that entrench inequalities in political representation prevented that possibility.

One year into the second term, Radha was back in her small shop, sticking beads on a piece of cloth when she was not tending to a customer, saying: 'He used to be Arvind for us, and now look, he has become one of these big men, and nothing changed for us'.[156] Nasim was back on that square of pavement from where he rented out tents and chairs for wedding banquets, saying: 'I have time but, I don't feel like it anymore'.[157] Punctually, he still attended the AAP's demonstrations, as he had wanted to do on that day when he announced that he was about to leave for a rally. Since he had no car or scooter, he had arranged to go with other people, who would call anytime to pick him up.

[155] Sunder Nagri, 28.10.2016, 6.2.2016.
[156] Sunder Nagri, 20.9.2016.
[157] Sunder Nagri, 6.2.2016.

He did not know that the rally had already left, although it had set off half an hour earlier. When we told Nasim, he tried to make a few calls, but did not get through. He mumbled something about these people having their office just around the corner and not even bothering to tell him, then he tried calling again unsuccessfully and cried out: 'I don't know what they are doing! The MLA does not even come here, just ask around, no one knows his face'. [158]

The AAP's political geography had grown beyond the geography of Nasim's involvement. He did not have the adequate means of commuting and the human connections he relied on were either weakened or not the right ones to be taken along to the rally. He had lost the ability to be at the right time and place to meet a contact or gain information. Though literate, he had spent a lot less time at school than the younger volunteers who could be found in the MLA's office. Nor did the practices of activism he had joined when working with Parivartan apply in the new situation. Even the narratives of fights and hidden-cameras that gave a meaning to his involvement had ceased to echo in the imagination of younger members for whom the wider but also less confrontational campaign was the reference. The way he spoke about collective action shaped by decades of conflicts with frontline officials contrasted with the new volunteers' aspiration to change the state from within. Nasim, in sum, did not have the 'habitus' (Bourdieu 1998) of the new politics that had emerged with the AAP's accession to power. So, he sat on his square of pavement, saying: 'I have time, but I don't feel like it any more'.[159] The community of practice, value and information that had once made it worthwhile to invest time in Parivartan had moved on past him, to another scale, other technologies, another generation, other practices and imaginations.

In the antechamber of the MLA's office, meanwhile, were younger people, a few of them from better-off families in Sunder Nagri, others from middle-class settlements nearby. They were shop-owners who could afford to delegate and teachers who could give tuitions in the evening. All of them could devote a significant part of their time to the AAP, in ways that even Nasim could not, and that allowed some of them to build enough political capital and experience to land a job as MLA assistant. Meanwhile, most residents of Sunder Nagri who had campaigned for the party were back at work, new sympathisers were waiting for guidance, and disillusion was growing.

Nevertheless, the history above could be felt. Radha and Nasim were disillusioned, but they still knew how to navigate the state. 'Two hours later the toilet was fixed', Radha explained with a big laugh when we enquired about their luck after we met them persuasively pressuring the MLA's assistant to do so. 'We learnt', she went on seriously. 'At first, we would go alone, they would humiliate us, and nothing would happen. Now we go together so they can't just send us away'.[160] Beyond veterans like Radha and Nasim, young people grew up with the figure of Santosh and some,

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[158] Sunder Nagri, 25.09.2016.

[159] Sunder Nagri, 6.2.2.2016.

[160] Sunder Nagri, 20.09.2016. On how legal know-how can improve the effectiveness of public action among poor people, also see: (Pollock 2013).

like Kavita Koli in the previous chapter 'did not bother to argue with this guy [the shopkeeper] but went straight to his boss'.[161]

Information and know-how about how service providers could be held to account for wrongdoings had spread among residents. Perhaps more importantly, the experience of having been involved in a collective mobilisation allowed them to think that it was possible to come together and challenge power and corruption in the state. This was true for Radha and Nasim who were directly involved in Parivartan, but it was true more broadly for many residents who were drawn to the AAP during the first electoral campaign, at a time when Kejriwal chose Sunder Nagri to stage his hunger fast and when Sunder Nagri's Santosh was seen as one of the new party's most charismatic leaders. In spite of the disillusion that had developed since, it was clear that for many residents of Sunder Nagri, this moment when their neighbourhood suddenly featured at the centre of a promise of change had done something to their sense of what was possible.

Each of the phases we came across, in sum, led to the foundation of the next. Initially, a few people were socialised into communities of involvement focused on livelihoods and awareness. Around Parivartan, the focus shifted towards changing the local everyday state, which inspired new practices of activism. The focus shifted again when these local practices dovetailed into the wider mobilisations aimed at changing the political system. At each step, new members were drawn in faster and for types of mobilisation that reached further beyond their particular interests. If new technologies played a role in these changes, it was a secondary one in a neighbourhood where most residents only owned an old cell phone, which, furthermore, was often out of credit. It is worth noting that this applies more broadly in a country where just 27 per cent reported having access to a working internet connection (Lokniti 2018, 6). Instead, each phase seems to have contributed to developing the practices and the human connections that could support these types of involvement. In the words of Arjun Appadurai, they expanded the 'pathways' (2013, 8) towards collective mobilisation. Each phase carved out time for it in the present and linked that present to a shared vision.

This should not make us lose sight of just how much combined to undermine these involvements. Outside interventions were required to break the trap of lacking know-how, information and confidence. For outsiders, the focus on transferring know-how and information was easily lost to the immediate aim of delivering results, when it was not lost to the wider aim of accessing power. Leadership, here, appears rooted in an imbalance of information, contacts and resources, at worse only mediating these resources without transferring the power that comes with them; in more favourable cases helping to shape local practices and perceptions. The emergence of local leaders took time, and the individuals who rose into leaders were exposed to multiple threats. Meanwhile,

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[161] Sunder Nagri, 13.10.2016.

for all those involved, incentives could fall apart when the geography of mobilisation moved passed the human communities that gave them a meaning.

Broadening beyond Sunder Nagri and the AAP, the kind of trajectory above was in fact fairly common. In Madanpur Khadar too, several of the AAP's most active volunteers had gravitated around the Right to Information movement. Similarly, the local Congress structure interacted with non-governmental organisations in a relation that ranged between collaboration and co-optation. Even among the BJP's most active volunteers and lower-ranking cadres, where the RSS played a pivotal role, several like Anand Prakash mentioned a contact with a 'social worker' as trigger for their involvement.

Unlike for the AAP, such encounters were for members of the Congress and of the BJP usually just a trigger prepared by an upbringing. Again, this was less frequent in Madanpur Khadar, where resettlement was still recent and where older political loyalties were usually linked to a former slum leader. In Sunder Nagri, however, Congress loyalties were part of the landscape. The moment of resettlement became, in the memory of older residents, an ambivalent affirmation of loyalty, remembered with a mixture of dread and thankfulness. 'We should support the Congress, Indira Gandhi is the one who got us a house', said many older residents even as they remembered the harshness of the first few years.[162] Around the house, networks of support emerged, which cemented partisan loyalties. They too, were communities of practice and values, but they were looser and rarely geared towards active involvement. The BJP had similar roots among Hindu residents, through its own cadres and through its sister organisations among which the RSS and the affiliated student union, to which we will return later in this chapter.

5.4 'You Should Work for the Party All Day'

The previous section ended on the disillusion of older members, sidelined by newer volunteers. Even for these new members, however, participation came with challenges, as the trajectory of one of them illustrates. For a long time, Fatima Salim's only involvement in politics had been to cast her ballot, until she came across AAP volunteers in Sunder Nagri who were enrolling people before the election campaign. Her husband described himself as 'a big fan of Kejriwal',[163] but she was more pragmatic: the tangible promises to cut water and electricity bills convinced her to devote a few hours to the campaign. About one year after the elections, AAP volunteers approached the family again, hoping that they would become the party's relay in the lane. The husband was too busy earning the family's income, but Fatima agreed. While she was waiting to hear back from the AAP, she convened a first meeting with neighbours who mentioned their grievances about a subsidised food card that had not been renewed and came up with the idea of setting up a gate on each side of the lane to address very

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[162] Sunder Nagri, 3.3.2016, 10.11.2016.

[163] Sunder Nagri, 28.10.2016.

real concerns of safety—the lane had become the theatre of a bloody feud over property that resulted in the murder of several of Fatima's direct neighbours and had the surviving members of the family living under police protection. Poorer residents of the lane, who happened to have remained loyal to the Congress, however, were not ready to contribute to the cost. Fatima did not want conflicts and the idea of the gate was abandoned. As time went by, Fatima's mood soured:[164]

'I am upset, the party doesn't support me. They called me, made me sign some papers and told me: "You are head of the committee now, you should work for the party all day, all your time should be devoted to it", but no one told me what to do, or where to go if I have a complaint. If I call neighbours and ask them to share their problems, it will raise expectations. But what if I don't know how to help? Not long ago, I needed to get an attestation for my daughter. I needed it within two weeks. I ended up paying a bribe, because I did not know how to get it done otherwise. How can I help others if I can't get things done the proper way for my own children?'

'What about these people who called you, have you tried asking them for guidance?'

Fatima does not answer.

'Do you know who they are?'

For some time more, Fatima keeps a sulking silence, then she adds: 'The call came from the *Court*'.

More time passes.

'I had big expectations, but I don't know what they are doing. I am just waiting, hoping they will start working at last'.

The *Court,* as noted previously, was the guarded compound where the MLA's office was located along with the local administrations and court. It is also the only English word I heard Fatima using. This alien word and its confines guarded by high walls became the expression of an obscure, distant state that annexed even the party she once campaigned for. When that entity became the source of a call to devote her entire day to a task that remained to be clarified, the agenda of decentralised participatory governance turned into a world akin to Franz Kafka's *Castle* (1924), where a surveyor arriving to do his job in a village set at the foot of a citadel spends the rest of his life and of the unfinished book waiting for permission from that citadel he cannot enter or even see.

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[164] Sunder Nagri, 18.9.2016.

More pragmatically, Fatima's case illustrates some of the challenges that confront the AAP's programme of accountable service delivery and decentralised governance. The politico-administrative stalemate with the Lieutenant Governor was a challenge, since the passing of the *Swaraj Nagar* Bill meant to institutionalise neighbourhood assemblies was among the casualties. Nor did the slow pace of implementation help. In Sunder Nagri and Madanpur Khadar, residents had seen no improvements in the everyday working of services despite substantial increases in social spending, which in the years to come would result in the building of schools, healthcare centres and so on.

While these larger gains remained unfelt, there had been deterioration on a few tangible issues. Residents of Sunder Nagri's resettlement colony who had one meter for several households saw their water bill increase because their consumption was more than the 20,000-litre threshold after which users had to pay a higher price, not just for their excess consumption, but for the initial quota as well. The measure was meant to avoid wastage, but it hit families who had no personal meter. Similarly, the AAP's election coincided with Delhi's reaching the state-wise quota of beneficiaries for subsidised food. The new government could do nothing about the quota, which was decided at the federal level, but that nuance was lost to residents who were told they could not register their new-born child. All of this did not help, but Fatima's difficulties point to other challenges that reach beyond these problems.

When she spoke about her fear of raising expectations by calling a meeting, she acknowledged that she needed to offer something in exchange for the time she asked from her neighbours. In her words, the problem was that she did not know how to navigate a state marred by corruption. Here again, time played an important role, since the example she gave as proof of her inability to hold the state to account was a bribe that she had paid to fast-track her daughter's paperwork. She expected guidance from her seniors in the party, which she did not get, and so she was waiting for 'them to start working, at last'.

Those who called her to the *Court,* meanwhile, were these new volunteers we saw previously in the MLA's office. They were addressing whatever complaints they could themselves and were doing the background work for others, so that the MLA could go through them during the limited available time he had. Their time went into solving immediate concerns and demands from their seniors rather than towards building the foundation of participation.

Meanwhile, the MLA detailed his time-use as follows: he slept for six hours, took a one-hour morning walk, spent four to five hours with his constituency and devoted the remaining twelve hours to the 'party', by which he meant ministers and other senior figures of the executive.[165] Little sleep, long hours, a tight temporal discipline: the posture is common among people in executive positions, and I will not comment on it further. With regard to the time devoted to his constituency, however, the five hours mentioned by the MLA contrast with my observations during five different visits. On

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[165] Sunder Nagri, 5.10.2016.

most days, we found only volunteers staffing the 11AM reception hour. Over the course of the five visits, we saw the MLA rushing by twice later in the day. He stayed for some 20 to 30 minutes, answered a few of our questions, processed the paperwork his assistant had prepared for him and was off again. His presence was short and irregular, defined as it was by meetings at the government's headquarters. The same time allocation was common to most cadres I came across: frontline workers spent much of their time in the MLA's antechamber, while the MLA spent much of his time in the corridors and offices of the executive.

Not that either of them had given up on participatory ideals. It was just that there was always a meeting to attend or some other work to get done. In their everyday routines, they were first accountable to their seniors. The remaining time was devoted to solving complaints from people who reached out. Efforts to build the foundations of the horizontal relation with citizens came after that. It was only when frontline cadres paused to outline their vision that this aspect reclaimed the centre stage in vibrant praises of a 'power built from below'.[166]

Incentives to prioritise the demands of seniors were clear. There were rumours about the MLA's nomination as minister, which would be confirmed a few months later. Frontline workers speculated about who would be the party's candidate in the upcoming municipal elections. To be fair to these party workers, however, individual interests were only one aspect of a larger structure that organised short-term accountability upwards, towards centres of power. In principle, elections should have contributed to balance this tendency, but the perspective was too remote to shape everyday practices. For this to happen, incentives and power would have needed to shift downwards not just during elections but in the party's everyday practices.

Neither was this upward accountability the only reason for neglecting the task of building participation. There was also an inherent tension between the promise of delivering better services and the promise of building participatory governance. In the AAP's long-term vision, the two aspects complemented each other, but in the short-term each demanded investments of time that competed with each other. Somewhat like the former Parivartan members in the previous section, frontline cadres were too busy solving their electors' problems to devote time to the longer-term aim of empowering them. Some of the more pragmatic ones even opposed the two. 'If we make it too easy for people to complain, we will drown in requests',[167] said a former Parivartan staff member turned head of the Delhi grievance cell. 'Sometimes, we have to keep MLAs at an arm's length', he added, 'the MLA will deal with problems at his level, but the government needs to get on with work'. The candid comment was an illustration of just how far the everyday constraints of governance could take officials away from the initial focus on participation. There was, to echo the framing that my starting hypothesis borrows from literature (Corbridge et al. 2003; Véron et al. 2006), a tension between the

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[166] Sunder Nagri, 25.9.2016.
[167] Head of grievance cell, Government of Delhi, Delhi Secretariat, 10.3.2016.

time-investments required to create the conditions of real accountability to voters, the time to respond to their immediate demands and the time claimed by the vertical accountability to seniors.

The task of turning the participation wave that accompanied the AAP's victory into longer-term loyalties was yet another challenge. The novelty that had been the AAP's strength during the elections became a challenge for its agenda of participation, which brings us back to Fatima's scene one last time. 'All of us here were Congress voters, before Fatima and Mohamad convinced us to support the AAP',[168] said one neighbour and kin. About half of the lane followed the two, while the other half remained loyal to the Congress. Those who shifted loyalties were better-off families who found in the new party a promise attuned to their aspirations, while those who stayed loyal to the Congress were poorer residents, among whom the man who was previously quoted saying: 'We owe Indira Gandhi our house'.[169]

Around this same very poor and unfalteringly helpful man the cleavage that ran through the street surfaced in everyday practices of solidarity: families who had remained loyal to the Congress were routinely sharing a plate of warm food with him, while Fatima's family helped other people, routinely telling off the man and eventually asking us why we spent so much time with someone they saw as a drunkard.[170] With the proposition to build a gate, these pre-existing tensions were drawn around two competing political parties. The family that had seen several of its members being killed had remained loyal to the Congress, and found itself caught between its own party affiliations, its poorer neighbours' basic livelihood concerns and the wider safety concerns of wealthier families.

Meanwhile, the political novice, Fatima, was struggling to mobilise her side of the lane, even as she confronted the cleavage that organised conflicting interests and aspirations in the street. She did not want conflict, so she gave up the idea of the gate. Her waiting for guidance, in light of the above, appears as a lot more than not knowing how to get the state to work. It is also about not knowing how to deal with conflicts that threatened the fragile cohabitation in a tight space.[171]

It might be worth noting, to conclude, that all protagonists of this negotiation were Muslims, whose political loyalties have often been described through the prism of identity-based patronage and stable vote banks (Berenschot 2014; Chhibber and Sekhon 2018; Michelutti and Heath 2014; Muralidharan 2014; Susewind 2015, 9). The behaviour of the poorest residents who remained loyal to the Congress would seem to speak to this interpretation, albeit even for these residents one might question whether the terms 'identity-based patronage' and 'vote banks' accurately describe loyalties that developed around a house-title awarded some forty years back.

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[168] Sunder Nagri, 10.3.2016.

[169] Sunder Nagri, 3.3.2016, 10.11.2016.

[170] Sunder Nagri, 28.10.2016.

[171] This opens onto the relation between decentralisation and conflict, which I can only point to here: (Bardhan 2005; Brancati 2006; Graham Brown 2008).

Better off residents, meanwhile, broke with these loyalties to embrace a newcomer who promised change and more transparent services. Their behaviour fits a trend that sees the Muslim electorate emancipating itself from its historic loyalties to gather around socio-economic demands (Ahmed 2009; Chatterjee 2017). It speaks to what classical literature on voter behaviour describes as a choice between policy programmes (McGann 2016). As previously, however, the reality seems more complex than the neat categories of political theory, since most people in the lane followed Fatima and her husband. Political behaviours in light of this example appears partly driven by a choice between programmes, partly driven by the kind of stable loyalties some might describe as patronage, both of which are framed by thick social and economic relations that constituted the political texture of a place.

In Madanpur Khadar, where the AAP had no roots at all, those who made up the sympathiser base were volunteers, who called themselves activists and distrusted the political entrepreneurs who were hoping to become the AAP's new candidate. The disconnect was such that there were in effect two parallel structures that did not interact: one of them geared towards electoral victory, the other that continued to file Right to Information requests and track the embezzlement of land and funds in the area. Even this activist base was scarce and its loyalty entirely dependent on the AAP's ability to live up to its promises.

One event that exemplifies the travails of the newcomer is the rally Nasim Ayub missed in the previous section. It was the largest political event I witnessed in Madanpur Khadar or Sunder Nagri—several hundreds of people among whom the MLA and his assistants gathered to honour the constituency's 'martyrs'.[172] Around a large board with pictures of the area's fallen soldiers were dozens of cars, scooters and rickshaws, which slowly made their way around Delhi's northeast. Music was blasting from a loudspeaker, everywhere Indian flags mixed with flags of the party. Several of the people whom I knew as disillusioned AAP supporters came up to us with a palpable sense of excitement.

The references to the 'martyrs' echoed a message that for days had dominated the BJP's rhetoric after Modi ordered 'surgical strikes' on Pakistan in retaliation for an attack by militants that left 19 Indian soldiers dead. For the AAP's representatives in the Delhi Secretariat, the rally was an initiative that had emerged from its volunteer base.[173] It was, if we take this view, a result of that same decentralised politics that remained nascent around the day-to-day issues that were at the heart of the party's electoral agenda.

In reality, the presence of the MLA and of his assistant casts doubt on the rally's spontaneous nature, and instead suggests that it served to galvanise a fledgling base. It did so around a national issue sidelining all the intermediary levels of governance that were meant to hand down power to

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[172] Sunder Nagri, 25.09.2016.

[173] Communications officer, Office of the Chief Minister, Government of Delhi, Delhi Secretariat, 16.10.2016.

citizens. It drew on emotions that transcend everyday concerns—nationalism and sacrifice blending here in a classic recipe whose examples can be found in multiple settings across space and time. For a constituency that was predominantly Muslim, the refusal to let the Hindu nationalist BJP own this narrative of sacrifice for the nation, was a statement, but one that broke with the AAP's focus on the concerns of ordinary people and on decentralisation.

Regarding my starting hypothesis, the rally is an example of participation that is not linked to accountability around services, and in fact comes to fill a vacuum of accountability. This complicates the argument that decentralisation favours citizen involvement around issues of direct concern to their everyday life (Bardhan 2002). While the above does not contradict this claim, it calls for an exploration of how these local practices and institutions interact with imaginations and emotions that transcend the local. If combining this last observation with the fact that participation, in the neighbourhoods as in much of India and more widely across the world, is a lot higher in state and central elections, than in municipal elections, we might touch on more than a mere challenge of governance confronting participatory initiatives. It might point to an upward pull that in the organisation of emotions, as in the organisation of accountability and power, tends to transcend the local and ordinary.[174]

Summing up, exploring whether it is worth it for poor residents to devote time to participatory models of politics, we came across multiple factors that can hamper a project of power devolution, some of which are familiar to literature on decentralisation while others are not. Even a leadership that had spent more time advocating and practicing the idea of power devolution to the poor than many others proved vulnerable to these factors. Between the idea of power-devolution and its practice was a gap, which the AAP had not bridged. The blocking of the *Swaraj Nagar* Bill left the call for decentralisation without the institutions that would have channelled down resources and information to ensure that participatory spaces really became the site of a tighter connection between local relevance and accountability pressures (Bardhan 2002, 15). Within the party, incentives and accountability structures seemed powerless to balance the forces that had cadres devoting time to their seniors or to the immediate urgency of delivering services instead of devoting time to the longer-term aim of building the base of participation. Societal cleavages and inequalities added to the challenge (Besley et al. 2004; Crook and Manor 1998; Dutta 2012), most obviously so in Madanpur Khadar but also for Fatima in Sunder Nagri's lane.

Beyond the institutions of participation, beyond its societal and economic foundations, the rally honouring fallen soldiers points to the need for a symbolic and emotional grammar of participation to find roots in discourses and practices. It invites us to explore what emotions and symbols can decentralisation develop around ordinary concerns? What can this grammar oppose to

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[174] The observation brings back emotions into the game, as literature in recent years has done for politics more broadly. See: (Clarke, Hoggett, and Thompson 2006; Demertzēs 2013; Hoggett and Thompson 2012).

the transcending grammar of nationalism? Developing this grammar of decentralisation was bound to be a slow process in a city whose funding structure and political imagination are fairly centralised despite being framed by federal institutions. Perhaps, the example above also tells us that this grammar requires a culture and a practice of patience that is hard to reconcile with a context where citizens are tired of the status quo and of the AAP's promise of radical change.

5.5 How the BJP Marshalls Time

With the BJP, participation evolved around a political party known for its top-down organisation. Nor was this a newcomer struggling to cement loyalties, but an older party reaching out beyond its traditional constituency of upper class and caste-groups in Hindi speaking regions to cement its 2014 victory at the centre and in state elections after that. In Madanpur Khadar and Sunder Nagri, efforts to appeal widely were reaching their limit. There were too many Muslims among residents and even the Hindus were too poor to be a comfortable match for the party, and its sister organisations in the *sangh*.[175] 'People have other concerns', Madanpur Khadar's BJP convenor acknowledged before adding that the RSS only had a limited following in the neighbourhood: 'You need to be sorted for that, have your finances in place, a proper family'.[176] Sunder Nagri's convenor was even clearer when he said: 'the uneducated will stay with the Congress, others will vote for us'.[177] This section, therefore, is also an exploration into the practices that defined the frontiers of the BJP's appeal. It provides insights into how the party pushed back this frontier around some issues, while on the contrary reasserting it around other issues.

The trajectories of all BJP cadres and most of its active male volunteers led back to the RSS,[178] whose early morning meetings known as *shakhas* were part of the landscape, among Sunder Nagri's Hindu minority, in particular where like other parties the *shangh* had older roots than in Madanpur Khadar. Most of those who joined followed a father, a neighbour or a friend, and the *shakhas* transformed this connection into a regular and disciplined affiliation to a larger group. Beyond the human connection that served as trigger, the standard motive given by members for joining the RSS was the desire to reconnect with India's culture. The *shakhas,* which were meant to work towards achieving this reconnection, became a way of marshalling time for collective involvement and orienting that time towards the long-term horizon of a Hindu nation.

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[175] Let me take this opportunity to acknowledge the limits of my take on the *sangh*. Researching the *sangh's* outreach among such sections of India's population would be a research-programme of its own, for which I was not the right person, being a woman and a foreigner. The discussion merely sheds light on those aspects of the *sangh* that surfaced in everyday behaviour.

[176] BJP convenor, Madanpur Khadar, 25.10.2016.

[177] BJP convenor, Sunder Nagri, 23.10.2016.

[178] RSS members, Sunder Nagri, 29.9.2016, 28.10.2016, 5.10.2016.

In the answers of members, these involvements were explicitly dissociated from any material benefits. 'If you go somewhere with the RSS', said the BJP convenor in Madanpur Khadar, 'you will have to bring your food and contribute towards renting out the bus. With political parties, the bus will be paid for, food will be handed out for free'.[179] Joining the RSS, in these conditions was to join a select group of well-to-do citizens who distinguished themselves from the many others who were, to echo Anand, 'not sorted' in life. Once this elected group surfaced in discussions, the benefits that initially seemed so remote came back to the centre stage. Members could ask for support for themselves or for family members when faced with an accident, in which case the organisation pooled funds to help. More importantly, the affiliation gave them the contacts that could help them land a job or solve a problem.

As previously for Parivartan and the AAP, communities of involvement emerged around the RSS, which however were part of a disciplined and hierarchic country-wide movement that linked individual prospects of upward mobility with the more distant aim of reinstituting a Hindu nation. From the RSS to the political party, transfers were common and encouraged, as this comment by Sunder Nagri's acting Councillor illustrates: 'If you join the BJP, the RSS goes softer on you about the daily *shakhas*'.[180] This, I should say, does not mean that there were no tensions between the two wings. In their 'view to the inside', Walter Andersen and Damle Shridhar (2018), evoke widespread suspicions in the RSS against politicians seen as self-interested and focused on short-term victories. In my own limited focus on the trajectories of members, however, such tensions did not surface. The RSS featured in these trajectories as the organisation that carved out time for a specific form of collective action, some of which was then freed up to form the core cadre base of the *sangh's* political wing.

In the BJP, the culture of collective action was similarly geared towards discipline and grassroots mobilisation. More than in any party, its frontline cadres seemed proud of commanding over a well-organised active group of volunteers. Anand, the BJP convener in Madanpur Khadar, for example went on for some 20 minutes during our first meeting rattling down the party's structure, the number of its leaders in streets, blocks, wards, districts and above, all the way up to the party's national president, Amit Shah. Anand was echoed by his peer in Sunder Nagri and by street leaders in both areas: all gave figures about the number of active volunteers, compared these with the number of sympathisers, quoted the number of invitations handed out in the most recent drive. Listening to them, it was clear that something powerful was in this party orienting the time and efforts of cadres downwards, towards building an active volunteer base. Just as clear was that this culture was not about decentralisation: 'I am here to obey',[181] said Anand.

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[179] BJP convenor, Madanpur Khadar, 25.10.2016.
[180] Acting Councillor, Sunder Nagri, 28.10.2016
[181] BJP convenor, Madanpur Khadar, 29.9.2016.

He and his peer in Sunder Nagri were told about upcoming events they would have to organise by text messages sent from a centralised cell. He then passed on the message to street leaders and heads of committees, who in turn passed it on to their networks. 'Say I get one message from above, I will have to send it to 100 people', Anand explained. 'These people will have to send it to another 15 each, and so on'. It was entirely top-down. Messages were the same in Sunder Nagri, located in a different political constituency, and when we asked Anand about whether he could influence their content, he repeated: 'It comes from above, we are here to obey'.[182] In spite of this, the chain was effective in making even the lower-ranking members of the party feel included: 'It comes straight from the Prime Minister',[183] said a street leader in Sunder Nagri, as he showed his phone with an injunction to unite in a cleanliness drive, then went on explaining how he passed on the message to some five households in the street. After him, the chain fanned out in an informal last mile.

The chain was the low-tech equivalent of an online infrastructure that allows the BJP to dominate India's social media. Long before his competitors, when he was still Chief Minister of Gujarat, Modi took to tweeting and posting. His personal Twitter and Facebook feeds became the centre of a nebula made up of institutional party feeds and of the personal accounts of cadres and sympathisers. All these feeds interacted in a space where jokes about opposition leaders and intellectuals critical of the BJP mixed with abuse, threats and incitements to communal violence.[184]

In both the online and the offline component, a one-directional flow backed by the party's centralised machinery was presented as a one-to-one conversation between a leader and his people. In both cases, informal social networks extended a centralised vertical channel of communication. Messages making their way through these channels could reach beyond the *sangh's* core constituency to include women and men who were not able or willing to attend party meetings or *shakhas*. They could adapt to the parlance of the place. They could blend into local solidarities and animosities of caste and religion. Some aspects were amplified, others were left out, and still others were distorted to mix with local rumours. In Madanpur Khadar and Sunder Nagri, the call to join a cleanliness drive blended into comments about littering, which in turn tied into the semantic field around communal differences of eating habits and ritual pollution discussed in the previous chapter.

All of this was possible without demanding much from people who shared information, commented on it or joked about it. It was a form of communication that reproduced the anonymous, noncommittal quality that literature on rumours describes as being one of the forces behind their spread (Bhabha 2004, 201; Das 1998, 116). In literature on rumours again, we read about how this spread can structure a group and mobilise it for action (Guha 1983; Rudé 1959), and how it can

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[182] BJP convenor, Madanpur Khadar, 29.9.2016.

[183] BJP street leader, Sunder Nagri, 29.10.2016.

[184] To the best of my knowledge there are no academic accounts of this nebula; for a detailed journalistic account: (Chaturvedi 2016).

cluster around social cleavages and amplify them with fear and hate (Das 1998; Knopf 2017). It was, in sum, a powerful tool of mobilisation that could go some way towards overcoming the distance between the BJP's positioning and the concerns of residents in Madanpur Khadar and Sunder Nagri. Not that it bridged the distance altogether, as we heard the two conveners saying, but for this section of society the BJP seemed to satisfy itself with this loose and partial inclusion.

One group that received special attention beyond the above was the youth. Identifying new students was part of the routine responsibilities of the BJP's frontline workers. Ahead of student union elections in major universities, street leaders identified all first-year college students, then passed on their names, addresses and contact details to the convenor who completed a list whose format was shared by seniors in the party. The list was then passed on to the *sangh*-affiliated student union the *Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad* or All Indian Student Council, whose members approached young people 'before their opinions were made'.[185]

One event at the beginning of the research illustrated the union's conflictive activism. In February 2016, the *sangh*-affiliated union of one of India's premier academic institutions, Jawaharlal Nehru University, accused leaders of the leftist union of chanting 'anti-national' slogans about freeing Kashmir. Soon the issue spiralled into larger demonstrations, even as two members of the leftist union were being arrested and accused of sedition. In metro stations and busy crossings of Delhi, men were gathering signatures to protest 'anti-national feelings in Jawaharlal Nehru University'.[186] In the court where the head of the leftist student union appeared, men dressed in lawyers' robes manhandled the young man along with journalists covering the event. Meanwhile, in Madanpur Khadar and Sunder Nagri, the two BJP-convenors had received orders to fill up 'at least two buses, provide food and drinks' and send people off to join the demonstrations.[187] From BJP cadres to young sympathisers,[188] the message was passed on through the centralised chain of communication described above.

For critics of the ruling-party, the event was one in a series of attempts to crush dissent in universities (Mehta 2016; Thapar 2016). Seen from Madanpur Khadar and Sunder Nagri, the event was also an attempt to reach out to an age-group that was more likely than ever before to attend university, but for whom colleges of excellence such as Jawaharlal Nehru University remained widely out of reach. In that age-group, it targeted the section that best fitted the party's promise of upward mobility. Even among this section, however, the attempt fell flat, once again showing the limits of the BJP's strategy to broaden its appeal. 'It wasn't a success. We hardly managed to bring them on this bus', said Anand with his usual candour, 'but we had to do it because that was our target'.[189]

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[185] BJP convenor, Madanpur Khadar, 25.09.2016. During this interaction, I was also shown the list of names.

[186] Lajpat Nagar, 14.2.2016.

[187] BJP convenor, Madanpur Khadar, 24.2.2016; BJP sympathiser, Sunder Nagri, 25.2.2016.

[188] Student, Sunder Nagri, 25.2.2016.

[189] BJP convenor, Madanpur Khadar, 24.2.2016.

Regardless of its limited success in Madanpur Khadar and Sunder Nagri, the event was finally one more example of how two wings of the *sangh* worked together, and a first illustration of how some aspects of this collaboration were kept out of the limelight. While it was a secret for no one that BJP sympathisers and cadres were involved, the systematic nature of this involvement and the role of the party in coordinating it were not publicised. For those watching the clashes, a cloud of uncertainty remained around just how tightly the different parts of the machine worked together in ways that partly shielded the BJP from critics and also made the protests look more spontaneous than they really were.

The event, in sum, adds one more facet to the diverse set of practices that allowed the BJP and its allies to appeal broadly beyond its traditional base. The student union enlisted the youth in its conflictive politics. The RSS marshalled the time of a group of better-off citizens. The BJP appealed to a broader group of sympathisers through looser networks that blended into local routines, solidarities and antagonisms. These different approaches went some way towards bridging the distance between the BJP and residents of Madanpur Khadar and Sunder Nagri, but the inclusion remained loose and partial: not only were Muslims excluded, poorer residents were too.

5.6 Waiting as Majoritarian Politics

To continue exploring these frontiers of politics, let me spin forward to an event that dominated the final weeks of fieldwork. On the evening of 8 November 2016, Narendra Modi announced that all Rs 500 and Rs 1000 notes would no longer be valid as of midnight that same day. Four hours later, notes amounting to 86 per cent of the currency were withdrawn from circulation and their owners given a few weeks, later extended to a few months, to exchange them. Provided they presented a proof of identity, they could deposit as many notes as they wanted into their accounts but could only exchange a maximum of Rs 4000 a day, soon reduced to Rs 2000 at a time.

Much has been written about demonetisation. Its limited success in fighting counterfeit currency is widely known (GOI 2017, 195), as is its disruptive effect on the livelihoods of many Indians (Bhattacharya et al. 2017; Chandrasekhar and Ghosh 2018). Across the political spectrum, economists agree that the move's rationale was political rather than economic (Subramanian 2018). Less has been said about the policy's most immediately tangible result: the queues and the endless waiting for cash, the provision of which was reduced to an unpredictable trickle. For us this new scene of people queuing provides a chance to reflect on the BJP's practices of rule from the perspective of yet another moment where time and politics interacted. Whereas in literature and in much of this thesis, waiting is the condition of people with limited resources and opportunities (Auyero 2012; Hyndman and Giles 2011; Schwartz 1975), during demonetisation it was the condition of that intermediary section of the electorate to whom the BJP was trying to appeal. The queues

became a matter of majoritarian politics, and an opportunity for us to explore how mass waiting can be a tool of political domination and what this means for people on the margins.

Neither Madanpur Khadar nor Sunder Nagri were equipped with banks, but by the time the branches in nearby middle-class neighbourhoods opened again two days later, hundreds of people had already gathered around them. 'They are not letting people in',[190] someone said in one of the many queues around banks of Okhla, near Madanpur Khadar, which I passed on my way to an interview that day. No one knew why. Nor had anyone seen the fresh bank notes. Eventually, the news filtered through that it would take several months for cash supplies to be renewed. In front of the banks, people settled into nervous but orderly waiting. When, at last, I too joined the queue on day six, tensions at the front were palpable. Soon, a fight erupted, which seemed on the verge of turning ugly, before a few men broke it up. Further back in the queue, however, the atmosphere relaxed. There, too, people discussed their hardships, but there was no exasperation in their voices as they compared their ordeal.

'The rich would be worst hit',[191] one man explained. Elsewhere, another man joked about how the leader of the Congress party, Rahul Gandhi, had joined the queues 'as if he had no one to do that for him'. Someone reported that bags full of cash had been found in gutters near well-off colonies. Many others lauded Modi's courage.

Meanwhile, in Sunder Nagri and Madanpur Khadar the mood had turned immediately and vehemently bitter. Those who had neither identity documents nor bank accounts scrambled to find someone who could change their savings for them. Those who had documents, but no bank accounts, were scathing about the invalidation of their savings. Many spoke of being out of work because their employers had no cash to pay them. Everywhere, people said about the Prime Minister: 'he does not care about the poor'.[192] Anguish never seemed to find enough words:

'Madam, listen', said an otherwise soft-spoken respondent fighting to have a say while neighbours pitched in with their own story of hardship. 'You go to the milk shop, and the only thing they agree to sell is 2kg of powdered milk. We are poor people. How can we buy 2kg at a time? Listen. It's bad. You give the old note, and the shopkeeper takes Rs 200 out of Rs 500. What will children eat? Listen, Madam, sit down! Will you bring me a small bomb, when you come back from London? You know these garlands of flowers the Prime Minister likes to wear. I will hide it there and watch it detonate. Just a tiny one, the size of my fingernail. Will you, Madam? Please?' The man pulled his earlobe over and over again as people

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[190] Okhla, 10.11.2016.
[191] Lajpat Nagar, 19.11.2016.
[192] Sunder Nagri, 13.11.2016, 17.11.2016.

around laughed uneasily. Then suddenly, looking anxious: 'It was a joke Madam. But it's so much pain. Listen…'[193]

Even in Madanpur Khadar and Sunder Nagri, however, were other voices, fewer than in the surrounding middle-class areas where people queued around banks, but existent nevertheless: 'Our Prime Minister knows what he is doing', declared a man in Madanpur Khadar, who went on to compare demonetisation with 'surgical strikes' against Pakistan a few months earlier. Someone else spoke about how demonetisation had hurt central India's left-wing insurgency.

Initially, it was unclear whether anger or support dominated, until four months later, the BJP won its first ever majority in Uttar Pradesh and several other victories after this. Six months after demonetisation, a countrywide survey found that 45 per cent of respondents considered the move to be necessary; 32 per cent considered it to be right but poorly implemented; only 16 per cent found it unrequired (Lokniti 2017, 5). It would be one more year before the same countrywide survey that had confirmed support for demonetisation showed that Modi's popularity had dropped (Lokniti 2018).

Demonetisation, in sum, presented the paradox of a policy whose prolonged period of grace coincided with maximum hardship. That the queues could cement support for the policy is puzzling on account of the literature quoted so far, where the feeling of being treated unfairly by unpredictable or obscure conditions of access is found to pit people in conflict against each other and against frontline officials (Corbridge 2004; Helweg-Larsen and LoMonaco 2008, 2008; Larson 1987). By invalidating people's savings overnight and forcing them to wait for scarce and irregular supplies, demonetisation seemed like the perfect incubator of conflicts and a good way to turn people against those behind the policy.

To explore the paradox, let me come back to the rumours that circulated in the queue. When people likened demonetisation to a 'surgical strike', or when they invoked how the terrorists of central India were hit, they echoed Modi's announcement on the first night. Demonetisation, he said would be a 'decisive step' to fight 'black money'. It would 'curb the evil of corruption holding the country back in its race towards development…. Enemies across the border running their operations using fake notes' would be dealt a blow (Modi 2016b).

More broadly, these associations echo literature in sociology and related disciplines, where money is an institution that establishes a fluid, anonymous order of cross-border exchanges (Simmel 1991). It dissociates exchanges from the 'local and personal', with the result that an individual is 'no longer connected to the totality as an entire person, but by spending' (1991, 18). Trust, in that order,

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[193] Sunder Nagri, 17.11.2016.

ceases to be a relation between individuals. It becomes a condition that involves the entire economic community and, as far as national currencies go, has the state as warrant (1978, 177).

In Modi's speeches and in the rumours spreading in the queues, this fluid anonymous order became associated with threats of terrorism. At the same time, demonetisation reminded everyone that money was indeed nothing but an institution that Modi could undo at a stroke. When he added that this stroke would liberate the country from what held it back in its 'race towards development', demonetisation became part of an imagination of re-established state sovereignty and protection. It opposed the threats associated with money, and instead offered the prospect of a nation, secure and thriving within the reasserted premises of its own borders. This was not just any nation, for in the context the reference is clear: the threat was Muslim; the nation was Hindu. Fear of terrorism dovetailed into larger majoritarian anxieties about the Muslim minority.

Modi's (2016c) second speech, five days after the first, dramatised the threat and asserted the central role of the Prime Minister. He understood the poor's plight, having come out of poverty himself, he said. In his voice, when he resumed, was the hint of a tremor, in his eyes not quite tears but their possibility: 'I know the forces up against me, they may not let me live, . . .but I am prepared'. To the hardship imposed on citizens, the leader responded with a willingness to sacrifice his life. In a world of fakes and hidden threats, this willingness proven by the leader's physical expression became a token of trust replacing the impersonal institutions that demonetisation had challenged. The leader stood in front of his citizens in an unmediated interaction that tightened the community of the nation around him, even as it sidelined the institutions responsible for implementing the policy and, along with them, the failings whose effects were by then felt by all.

Meanwhile, another set of rumours spoke to another societal cleavage: the rich, it was said, would be the hardest hit. In the queues, the aspirations to more equality resonated in ways that are uncommon in the everyday interactions of an unequal society. Not that equality ruled, since most better-off citizens paid others to do the queuing for them. Nevertheless, as one stood waiting, the idea of equality acquired a semblance of reality. When jokes and rumours about how demonetisation hurt the rich and corrupt became a means to pass time, the queues turned into an audience where such aspirations for justice mixed with resentment against an establishment that continued to be associated with the Congress more than with Modi's BJP.

In their register, jokes about the leader of the Congress adopted the forms of a form of street humour that is often used to challenge the misdeeds of the rich and powerful in places like Sunder Nagri and Madanpur Khadar. Sometimes a Councillor was mimicked laying slabs of concrete over gutters that had not been cleaned for five years, bending down begging for votes and distributing sweets. Above, we heard an anonymous rickshaw driver saying: 'See, the good days have come, we have started to sweat profusely!' On a darker note, we heard a desperate man speaking about a tiny

bomb that could be fitted to the Prime Minister's garland of flowers, then backing off: 'It was just a joke, Madam'.

In the comment about Rahul Gandhi, that gallows humour of the subaltern was directed against a weakened opposition. Modi (2016a) himself, after another of Gandhi's public denunciations, quipped that '*pappu* [the dumb kid in colloquial Hindi] wants to be a politician but has to learn how to speak first'. When these jokes were echoed among people forced to be in the queues by their need for cash, they became a means to cement one non-elite section of the electorate behind a new elite seeking to establish its domination over a discredited establishment. When this symbolic unification against the rich occurred as part of a policy that excluded people without bank accounts or identification documents, we have yet another example of how the BJP went about broadening its appeal among upward aspiring lower-middle classes but left out the poor.

The queues, in sum, were a means to unite one section of India's citizens against another. Effectively, they excluded the poor, even as they drew a symbolic boundary made of resentment against the rich, fears of terrorism and wider anti-Muslim feelings. Seen from this perspective, even the rougher sides of the queues might have fed into divisions on which the BJP thrived. They were cementing that polarisation between a majority unified behind its leader and a minority whose angry desperation spoke to that pernicious danger that majoritarian rhetoric associates with the fringes. In Madanpur Khadar and Sunder Nagri, where many residents openly expressed their anger and desperation while a few others quietly united behind their Prime Minister, the frontiers of the BJP's appeal hardened.

To conclude this discussion, let me tie the elements above to the temporal regime ushered in by the policy. Before it trapped a nation in waiting, demonetisation was a shock, whose suddenness responded to people's impatience with a status quo perceived as unjust. Soon, however, prolonged and unpredictable waiting followed and an entire nation's ability to make informed choices about its immediate future was undermined. For much of the population, the weeks that followed the announcement revolved around managing the hurdles of getting enough cash to get by. Demonetisation, in sum, responded to the challenges that the impatience of citizens represents for a democracy by suspending autonomous activities and sidelining institutions. It ushered in a new temporal regime that left little scope for autonomous thinking or nuanced critics. The electoral successes that followed appeared like the expression of a political moment that echoes a widely commented evolution of democratic regimes towards a form that is founded in the ballots, yet illiberal (Zakaria 1997).

5.7 Religion and the Rhythms of Politics

The focus on events could also be felt in the rhythm of the BJP's everyday politics in Sunder Nagri and Madanpur Khadar. Anand routinely listed these events with the same combination of boredom

and superiority that characterised his rattling down the party's structure. The list was a mix of the social and religious: a cleaning drive, this or the other Hindu festival, a blood donation campaign, or the construction of a temple.

Anand made no secret about the limited success of the first type of event, nor did he seem very concerned that 'just one or two people'[194] came forward to donate blood and that just a few more got involved in the cleaning drive. On the social front, Anand limited himself to managing everyday problems and expectations within the constraints that curtailed his power.

Anand livened up when the topic shifted to religious events. 'Just seven days ago, we organised a campaign to get a temple built in the area',[195] he said the first time we met him. 'We demonstrated and asked for land. Some 500 people joined'. The temple was in fact the only mobilisation that stemmed from residents Anand ever mentioned. For him, it was an example of 'social work', where unlike in 'professional' politics, you 'can do the things you feel strongly about'. Not that a mobilisation had to be independent from the *sangh's* organisation to count as such, as this comment shows: 'you want to build a temple and need someone to deal with the police, you can call the RSS'. Instead, the association of the religious and the social evoked a motive of involvement that was engrained in the social texture of the place.

Perhaps there is a link to be made with the fact that affiliations to religious associations were by far the most common and the most regular type. When Anand mobilised people for a temple or other religious events, he appealed to practices that since childhood socialised many residents into collective networks. Whereas previously, we saw the AAP drawing on networks and practices fostered by secular civil society organisations, we now see Anand drawing on the much thicker networks and practices that emerged around religious associations to underpin a collective mobilisation, which the machinery of the *sangh* then politicised.

While the temple was being built, Anand mobilised his troupes again. This time orders had come from the top, for an event whose ambition was no less than to be the 'largest ever gathering on earth'[196]—the World Culture Festival, which, according to organisers, had 3.5 million people celebrating 'unity in diversity' under the umbrella of Hinduism.[197] Officially, the festival was an independent event organised by a spiritual leader who has always denied having any ties to the BJP. It was attended by politicians from all parties including the AAP's Arvind Kejriwal. In the BJP's office of Madanpur Khadar, meanwhile, boxes full of invitations were piling up along the walls: 'See, they

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[194] BJP convenor, Madanpur Khadar, 25.09.2016.
[195] BJP convenor, Madanpur Khadar, 24.2.2016.
[196] BJP convenor, Madanpur Khadar, 25.09.2016.
[197] As announced on the organisation's webpage: (Art of Living 2016).

are private invitations, one for each household', said Anand as he opened an envelope of light salmon paper and pointed to the address line on the card inside. The RSS was 'on duty' for this, he added.[198]

It was one more example of how two wings of the *sangh* worked together for the mammoth task of identifying relevant households and distributing the invitations. It was also one further illustration of how some of these interactions were kept outside of the limelight or even plainly denied. On the ground, the BJP was coordinating the event's outreach and the RSS was providing the manpower for it, while official communication maintained the distinction between the event and the *sangh*. The festival could present itself as politically independent. The BJP could avoid responsibility for an event whose financial and ecological costs would prove daunting, even as its people on the ground were associated with this gigantic show of soft *Hindutva*. Where above we saw how the dense social networks that emerge around religion became a foundation for the BJP's politics, we have here an example of the ambivalences involved in this blurring of politics and religion. More fundamentally, the event brings us back to the foundations of the *sangh*, for whom political domination is just one of a series of means to work towards the larger aim of reinstituting a nation united in its Hindu identity.

More than in large events, however, religion featured in festivals and prayers, echoed by religious pictures on the wall. Rituals and their regular performance, in sum, became the rhythmical backbone of BJP politics, which brings us to one dimension of the social reality of time that has hardly featured and which Emile Durkheim summed up as the power of 'rites, feasts and public ceremonies' of religion to define the rhythm of everyday life (2008, 22–23). In all of these, Madanpur Khadar stood out compared to Sunder Nagri, where festivals were low-key, walls were clear of devotional paintings and campaigns to build temples not on the programme. The large share of Muslim residents in Sunder Nagri played a role, yet beyond this difference, the contrast between the two places evokes another contrast—this one, linked to their governance and to the theoretical premise that underlies the choice of the two places. From this perspective, the centrality of religion in the politics of Madanpur Khadar would shift attention away from the BJP's failure to deliver basic services. If echoing Anand's definition of politics, it would be a way to 'manage expectations'[199] by transcending them.

Even this interpretation should not be exaggerated. While very visible in the neighbourhood's politics, religion did not replace services in citizen's expectations, as much of the discussion in this thesis drives home. Jobs and services also came first in a final question of the survey asking respondents to list their two top expectations towards their political representatives, while religion or culture were not mentioned once.[200] The religious reference, therefore, might have

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[198] BJP convenor, Madanpur Khadar, 25.09.2016.

[199] Madanpur Khadar, 9.09.2016.

[200] Annex 1, question 129, p. 247.

resonated with practices, beliefs and emotions that were part of everyday life for many people but it was not enough to cement wider approval.

Religion, however, did galvanise a limited number of residents who gave their time as a core group of active volunteers. For the mobilisation of this highly visible group, religion provided a symbolic and emotional register. Members of this core group went door to door to identify students or distribute invitations. They were the first ones who shared messages sent by frontline cadres. When it occurred in a context where all parties struggled to deliver better services and where responsibilities for shortfalls were blurred by Delhi's complicated system of governance, this role in galvanising a section of society arguably contributed to tip the scale in favour of the BJP.

When emphasising the role of dense networks of solidarities, beliefs and practices that emerged around religion, the discussion above seemed to echo Triloki Nath Madan's reflections that secularism cannot be a 'basis of state action' (1987, 748) because for a majority of citizens religion permeates all aspects of everyday life. The fact that neither religion nor culture featured among people's expectations towards the state, however, suggests that the same comment can be made about the latter as well. There would, in sum, be a tension between what allows a party to establish itself as political force and win over the executive, and what is expected from the government. In the first, religious and cultural practices can be an asset, but they fall to the background in the second. This spells out a tension between the foundations of executive power and the foundations of government legitimacy that adds to the diagnosis of the crisis of representation whose echo in literature was quoted at the beginning of the chapter (Hansen and Jaffrelot 2001; Kohli 1991).

5.8 Conclusion

In this chapter my premise became a relation of interdependence. Political parties needed the time of citizens and citizens needed parties to hold the state to account when it failed to deliver basic services. In a context where accountability for basic services was weak, this relation was under strain. The impatience of voters clashed with the slower rhythm of policy-driven change and the slower yet building of political loyalties. Asking why people deem it worth their time to vote or campaign for political parties shed light on how each party addressed this challenge.

Once again, survey findings confronted us with a contrasted picture. While higher voter turnout in Sunder Nagri than in Madanpur Khadar was not a surprise, high overall turnout in both places contrasted with the disillusion expressed by residents. Just as surprising were figures of affiliation to political parties, which were more frequent in Madanpur Khadar than in Sunder Nagri.

By following trajectories of involvement, we saw people getting progressively socialised into collective mobilisation around an NGO, then joining a movement like Parivartan and finally volunteering for the AAP. With each phase, motives for getting involved became more overtly political and far-reaching: the NGO focused on livelihoods issues, Parivartan focused on changing

the local state from outside, while the AAP focused on changing the state from inside. Around the RSS and the BJP, people's time was marshalled for the long-term horizon of a Hindu nation re-established in its erstwhile might. The Congress in Sunder Nagri exemplified a third type of trajectory rooted in older solidarities and loyalties. In all three cases, albeit in different ways, communities of interest, practices and recognition shifted incentives towards devoting time to collective involvement. In all of them, livelihood concerns and changes in the geography of involvement could undermine these communities.

Time spent on the activities of the AAP and the BJP provided other insights into the reason people deemed it worth their time to participate in political parties. The AAP's programme spelled out what could be defined as a temporal regime of accountability, where the appeal to participate in decentralised politics and the promise of more transparent services were tied together around a series of tight timelines. While this programme had convinced many residents of the two neighbourhoods to vote or campaign for the AAP, two years after the elections the AAP was struggling to mobilise residents into meaningful involvement. The example added to a circumspect strand in literature on decentralisation (Bardhan 2002; Bardhan and Mookherjee 2006a; Véron et al. 2006), when illustrating how even for a party committed to power devolution, a fraught political context and the pressure to deliver tangible results could orient efforts towards satisfying seniors and short-term concerns instead of building the conditions of meaningful participation. For residents, the AAP's call to get involved had expanded expectations and raised the risk of disillusion. When they rallied to honour fallen soldiers, the AAP's decentralising ideal ceded to an imagination that transcended the local and the ordinary.

The BJP, in contrast, had an active volunteer base despite a top-down structure and a record of service delivery that, in Madanpur Khadar in particular, was wanting. Through the RSS, it managed to enlist a core group of members while a chain of messages allowed it to reach out to a wider group of sympathisers. Different components of the *sangh* complemented each other, sometimes emphasising cultural and religious aspects, on other occasions emphasising anti-establishment feelings. Motives like nationalism and religion became means to mobilise a core group of volunteers even where the BJP was unable to deliver basic services. At the same time, these motives allowed the party to bypass the temporal regime of accountability where the call to participate came with promises of better services framed by tight temporal markers. A similar point could be made about demonetisation, which created a situation where unpredictability, emergency and waiting combined to prevent citizens from forming stable expectations and judgments. Not that religion or the shock of demonetisation were enough to cement a wide and lasting approval, but they secured support in decisive moments and among decisive sections of the population in ways that gave the BJP a political advantage. When analysing these findings, the thesis spoke to a concern among observers of politics with what ails democracies worldwide. The unpredictable suddenness of demonetisation, in

particular, responded to the temporal challenge faced by political parties in a democracy in a way that was both indisputably rooted in the ballot and illiberal.

As we conclude this summary, the reasons for devoting time to party politics appear as contrasted as the overview of behaviour given at the beginning of the chapter. We saw that political involvements are often rooted in the thick social and economic relations that bind together residents of a lane, most obviously among those who remained loyal to the Congress, but also among BJP supporters. We saw how the AAP's success disrupted these stable loyalties and convinced many people to embrace a promise of change that linked an appeal to participate in politics with the promise of better services. We saw that stable loyalties and the embrace of change were challenged by citizen's impatience with a situation where political parties had only limited capacity to deliver change. In these conditions appeals to participate based on religious or nationalist grounds or the shock of demonetisation could give political parties an edge. Even so, however, the history of collective mobilisation that had preceded AAP's emergence had left a legacy that exceeded party politics: information and know-how about taking on the state had spread among residents, as did the sense that it was possible to come together and challenge power and corruption.

6   Women's Time and the State in Daily Life

Many of the scenes we came across so far had one common feature, they were about women interacting with male service providers, political representatives and powerbrokers. Women might have been fewer to report an action to improve service delivery, but they were often the ones who spent time waiting for providers, arguing with them or getting involved in committees. They were, in sum, the foot soldiers of a political society whose higher echelons were staffed by men.

Compared to my starting hypothesis, this appears like one more paradox. I had assumed that people would be more willing to come forward and complain when political parties tied accountability around basic service delivery. The relation, I expected, would account for differences between neighbourhoods and between people more or less equipped to hold political parties to account. In chapter four, we came across the paradox of people who devoted time to informal political networks exactly where the accountability rooted in political parties frayed. In chapter five, we came across the paradox of people who devoted time to participating in political parties whose record on delivering basic services was weak. This chapter presents the paradox of a sub-group of residents who were at a disadvantage when attempting to make their claim on the state, and who nevertheless spent long hours negotiating with providers or joining committees. Why was it worth their time for women to engage in the everyday politics of service delivery?

The question does not only challenge my starting hypothesis, it also sits uneasily with the literature quoted so far. In studies on everyday interactions with the state in India men are seen interacting with men (Gupta 2012; Jeffrey and Lerche 2001; Witsoe 2013), while literature concerned with how women in India negotiate economic compulsions describes behaviours around basic services as unpaid work and drudgery (Hirway and Jose 2011; Jain 1996). At the meeting point between the two is a terrain that this chapter explores, along with the question above asking: are these behaviours even political? What do they tell us about the state?

After reviewing the gendered context in which the enquiry takes place, we study how behaviours around the two basic services of water and food explored in chapter four differed for men and women. We bring up new discrepancies in reporting and explore whether they fit the same pattern found in previous chapters. New ethnographic evidence in section three nuances the interpretation by showing that this minimising can also be a tactic to reclaim some discretionary leeway amidst the many constraints. Exploring these tactics, we find ourselves on the typically Scottian terrain of 'hidden transcripts' (1990) and 'weapons of the weak' (1985). Beyond such covert tactics, a fourth section explores how women get involved in collective mobilisation and it asks what this mobilisation entails for the representation of politics and of the everyday state. The chapter ends

with a reflection about the prominence of violence in women's narratives. It asks how the threat of violence impacted women's temporal choices and reflects on why women spoke so openly about it.

6.1 Gender and Politics in Madanpur Khadar and Sunder Nagri

In gendered research, northern India features for stark constraints on women's freedom to move around, engage in paid work and make themselves heard in public (Jejeebhoy and Sathar 2001). It is part of a stretch running east and west into Bangladesh, Pakistan and beyond sometimes depicted as the belt of 'classical patriarchy' (Kandiyoti 1988, 278) where gendered roles are shaped by the prominence of the patrilocal family and rules of inheritance that leave women with no claims to productive property of their own (Agarwal 1998). Here the practice of female seclusion known as *purdha* [veil] is widely felt (Jeffery 1979; Kabeer 2000, 36–37): many women limit their public appearances and abide by norms of modesty when interacting with older men in the family. Within this larger context, women of India's Muslim minority who make up much of my sample are, according to country-wide trends, likelier to practice strict forms of *purdha* in their public behaviour than women from any other group (Desai and Temsah 2014).

In light of the above, it is not surprising that literature on everyday interactions with the state has focused on men interacting with other men (Gupta 2012; Jeffrey and Lerche 2001; Witsoe 2013), or on women's lesser tendency to approach officials when faced with a problem (Harriss 2005). The few studies that have described women's participation in collective action have focused on mobilisations that emerged out of their identity as workers (Kabeer, Sudarshan, and Milward 2013). Often, women's involvement in accessing basic services has been described as unpaid work (Hirway and Jose 2011; Jain 1996) and as expression of the same gendered constraints that ascribe to women the responsibility for domestic chores while ascribing to men the responsibility and power to take on public roles as workers and in dealing with the state.

To examine women's behaviour as political agents, we can turn to a wider body of studies that discuss the implementation of a 1993 law instituting a 33 per cent reservation for women in municipal wards and villages (since increased to 50 per cent in parts of India but not in Delhi). While their findings converge in emphasising the obstacles faced by the new entrants, their conclusion about the impact of the law differs. In regions where gender, caste and religious dominations are not too starkly entrenched, they find that the sudden transformation of gender representation has made a difference in decision-making, attitudes (Chattopadhyay and Duflo 2004; Duflo and Topalova 2004; Iyer et al. 2012), and in how non-elected women engage with politics (Sathe et al. 2013). In contrast, in regions where social stratifications are particularly strong and linked to well-established dominations, the effect appears to have been limited (Ban and Rao 2008; Besley et al. 2004; Crook and Manor 1998; Dutta 2012; Munshi and Rosenzweig 2008; Pai 1998).

In Sunder Nagri, the municipal seat was reserved for a woman, but the phone number given to us by two different local BJP cadres belonged to the elected Councillor's husband,[201] who was also the only person we ever saw sitting amidst a group of male volunteers in what was known as the Councillor's office. Lower down the party hierarchy, the AAP's Natissa was waiting to hear from senior party volunteers, all of whom were men. In the BJP, where this position on the margin was as well organised as everything else in the party, the experience of being introduced to three women heads of committee was a show of gendered stratification. The women were nodding in agreement while Anand explained their involvement in distributing pamphlets or preparing for a social event. In the small party offices where the actual planning took place, none of the volunteers I ever saw hanging around were women. In light of the above, it is unsurprising that fewer women (4 per cent) reported an affiliation to political parties than men (10 per cent), and that women (28 per cent) were again fewer to report having taken action about unreliable service delivery than men (43 per cent).

More surprising was the fact that Muslim women were overall more likely to report having taken action than Hindu women, if once again we leave out Madanapur Khadar's slum whose residents had other reasons not to take action. Just as striking was the fact that women from each religious group were more likely to report having taken action in places where they were a minority. Neither were these actions the only ones performed by women while accessing basic services, as this chapter discusses in more depth.

Table 6.1.1 Women Who Took Action by Religion
Percentages (reported by cell)

	Hindu	Muslim	Sample size
Sunder Nagri			
Resettlement	50%	28%	35
Slum	31%	39%	36
Madanpur Khadar			
Resettlement	22%	40%	23
Slum	—	14%	30

Source: own survey

These behaviours cannot be dissociated from the economic context outlined in chapter three. As have other researchers who have worked in poor urban settlements (Jesmin and Salway 2000; Parry 2001; Snell-Rood 2015b), I found that the reality of many households had little in common with the patrilocal family theorised by Deniz Kandiyoti (1988). For many households, leaving the village had meant leaving the extended family. Just one in four had three generations living

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[201] BJP street leader, Sunder Nagri, 29.10.2016; BJP convenor, Sunder Nagri, 23.10.2016.

under one roof, eight were headed by women who had either seen their marriage break up or their husband die.

In both neighbourhoods, the forced relocation had undermined men's role as bread-earner (Coelho, Venkat, and Chandrika 2012), while a trend towards casual labour in low-skilled service and manufacturing jobs pushed many of them into irregular, often home-based work (Breman 2004; Gooptu 2007; Neema and Baneria 2005).[202] This was most obvious in Sunder Nagri where many nearby manufacturing units had closed, but it also applied to the low skilled service jobs of much of Madanpur Khadar's population (Gooptu 2013). The situation in the two neighbourhoods had much in common with the one described in a series of papers about how the decline of the manufacturing sector in other parts of India left men unemployed (Breman 2004; Joshi 2002) and pushed women to cope by taking on paid work, joining self-help groups or political parties (Gooptu 2007, 1928).

More broadly, the focus in this chapter speaks to a rich body of research concerned with how women negotiate gender norms destabilised by economic transformations. Much of this literature has focused on decisions to join the labour force. A full overview would therefore take us much beyond the scope of this thesis. Nevertheless, because negotiations about taking on paid work often overlapped with negotiations about stepping out to access basic services, a few pointers are helpful.

In neighbouring Bangladesh, Naila Kabeer (2000) has described how women negotiate norms of *purdah* to join manufacturing units in Dhaka, while a group of Bangladeshi women in London remain confined to home-based work. In Dhaka, an expanding manufacturing sector and the city's anonymity allow women to take on public roles as workers. On the contrary, limited work opportunities for men, the exposure to racism and social controls inside the migrant community prompt women in London to cling on to traditional roles.

In India, where the manufacturing sector has not created new niches for female workers, many researchers have emphasised the limited emancipatory potential of work available to poorer women in urban areas, most of whom are involved in home-based or domestic work (Boeri 2018; Kantor 2003, 2005). Against this backdrop, assessments of women's withdrawal from public roles have varied. Some studies have stressed the resulting loss of freedom and decision power (Kapadia 1998), while others have argued that the practice of seclusion had to be situated in a context where it could seem preferable to 'the degradation of impoverishment and back breaking work' (Jeffery 1979, 174). My own findings in this chapters will initially seem to back the second interpretation when showing how the double burden of accessing unpredictable basic services and engaging in low-paid work impacted the discretionary time of poorer women in my sample. Later parts of the chapter, however, will nuance this assessment and show that such involvements could lead to collective action

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[202] See discussion of work patterns in the two areas, chapter 3, p.72.

and to a form of ambivalent emancipation in which tremendous vulnerability and hardship combined with some empowerment.

Beyond these commonalities between the literature above and the discussion in this chapter, the emphasis on basic services brings the state back to the heart of the discussion and raises the question of when and how women get involved in politics. Lastly, the limited scope of the discussion here is worth stressing in comparison to much of the literature above: the starting point of the thesis was a reflection on time and politics, not on gender in interactions with the state. This chapter therefore should be read as a reflection on a question that emerged as an important one during fieldwork rather than a full engagement with a strand of research that would take us much beyond the scope of this thesis. We start by stepping back on to a terrain familiar to time use research and consider how negotiations around these tasks take place in the household. Later in the chapter, we consider women's interactions with service providers and make our way towards political domains.

6.2 Time and the Household

To start exploring how men and women spent their time around basic services, we can build on statistics concerning involvement in the time-consuming tasks of fetching water and food in chapter four. We begin with the basics and with two survey questions. The first asked respondents to report in general terms about the routine involvement of men, women and children in the household. The second asked them to report about their own personal involvement. Reporting separately for men and women respondents, we have:

1. Women reporting about who in the family was routinely involved in water and food chores—men, women, or children

2. Men doing the same.

3. Men and women respondents separately reporting about their personal involvement.

Table 6.2.1 Involvement in Water and Food Chores
Percentage of residents who rely on supplies outside their premise
(reported by cell)

	Women	Men	Children	Sample Size
Water				
In the family, as reported by women	78%	26%	26%	50
In the family, as reported by men	51%	55%	20%	53
Own involvement:	74%	68%		103
Food				
In the family, as reported by women	83%	22%	8%	80
In the family, as reported by men	82%	22%	12%	79
Own involvement:	80%	38%		159

Source: own survey

The figures above confirm that women were more involved in sourcing water and food than men. More than men, women were likely to be waiting for the tanker-trucks' irregular visits or for the unpredictable opening times of a subsidised food shop, and they were the ones usually under-reporting the costs in time and opportunity of such unpredictable supplies. Beyond these overall figures, the divergence that surfaces between different forms of reporting is striking. About fetching water, in particular, men and women's assessment of who shouldered the burden differed widely, as did third-person and first-person accounts. If considering that my own observations put the profile of people queuing for water at three different points at 55 per cent of women, 20 per cent of men and 25 per cent of children, we appear to have a case of men over-reporting their own involvement.

About the opposite pattern of under-reporting, I argued in chapter four that the finding might reflect people's interiorising the lesser value of the time they devoted to the task. The above adds a gender perspective to these patterns. Fetching water was for women a routine involvement in the kind of unpaid work whose contribution to the economy of the household was widely undervalued. For men, by contrast, an involvement in these same tasks might have been considered as noteworthy enough a departure from these routines to be reported. Most men described sourcing food and water as being a task for everyone in the household. With respect to sharing burdens, however, the reality differed. Men's over-reporting their personal involvement would reflect the gap between attitudes towards sharing burdens and behaviours.

Around subsidised food, divergences were more limited, which might be linked to the effect of frequency and rhythm. Water was a daily task, around which other chores had to be organised. The time spent waiting for irregular supplies blended into these other tasks to shape much of a life. Buying subsidised food, in contrast, claimed much of one day every month. In the pattern of reporting above, the ordering and segmentation of time would interact with institutional factors that determine how people value and remember their time.

Beyond these questions of reporting, the interaction between paid work and the task of accessing free water and subsidised food brings additional insights about the extent to which taking on paid work relieved women from the burden of accessing time-consuming public services (table 6.2.2). Women involved in paid work were more likely to spend time accessing water and food than women who were not. The contrary applied to men. Note, furthermore that the figures below rely on first person reporting, which is likely to exaggerate men's involvement in the two chores as noted above.

Table 6.2.2 Involvement in Water and Food Chores by Work Status

Percentages (reported by cell)

	Water	Food	Sample size
Women			
Working	82%	87%	60
Non-working	64%	76%	76
Men			
Working	67%	33%	114
Non-working	68%	60%	27

Source: own survey

Compared to most studies conducted in rich countries, the contrast between men and wo,em stands out. Women's paid work in rich countries reduces the overall amount of time a family devotes to house chores and shifts some of it towards the partner (Bittman et al. 2003; Gershuny, Bittman, and Brice 2005). Most research finds that this transfer remains unequal, which results in women doing a 'second shift' (Hochschild and Machung 2003). Even this imbalance, however, does not amount to paid work being associated with more unpaid work in the form of accessing water and food from the government. For women who were engaging in both activities in addition to the household chores they shared with their non-working neighbours, it was a 'third shift'.

This 'third shift' evokes findings from an Australian research where women who earn more than their partners are found to over-compensate by doing more unpaid work (Bittman et al. 2003). Ethnographic evidence in the next section will provide more evidence about whether women compensate for behaviours that depart from gendered expectations, but already we can note that the two cases differ in one important way. In sunder Nagri and Madanpur Khadar, women were involved in very low-paid, mostly home-based work. Asked about paying for less time-consuming supplies, women expressed the matter in the most concise way: their hand moved in front of their lips—from hand to mouth; there was no margin. Necessity, in their case, played a role that does not apply to women in the Australian study.

To describe the increase in female labour force participation during periods of economic hardship, Indira Hirway has used the term 'distress employment' (2012, 68). Women in poor households sourcing government services would be the other facet of the economy of distress. In line with this interpretation was the existence of an income threshold of Rs 15,000 per month (Rs 400 more than the average income), above which women were simultaneously withdrawing from paid work and from the tasks of buying subsidised food and fetching free water. Their withdrawal from these tasks would be part of the same pattern that has women who can afford it leaving the most adverse forms of paid work, with consequences that can be seen in the country-wide drop in female labour force participation registered by national statistics (Andres et al. 2017; Mehrotra and Parida 2017; Neff, Sen, and Kling 2012). Both their withdrawal from work and from accessing water

and food from the government would feature women pulling out from the harshest forms of work and drudgery without finding a way back into jobs as saleswomen or clerk, which were often considered to be acceptable for women.

Women who engaged in paid work were also not able to transfer burdens of accessing water and food to their male partners. Men in their households were, in fact, less likely to be involved in the tasks than men in households where women did not work. Instead, children were taking on the burden in a pattern that illustrates how the 'vicious circle of unpaid work and poverty' (Antonopoulos and Hirway 2009, xxv) is passed on from one generation to another. Time use research has argued that the sharing of unpaid work in the household reflects how each member would fare should the family break up (Gershuny, Bittman, and Brice 2005). While such relations of power are likely to have played a role in the distribution of water and food chores, the example also reflects the fact that irregular supplies prevented those who worked outside the lane from getting involved. Combined with low female wages and norms adverse to women leaving the neighbourhoods, irregular service delivery rigidified in behaviour whatever fluidity existed in attitudes.

In discussions with women of Madanpur Khadar and Sunder Nagri who were not accessing subsidised food or free water, it was clear that the burdensome nature of the tasks played a role in their withdrawal. Just as important, however, were considerations about status. As for paid work, women's withdrawal from these tasks was a mark of affluence. Considerations about safety and decency also played a role. Among the better-off Muslim households of Sunder Nagri, many women did not only avoid going to the subsidised food shop, they also did not leave the house without covering their face and body in a full niqab. In Hindu households, the link was often made with markers of caste, as in this example where a woman concluded her depiction of how she had to negotiate the right to step out of her house and remove her veil: 'We are Kolis, you see!'[203] Gender, class and religion, in sum, combined to turn the withdrawal from public roles into a mark of social status for the household.[204]

In contrast, stepping out to line up at the subsidised food shop or fetching water were not trivial behaviours, but ones that entailed confronting this equation of gender, class and religion. This was again true for women of both communities, but the contrast was particularly strong in the Muslim community, where the practice of full veiling in better off households contrasted with the fact that Muslims were over-represented among the poorer women who took on paid work and stepped out to access government food and water.[205]

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[203] Sunder Nagri, 20.9.2016.

[204] On the interaction of gender, class and religion in women's withdrawal from public roles: (Jeffery 1979; Kapadia 1998; Still 2017).

[205] Chapter 3, section 4, p72.

Ethnographic insights in the next section will help explore how women negotiated the constraints that surfaced in this section. They will also nuance this section's conclusions where poorer women seemed to have no temporal discretion. The task of obtaining water and food from irregular government supplies trapped them in unpredictable waiting. They were unable to renegotiate burdens with their spouses, even as their low-wages prevented them from paying for less time-consuming private supplies of food and water. Unpredictable basic services, in sum, were the other facet of a cycle of impoverishment and drudgery that literature has ascribed to the kind of employment opportunities available to poor Indian women in urban areas (Boeri 2018; Kantor 2003). An adverse inclusion in the labour market and irregular basic service delivery combined to undermine their temporal discretion.

6.3 Minimising and Tactics

To explore how women dealt with the many constraints that surfaced in the previous section, let me bring in Natissa Qureishi, whom we first met alone with her two small children at her house in Sunder Nagri's slum.

'Are you working?' goes the survey question.[206]

'I sell these clothes', she says pointing at a bundle on the floor. 'My father has a stall and I help him'. A few questions later, Natissa describes how she became an AAP sympathiser through a female friend of hers and sister of the MLA's assistant. When we ask whether her husband would take the survey, she answers defiantly that he is in the village with no prospect of return.

A few months later, we are speaking to the MLA's assistant at the AAP rally described in the previous chapter, when a cheerful Natissa comes up to us, the female friend of hers not in sight as she discusses some logistical issue with the young man.[207]

Wanting to follow up on whether the rally was a success, we find Natissa and her husband.[208] When the discussion turns around politics, Natissa remains silent while her husband speaks of his AAP sympathies. The clothing trade, this time, is described as Natissa's father's only, whom she occasionally assists, 'because he is so old'.

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[206] Sunder Nagri, 3.3.2016.
[207] Sunder Nagri, 25.9.2016.
[208] Sunder Nagri, 1.10.2016.

Walking by a few weeks later, we come across Natissa's father, who tells us she is out working.[209]

'That clothing trade you are involved in?'

'I am not. It's her business', says the elderly man with a kind smile: 'I am too old for that'. He is not involved in politics neither, no one in the family is. At most, Natissa accompanied a female friend of hers to one or two meetings.

Natissa was not alone in hiding or downplaying some of her behaviours. The shop another woman tended was 'just *timepass*'.[210] It 'just covered the small things',[211] which however turned out to be a significant share of the family's food and the family's only income for a period during which the husband was unemployed. Elsewhere yet, home-based sewing was 'work of no value',[212] or denied altogether. Sarah Bano from Madanpur Khadar, for example, answered that she was not working, even as she sat diligently sticking beads on a piece of pink cloth.[213] When we pointed to her buzzy fingers, she made a gesture of disdain: 'That's nothing'. Later, however, we would learn that her husband had been unemployed for three months and had only started working a few days earlier—that too, occasionally, when he was able to borrow a rickshaw from acquaintances. Meanwhile, financial pressure forced Sarah to do more of the beading work, which she used to pass on to neighbours. Still, for Sarah's husband her work was 'just *timepass*' and something he did not see the point of doing,[214] while for Sarah, it was 'nothing'.[215] In chapter four, the same expression '*timepass*' was used by another woman who was waiting to access subsidised food: 'what does it matter whether we wait here or there, it's just *timepass*'.[216]

The expressions above echo the larger pattern of under-reporting the cost in time and opportunities of accessing basic services, which I interpreted as a reflection of how women internalise the lesser worth of their time. This is again what we would find here when a woman downplays the importance of her work or describes much of her daily chores as 'just *timepass*'.

In several of these cases, however, women seemed to be doing more than merely internalising the lesser worth of their time. The woman who said that her shop 'just covered the small things', for example, went on praising her formerly unemployed husband: 'But he also contributed,

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[209] Sunder Nagri, 28.10.2016.

[210] Madanpur Khadar, 20.2.2016.

[211] Sunder Nagri, 1.10.2016.

[212] Sunder Nagri, 3.3.2016.

[213] Madanpur Khadar, 9.9.2016.

[214] Madanpur Khadar, 14.12.2016.

[215] Madanpur Khadar, 09.09.2016.

[216] Madanpur Khadar, 4.11.2016.

that's how it is in a family, we should help each other'.[217] Minimising her contribution, in this case, seemed to be a means of sparing her husband and downplaying the tension between the family's economic situation and gendered norms that ascribed men the role of bread earners.

Natissa's case was even clearer. In the opening quote, the first version presented to unknown researchers was adapted to wider social controls. The second starkly censored version was for her husband. The third, by her father, showed the greater freedom she enjoyed with him, although even he did not know everything about her involvement in politics. The different versions also gave a sense of the tensions in the family. Initially, Natissa spoke so defiantly about her husband that we assumed he had left her. The husband then told us he was away touring the country as a sub-contracted salesman much of the year. Either way, Natissa was often alone with small children and an elderly father. Hiding and minimising became a tactic to manage the tension between the reality of the household's situation and gendered norms about the behaviours that suit young married women. In a situation where the two diverged, maintaining a façade loyalty to gendered expectations allowed Natissa to claim some room to go about engaging in politics and in paid work while downplaying conflicts with her husband and averting critics from neighbours.

Unlike for Natissa, around whom conflicts were merely hinted at, they were overt around Sarah. Twice, on subsequent visits, we witnessed clashes with neighbours, who accused her of holding onto money she owed them. Husband and wife also disagreed. He wanted her to devote her time to the care of children, and the long-term time horizon of their children's future. She thought they could not survive day after day without her income. After her husband lost his job, the conflict grew so acute that Sarah went to the police station, ready to lodge a complaint for domestic violence. The policeman she spoke to, however, told her to go home. 'He told me to sort this out myself. I gave up, because how would I live?'[218] For Sarah, under-reporting her gains or describing her work as 'nothing' was a means to downplay conflicts with her husband and with her neighbours.

There was more to the conflict between Sarah and her husband than a disagreement about how Sarah spent her time. He saw her work as a threat to their position in the lane, which was vulnerable enough, being one of three Muslim households in an otherwise Hindu lane. Sarah agreed that her work was a cause of conflict, and she also stressed how these conflicts dovetailed with communal tensions in the lane. More than once, she complained that their relationship with neighbours was bad. 'They have problems with what we eat',[219] she would say lowering her voice, 'when they kill a pork there are clashes and we don't share food'. She would have wanted to set up a stall on the market, which according to her would have spared her the conflicts with neighbours, but

[217] Sunder Nagri, 1.10.2016.
[218] Madanpur Khadar, 9.9.2016.
[219] Madanpur Khadar, 9.9.2016.

her husband was opposed to it and she did not think they could do without an additional income. Her beading work stayed as uneasy compromise.

For Sarah, tensions surrounding her Muslim identity in an all-Hindu lane were an essential feature of the conflict with neighbours and with her husband. More striking even than Sarah's example were three widows of Madanpur Khadar's Muslim minority, one of whom is worth invoking to complete the picture above. When we met her, we were speaking with a group of six Hindu women. We had just asked them who they went to when faced with a problem about basic services. Initially, the question did not strike a chord but eventually one of the six gestured towards an elderly woman who was walking by: 'She is the one we go to'.[220] The woman came closer and soon we were all listening to her as she recalled how she had gone 'begging for work' after her husband's death and how eventually, having accessed sub-contracted work, she started passing some on to neighbours. When she concluded, the discussion turned to the deteriorated atmosphere in the neighbourhood: young men were hanging around; drugs circulated; crime abounded. There were comments about how residents from the Muslim cluster across the wall were stoking insecurity in the main colony. 'See, this wall, it separates India from Pakistan', said one woman gesturing expressively. There were laughs around, and someone explained: 'No Muslims on this side, one or two, that's it'.

One or two, among whom the widow they had just called their leader and who was by then listening silently. As in Sarah's case, the woman's access to scarce resources established both her influence and her vulnerability. On the one hand, the evocation of work and unemployed youth paved the way for the communal rhetoric. On the other hand, the widow's ability to pass on work gave her authority and established her status as the person to go to for problems about work and basic services. The example, once again, highlights how women like this widow and Sarah had to negotiate multiple social fault-lines. The widow's attitude reminds us that knowing when to stay silent played a central role in this negotiation.

The widow, Sarah and Natissa were all Muslims, but the widow and Sarah lived in Madanpur Khadar surrounded by Hindu neighbours while Natissa lived in Sunder Nagri where most of her neighbours were Muslims. If religious polarisation influenced Natissa's direct environment, it is likely to have united the area's Muslim population in opposition to a hostile wider society and increased social controls inside the community. The version she presented to us, where she spoke of working with her father and having been drawn to AAP by a female friend could reflect these social controls. For Sarah and the widow, in contrast, religious polarisation loomed large in everyday interactions with neighbours and the fear of this polarisation was a cause of conflict with her husband.

In such fraught situations, practices of hiding and minimising evoke the 'weapons of the weak' famously described by James Scott (1985) in his ethnography of poor farmers in Malaysia for whom lying, hiding, foot dragging and pilfering are means to resist adversity. As in Scott's 'hidden

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[220] Madanpur Khadar, 15.2.2016

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transcripts' (1990), women adjusted their answers to the starkly unequal relations of power in which they were caught. These were not the strategies of individuals who have the means to change the terms of a situation, but the covert tactics of people bound to a relation they cannot break away from.

And yet, the situation differed from Scott's depiction of the resistance waged by people cornered into a losing position. For a start, the relation between these women and their husbands was a complicated one where confrontation combined with collaboration and even solicitude in much more intimate ways than in Scott's example of poor farmers and their patrons. Another difference was that in spite of all, Natissa attended the political rally and managed to work. Even Sarah surrounded as she was by conflict had managed to get the household through hard times and she had established herself as the person to go to for those who wanted to engage in piece-rate beading work in the lane.

This ambivalence echoes a situation Craig Jeffrey describes in his ethnography of unemployed young men in northern India among whom the word '*timepass*' and associated expressions of having nothing to do described a state in which 'paradoxically, claiming to be useless… had become a means… to build youthful solidarities, sometimes across caste and class boundaries' (2010b, 465). As we heard above, this same vocabulary of *timepass* and uselessness had entered the Hindi parlance of women in Sunder Nagri and Madanpur Khadar. Unlike in Jeffrey's study, however, where it described the situation of unemployed men, it described the condition of women who took on paid work or stepped out of their house to buy subsidised food. They described two activities out of which women who could afford to do so withdrew.

In both cases, the vocabulary of '*timepass*' and uselessness was associated with situations that challenged norms of gender and class. In both cases, they were ambivalent situations associated with anguish for Jeffrey's middle-class respondents and with distress for my own poorer respondents, but they were also situations in which new solidarities and new forms of activism could emerge among Jeffrey's male students as among the women of Madanpur Khadar and Sunder Nagri. Some of these solidarities concerned husband and wife. The woman whose small shop got the household through difficult time, for example, recalled that her unemployed husband prepared food for her.[221] Other solidarities involved people outside the household, as is the case with the Muslim widow whom her Hindu neighbours introduced as their leader. Speaking of '*timepass*' and uselessness, in sum, became for the young men of Jeffrey's research and for the women depicted in this study, a sort of discursive means to deal with a situation that challenged traditional gendered norms with profoundly ambivalent consequences.

The behaviours in this section call for one final observation that makes the link with patterns of reporting above. Whereas previously under-reporting was a matter of women's interiorising the lesser value of their time, here we saw them hiding and minimising to avoid conflicts. Whereas

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[221] Sunder Nagri, 1.10.2016.

previously, gendered relations of power were interiorised, they were tactically abided by in this section. While the reasons differed, the result was in both cases that women's involvement in politics or work was minimised in ways that once again suggest that the quantitative evidence in my survey might be an under-estimate. One could go further and note that if hiding is a tactic of vulnerable individuals, finding out their real status also raises ethical questions. It commands prudence when surveying in cramped spaces that is lost in the practice of collecting large datasets.

For all the hardship we came across in this section, the picture we arrive at in these final paragraphs differs from the previous section, where women's involvement in obtaining food and water or in paid work undermined their temporal discretion. This section, in contrast, features women who succeeded in regaining some leeway to go about their work or engage in politics. Their tactics added another possible explanation to the pattern of under-reporting that surfaced in different places of this thesis: whereas previously it seemed to be a symptom of people's interiorising the lesser worth of their time, it was here a tactical means to downplay conflicts.

6.4 Women and Politics

When women accessed food and water from the government, they were also negotiating with service providers and middlemen. For many women, this 'pervasiveness of voice' (Schaffer and Lamb 1974, 79) was a requirement of accessing services. It involved enquiries about a food shop's opening times, complaints about the quality of food or the cleanliness of water. Some women went further and got involved in committees, attended the meeting of the man with his yellow slips or approached their political representatives. Pausing on the story of a few of these women allows us to complete the trajectories leading to male dominated political parties in the previous chapter, with others leading to female spaces of participation.

Rama, who was manning the water point in front of house number D-286 in the opening scene is one woman who stood out. Compared to others in the lane, her house looked affluent. When we met her, the family was building a third floor and getting other parts painted afresh. They could have afforded to pay for bottled water and Rama could have withdrawn from the water committees, but collective involvements had been part of her upbringing as daughter of an erstwhile slum-leader, she said proudly. 'My husband too is always helping others, he is always doing something'.[222] The family's endeavour appeared not quite as selfless when listening to neighbours, but either way, it was a chosen endeavour for all members of the family.

Rama manned the committee, rallied her neighbours behind a letter asking the MLA for more reliable supplies and attempted to mobilise them around issues of cleanliness. Being illiterate, she had asked her eldest child, a college-going daughter, to write the letter. Meanwhile, Rama's

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[222] Madanpur Khadar, 25.10.2016.

husband, who owned a rickshaw, attended rallies and drove neighbours to faraway offices. Initially, Rama had joined him a few times, but she had stopped attending rallies since. Commuting was a problem and 'these were not places made for women. Everything could happen, out there. Beside it was not good for women?'[223] In sum, theirs was a household endeavour, where all members had their role defined by education, means of commuting and gendered concerns about decency and safety. Their endeavour was part of a trajectory of upward mobility in which the family's influence in the street increased as its members progressively gained a grip on institutional channels of accountability rooted in political parties.

The case of Firdoz who manned the committee at a water point located less than one kilometre away from Rama's lane was different. Her house was a rough one-storey construction whose unpainted bricks stood out amidst the tiled and plastered facades of the lane. She was a widow with small children under her care, and she was a Muslim in a neighbourhood where Hindus dominated. Like Sarah and the elderly lady who stayed silent while neighbours likened a nearby Muslim cluster to Pakistan, she made a meagre income from home-based sewing and beading work. All these women could only survive as intermediaries if they were able to mediate the provision of water, work, subsidised food or information about these resources. The fewer means they had, the more time they had to spend chastising a potential rival, gleaning information, or paying respect to a powerbroker.

Contrary to Rama, Firdoz' activism was the consequence of her isolation. Similarly, Sarah and the elderly woman in the previous section had emerged as persons to go to for neighbours because their husbands, being unemployed or dead, were unable to provide for them. While there is no denying that even Rama was confronted with hardship, the behaviour of these three Muslim women was an extreme example of how necessity could lead women to take on public roles. Not all women who shared this profile of extreme vulnerability were Muslims. Firdoz' committee, for example, included a Hindu woman whose husband had been bedridden for nearly one year. Nevertheless, the fact that several women from Madanpur Khadar's Muslim minority stood out is unlikely to have been a coincidence considering that Muslims in the area were also much poorer than their Hindu neighbours. If, furthermore, we consider that networks of sub-contracted work were dominated by Muslims,[224] we might touch on the different facets of a local political economy that explains why Muslim women in Madanpur Khadar were more likely to report having taken action about unpredictable basic service delivery than in any other cluster.

Rama and Firdoz lived in the most recently established part of Madanpur Khadar's resettlement colony along its southern border, far away from the next common tap and where tanker-trucks had only started arriving a few years earlier. Because residents were resettled there last, fewer

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[223] Madanpur Khadar, 25.10.2016.
[224] Madanpur Khadar, 9.9.2016, 15.2.2016.

seemed to have found their way back to employment. This geography of deprivation matched the reach of Dalmiaji's name. In these southern lanes, it resonated alternatively as selfless benefactor, mafia boss, BJP affiliate, representative of the Congress and AAP sympathiser. According to the driver Satish who was Dalmiaji's intermediary, the water committees also functioned best in this part of the neighbourhood.[225] As one moved west and north into more affluent lanes bottled water or common taps replaced tanker-trucks and responses to enquiries about the big man turned into: 'Dalmiaji? Never heard the name'.[226]

The answer to my starting question about why it was worth their time to get involved in the politics of basic service delivery is here again rooted in an economy where free or subsidised goods delivered by the state play an essential role. In light of the above, we can narrow down the different parts of this political economy to a micro-territory of a few lanes. Because access to labour markets was limited and basic service delivery marred by corruption, Firdoz and Rama deemed it worth their time to devote long hours to the water committees, while their neighbours a few blocks away were ignoring even the existence of these committees. Because similar constraints applied to the food distribution chain, it was worthwhile for other women to attend the meetings of the man with his yellow slips. It was worth it for Firdoz, Rama and the other to devote so much time to the committees or the meetings because many people did not have the means to 'exit' (Hirschman 1970) government services. Because 'exit' was not an option for Firdoz, it was worth for her to devote time to the committees. Because enough people around Rama could not 'exit', devoting time to the committee became a strategy of 'voice' that could establish her influence in the lane.

Both Firdoz and Rama were women who one day came across Satish and decided it was worth their time to get involved in the committee. From this common starting point onwards, their trajectories diverged. Soon, Satish's tanker-trucks were not reliable enough anymore for Rama, who got her daughter to write a letter to her political representative. The letter by her educated daughter allowed Rama to free herself from her dependence on Satish and activate precisely those institutional channels of accountability that made it into the survey. She was planning to repeat the action with another complaint about cleanliness. Firdoz, by contrast, remained loyal to Dalmiaji's network, subservient towards Satish, and the long hours she devoted to the task stayed in this blind-spot that does not feature in my survey of political behaviours.

When the two women's involvement in the committees diverge around the letter written by Rama's daughter, they underline the importance of one aspect often put forward by discretionary approaches to time (Burchardt 2010) and by research on the political behaviour of the poor (Harriss 2005)—education, which becomes here a generational feature of Rama's networks. In a sample where 81 per cent of the 5 to 18-year olds were literate against 35 per cent of those reaching the official age

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[225] Madanpur Khadar, 15.2.2016.
[226] Madanpur Khadar, 15.2.2018.

of retirement at 58 years, this was not just a feature of Rama's network, but one that cut across most families.

To complete this picture, we can make the link with Radha in Sunder Nagri, whom we heard threatening the MLA's assistant with unsavoury consequences if he failed to fix a clogged drain within two hours. Like Firdoz and Rama, Radha was illiterate and the trajectory that turned her into the confident woman she had become started at a time of tremendous vulnerability, when her husband could neither find work to provide for the family nor resolve himself to see Radha taking on paid work. In her case, it was not the mediation of a literate daughter that allowed her to overcome her disadvantage, but the progressive socialisation into saving groups and into Parivartan. 'We learnt', she recalled, 'at first, we would go alone, they would humiliate us, and nothing would happen. Now we go together so they can't just send us away'.[227]

Above, I argued that Firdoz' activism was an ambivalent emancipation rooted in extreme poverty and vulnerability. This adverse emancipation also explained why Muslim women were more likely to report an action to improve basic service delivery in Madanpur Khadar's resettlement colony where they were a minority than in any other cluster. Radha's example might provide an explanation for the findings that Hindu women were more likely to report an action in Sunder Nagri than in Madanpur Khadar. While I cannot do more than offer a hypothesis, it is perhaps not a coincidence that six of the twelve Hindu women who reported having done so in Sunder Nagri were Kolis, a community that was also highly represented among erstwhile sympathisers of Action India and Parivartan. Radha and the Action India staff member who had approached her initially, Santosh, who became the AAP's public face in Sunder Nagri until her premature death, Kavita the young woman who was quoted saying that she went straight to the *Court* to complain about shop owners—all of them were Kolis. The caste network might have prepared the ground for their socialisation into a wider network of collective action. Among other women who reported having taken action, two were linked to the BJP and, through their husband, to the RSS. These involvements, in sum, bring us back to the social and political texture explored in chapter five, and to the human connections, the shared practices and solidarities that develop around collective mobilisations.

This allows us to end the section on a more hopeful note than seemed imaginable when starting this chapter. The example of Radha and the fact that women in Sunder Nagri were overall more likely to report having done something to improve service delivery suggest that initiatives aimed at supporting collective action can make a difference. They cannot change the fact that relying on unpredictable services undermines temporal discretion, but they can help people who depend on these services come together in ways that can be empowering. 'It has changed things to come

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[227] Sunder Nagri, 20.9.2016.

together. It has changed us',[228] says Rama about how she and her neighbours came together to demand better water supplies and a cleaner lane.

Above, we answered the question: why do these women deem it worth their time to get involved in water committees or other forms of collective action aimed at improving the delivery of basic services? Here, we adressed another question that runs through this thesis: when does time invested in a task increase people's ability to do things that matter to them with their time? One question, however, remains unanswered: how should we qualify the behaviours we saw above? They differed from those featuring in literature on India's politics. Many of them were too informal and local to echo research about how women come together 'beyond the weapons of the weak' (Kabeer, Sudarshan, and Milward 2013) in structured collective movements. Even women who engaged in them seemed to think that they were not worth reporting among interventions to improve basic services. Were they even political?

The question speaks to a reflection about Hannah Arendt made by Veena Das and co-authors (Das 2011, 320; Das and Randeria 2015, 4; Das and Walton 2015, 52). Arendt's *On Revolution* (Arendt 2006, 49–105) distinguishes the demands for civil and political freedom of the middle-class who shaped the beginning of the French revolution and the impulse of necessity that drove the poor in nodal moments that radicalised the revolution. While engaging with this interpretation would take us too far from the concern of this thesis, the critique of Das and co-authors brings us back to the question considered in this section. For them, the distinction between the politics of freedom of those whose needs are satisfied and the compulsion of the poor is emblematic of classical representations of politics. The poor, in this representation, are depoliticised, and women doubly so when their negotiations with service providers, middlemen and political representatives are approached from the sole perspective of their unpaid work.

If, however, we define the political as the capacity to turn needs into collective claims on the state (Procupez 2015, 64), then an involvement in a water committee is political, being collective and directed towards influencing the state. Similarly, enquiries about opening times and complaints about the quality of food become political when they enter a pattern of neighbours collectively enquiring and complaining in ways that put pressure on shopkeepers and tanker-truck drivers. When these conditions are fulfilled, they are female political involvements born out of necessity.

Poverty drove women like Firdoz into political activities. When she succeeded in imposing herself as the person to go to for neighbours, she managed to carve out an informal constituency for herself. Poverty tied wider political stakes of how resources and power should be distributed in society around every moment of Firdoz' life with a stringency that had no equivalent in the lives of those whose basic needs are satisfied. One could go further and note that it is also in lives such as these that, in urban India at least, the state's interventions are most directly palpable if only in those

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[228] Madanpur Khadar, 25.10.2016.

hours spent waiting for public supplies of food and water. Poverty, in sum, is here what exposes the uncompromisingly political nature of behaviour that is often described as drudgery.

It is clear that recognising the political nature of women's involvement in accessing services does not amount to minimising the constraints that limit their behaviour. It does not question the reality of women's marginalisation in political parties and bureaucracies, nor does it question men's domination in informal networks of power. It does, however, shift the focus from an emphasis on women's absence in politics to an emphasis on what can bring the politics of women on a level playing field with the politics of men. The picture that emerged from the discussion above was far from a level playing field, but it did suggest that initiatives aimed at supporting collective action and transferring the know-how required to approach a political representative, check a register or file a Right to Information Request can have long-term positive effects. The spread of education also helped lift some obstacles, which nuances Gupta's (2012) argument that education alone does little to empower the poor and that collective involvements in politics can compensate for the disadvantage of illiteracy. While this section shows that collective mobilisation really can empower illiterate people, the contrast between Firdoz and Rama reminds us that literacy is a crucial advantage even when engaging in collective action.

6.5 The Lane, Where the State Meets Society

Beyond politics, the discussion above leads to several reflections about the state. While they momentarily take us away from the discussion of time, they allow us to tie together a number of insights about everyday interactions with the state. Instead of the scenes of male citizens interacting with male political representatives and officials depicted in much literature on everyday interactions with the state (Gupta 2012; Jeffrey and Lerche 2001; Witsoe 2013), this section featured women interacting with service providers and intermediaries or even asserting themselves as intermediaries. In these encounters, male family members played an important role, they were often the ones who had the money to pay a bribe, they usually lodged complaints and attended rallies, but most everyday interactions involved women residents and men providers.

This emphasis on the ordinary moves the site of interaction with the state from the *Court* set behind its gates guarded by policemen in Sunder Nagri and from distant, scattered offices to the porches of subsidised food shops and to the lanes where tanker-trucks stopped in Madanpur Khadar. As they moved into the lanes, interactions with the state met the private routines of residents that the cramped condition of the houses pushed into the open. Here, men and women negotiated the norms and material constraints that defined boundaries of the domestic and the public. Here, they decided whether to engage in collective action, all of this in a setting where interactions with neighbours easily dovetailed with communal dynamics stoked by majoritarian politics. The lane also became an essential unit of politics. The informal constituency of Firdoz and Rama was the size of a

lane. In the previous chapter, the lane was again the relevant unit for the split between those who followed Fatima when she joined the AAP, while others remained loyal to the Congress. The lanes of Madanpur Khadar and Sunder Nagri, in sum, were the primary sites of the state's involvement 'in the minute texture of everyday life' (Gupta 1995, 375).

So far, we saw women interacting with service providers, middlemen or getting involved in committees. We saw them negotiating the constraints that limited their ability to take on a public role. To complete this overview, I want to pause on a few examples in which the state was drawn into private interactions. Already, we heard one example of this, when Rama asked her educated daughter to write a letter to the MLA. Others asked children to help with online forms, but none were as vocal about the symbols and emotions carried by this mediation as the AAP's Fatima. She could not speak any English and when she used the word '*Court*' it expressed a feeling of alienation: 'The call came from the *Court*', she said about the seniors who had enjoined her to devote her entire day to serving the AAP,[229] then had left her to fend for herself. The same Fatima explained how her daughter translated the English parlance of official politics. When this daughter spoke to us in English, Fatima added: 'My eyes fill with tears when I hear her. English used to be the language of the big people and now my daughter speaks it'.[230] The distance of the English-speaking 'big people' was neutralised when it embodied itself in the child Fatima had raised, in yet another example of how the generational difference of education shaped the political imagination of poor families in the two neighbourhoods.

Not all instances of this imbrication of distance and proximity were as lenient, however, as this scene illustrates, simultaneously illustrating how men's role as bread-earners was destabilised:[231]

In the three-by-four-meter dwelling of Sunder Nagri's slum, Sadiq Najib is sewing bras, two seams on each, the sewn pieces gathered near his foot. His wife, Yasmin, a baby on her lap is crying as she tells how he lost his job in a tailoring unit and was forced to take on home-based work. With the birth of their last child, money became too scarce to pay Sadiq's mother—the owner of the house—the basic rent that is also the widowed woman's main income. One week earlier, the elderly woman has ordered them to leave the flat, and a few days before our visit has made them sign a declaration in which they agreed to leave. Yasmin looks down, arranges the baby's cloth, then just stares.

'This marriage, these children: they have been so much trouble. If at least, I could start working again!'

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[229] Sunder Nagri, 18.9.2016; and chapter 5, p. 128.
[230] Sunder Nagri, 28.10.2016.
[231] Sunder Nagri, 5.10.2016.

Sadiq goes on sewing, pitching in when the talk is about his work; when the discussion circles around his mother, sparsely interjecting a word of wisdom while Yasmin details the abuses.

'The fruit of patience is sweet'.

Two neighbours have come to enquire about the fight. Sadiq offers his stool. He sits down near the heap of white cloth and starts cutting the threads that still connect the bras. Yasmin describes the fight again, then turns around and a few seconds later steps back into the circle with a folded paper, which she hands over to the young woman who is assisting me with research that day. She reads in silence, then passes on the paper—a carefully hand-written letter in Hindi, with two uncertain signatures at the bottom. For some time, we sit there, Yasmin with the paper, Sadiq with the scissors, the neighbours commenting vividly so that Yasmin's gesture passing on the paper once again goes unnoticed until Sadiq asks: 'Could you read it out for us?'

There's a moment of flux as the realisation sinks in that neither Yasmin nor Sadiq are able to read the document in which they declared themselves prepared to leave their dwelling within two weeks and accept that failing to do so exposes them to being evicted by the police.

'She got a lawyer to write it', a teary Yasmin explains. 'How will we do? Just one room will cost three times as much as this'.

Sadiq, who has dropped the scissors, lays a first bra on his thigh, then a second, then a third, breast case over breast case, forming two stiff stacks of crisp fabric under his hands. His fingers are patting gently until suddenly, he brushes aside the pile.

'And what? Worse comes to worse: long live the rickshaw!'

He then takes the scissors again, turns to the pile of immaculate fabric and starts cutting again, faster.

'A man should not think about domestic worries. He should focus on work'.

In this letter, an illiterate mother got a lawyer to write a document in which her illiterate son and daughter-in-law declared being aware that the police would evict them if they did not leave the flat. A private score was referred to the one section of the state that is most representative of its martial authority. The letter itself aped the state's judiciary and administrative paper work. It evoked the relation of power this paper work institutes between those who can write and read the state's

writing and those who cannot (Gupta 2012, 214), the twist being that the person evoking this relation of power was herself illiterate. The parties of the conflict were bound by their common inability to read the scripture and a shared image of the coercive power of the state.

The conflict between Sadiq and his mother was about an unauthorised settlement. The right based on which Sadiq's mother got the letter written was itself set in a grey zone. When she first bought the plot on the informal market, urban planners considered her as an illegal squatter on government land. Enough time had passed since for her right to have stabilised. She could expect to see it recognised once and for all in the foreseeable future, but until then she was still an unauthorised slum-dweller. When she invoked the police in a letter that copied the procedures of the judiciary, she illustrated how references to the authority of the law feature prominently in the behaviour of precisely those people about whom Partha Chatterjee wrote that they 'make their claims on government…, not within the framework of stable constitutionally defined rights and laws, but rather through temporary, contextual and unstable arrangements' (2008, 57). This echoes Veena Das' (2004a, 230) argument that the state's presence in the daily lives of the poor is suspended between the 'rational presence' of rules and regulations invoked to validate informal practices and customs, and magical qualities 'apparent in the uncanny presence' the state achieves in their everyday lives. For it to be mimicked in these conditions was 'not a sign of vulnerability but a mode of circulation through which power is produced' (Das 2004b, 245; Gupta 2012, 230).

The scene was lastly one vivid example of how home-based work destabilised the gendered distinction between a female domestic sphere and a male public sphere. Sadiq was working from home, surrounded by children who had to be cared for, domestic conflicts and neighbours who had come to discuss the fight. In his comment about men needing to focus on work echoed the longing for a simpler order, where gendered dichotomies of public and domestic would still apply. 'Worse comes to worse, long live the rickshaw!' he cried out as his wife described their descent into precariousness. 'Long live the rickshaw!' in Hindi *Rickshaw zindabad!'* from the slogan of India's freedom struggles 'long live India'. The comment evoked a common set of associations linked to the job of rickshaw driver—a job of last resort, harsh but in the open, masculine and free.[232] As much as the longing for a simpler gendered order, Sadiq's quote evokes the longing of an 'exit' (Hirschman 1970) on his own terms by a man pushed into adverse fringe markets for his work and his dwelling (Schaffer and Lamb 1974). His wife, in contrast, did not long for exit. The marriage had 'been trouble', but all she wanted was the baby to grow enough for her to start working again. For her, as for many women featuring in this chapter, the fall-back options (Gershuny, Bittman, and Brice 2005) were too bad to think of leaving, all she could do was to negotiate some additional leeway amidst the constraints.

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[232] For a literary take on this association: (Sethi 2012).

The above brings us back to the economic situation out of which many of the female behaviours we saw in previous sections emerged. Because men were destabilised as bread-earners, poorer women in the neighbourhood tried to cope by working or getting involved in the politics of basic service delivery. They did that in an environment where men were often underemployed or involved in home-based work. This opened possibilities for men and women to work together as Sadiq and Yasmin used to do before the birth of their last child. It also curtailed women's freedom to go about hiding and minimising their involvement in politics and paid work. Women like Yasmin had to compose with this continuous presence of their husband. For other women, like Sarah and Radha whose husband depended on casual work, the situation added a factor of unpredictability, one illustration of which is given below in the discussion about violence.

6.6 Anticipating Violence, Recalling Violence

Without any prompting, one in three women interviewed for the ethnographic component spoke of being exposed to violence from their husband or from other members of the extended family. Mentions of sexual violence in public spaces were even more widespread. What did this violence entail for women's temporal choices?

All women avoided leaving the lane after dark and they avoided leaving their house at night. In the winter, the man with his yellow slips held his meetings at 4PM instead of 5PM because women did not attend events that finished after dark.[233] Beyond these basic coordinates, the geography of violence could vary. Some women who lived a secluded life considered that the lanes of the neighbourhood were unsafe even during the day. Many more women considered that the wider city was a place where 'everything could happen' any time,[234] while those who stepped out of the neighbourhood to work or study considered that certain routes were safe during day time.

Such considerations about violence in public spaces were widespread and an obvious parameter of the coordinates of time and space that defined the geography of women's movements, but they did not loom as large as the threat of domestic violence in the words and behaviour of many women. While the existence of widespread domestic violence was not a surprise (IIPS 2016; Koenig et al. 2006), its prominence in women's answers contrasted with research that finds them minimising the problem (Rao 1998) or avoiding to discuss it in public for fear of compromising the reputation of their family (Naved et al. 2006; Snell-Rood 2015a, 68). Beyond exploring how such violence impacted women's temporal choices, the discussion therefore provides an opportunity to reflect on how the women I interacted with spoke about violence.

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[233] Madanpur Khadar, 9.10.2016.
[234] Madanpur Khadar, 25.10.2016.

Radha was one woman who experienced violence from her husband: 'I would go out knowing I'd get beaten up in the evening' she said about Action India's meetings.[235] 'At first, I did not say anything. I did not resist. I just kept on going. Then, I started playing a trick. If I had a meeting on the next day, I would tell him, the meeting was on the day after. The day after, I would tell him I am not going'. Eventually, the meetings became the new normal. By then, however, Radha's husband had lost his job and Radha wanted to take up work. Through contacts from Action India, she was offered to join a training program in a local dispensary, with the promise that it would lead to a placement in a rich patient's home in central Delhi. Again, violence marked the negotiation between spouses. 'At first, I said nothing, but eventually, I started arguing', Radha recalls. Nearly twenty years later, we can see a young her doing so in a documentary (Roy 2003): 'She used the safe space of the camera to have this conversation', the director recalled.[236]

Violence, in Radha's narrative, marked the boundaries of a gendered geography: she crossed a first boundary when joining a saving group, then another when joining the training program, and another when stepping out of the neighbourhood to start working. What this geography was about Radha made clear during one of our interactions. She drew the extremity of her blue sari over her face: 'We were all like that earlier',[237] she said from beneath the translucent veil that a moment later she pulled back onto her hair, sheepishly peering at us from below as she cried out with a resounding laugh: 'We are Kolis, you see!' The boundaries she renegotiated amidst violence where the boundaries of *purdah* (Kabeer 2000, 82). Violence in this depiction was predictable, and something Radha could have avoided by not joining the meetings or taking on work. She could try to trick her husband or use the 'safe space' of a camera.

The reality, however, was often different. One woman asked to cut short an interview: 'I don't know', she said, 'he might have been drinking, and he gets aggressive when he does'.[238] Two other women asked to meet in a neutral space for fear their husband could come back early. When Sarah spoke of how violence increased after her husband lost his job and started drinking, it was only partly linked to disputes about her work but otherwise nothing that followed a set pattern. Violence, in these situations was unpredictable and shaped by circumstances of the day. For many women, this unpredictability was compounded by their husbands' dependence on irregular casual work. As other situations shaped by unpredictability, violence kept women waiting and curtailed their movements much beyond the outbreak of violence or even the presence of their husband. For the women who found themselves guessing whether their husband had been drinking or would come back early, the inability to predict casted a shadow of lesser discretion that reached far beyond the actual moment of violence.

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[235] Sunder Nagri, 1.10.2016.

[236] Noida, 7.10.2016.

[237] Sunder Nagri, 20.9.2016.

[238] Madanpur Khadar, 9.9.2016.

In contrast, Radha's narrative above appears like the reconstruction of a continuous and predicable order. Whereas actual violence trapped women in a present of waiting and rushing, these narratives spoke of enduring a violence that could be predicted. Whereas above, violence undermined a women's discretion, these narratives spoke of reclaiming it over time, by enduring it first and later by opposing it. Radha's narrative was not just remarkable because of what it said, it was also striking because of where it took place. She was sitting in front of her small shop surrounded by the same group of neighbours who were with her when we met her in front of the MLA's office complaining about a clogged drain. Some two meters away was the bus stop where male travellers were waiting; there were male passer byes and male costumers who were also neighbours.

While Radha was speaking, we were joined by an elderly woman who turned out to be Deepa Koli, the former Action India community mobiliser who had encouraged Radha to join the saving groups nearly twenty years earlier. She lived in another part of Sunder Nagri but had come to pay a visit. After Radha, Deepa spoke about how she had endured violence from her mother-in-law, until: 'Something snapped in me', Deepa recalled, her arm knocking the air in the middle of the circle that had formed around her as she went on: 'I hit her again and again. I would have killed her, if they had not taken us apart'. While Deepa was breaking down in tears, Radha added: 'Killing was easy then'. A neighbour brought a glass of water to the one crying. Another neighbour stirred a fan around her head. Radha spoke again to describe how Deepa had intervened when her husband opposed her work.

In Radha's recollection above, violence marked the boundaries of a gendered landscape. In this gathering of women, the narration itself spilled over one such boundary separating the privacy of homes from the lane where men and women mixed. Violence was not endured alone. Instead its description and the recollection of solidarities that had emerged around this challenge founded interactions between Deepa, Radha and her neighbours.

This contrasts with Claire Snell-Rood's (2015b, 2015a) depiction of how women in another slum of Delhi deal with domestic violence. While there too, many women were seeking informal support from neighbours, most of them avoided spelling out domestic violence in public for fear it could reflect badly on their family. After reaching out to neighbours, they often broke ties with them and shut off even their closest friends when they felt judged by them. Safeguarding even strained family ties was more important for them than relationships with neighbours, which they depicted as having no significance for them (2015a, 67). Nor did neighbours always help each other. A group of Hindu neighbours never intervened to help one Muslim-born woman who had converted to Hinduism after remarrying (2015a, 69). Some took offence with her Muslim background, while others judged her for having remarried.

Several women in Sunder Nagri and Mandanpur Khadar were no less wary of their neighbours. When we asked whether they could get help from them, they answered: 'what do

neighbours care',[239] 'they are there when all goes well, but when you are in trouble, they disappear'.[240] Sarah was even more adamant: 'I am alone here', she said, before commenting that their relationship with their Hindu neighbours was strained.[241] In Sarah's case, as in the example depicted by Snell-Rood (2015a, 69), communal tensions were an additional cause of isolation. They made her doubly vulnerable because the fear of such tensions was a cause of conflict with her husband, and because these tensions left Sarah without the informal support of neighbours during conflicts with her husband.

What, then, explains the contrast with Deepa, Radha and the neighbours who brought water or stirred a fan? All of them were from the same Koli community, which might have helped bring them together. Beyond these caste affinities, however, it is probably not by chance that these women had all been socialised into the networks that emerged first around Action India and later around Parivartan. The scene above would be another example of how human solidarities can be strengthened by collective involvements and remain alive even when the interventions that supported such involvements have long since ceased to exist.

While these ties were exceptional, Deepa and Radha were not the only ones who spoke eloquently about the violence they faced. Sitting alone in her lane, Firdoz was no less articulate, and there were other women yet whose words about violence rang loud and precise. It might be worth asking to conclude whether the historical context might have played a role in these women's willingness to discuss violence. In 2012, the brutal gang rape and murder of a young woman in Delhi brought crowds into the streets. After that, gendered violence remained in the news, with more brutal crimes and more protests. Domestic violence featured in these debates when the committee appointed in the aftermath of the 2012 crime proposed a series of measures targeting both public and domestic crimes (J. S. Verma, Seth, and Subramanian 2013).

Situating these words in their historic context, one might ask, to conclude, whether a parallel does not apply with Veena Das' depiction of 'critical events' (2004a, 2007, 7). Critical events are, for her, moments whose disruption unfolds in ordinary lives, in the process lastingly transforming the ways of speaking, the practices and imaginations that define a nation's history. Most of the events she describes are traumatic moments of large-scale suffering and violence, among which partition, the anti-Sikh riots in Delhi and the Bhopal disaster. Not all, however, fall in this category, there is also the societal violence that was the killing of widows. For each of these, she traces how in 'critical' moments of the country's recent history practices and narratives shifted around norms and symbols that shape people's thinking about the world. Keeping proportions in mind, one might ask whether the narratives reported in this section might be an example of one such transformation. Everyday

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[239] Madanpur Khadar, 14.12.2016.
[240] Madanpur Khadar, 15.10.2016.
[241] Madanpur Khadar, 9.9.2016.

violence against women, which is often trivialised as a non-event and kept on the margins of public discussions would be crossing the boundary of domesticity and finding words in public in what perhaps history will recognise as a critical shift in how violence against women is considered and spoken about in India.

In the previous section we saw how, on the contrary, women resorted to hiding and minimising. From there to saying that by speaking out women challenged the gendered relations of power in which these tactics were rooted is just one step, all the more so when these words were spoken out by friends who had come together around Sunder Nagri's history of collective action. It was more complicated than this, however. Though vivid in the lane, these narratives found no institutional expedient to the conflicts they expressed. As a consequence, violence continued to shape the temporal choices of many women in two different ways. As a possibility that hung over their everyday lives, it was unpredictable and one more of those things that cast a shadow of reduced temporal discretion much beyond the moment of violence. When it was mediated in narratives, in contrast, it became predictable and it marked the boundaries of a gendered geography. For those who stepped across the boundary, it became part of a narrative of endurance.

6.7 Conclusion

Is it worthwhile? In this chapter again, the long hours women devoted to the everyday politics of basic service delivery seemed to challenge my premise, in which incentives to invest time were linked to how political parties integrate public accountability around services. Unlike in previous chapters, where the challenge came from unexpected locations and forms of politics, here it came from people constrained by gender, class and religious polarisation.

It was worthwhile for women to get involved because subsidised food and free water from the state were essential for the economy of many households. Everyday negotiations with service providers were the political facet of this particular economy, which was also an economy where men were underemployed or cornered into casual work. As women set out to argue with service providers and middlemen, the gendered distribution of roles and spaces was destabilised. Summing up, four main findings emerge from the discussion of how time featured in women's behaviours around basic services.

First, the chapter expanded on patterns of under and over-reporting observed in chapter four. It showed that women were the ones who under-reported the cost in time and opportunity of accessing food and water. The argument in chapter four about how residents integrate the constraints that undermine the value of their time primarily applied to them. Beyond temporal alienation, ethnographic evidence suggested that women also minimised and hid certain behaviours for tactical reasons. A façade of loyalty to gendered expectations concealed the reality of behaviours challenging

them. Alienation and resistance, in sum, became the two sides of the pattern of under-reporting discussed in this thesis.

Second, the chapter builds on the discussion about the temporal consequences of unpredictable basic service delivery in chapter four. It showed that women were most affected by the temporal regime of unpredictability and that the combination of irregular services and low wages also undermined their temporal discretion. Wages were too low to allow them to pay for less time-consuming private services and the irregular delivery of basic services prevented the transfer of burdens to male household members. Once again, ethnographic evidence nuanced this discussion when highlighting how, in spite of the many constraints, women reclaimed some freedom to go about their work, to join the meetings of an NGO or to attend a political rally. 'Beyond these weapons of the weak' (Kabeer, Sudarshan, and Milward 2013), it showed that women's involvement in accessing basic services could sometimes lead to collective actions aimed at transforming the government.

Third, the chapter showed that women were routinely interacting with the state, when describing their negotiations with service providers and middlemen. In contrast to research where such involvements in accessing basic services are described as unpaid work (Hirway and Jose 2011; Jain 1996), the chapter dwelled on their political meaning. In contrast to studies of everyday interactions with the state (Gupta 2012; Jeffrey and Lerche 2001; Witsoe 2013), it found that women's dealing with male service providers and middlemen are the most ordinary interactions between citizens and the state in Madanpur Khadar and Sunder Nagri, while men's interactions with male officials and politicians are occasional.

Fourth, the chapter reflects on the prominence of violence in how women spoke about their everyday lives. Because violence was unpredictable, its possibility cast a shadow of reduced discretion much beyond the moment of violence or even the presence of a violent husband. In their narratives, on the contrary, violence was predictable and something they could endure, resist or oppose. While these narratives about violence did not find an expedient to the conflict they spelled out, women's readiness to discuss the issue in public contrasted with the reluctance to speak out found by many other researchers (Naved et al. 2006; Snell-Rood 2015a, 68). One group of women who had stood by each other for many years was particularly remarkable. Because these women were also among those who had joined Action India and Parivartan, they appeared as one more example of how informal networks that develop around such interventions can have an empowering impact much beyond the interventions themselves.

'Just *timepass*', Radha in her shop, Sunder Nagri.

7 The Ballot as Burden of Proof

Neighbours from the main colony have warned us: the place is full of Bangladeshis, who have crossed into India illegally; it is a hotbed of crime and prostitution.[242] We are in the slum of Madanpur Khadar, in one of several clusters of shacks set around the large field of pale waste that serves as segregation site. It has rained the night before, a short spell, long since evaporated elsewhere, but in this pocket where garbage carts have cut deep trenches into the earth, the soil is still muddy and dark. Around us, the ten shacks are empty, their doors locked. Walking back to the field of pale waste, we notice a young man standing in the shadow of a low roof, looking at us.

'Are you alone?'

'Alone, others are in Assam'. He steps into the hazy light: 'For the elections'.

The elections in the Indian state located near the border with Bangladesh are three weeks away, but roughly 120 out of 300 huts are empty. Several more families are preparing to make the trip—a three-day journey each way for a reported cost of Rs 10,000 per household,[243] more than the average Rs 8,000 monthly income in the cluster. It is an astonishing investment of time and money for an act of citizenship, even more so for people who do not avail themselves of subsidised food, government healthcare and schools. The only government facilities they use are nearby water taps and roads on which they transport the waste they segregate for a living. Their commitment to vote is even more formidable considering that one common feature underlies the variety of individual trajectories: they are in Delhi to work hard in punishing conditions long enough to afford going back to their village.

'We have to vote', says the young man. Then he adds, his chin pulled back briskly: 'If we don't vote, people think we are Bangladeshis'.

'Would you go otherwise?'

He looks downwards and sideways towards the trenches of dark mud.

'Probably not. Just getting there takes three days, and it's so expensive. You have to understand'

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[242] Madanpur Khadar slum, 5.3.2016.
[243] Madanpur Khadar slum, 5.3.2016, 21.10.2016.

A slum cluster around a waste segregation site, Madanpur Khadar.

In a cluster across the field of waste, the leader of the All Assam Labour Union, Imtiaz Islam, has similar concerns:[244] 'The elections are coming, but I cannot make it'.

While speaking, he unties a cloth wrapped around his neck, uncovering a piece of white gauze patched over an unhealthy bulge.

'Our problem is that people take us for Bangladeshis. That's why we founded this organisation. When someone asks for help, we check electoral rolls. If we don't find the name, we inform the police'.

His eyes light up while he goes on explaining the network of contacts linking him to lawyers and political leaders; the favours received and given.

'What about transferring voter registrations to Delhi?'

'We should vote in the village, that's where we belong to'.

We probe, echoing complaints about the price of the trip: are administrative hurdles keeping them from changing their registration? Imtiaz looks exhausted suddenly. His eyes are blending into his frozen features as if something was pulling from beneath that gauze on his neck.

'We belong to the village, that's where we should vote'.

Later that year, returning to the slum after a few weeks' absence, [245] we find cardboard and plastic piled on the ashen soil where some 40 shacks had stood, among them the cluster where we met the young man who, alone in his family, had stayed back during the elections.

'What happened?'

'A fire', says a woman who is walking by.

'And the families who used to live here?'

She has moved on already, her hand raised, not knowing.

'Picked-up and sent to the border', says the old man we ask next, he too scarce of words and in a hurry.

We knock at Imtiaz's hut, hoping to learn something about the residents displaced by the fire, but Imtiaz has died of cancer. He has been buried nearby, without having seen the village one last time.

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[244] Madanpur Khadar slum, 4.3.2016.
[245] Madanpur Khadar slum, 15.09.2016.

Here, some 40 shacks used to stand before a fire burnt them to the ground.

Why do people who receive so little from the state invest such considerable time and money in the act of voting? More radically than any previous chapter, this question challenges my starting hypothesis in which the willingness to invest time in political processes was premised on a relation of accountability linking the governing and the governed around basic services. Already, we saw examples in which time was spent exactly where this relation came under strain. We saw people devoting long-hours to informal networks of power where formal channels of accountability failed to address their grievances. We saw them volunteering in political parties that did not campaign around services. Nowhere, however, was the disconnection as radical as among Madanpur Khadar's slum dwellers, for whom it was linked to a place of belonging that compromised their claims to citizenship. They were, referring once again to the dialogue between Hirschman (1970, 1974, 1981) and his critics (Schaffer and Lamb 1974), the excluded cornered into adverse outcomes and fringe markets.

Why do they deem it worth their time to vote? In the first part of the chapter, this question opens onto an exploration of the political landscape in which the act of voting takes place. We draw on literature in ethnography and related disciplines that conceptualises the margins not as the periphery of a centralising order, but as a space where practices of governance dictated by national concerns of sovereignty interact with human geographies that have their own history and organisation (Cons and Sanyal 2013; Donnan 2015; Johnson et al. 2011). In the fraught political landscapes that result from this interaction, the ballots feature as one of multiple practices of rule around which individuals and groups struggle to assert their belonging (Das and Poole 2004, 19–20; Fassin, Wilhelm-Solomon, and Segatti 2017, 167), their struggles ultimately shaping the human boundary between nationals and foreigners. We will explore how time features in the composite set of behaviours that slum dwellers deploy in response, sometimes exposing themselves to the state, sometimes hiding from it.

Why do they vote in the village, and what is this belonging asserted by even those who will never make it back? In the second part of this chapter, the question opens onto a discussion about temporal horizons. The memories and aspirations of slum dwellers is the starting point to explore the imagining of past and future implied by this term of belonging—with what consequences for their everyday behaviours, what trade-offs? In the answers of slum dwellers, we will hear how that arbitration between several competing longer-term horizons translates into an austere discipline of the labouring body. We will see how this discipline becomes the resistance slum dwellers oppose to the powerful forces that undermine their claims to citizenship and to life.

To conclude these introductory paragraphs, I want to acknowledge two major limitations of the discussion to come. First, the reader will soon realise that women in this chapter are largely absent, despite the fact that they too went back to vote in the village. In the slum, there were fewer women to start with, and access remained a problem throughout, partly because men were more than elsewhere reluctant to let us speak to their wives, partly because women themselves only spoke

Assamese and remained excessively word-shy even when I was assisted by someone who spoke their language. Of all clusters, Madanpur Khadar's slum was the one site where, as women researchers, we had less access to women than to men. Overcoming these constraints and exploring how the gender dynamics we experienced interacted with the political landscape described in this chapter would have been a topic of research in itself, with which I hope to engage in the future.

The second limitation is that I did not accompany Madanpur Khadar's slum dwellers on the journey to cast their ballot, something I also hope to explore in future research. In this chapter, however, the empirical evidence is limited to what the slum dwellers told about their voting practices, and to my observations about how the politics surrounding their vote played out in Madanpur Khadar. As in James Scott's 'hidden transcripts' (1990), we will listen to how slum dwellers adjust their answers to the starkly unequal relations of power in which they find themselves caught. Towards the end of the chapter, this first layer will give way to a second more elusive layer, unlike the first not dictated by external constraints, but by the subjective necessity for slum dwellers to cling on to a place of belonging far away from that field of pale waste where they lived and worked.

7.1 Ballots and the Impossible Border

The behaviours described in the opening scene cannot be separated from the politics of the two areas of Assam and Madanpur Khadar where the slum dwellers cast their votes and live. This section draws on literature about the politics of borderlands and margins to sketch out this landscape.

'Maps are a barred subject' on the Indo-Bangladesh border writes Ranabir Samaddara (1999, 109): officials willingly discuss the difficulty of enacting a frontier that is in fact 'no border at all' but a succession of 'interlocking ponds, canals and rice fields', but they turn defiant when asked about a map and defer to distant headquarter offices. For William Schendel, these restrictions 'point to an official politics of forgetting, an elaborate attempt to obliterate the contested origins and nature of the border' (Schendel 2005, 13). They are the symptom of 'a fear of national disunity and fragmentation that produces actions and policies that may in fact hasten precisely that very outcome' (Schendel 2005, 13).

The analysis is part of a larger strand of literature in which borders are understood as more than a line demarcating the periphery of a territory. They are spaces in which practices and institutions dictated by national concerns of sovereignty meet a reality that resists this ordering intention (Donnan 2015; Johnson et al. 2011).

Between India and Bangladesh, the difficulty of enforcing the border is compounded by history and geography, so much so that the 50-year existence of the frontier is in effect the chronicle of an impossible border. The 1947 line of demarcation runs through fertile land, whose older inhabitants mix with settlers from surrounding areas brought in by the British colonial power. In 1947, already, human mobility was well established in this land that was itself unsettled in parts by

the erosion of the Brahmaputra River. For decades, the status quo prevailed, even as attitudes in India shifted from welcoming the refugees of the 1971 war of independence in Bangladesh to hostility against those whom many Indian politicians then and now called 'infiltrators' (Schendel 2000). In Assam, demands to check immigration grew increasingly assertive until the early 1980s, when they peaked in widespread demonstrations and violent clashes, among which the massacre of more than 2000 Muslims in and around the village of Nellie in 1983. By 1985, the political champions of these demands to curb immigration and undo its recent history ruled over the state and obtained from India's federal authority an agreement that laid the foundations for the extradition of people who had crossed into India after the creation of Bangladesh in 1971.

Even then, however, establishing a person's belonging meant cutting through a dense fabric of social and economic interdependences based on records that were full of gaps. In Assam, a first and only national register in 1951 was widely seen as incomplete. Other documents such as passports, certificates of birth, education, or wedding were a scarce currency among large sections of society. The state, to echo James Scott (1998), did not have the instruments that would have allowed to 'see' how the border mapped onto populations. It did not help that the 1971 threshold forced a solution to this problem a posteriori, based on bureaucratic tools that had not been made for the purpose of demarcating populations.[246] Nor did it help, last but not least, that Bangladesh did not recognise as its own people those whose belonging was not attested to by documents.

Again, the status quo prevailed, while political polarisation around cross-border movements grew once again, after the largescale massacres of the early 1980s peaking again in a series of deadly incidents in the 2010s. By the 1990s, meanwhile, polarisation was spreading to mainland urban centres where it mixed with animosity against poorer migrants from inside India. With no response to the challenge of migration, still, Bengali-speaking Muslims became the target of widespread harassment and occasional violence; others were rounded up in so called 'push-back operations' only to be left stranded at the border after Bangladesh refused to recognise as its citizens the victims of what it considered to be 'push-in operations' (Schendel 2000, 46).

The border had become an intricate knot of bureaucratic powerlessness and political polarisation. For those caught in the knot, claims to citizenship became 'temporary, contextual and unstable arrangements' (Chatterjee 2008, 57), which needed to be constantly renegotiated with officials, politicians and powerbrokers—all those, in sum, who had a hand in the 'messy business of translating' (Gupta 2016, 346) between the idiom of borders and state sovereignty and the fluid social reality of borderlands. In ways that echo Didier Fassin's (2013) analysis about 'the precarious truth of asylum' in other parts of the world, judgments about the reliability of citizenship claims became the result of a negotiation. As in Fassin's depiction, suspicion coloured this negotiation, with the

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[246] On this gap between bureaucratic tools and reality: (Gupta 2012, 2016, 346).

result that the discrepancies on a voter list, a denunciation by neighbours or kin could compromise a person's claim.

In this knot of bureaucratic powerlessness and political polarisation, voter lists played a nodal role because they became a de facto register of population. Not that the voter lists were themselves viewed as reliable: powerbrokers were known to arrange votes on both sides of the border (Schendel 2005) and the common misspelling of names made it hard to link one person to an inscription on the register. Nevertheless, for poor people whose lives did not leave much of a paper trail, they were the only available proof of belonging.

As polarisation grew, so did the stakes around the voter lists. For the Borderlanders, they became an essential proof of citizenship. Authorities, meanwhile, from 1997 onwards adopted the bureaucratic practice of marking doubtful voters or 'D-voters'. Those who were marked as such lost their right to vote and their case was referred to a 'foreigner tribunal'. The situation took a new turn when a Supreme Court judgment (GOI 2005a) declared that the burden of proof would shift from the authorities who accused a person of being a foreigner to the accused. The judgment undid an older law that the federal government had passed for Assam alone, in a bid to protect residents of the state against the first wave of anti-migrant politics in the 1980s. Assam fell back under the Foreigners Act (GOI 1946) where the burden of proof fell onto those whose citizenship was at stake. In the polarised context, this shift took on a significance it did not have in the past. In the courts of exceptions, where they stood accused of being 'foreigners' people found themselves having to make their case based on lacunar paper work. For people least endowed with papers and connections, citizenship in Assam became a perpetual burden of proof, and the ballot became a means of last recourse to uphold fragile political rights.

It was in this context that a new Supreme Court judgment (GOI 2014) directed the Government of India to go ahead with updating the register of citizens, for which all residents of Assam would have to prove their belonging to India before 1971. From the beginning, suspicion shaped the bureaucratic process, and it did so increasingly as the process went ahead: soon, submitting documents was not enough anymore; applicants also had to fill family trees, which officials then compared in order to find people who had wrongfully claimed a link to an Indian resident they were not related to. A discrepancy between the family trees of kin or between occurrences on voter lists could lead to being removed from the register, which in turn could undermine the claims of other family members.

The process led to the publication of a first draft in August 2018, where the names of 4 million out of the 32 million people who had submitted papers were missing. Those who did not make it onto the list were given until 31 December 2018 to appeal and file new documents. By the closing of that time window, 1 million people who were not able to provide new documents found

themselves in a limbo of 'non-right', and the number was bound to increase with the publication of the final list.

No section of Assam's society was spared, but poor people were affected more than others because they had fewer papers. Women, among the poor, even more so, because they were more likely not to have documents, or even a registration with the local village council (Mander 2018). Muslims overall were worst off because, apart from being poorer than Hindus overall, they were also the primary targets of the political polarisation surrounding the exercise.

Bangladesh, however, stood by its refusal to recognise as its own anyone whose belonging could not be proven. The country's Prime Minister and its border officials repeatedly declared that their Indian counterparts had assured them that the process would not result in extraditions (Indian Express 2018). With no resolution in sight for the conundrum of Borderland belonging, those caught in the knot risked being stripped of the most basic rights in India rather than being expelled.

To conclude these few words about this borderland conundrum, a few reflections on the temporal implications of the above are in order. To feature on the national register of citizens, people had to prove their belonging to India for over forty years. Unlike in many other regions of the world, years spent on the national territory were not, in this case, proxies for integration, leading first to stable residency permits and eventually to a right to citizenship (Shapiro 2000). Instead, the impossibility of solving the administrative and political knot around cross-border movements inscribed this border's existence in a peculiar temporality. It turned citizenship into something that could not be acquired over time, but that a person had or not depending on whether his or her life was bound to the administrative and political origin of the nation-state. In a context where this administrative origin was itself full of gaps and illegible tracts, this imagination of an atemporal border, however, contrasted with the reality of a citizenship that was forever unstable.

It is not by chance, if we turn to the other side of this landscape, that some of the Borderlanders settled in Madanpur Khadar, which was itself set along the border demarcating the National Capital Territory of Delhi and the state of Uttar Pradesh. On this ground that until 1998 was farmland, real estate investments on land surrounding the resettlement colony met a patchy land register around which multiple disputes have emerged. Here too, albeit on a different scale, maps establishing claims over a territory were contested. On these grounds, contractors bribed the police into letting them set up segregation sites, which at all moments risked being destroyed by the police.

One such moment was the fire mentioned in the opening scene. We would learn later that the residents continued to live in their half-burnt shacks for a few weeks before the police tore down the remaining structures in response to complaints by neighbours, who protested their own exposure to the hazards of the waste business. Those who had lived in the shacks were not sent to the border, but they were left homeless. Many found an alternative dwelling on nearby disputed land, where leaky

walls of iron ceded to leakier walls of cardboard and plastic; a precarious fix ceded to a more precarious fix.

Here too, polarisation loomed large. In 2018, yet another fire burnt down a nearby slum, where some 200 Rohingya families had settled after another mediator arranged to host another group whose citizenship was compromised as a result of yet another violently contested attachment along that same eastern side of what was once the British empire. Just as media reports were declaring the fire to be accidental, a young man tweeted: 'Yes we burnt the houses of Rohingya terrorists' (NDTV 2018b). The man's twitter profile indicated an affiliation to the ruling party's youth wing. Accidental fires are frequent in places such as these and the young man might have been boasting sinisterly. Even so, identity and politics combine on these disputed lands in ways that added to the insecurity of families residing not just in the Rohingya cluster, but also in slum clusters around.

7.2 Claiming Citizenship from the Margins

'We have to vote'[247] went the standard response to strangers who enquired about the long and costly journey back to Assam. Soon, however, other answers followed, which reflected the political landscape above. 'We need to prove that we are Indians',[248] said one man after explaining that he had to demonstrate his grandfather's belonging to the country to satisfy bureaucrats involved in revising the register. 'If we don't vote once it's all right, but if we don't do it three or four times, it raises suspicion and we risk being removed from the voter list'. About transferring his registration to Delhi, he answered again: 'it would raise suspicion; and again: 'If I vote here and my wife's name is registered there, they might find it suspicious'.

Whose suspicion, we do not know for the time being, all we know is that for this man citizenship was an injunction to keep such lingering suspicions in check election after election. It demanded from him and others who took the trip back home that they be 'seen' by the state (Scott 1998) casting their votes. It was an imperative to abide strictly by the script of formal political citizenship amidst the overall obscurity of borderland belonging, all the more so because the script was itself compromised by the multiplication of fakes and copies.[249] 'I could have made two cards easily'[250] said an old man who had spent much of his life in a shack of Madanpur Khadar. 'But I would not have been able to use them, because it raises suspicion'. The orthodoxy of behaviours had to compensate for the tampering of the actual script.

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[247] Madanpur Khadar slum, 5.3.2016, 6.3.2016, 21.10.2016.
[248] Madanpur Khadar slum, 19.9.2016.
[249] On fakes in interactions with the state: (Das 2004b, 245; Gupta 2012, 228; Srivastava 2012).
[250] Madanpur Khadar slum, 6.3.2016.

Such strategies of intentional exposure to the state applied selectively, however. Only a handful of residents had registered their whereabouts in Delhi. The so-called 'protection money'[251] paid by the contractors was also a way to ensure the police's selective blindness. By renouncing public services, residents turned this cultivated invisibility into an avoidance of the government for all matters pertaining to their everyday life. Again, Scott's discussion of people eluding the state comes to mind. Unlike the highlands of his *Art of Not Being Governed* (2009), where remoteness has allowed strategies of avoidance to settle into social organisations over centuries, such strategies applied in Madanpur Khadar to the interstices of a system of governance that was marginalising residents. With this composite space came a composite set of strategies that had slum dwellers exposing themselves to the state while voting, even as they avoided its everyday governance.

In all of these strategies, powerbrokers played a role that once again echoes descriptions about how intermediaries facilitate an attachment to one side or the other of practices and institutions demarcating populations in literature on borderlands (Cons and Sanyal 2013). Five contractors were each responsible for one sub-cluster around the waste segregation site. They rented the land, bribed the police, bought waste from the slum dwellers, sold it in bulk, served as bank for their workers when they kept their meagre saving and lent them money. 'He used to get Rs 20,000 for our vote',[252] said late Imtiaz about his contractor, later adding: 'I told our MLA that the trip was expensive for us. He said he would pay if I got 50,000 people to sign a plea. But who can get that number?' Though the negotiation was unsuccessful in this case, the comments show how residents used their vote to negotiate some limited advantages. They also illustrate the multiple intermediaries involved: contractors, politicians in Assam and, if Imtiaz is to be believed, politicians close to the former Chief Minister of Delhi.

Beyond this, Imtiaz's interview shows how the politics of belonging shaped interactions in the slum. He seemed to have played a role in organising the vote bank, which he then negotiated with powerbrokers. Several contractors came from the same village as their workers, and they too played a role in this negotiation. More broadly, the act of voting cannot be separated from the dense social and economic ties connecting the village and the slum. Somewhat like a wedding or a burial, it was part of a set of exchanges that bound together the group. Many slum dwellers sent money to family members in the village. They had claims on resources in the village, as a respondent's reference to land his family had to sell will illustrate in the next section. Land, in particular, is known to play a central role in the politics of borderlands, where poor people in fertile areas are being displaced by better-off newcomers (Schendel 2000, 32). When the slum dwellers added, after relating that voting was an obligation for them, 'that way, I get to see my family'[253], they spelled out an emotional attachment, but they also spelled out economic interdependences.

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[251] Site supervisor, Madannpur slum, 15.9.2016.

[252] Madanpur Khadar slum, 4.3.2016.

[253] Madanpur Khadar slum, 19.9.2016.

One other aspect that surfaces in Imtiaz' answer is how the divisions surrounding the border permeated the group of slum dwellers. When the All Assam Labour Union denounced people because they did not feature on voter lists, a constituted sub-group acted as enforcer of a separation that outsiders failed to achieve. The situation appears even more complicated when considering that the four members of Imtiaz' family included in the initial survey reported not having a voter card. Informally, Imtiaz told us that none of the 18 people of his extended family had gone back to vote in the last election. Many residents had lost their papers in a fire that burnt the area to the ground in 2015. While some families had since managed to make new documents, all complained about the difficulty of doing so. Whether Imtiaz's situation reflects how easily a person living in these conditions can lose the status of citizen or how non-citizens protect themselves, I would not venture to guess. As far as tactics go, however, this example shows that, for established sub-groups, denouncing others can be a means to protect their own compromised citizenship.

In light of the above, the answer to my initial inquiry about why slum dwellers went back to vote appears to be driven by the threat of losing one's claim to citizenship.[254] Against this threat, the voter card might not have offered a full protection, but it was the best available one barring the mediation of powerbrokers. Around the journey back to Assam, moreover, the slum dwellers' interest in upholding their citizenship converged with the interest of powerbrokers who had a stake in their votes. For those who did not vote, these same powerbrokers could turn into threats. This last aspect answers a question left hanging about the lingering fear of raising suspicion that surfaces in two quotes above. Here, we understand that this fear was sustained by a multiplicity of individuals—clients and patrons, neighbours in Delhi and in the village, officials from the police and other departments—all of whom had some stake in the borderland votes and could turn against those who did not cast their ballot.

The composite set of strategies with which slum dwellers responded to this situation had a price. Most immediately, they imposed a compulsion to invest time and money in the journey back home to vote with no entitlements in return. They meant accepting the commitments of political citizenship without claiming the social and economic entitlements of full citizenship (Marshall 1992).[255] It was a citizenship of extraordinary political responsibilities and less than ordinary entitlements, and it was a citizenship that even in this minimal political application was never acquired once and for all. This also meant that the slum dweller's situation never really stabilised over time, unlike in Sunder Nagri's slum, whose residents also did not start with stable rights to a dwelling in the city, but whose basic political citizenship was guaranteed. In Madanpur Khadar's slum, even the

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[254] On another case of voting as compulsion among slum dwellers: (Das and Walton 2015, 53).

[255] For a few entry points into literature on substantial citizenship in the wake of Thomas Humphrey Marshall's (1992) claim that modern citizenship cannot dissociate political and civil rights from social entitlements: (Butler and Spivak 2007; Isin and Wood 1999; Kabeer 2006).

most established residents could see the limited stability they managed to negotiate fall apart after a fire, a complaint from neighbours or political pressures.

Making the link with Hirschman (1970) once again, we understand that in the political landscape emerging around the impossible border, casting a ballot turned into something more ambivalent than merely engaging in an act of 'voice'. For Hirschman, each term of the triad is a reaction to deteriorating services. In contrast, 'voice' is for Madanpur Khadar's slum dwellers not about any service but about upholding a minimal political citizenship. The difference between 'voice' and 'loyalty' blurs in this case, even as a costly display of both 'voice' and 'loyalty' becomes a condition of inclusion (Schaffer and Lamb 1974).

Pausing on the empirical material above for a moment longer, we can make two additional comments in line with literature that conceptualises the margins of the state not as peripheries of a centralising order but as territories where mainstream political concerns meet complex human realities (Das and Poole 2004, 19–20; Fassin, Wilhelm-Solomon, and Segatti 2017, 167). First, we can complete an observation made in the previous section about how the ballot box was a space around which Borderlanders struggled to uphold their citizenship. The examples above turned the politics around the ballot box into the site where the human boundary between nationals and foreigners was being negotiated. The slum dwellers influenced the outcomes of this negotiation when they voted or denounced others. The boundary became the result of an interaction: it was imposed on Borderlanders, but its contours were ultimately defined by the Borderlanders' tactics.

The second observation that can be made is that, though the slum dwellers were marginalised, the politics they found themselves engulfed in were not marginal—they involved mainstream actors and they raised a question of sovereignty that was key to India's national politics. The margins became the playing ground of mainstream politics, with dire consequences for those who found themselves in this ambivalent space where margins and mainstream were interwoven. Tying together the two observations, the margins became this site where national politics met the tactics of those ascribed to the margin in a negotiation that resulted in a section of that 'blurred boundary' (Gupta 1995) that constitutes the state's frontiers around India's borderlands.

7.3 Costly Choices and Impossible Belongings

In the opening scene, we heard Imtiaz saying: 'We belong to the village, that's where we should vote'[256]. He was not alone in emphasising this belonging. Often, the few words spelling out this belonging to the village were followed by a reference to the horizon of a return: 'Two years, and I want to be gone',[257] said Faisan Wadut, who will feature prominently in the second half of this

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[256] Madanpur Khadar slum, 4.3.2016.
[257] Madanpur Khadar slum, 13.11.2016.

chapter. Like Imtiaz who never made it back, Faisan would eventually admit: 'How can we go back if we don't have money?'[258] Many others who spoke of an imminent return held debts they needed to pay back before leaving. What, then, does this assertion of belonging entail?

Already, we saw that it involved relations of kinship, interdependence and the competition over scarce resources, but the village was also something more intimate, which linked present behaviour with memories and aspirations. The first time we met Faisan, he reported briefly about how he came to Delhi after his father's death plunged the family into poverty: 'That's my story', he concluded. 'As soon as I have enough money to set up a stall, I am leaving. Two years and I want to be gone'.[259] Over the coming months, he would narrate the childhood in the village where 'there was space and air'[260]; then hunger after his father's death, which forced him out of school. He recalled the rough first seven years in Delhi, when he slept on pathways, and how three years earlier he had finally found a shelter in Madanpur Khadar, as well as his modest 'beat'[261] —seven well-off houses whose waste he picked up and sorted.

In Faisan's story, the village was idealised as the place 'where there is space and air' and as the goal of his striving, but it was also a place he was forced to leave. The trajectory itself, however, was free from these ambivalences: it involved a sense of purpose framed by neat markers of time. From this perspective, the decision not to transfer the voter registration was part of the hardship endured in the expectation of a return. This neat temporal horizon evolved around a present in which time and money were scrupulously counted:[262]

> 'I make a fixed amount of Rs 2500 to Rs 3000 from the beat. The tips get me to Rs 7000. Then I make between Rs 4000 and Rs 4500 every second month when selling waste in bulk. I leave at 5 AM. It takes me 2 hours to get there pulling my cart, then I work for 3 or 4 hours. I take 1 hour of rest, then I work 3 more hours, perhaps 2 now that days have become short. On my way back, I stop at a temple where I can get cool water for 5 minutes. I take Sundays off. The body has to rest, no?'

Money made on a good day. Money lost to a necessary day of rest: all of this was part of a minutely calculated economy pegged to the plan of going back. Only, in later interviews, this harsh

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[258] Madanpur Khadar slum, 17.11.2016.

[259] Madanpur Khadar slum, 6.3.2016.

[260] Madanpur Khadar slum, 17.10.2016,

[261] On this informal waste economy: (Beall 2006; Gill 2012).

[262] Madanpur Khadar slum, 21.10.2016.

but hopeful equilibrium ceded to a more desperate reality. 'All of us in the slum were ill',[263] said Faisan about the strain of malaria-like fever that affected Delhi during the monsoon. He was not alone in saying so, nor was the situation exceptional: without sewage system, the slum was exposed year after year. 'The family spent Rs 10,000 on medicine',[264] Faisan explained, while some of his neighbours quoted amounts that could be as high as Rs 50,000, more than six times the average monthly income in the slum.[265]

About half of all families interviewed for the survey reported having a pending loan, which in most cases was held by the contractor. The amounts they quoted were as vague as they were substantial—between Rs 30,000 and Rs 1700,000.[266] Upon probing, however, these amounts became uncertain. More than once, respondents quoted a total figure that differed widely from the break up given afterwards. Contractors and site supervisors, meanwhile, put the figure much lower: 'Rs 4000, at the most' said one contractor. 'We don't give them more, because they can't pay back'.[267] Whether the slum dwellers really had lost track, or the contractor minimised figures to avoid appearing to be binding his workers, I do not know. Either way, this slide into uncertainty compromised the perspective of a return.

The terrible paradox was that these loans were primarily contracted to pay for basic services that the government provided much cheaper. Free healthcare in India is one of the entitlements of full citizenship. While the reality in much of the country is different, Madanpur Khadar had, at the time of the research, just seen the inauguration of a dispensary where residents of the resettlement colony were receiving free treatment for basic healthcare including waterborne diseases.

Unlike for subsidised food, accessing healthcare would not have required registering in Delhi. What the law did not prevent, however, the political and social determinants of their borderland belonging did. Discrimination by dispensary staff or residents from the neighbouring colony might have played a role, but it did not surface in interviews. What did surface, in contrast, was the contractor's influence in directing them to a private doctor. 'They would just make them wait and run around',[268] a site supervisor said about government health facilities. Under the solicitude, the conflict of interest loomed large. The less time the slum dwellers spent waiting for healthcare, the more waste they could sell to him, the more money he made out of the piece of land he rented. Besides, debt as long as it remained low, was an effective way of stabilising his workforce.[269] Contrary

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[263] Madanpur Khadar slum, 17.10.2016.

[264] Madanpur Khadar slum, 17.10.2016.

[265] Madanpur Khadar slum, 21.10.2016, 13.11.2016.

[266] Madanpur Khadar slum, 6.3.2016, 21.10.2016, 13.11.2016.

[267] Madanpur Khadar slum, 17.10.2016, 16.11.2016.

[268] Madanpur Khadar slum, 16.11.2016.

[269] Asking whether this amounts to bound labour would be relevant, but beyond the scope of this chapter. For the discussion on contemporary unfree labour in India: (Breman 2007; Lerche 1995).

to the journey back to vote, the interest of the contractor clashed in this case with the workers' aspiration to go back home.

As Kaveri Gill (2012) has argued in her study of the informal recycling business in Delhi, their situation could not be reduced to exploitative contractors, but was rooted in a larger landscape of discrimination and deprivation. Neither were the slum pockets, for all their harshness, the worst place to be in this adverse landscape. Faisan was worse off before he found a place in the slum, as were the families displaced by the fire. It is striking, furthermore, that in purely monetary terms, the difference between the average per capita income in the slum and in the neighbouring resettlement colony, at Rs 1733 and Rs 2848 per month respectively, hardly seemed to reflect the stark difference of life chances. In the slum, families were trapped in a downward spiral of impoverishment, debt and illness despite working full time, which is a stark denunciation of a political citizenship of obligation severed from the social and economic aspects that create a level field for all.[270]

Coming back to Hirschman once again, the price paid by the slum dwellers for having to renounce the substantial entitlements of citizenship invites us to reflect on the term 'exit'. On the surface, the above appears to exemplify a case Hirschman's subsequent essays (1974, 1981) would describe as a gap in the first book (1970), where 'exit' is the less burdensome option available to people who can afford it. 'Exit', he would emphasise in his later essays could itself come at a cost that far exceeded monetary aspects.

More fundamentally, however, the condition of the slum dwellers arguably exemplifies another aspect that even these later texts do not develop, namely the threat of exclusion. Quite simply, a person needs first to have access to a service in order to be able to respond to its shortfalls. When failing to consider this fact, we do not only lose sight of the fate of people excluded from these entitlements, we also lose sight of how the threat of exclusion shapes the response of people who are precariously included. The slum dwellers' voting to uphold their citizenship is an example of how the threat of exclusion prompts a costly behaviour that blurs the two categories of 'voice' and 'loyalty'. Their being pushed into 'exiting' the entitlements of full citizenship is another example of how this threat can corner people into what other researchers who have raised the same objection have termed

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[270] Perhaps, one could add, extrapolating beyond this specific example, that we should cautious when emphasising the self-reliance of vulnerable migrant populations as is now frequent in policy debates about forced displacement (UNHCR 2016, 71; World Bank 2016, 89–94). While the idea of allowing displaced people to work can hardly be objected to, the discussion in this chapter shows the many challenges raised by its real-world application. It shows how easily, without the safeguard of substantial citizenship, these populations can be cornered into predatory forms of work that let them toil without even sufficient returns to avert a trap of debt and impoverishment for them and their children. The hateful tweet by a BJP youth leader claiming responsibility for a fire that burnt down one slum cluster also drives home just how easily the lives and work of these populations can become the target of polarising politics. While these examples do not question the advantage of lifting obstacles preventing displaced populations from working, they drive home the limitations of an approach where the focus on generating work would not be coupled with a focus on preventing conflicts with host populations and exploitation for migrants. At a time when actors as powerful as the World Bank are taking a position on supporting access to work for the forcibly displaced, this also calls for a lot more research on the conditions in which such programmes are or not a cause of conflict and exploitation.

a 'degraded exit' (Schaffer and Lamb 1974, 87). In both cases, the possibility of exclusion influences how the three terms of Hirschman's triad present themselves to the person, in ways that greatly increase the cost associated to each of them.

For the slum dwellers of Madanpur Khadar, one of the prices paid for this situation was the perspective of a return. When we met him last, Faisan expressed this distressing reality: 'I don't have plans to go back. I would like to. But we don't have money'.[271] Soon, however, he came back to the first version, about his voter registration saying: 'What would I get from transferring it? I do not have anything here'. Among the few who did not cling onto this version, lucidity ceded to despair, as for this man who said about his daughter: 'She is eight, but I don't know if she will live long enough to marry'.[272] Despair, in this case, was also a shrinking of temporal horizons.

Perhaps, one could add to this a note about narratives of the past. 'That's my story',[273] said Faisan after summing up his life in a few words the first time we met him. If Faisan is quoted so extensively, it is because he was one of the few who did not stick to this initial conciseness. Most other people remained word-scarce in ways that contrasted with the resettlement colony. There, summing up a life could take more than an hour in a first interaction and expand much beyond in a second or third encounter. In the slums of Madanpur Khadar, in contrast, evoking a life often took just ten to fifteen minutes: it was a series of losses, the arrival and the hope of a return. Partly, this conciseness might have been linked to a caution towards strangers, whom they had good reasons to distrust. Yet, the scarcity remained even as we stayed on and interactions grew cordial. Mere caution, therefore, hardly seems enough to explain the compactness of these narratives.

To interpret this contrast, I can do little more than tentatively point to the fact that the shortest narratives were also the ones made by the most vulnerable narrators. In the resettlement colony, lives were anchored in a house furnished with scarce but nevertheless private objects. People had documents attesting to their inclusion in the nation-state and their right to vote. Nothing in Madanpur Khadar's slum played this stabilising role, except the slum residents' own human community linking them to the village. Their dwellings were too precarious to anchor them in a place as was the motley collection of usable waste items with which they furnished their houses. Documents were few and prone to burning in repeated fires. They lived in Delhi, hiding from the state, far away from the place where they were voting. The contrast between the short narratives in the slum and the longer ones in the resettlement colony would, if I am right to make this link, express the fact that, like the 'capacity to aspire' (Appadurai 2004), the capacity to narrate the past is not equally distributed in society. Just like envisioning the future, gathering life events in a personal

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[271] Madanpur Khadar slum, 17.11.2016.
[272] Madanpur Khadar slum, 7.3.2016.
[273] Madanpur Khadar slum, 6.3.2016.

trajectory of struggles and becoming has to be practiced in order to thrive, which cannot be done without a minimum of stability and recognition.

When Faisan said 'Why should I transfer my registration?'[274] he might have simply been expressing the necessity to cling onto a place of belonging, far away from this field of pale waste where he lived and worked. Rather than the perspective of a return, the village was in this response a 'horizon of hope' (Appadurai 2004, 75) linking the longer term perspective of an idealised past and of a likeable future. The terrible paradox was that the attachment to the village was a necessity to maintain a sense of purpose, but the price for this attachment was such that it compromised the perspective of a return. All of this, for a village Faisan and others in the slum were forced to leave and which ascribed them an identity that undermined their life chances. The impossibility of citizenship and the composite behaviours that responded to this condition in the previous section are here echoed by a conundrum of belonging.

7.4 Embodied Ethos of the Labourer and Politics of Last Resort

The above should not reduce the slum dwellers to mere victims of an impossible belonging. Much of this chapter, in fact, was about how they resisted marginalisation. In this final section, I want to develop this aspect around references to the body that surfaced in the slum dwellers' responses. In doing so, I will borrow a question Veena Das and Deborah Poole ask about people evolving in the margins of the state: how do their behaviours result 'in "forms of life"[275] through which ideas of subjects and citizens emerge' (2004, 16)?

The focus speaks to a tradition where sovereignty is understood as governance over life and death. Whereas in earlier sections, slum dwellers evolved around practices of governance delimiting a territory and a population, the stakes shift in this section to practices that allow or not their lives. While the situation described in this paper spontaneously evokes Giorigio Agamben's (1998) widely quoted political category of 'bare life', or life deemed killable because stripped of the protection of laws that would turn its killing into a murder or a sacrifice, I find little space in his writing to understand the everyday resistances that feature in the pages to come.[276] More than Agamben's, they evoke Michel Foucault's discussion of the body as a site where the governance of laws and the self-governance of the subject interact with conceptions about what kind of life is worth engaging in (1998a, 1998b).

In Faisan's routine, the body's need for rest claimed one day every week and several precisely counted moments during his workday. Younger neighbours took off one day every second week.

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[274] Madanpur Khadar slum, 17.11.2016.

[275] The notion of 'forms of life' is taken from Ludwig Wittgenstein (2003). For a discussion of this philosophical background, see: (Das 2017; Fassin, Wilhelm-Solomon, and Segatti 2017).

[276] For similar reservations, see: (Butler and Spivak 2007, 42; Das and Poole 2004, 27; Gupta 2016, 349).

Labour is nothing but human time, writes Karl Polanyi (2001, 72). It becomes a fictitious commodity when this fundamental reality is forgotten, and labour taken for granted. For the waste pickers of Madanpur Khadar, the fiction did not hide the underlying reality. Labour, one might add, was embodied time, with its biological possibilities and constraints. For the slum dwellers, this biology imposed a constant arbitration between the rest required to endure gruelling work and the perspective of buying themselves out of the slum. When Faisan and his neighbours stressed the routine arbitration between these horizons, they situated the act of choosing at the heart of their everyday life. Temporal choices translated into an austere discipline that required giving just enough to the body for it to keep going, but as little as possible to avoid compromising the prospect of a return. It was, in sum, an embodied discipline of patience.

This discipline was pegged to a conception of the subject that emphasised its autonomy amidst adversity. Whereas for Polanyi,[277] the disciplining of human time into labour is achieved through the state's forceful intervention, for the slum dwellers of Madanpur Khadar it is part of an imagination of self-employment. 'No, self-employed',[278] they insisted when initially we probed, unsure about how to define their relation to the contractor. This identification came with an emphasis on self-reliance, which contrasted with expectations towards the state in the neighbouring colony. Asked about what they expect from the government, many said 'nothing', and 7 out of the 67 respondents to the survey said: 'Why should they give us anything, we are not from Delhi?'[279] Similarly, when asked whether a mosque that had distributed food after the fire in 2015 still helped, Faisan answered: 'Why should they? We work. We can take care of ourselves'.[280] Faisan's brother, who alone in the cluster stated his preference for staying in Delhi added: 'I am free here. Say I want to work at night. No one will bother. If I do it in the village, they will start saying that I am a thief'. His freedom to choose when to work or rest became part of a larger ethos linking work and autonomy.

This emphasis applied even as residents stressed 'no one who has a choice comes here'.[281] It was self-reliance amidst adversity centred on the routine practice of choosing how to balance priorities. As individuals engaging in an austere rationalisation of their own work-force participation to serve the long-term aim of a return to the village, the slum dwellers practiced and spelled out a conception that was closer to the perfect rational economic ideal than any other group I came across in the research. The fact that precisely this group was falling into a trap of debt and pauperisation is yet another denunciation of a conception that does not link the entrepreneurship of the poor to the protective entitlements of full citizenship.

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[277] Also see: (Engels and Marx 1950; Harvey 1985).

[278] Madanpur Khadar slum, 4.3.2016, 5.3.2016.

[279] See chapter 4, section one, p. 83.

[280] Madanpur Khadar slum, 13.11.2016.

[281] Madanpur Khadar slum, 13.11.2016.

In Appadurai's discussion of slum residents in Mumbai coming together to secure their dwelling, the house is the focus of a patience defined as their 'biggest weapon' (2004, 81). Madanpur Khadar's shacks were too precarious to play this role. Instead, the working body became the focus of patience. As previously, however, the harsh equilibrium ceded to a more distressing reality: in the slum, the dice of time were loaded against patience. Faisan again:[282]

'How old do you think I am?' he asks, his eyes narrowing into a line.

'I don't know'.

'Tell me' he insists staring at us for an uncomfortable moment longer while neighbours look on silently.

'I am 40'.

Again, he pauses, his eyes sharply set on us, before he finally looks away, smiling: 'I look a lot older, isn't it? This work is harsh on us. My skin and my body have become the skin and body of an old man. You should have seen me before. I looked different. Sometimes, my leg hurts so much that I can't go out to work'.

He pauses, patting the hair of a small girl: 'It's all right for me to be here. It's my life and I make some money. But it's hard to see the children. Their future lies ahead after all, and it's wasted here. They do not get anything out of being here. They do not go to school'.

Later, yet: 'All I want is to keep healthy, and make sure my two daughters get married into good houses'.

If work is time embodied in human flesh, then in the slum time races faster than elsewhere. Already, we saw how diseases played into this adverse economy. In this interaction, we see that independently of these shocks, the dice of time are loaded against patience. Above, the body became the focus of a strategic patience of last resort. Here, we are reminded that the body also exposes the marks of time in ways inert objects such as the house of Appadurai's discussion do not. Between the person who engages in patience and the price of this patience, the house introduces an intermediary. It allows focusing on the potential benefits without being constantly reminded of the cost. When the body is the focus of patience, this mediation is lost. The object of patience becomes the mirror of the passing of time, all the more unsparing because the harshness of the environment accelerates the race of a lifetime.

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[282] Madanpur Khadar slum, 21.10.2016.

There is something distinctly tragic in the concentration of these temporal stakes around one embodied subject. It is tragic in the sense that the situation combines many of the characteristics that an aesthetic tradition has attached to the word tragic.[283] We have a losing dilemma where death is at stake, a plot stripped from all diversions, and the lucidity resulting from this concentration—the difference, of course, being that for the aesthetic tradition, the lucidity resulting from this combination is the one of the spectator mediated through a representation. In Faisan's quote, the stakes are yet more concentrated: the loosing dilemma where death is at stake is a real-world one; the body is the mirror of the protagonist; it is Faisan's own lucidity we are witness to.

These existential stakes opened onto larger ethical stakes, which are powerfully expressed by Faisan's speaking as a father: 'It's hard to see the children. Their future lies ahead after all, and it's wasted here', he was quoted saying above. 'All I want is to keep healthy, and make sure my two daughters get married into good houses'. The children's future becomes the price paid for the time Faisan spends in the slum working as waste picker. It is a sobering counter-horizon to the aspiration of a return to the village. Again, the labouring body and the discipline required to 'keep healthy'[284] against the odds are key to this arbitration. Keeping healthy for Faisan is the condition for not replicating in the life of his children the shock that led him to the slum after his father's death. When it is a way to make sure that the two daughters get married into good houses, it becomes the condition to achieve what, in his culture, is the major responsibility of a father. The discipline of the working body is also the embodiment of an ethos of human dignity amidst adversity.

One could go further and ask whether this stance does not imply a claim to a positive belonging beyond the village. 'The city would not be able to cope without us',[285] said workers and contractors alike. This comment was associated with a spatial metaphor that situated the slum dwellers at the very heart of India's capital: 'see, the entire city ends up here', they said pointing to the waste around.[286] Walking through the heaps, it really felt like the intimacy of Delhi's rich and powerful stood exposed. Here, the foot stumbled over a torn handbag. Elsewhere, it was a broken doll or the stained plastic plates and cups of some banquet. The impression was all the more striking that items entered the shacks: 'We don't buy anything here'[287], Faisan explained before detailing how he had found his television and cooler. This spatial metaphor and the labourer's service to the city were part of a set of associations people in the slum opposed to dehumanising stereotypes associated with their identity as Borderlanders, Muslims and waste pickers. Faisan again:[288]

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[283] In a tradition that links the genre with knowledge (Aristotle 1987, 350–60).

[284] Madanpur Khadar slum, 21.10.2016.

[285] Madanpur Khadar slum: 5.3.2016, 17.11.2016; contractor and supervisor, 15.09.2016, 16.11.2016.

[286] Madanpur Khadar slum, 6.3.2016.

[287] Madanpur Khadar slum, 21.10.2016.

[288] Madanpur Khadar slum, 21.10.2016.

'Some fellow Muslims tell me you should not do this work, it's for *banghis*
[a dismissive reference to a Hindu caste of sweepers]. But why shouldn't I, if I need
it? The work I do, you couldn't do; the work you do I couldn't do. If I do this work,
it's because I am a labourer. Someone has to do it, or there will be no development'.

Here again, his response to being deprecated involves an emphasis on self-reliance amidst poverty, his identity as labourer and his role in the development of the country. For Faisan to speak of development was also a way of extracting himself from the condition that trapped him in 'the tyranny of emergency' (Appadurai 2001, 30; Bindé 2000, 52), and claim a stake in the collective future of the nation.

One could go further and point at the wider political resonance of this word of development: 'All together, development for all', went the campaign slogan that led Narendra Modi's BJP to a resounding victory in the 2014 general elections. The same Hindu nationalist BJP had since stoked feelings against Muslims in general and against 'Bengali infiltrators' in particular (NDTV 2018a). For Faisan to claim a role in the country's development was also a way to resist this politics. More broadly, the discipline of the labouring body became a resistance to the kind of politics that refused him a place in this country and made his life impossible.

'Delhi is the capital of all Indians', Faisan said that same day: 'We have a right to be here. We are Indians after all'.[289] In this quote, note the 'we', which turns this into a collective claim towards the Indian state and a political stance (Procupez 2015, 64). This assertion of belonging was linked in Faisan's words with an emphasis on how he too had learnt Hindi because being an Indian, he had to know his own country's dominant idiom. It was not the minimal claim of people who merely wanted an access to a work-market, but the assertion that they too were part of the wider community of the nation.

Nowhere, perhaps was this ambivalent attachment made of fear and pride as striking as in the woman displaced by a fire, whom we met one day as she was picking up the decomposing waste of Madanpur Khadar's main colony. 'I am Indian', she said quietly as people around pitched in: 'don't bother, she is not from here, she doesn't speak Hindi',[290] and then again as people around spoke louder: 'I am Indian, from Assam, I can show you my voter card', again and again.

'Still, I want to show it to you',[291] she said a few days later when we met her at her shack, her voice louder now and adamant despite our insistence that we were not there to check her identity. 'I work for the Municipal Corporation', she went on with a tenacious smile, only when she had shown

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[289] Madanpur Khadar slum, 21.10.2016.
[290] Madanpur Khadar slum, 4.11.2016.
[291] Madanpur Khadar slum, 7.11.2016.

us the document and taken out the uniform she had received from the person sub-contracting work to her speaking about how she had ended up in Madanpur Khadar—the death of her husband, the fights with the in-laws, the escape with her two children, the police displacing her after the fire. With no contractor and an income of Rs 1500, she was poorer than any other person I came across. In spite of this, her voice as she showed us the card and the uniform, sounded like a claim.

This interpretation speaks to the same strand of studies that emphasise the political stakes involved in claims about everyday needs already quoted in the chapter on women and the everyday state. Veena Das and co-authors (Das 2011; Das and Randeria 2015, 4; Das and Walton 2015, 52) distance themselves from the distinction Hannah Arendt (2006, 41–105) makes between a politics of freedom that can only be engaged with once basic needs are satisfied, and the impulse of necessity that drives the poor. In the slums of Madanpur Khadar, in contrast, the act of voting is rooted in compulsion, while the survival as workers opens onto an expression of freedom followed by an assertion of belonging. Perhaps it is worth making yet another connection with the literature in chapter five and note just how far we are here from Mukulika Banerjee's (2014) depiction of elections as great levelling moments where social hierarchies cede to the arithmetic of one vote one person. While voting behaviours are a response to compulsion, the very hierarchic field of livelihoods paradoxically establishes a positive claim of belonging to the nation.

Let me note, to conclude, that a thin line separates the fragile positive claim from the compulsion that dominated other sections. When the All Assam Labour Union denounced people who did not feature on electoral lists, the divisions that surrounded the slum dwellers' claims to citizenship subverted an organisation whose stated aim was to defend the identity of labourer, which Faisan used to assert his contribution to the nation. More fundamentally, without the supportive foundation of substantial citizenship, the balance did not add up for the slum dwellers: loans grew in spite of working full time and the body aged too quickly.

'Of course, the city could not do without us'[292] one neighbour interrupted while we were discussing with Faisan, his voice bitter and defiant as we nodded too promptly to the soothing perspective of restoring some positivity amidst such hardship. No one was duped, his defiant voice signified: this was not what belonging was supposed to mean.

7.5 Conclusion

Why is it worth their time? In this chapter, the question applied to the long and costly journey residents of a Delhi slum undertake to cast their vote in Assam. What seemed like an inordinate political commitment coming from people who do not use public services yet again challenged the starting hypothesis of this thesis where participation and accountable services are linked. After

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[292] Madanpur Khadar slum, 21.10.2016.

coming across cases where participation emerged exactly where formal channels of accountability loosened and frayed around locations, political parties and women, it emerged here among a group suspected of being foreigners. Voting became a necessity to safeguard claims to citizenship against the lingering suspicions that turned their citizenship into a permanent burden of proof. It was part of multiple tactics that had the slum dwellers expose themselves to the state when casting a ballot, while avoiding it for matters of everyday life.

Why in the village? This second question opened onto an exploration of the memories and aspirations shaping the behaviours of slum dwellers. Their attachment to the village became the start and end points of a trajectory. Between the two was a routine of labour governed by a strict articulation of time and money. The working body became the focus of a constant arbitration between the competing horizons of the body's need for rest and the slum dwellers' desire to buy themselves back into the village. In the debt they contracted, their speaking of illnesses and growing old too fast, we saw just how much contributed to undermine this arbitration. Belonging turned into a conundrum—the attachment to their village becoming a necessary 'horizon of hope' (Appadurai 2004, 75), even as it undermined the prospect of a return. Against this, the discipline of the working body opposed a fragile resistance, which became a means to reclaim a precarious belonging, beyond the village, to the nation of their compromised citizenship.

Children playing on the waste segregation site, Madanpur Khadar.

8   Conclusion

Is it worth their time? The question was the starting point to explore how time and politics interact around basic services in two poor neighbourhoods of Delhi. As I prepare to summarise the main findings of this exploration, let me briefly recall the underlying premises.

My approach brought into dialogue two theoretical traditions rooted each in different methodological foundations. In research about temporal choices, I built on a recent strand of studies that operate a shift from merely quantifying time patterns to assessing people's freedom to devote time to things that matter (Burchardt 2010; Goodin et al. 2008). I pushed the frontiers of this strand when arguing that the theoretical shift was not followed to its final conclusion if, as has been the case, the empirical focus was on time scarcity. Both the feeling of having too little time and being trapped in forced waiting need to be understood as two sides of a same powerlessness within time. Seen from this perspective, temporal choices engage a value judgment about the extent to which a task is worth one's time. They engage a reflexive judgment tying the person judging to the object judged—the worth of a time allocation to the appreciation of self-worth by the person whose time is at stake. Is it worthwhile? In the question lies both my indebtedness to a tradition and what I add to it by moving beyond the focus on scarcity.

A second characteristic of my approach is the emphasis on political factors involved in shaping people's temporal choices. To develop this point, I drew on a largely qualitative tradition focused on everyday interactions with the state. From there, I took the two founding premises on the relation between time and politics in contexts of complex governance. First, I assumed that the more tightly political accountability would be integrated around basic services, the more citizens would be ready to devote time to denouncing shortfalls in basic services (Mooij 1999). Second, I assumed that political parties would play a central role in this integration through a twofold relation of accountability to a leadership committed to delivering transparent basic services and to voters (Chandhoke 2005; Corbridge et al. 2003; Harriss 2007; Véron et al. 2006). The two premises, I expected, would account for differences between neighbourhoods and between people more or less equipped to hold political parties to account—individuals with fewer political connections less than those who are well connected; women less than men; individuals whose claims to citizenship are challenged less than anyone else.

The two traditions above echo in the methodological decision to bring quantitative markers of time into dialogue with extensive ethnographic evidence. Out of this dialogue a series of divergences emerged, which led me to multiply comparative edges: beyond the contrast between closed-ended survey questions and open-ended ethnographic interviews, contrasting the answers of respondents with my own observations; contrasting their answers when reporting about themselves

and about other members of the family; as well as contrasting answers made when speaking in the presence or absence of others.

The multiplication of comparative edges also applies to the selection of cases. I chose Sunder Nagri and its history linked to the emergence of the AAP to represent a tighter integration of political accountability around basic services. Madanpur Khadar, where politics is defined by caste and land-disputes, represented the opposite case figure. Differences between individual respondents added a second comparative edge, with the contrast between well-connected families and families with fewer connections, men and women, Hindus and Muslims.

Beyond these two main contrasts, the comparison with Delhi and countrywide studies added a third comparative edge. A fourth contrast resulted from the decision to focus on specific services: water and subsidised food were time-consuming; waste was not; water was a daily task that blended into routines; food was a monthly task that took up much of a day. Each service, furthermore, involved different informal political actors and relations of power. The water committees represented a model of community-based involvement in a delivery chain where private and public interests were imbricated. With food, this imbrication of private and public occurred as well, but there were no committees, only activists and strong men.

The contrast between the AAP, which ruled at state-level, and the BJP at the centre, introduced a fifth comparative edge. The AAP was a movement turned party, which promised to achieve more transparent service delivery through participatory governance. It was a case in point for the twofold integration of accountability around services, which according to my starting premise should have favoured involvement in politics. The BJP, by contrast, was a highly centralised party, whose political messages around national issues and religion transcended the everyday politics of service delivery.

8.1 Paradoxes and Findings

The empirical enquiry into these multiple comparative edges revealed a series of paradoxes that seemed each to challenge the starting premises of the thesis. Divergences were limited still, when considering only quantitative findings. According to the survey, people spending time to improve service delivery were not numerous. Most of them were men. More of them lived in Sunder Nagri than in Madanpur Khadar's main colony, and even fewer lived in Madanpur Khadar's slum cluster. A first discordant note surfaced with the finding that more people in Madanpur Khadar reported an affiliation to political parties. The number of divergences increased when turning to the qualitative evidence. In three cases that seemed each to contradict my initial assumptions, I found people investing considerable amounts of time exactly where relations of accountability frayed.

First, I found them devoting time to alternative forms of politics where parties failed to integrate accountability around basic services. In Madanpur Khadar, in particular, I found them

getting involved in informal networks that developed around powerbrokers. In both locations, I found them being mobilised by these parties on issues that were not linked to service delivery. The party struggling most to fight off voters' disenchantment and impatience was the AAP, whose projected identity should have favoured citizen involvement in politics. The reality of its fledgling base contrasted with its pledge to work towards decentralised participatory governance. It also contrasted with the BJP, which managed to mobilise and discipline its base on issues that were largely unrelated to service delivery.

Second, women were devoting a substantial share of their time to arguing with service providers or getting involved in committees despite being on the margins of official channels of accountability rooted in political parties. Several of them spent a significant part of their day establishing themselves in networks of power whose higher echelons were dominated by men. While some had family backgrounds that supported their involvement, others did not. Most striking among the latter were several widows of Madanpur Khadar's Muslim minority. The odds against their taking on a proactive role in the local politics of service delivery were tremendous—as women, illiterate and members of a poorly represented minority. And yet, we saw how, at the price of long hours and constant vigilance, they asserted themselves as the last link in a chain of delivery that towered much above them.

Just as striking, and this was the third apparent paradox, was the case of the slum dwellers living on the fringes of Madanpur Khadar. Their belonging to the Indo-Bangladesh borderland area undermined their claims to citizenship. They had no access to public services and the embodiment of the ordinary state for them was at best a policeman who could be bribed into ignoring them, at worst that same policeman coming to rip down their shacks. In spite of everything, they made the long and costly journey back to their borderland villages in order to cast their vote.

Why did these people deem it worth their time to engage in these behaviours? The empirical discussion of these paradoxes draws attention to seven findings that were not sufficiently reflected in my starting hypothesis.

8.1.1 Timing the Politics of Informality and Poverty

First, the long hours residents of Madanpur Khadar and Sunder Nagri spent arguing, complaining or mobilising exactly where formal channels of accountability rooted in political parties loosened and frayed suggest that the politics of informality are central to understanding how and why people spend their time. In the examples above, informal solutions emerged around the inadequacies of formal institutions. Arrangements with intermediaries were activated where institutional channels of delivery failed to provide services and formal routes of redress through parties did not address the problem. Bribes were used to provide a temporary fix to the challenge of belonging to the borderland, or to deal with waiting times a person was not able to cut short through legal means. To echo one

influential description I have referred to throughout this thesis, they were characteristic of the temporal regime that engulfs those who 'make their claims on government (…), not within the framework of stable constitutionally defined rights and laws, but rather through temporary, contextual and unstable arrangements arrived at through direct political negotiations' (Chatterjee 2008, 57).

Madanpur Khadar's slum dwellers were an extreme example of how just proving the right to claim entitlements can engulf a life. The lack of inclusion in the institutions of the nation-state undermined the possibility of achieving stable long-term projections. It was all the more striking that they were very explicit about their long-term aim of returning to the village. This aim inspired a discipline of labour that had them spend as much time working as they could without undermining their body's ability to endure harsh work. In spite of this discipline, the perspective of a return was undermined by the multiple hazards they were exposed to in the absence of the protective entitlements of a full citizenship. In this extreme case, the body turned into the theatre of a conflict between a hostile environment and the subject's ability to endure against the odds. The same observation applied more widely to the women whose waiting for an unpredictable horn opened this thesis and to most residents in their everyday interactions with the state. For them too, the constant need to renegotiate entitlements resulted in a temporal regime where forced waiting alternated with sudden and unpredictable urgencies in ways that undermined the ability to form autonomous and stable plans.

These outcomes can be contrasted with research that compares social and economic rights across several countries and concludes that the resulting welfare regimes can provide up to several hours of additional temporal discretion for certain social groups (Rice, Goodin, and Parpo 2006). In contrast, the examples above show that before such social and economic entitlements can be accessed other conditions need to be fulfilled, among them a stable address and the guarantee of civil and political rights. They show that fulfilling these conditions of access can be so time-consuming as to undermine temporal discretion.

The long hours devoted to the politics of informality were also hours devoted to the politics of scarcity. For those who had the fewest means to buy private services, getting involved in the networks of power that influence how scarce public goods are distributed and divested became a way of coping. Exploring these forms of involvement, the thesis spoke to literature that describes how private interests penetrate the distribution of scarce public resources (Harriss-White 1997) with insights about the temporal consequences of this situation. Around different services and in different settings, this penetration materialised differently.

The water committees created spaces where residents could get involved in the last mile of a chain where public water was delivered by private drivers in ways so prone to corruption that the term 'tanker mafia' had become common parlance. With food, public supplies were channelled

through private license holders. Citizen interventions largely drew on the legal and administrative tools of transparency linked nationally to the Right to Information movement (Baviskar 2010; Goetz and Jenkins 2001; Sharma 2015; Webb 2013) and in Sunder Nagri to the AAP's history as movement turned ruling party. Here too, the term 'mafia' was common parlance among residents, but more than for water it evoked the possibility of violence. As a result, civil technologies of activism linked to the Right to Information Act (GOI 2005b) became embroiled with the cruder methods of political society. In both cases, we saw a minority of residents devoting considerable amounts of time to establishing themselves in these networks. The female heads of water committees did so at the price of constant vigilance. For subsidised food, in contrast, the technicality of the tools and the looming threat of violence meant that male activists and political entrepreneurs emerged as one additional intermediary between the shopkeepers and the mostly female residents who queued in front of the shop.

Around both food and water, the time invested by recipients helped establish the influence of powerbrokers. It was clearest for food in Madanpur Khadar, where women in their pursuit of a solution to unreliable service delivery converged around a strong man. The authority over a large group of women was for this man one term of a two-pronged influence, the other term being his ability to pressure service providers through means that ranged from the tools of the Right to Information movement, to threats and outright violence. While the motivation of powerbrokers was not as obvious in the water committee, it was clear that the loyalty of residents was a resource there too.

The politics of poverty and informality, in sum, imposed certain temporal costs. It undermined stable long-term horizons, and it forced people to organise their day around unpredictable supplies. While we came across some examples where a person who had invested time in this politics was empowered by it, the multiplication of constraints often undermined these benefits.

To conclude, we can make the link with one more reference that accompanied us throughout the thesis: Hirschman's 'exit, voice and loyalty' (1970). The examples reviewed in this section involved people whose entitlements were not guaranteed. Few of them chose to 'exit' basic services from the state. Instead they were either pushed into fringe markets because obstacles to accessing basic services in the area were too stark (Schaffer and Lamb 1974), excluded altogether, or forced to engage in very costly forms of 'voice and loyalty' in order to avoid being excluded. These examples drive home that people need to have access to a service before being in a position to opt for one of the three behaviours theorised by Hirschman. Even people who have access but are threatened with exclusion can be forced into forms of 'exit, voice and loyalty' that undermine their life chances and their temporal discretion.

8.1.2 Women and the State

None of the above was gender neutral. Because women were more than men involved in fetching water and food, they were the ones routinely enquiring and complaining with frontline providers. When pausing on the political stakes involved, the analysis added to time-use literature where these behaviours often feature as drudgery and unpaid work (Hirway 2009b; Hirway and Jose 2011; Jain 1996). It also added to research where everyday interactions with the state involve male citizens and male officials or political representatives (Gupta 2012; Harriss 2005; Jeffrey and Lerche 2001; Witsoe 2013). In my research, such cases where men complained to officials and political representatives, begged with them, threatened or bribed them were uncommon. These behaviours aimed at the institutions of India's representative democracy were the emerged tip reflected in the survey. In contrast, the most ordinary interactions with the state featured women informally arguing with service providers and middlemen or getting involved in committees. Because these behaviours were not reported in answers to a survey question that asked people to list all actions taken to improve service delivery, they were the much larger hidden base above which towered male-dominated political parties and state institutions.

To assert themselves beyond these informal negotiations, women faced multiple constraints. Irregular supplies tied them to the lane and played into gendered norms that limited their freedom to move around and engage in politics. Because a majority of women in my sample were from the Muslim minority, these constraints were compounded by communal tensions, which lingered in interactions with neighbours.

In spite of these odds, a few women asserted themselves in the informal networks that surrounded the delivery of services at the price of considerable investments in time. Among those who came forward, some were supported by a favourable family background, but several others were driven by necessity, often in response to their husband's unemployment or death. For those with enabling backgrounds and educated children who could translate their needs into the formal scriptures of the state, a first involvement could serve as stepping-stone into autonomous forms of politicisation. In contrast, the more vulnerable tended to remain tied to the network that had first gotten them involved.

The above renders in terms of gender the observations about unpredictability and informality undermining stable long-term planning, but it also contributes to wider literature on the everyday state. Many female interactions with the state took place in the lanes, where negotiations with service providers and middlemen mixed with private routines. In the lanes, women also negotiated with male household members the limits of their involvement in the politics of service delivery. In the lanes again, neighbours had to decide whether to collaborate or engage in conflicts that could dovetail into communal dynamics stoked by majoritarian politics. The lane, in sum, became the intermediary space where constraints on women's movements were being negotiated along with

politicised religious identities. Seen from these intermediate spaces, the state was a motley aggregate of middlemen, private providers, actual paper work, fakes and fetishes. It was distant when the English word of *Court* was used by Hindi-speaking people to describe administrative, political and judicial power, but it was also a state whose illegible scripture could be mediated by children in the intimacies of homes. Its paper work was copied to settle a family dispute, as with the declaration used by an illiterate mother to pressure her illiterate children into vacating the floor.

Violence and its evocation were prominent in these interactions. In everyday life and in the practice of fieldwork violence hung over behaviours in ways that emphasised unpredictability and the necessity for women to be constantly vigilant. Somewhat like irregular service delivery in other parts of the thesis, its unpredictability cast a shadow of reduced discretion much beyond the moment of violence or even the presence of a violent husband. In women's narratives, on the contrary, violence was predictable and something they could endure, resist or oppose. While these narratives about violence did not find an expedient to the conflict they spelled out, women's readiness to discuss the issue in public contrasted with the reluctance to speak out found by other researchers (Naved et al. 2006; Snell-Rood 2015a, 68). One group of women who had stood by each other for many years was particularly remarkable. Because these women had been protagonists of Sunder Nagri's history of collective action, they seemed to illustrate how informal networks that develop around such mobilisations can have a lasting empowering effect.

8.1.3 Time and Collective Involvement

Another contribution of the research explores the reasons that lead people to invest time beyond waiting, to interventions aimed at improving service delivery. For a start, the above qualifies the term 'waiting'. In a context where entitlements were never guaranteed, waiting always involved enquiring, negotiating and jostling for access. Even for people who did not report any intervention, the ordinary pursuit of services involved constant informal enquiries, many of them escalating into complaints, all of which took time. These enquiries involved networks of neighbours, which again blurred the line between individual and collective.

The contrast between two scenes of queuing at a subsidised food shop provided a first insight into the emergence of collaborative behaviours. In Sunder Nagri, people discussed while they waited around a line of bags. In Madanpur Khadar, they rushed, then stood in a silent line when the door closed on someone who was not the provider. Unlike in much of the above, my findings converge with what could be expected. In literature on queues, unpredictable waiting times rooted in underlying issues of governance are said to pit people in conflict against each other (Corbridge 2004; Helweg-Larsen and LoMonaco 2008; Larson 1987; Schaffer and Huang 1975). Collaborative behaviours, from this perspective, would require a minimum of predictability and transparency to emerge, which would be reflected by the contrast between the two scenes of queuing.

The role of caste and religious divisions added one further dimension to this part of the argument. Many residents who did not report any action to improve services blamed it on the inability to unite, which they linked to divisions of caste and religion. Their answer pointed to a different explanation, where the inability to come together did not result from problems of governance but from caste and religious heterogeneity. This interpretation, however, seemed questioned by the fact that such responses were as frequent in Madanpur Khadar whose population was heterogeneous and not prone to reporting any action, as they were in Sunder Nagri whose population was more homogenous and more prone to taking action. Rather than an actual obstacle, identity cleavages seemed like a justification for actions not taken. Looking for why such action were not taken we once again came back to issues of governance that in Madanpur Khadar undermined the accountability of political parties and the reliability of service delivery. If caste cleavages played a role in this political landscape, then it was the one that ran along the canal separating the diverse population of the colony and the dominant caste of the Councillor. It was this division that organised the competition for power and land that turned political parties into sites of conflict and capture.

Broadening beyond the scenes of queuing to explore what allowed residents of Sunder Nagri 'to extricate themselves from these constraints' (Ostrom 2015, 7), brought the discussion back to the neighbourhood's history of mobilisation. We saw how a few people were socialised into collective efforts around livelihoods and awareness. Around Parivartan, the focus shifted towards changing the local everyday state, which inspired new practices of activism. The focus shifted again when these local practices dovetailed into the wider mobilisations aimed at changing the political system. Around each of these involvements, micro-communities emerged in which information and know-how circulated, and where qualities like courage and astuteness founded an ethos of collective action. Most of these communities had ceased to be active by the time the research started, but some of what had circulated in them had seeped into the social fabric of Sunder Nagri. Solidarities had emerged whose effect seemed to have ramifications beyond people's interactions with the state, including in how women informally supported each other when they were confronted with domestic violence (Snell-Rood 2015b).

Once again, however, these forms of structured involvement need to be contrasted with the many forms of informal involvement observed in Madanpur Khadar, precisely where basic services were most unpredictable. There was no surviving in the lanes of Sunder Nagri and Madanpur Khadar without getting involved in collaborative behaviours. The above is not about whether erratic supplies of basic goods allow collaborative behaviours to exist or not, but about how interaction with these collaborative behaviours in ways that can let them develop and stabilise or on the contrary weaken them.

8.1.4 Time and Party Politics

The discussion about party politics made four additional contributions, one of them being that it built on the reflection about collective action with insights into trajectories of involvement. The AAP's history in Sunder Nagri exemplified one such trajectory, in which people were progressively socialised into local communities of involvement. While considerations about potential benefits often triggered these trajectories, the recognition by peers played a central role in shifting incentives towards collective involvements and stabilising loyalties. Beyond such collective involvements, the AAP's history showed how easily the transformation from movement into ruling party could undermine the communities that had supported the involvement of people less endowed with the human and technological resources required to navigate politics beyond the local level.

Trajectories of involvement in the BJP had the RSS drawing on its local networks to marshal the time of an upward-aspiring section of residents. As around the AAP, calculations of interest blended with the search for recognition, but whereas such involvements were among the AAP's older members rooted in an imagination of resistance to corrupt officials, they were among BJP sympathisers rooted in an all-India network where individual aspirations combined with the idea of a Hindu Nation re-established in its past might. More than this pattern from which most residents of Madanpur Khadar and Sunder Nagri were excluded for being too poor, we saw the importance of an infrastructure that mobilised a looser base of sympathisers. Centralised top-down channels of information and decision-making fanned out at the grassroots into local informal networks and allowed the party to keep in touch with sympathisers between elections.

Second, the discussion provides insights into the everyday temporalities that shape each party's connection with ordinary citizens as well as interactions within the party itself. Without the backing of institutions, the AAP's programme of participatory decentralisation remained insufficient to shape the everyday practice of politics. For cadres at every level, incentives to invest time upwards to where executive power stands trumped incentives to invest time downwards into building the horizontal foundation of accountability. For ordinary members supposed to be the party's roots in the population, this resulted in a limbo where a generic appeal for their time came without their integration in internal channels of information and decision-making.

In the BJP, on the contrary, an explicitly vertical organisation in which frontline cadres described their role as one of obeying orders from above combined with numbered targets to get residents involved. Meanwhile, the informal networks above allowed the BJP to respond to apparently contradictory aspirations rooted in the spread of democratic practices among impatient non-elite voters.

Third, the discussion shed light on how parties can appeal to the time of electors without providing accountable basic services. We saw them bypassing the relation linking participation in politics with accountable service delivery when mobilising a core group of sympathisers around

religious and nationalist events. During demonetisation, we saw the ruling BJP momentarily benefiting from a situation where unpredictability, emergency and waiting combined to prevent citizens from forming stable expectations and judgments. Here the thesis spoke to a concern among observers of politics with what ails democracies worldwide. Both the bypassing of the relation linking people's willingness to participate in politics with accountable service delivery in Hindu nationalism and the unpredictable suddenness of demonetisation featured as examples of a response to the temporal challenge represented by voters' impatience and the slow pace of policy-driven change that was both indisputably rooted in the ballots and illiberal.

8.1.5 Representing Politics

More fundamentally, the discrepancies between my survey findings and the ethnographic observations invites us to reflect about the representation of politics. If, by politics, we mean behaviours evolving around the institutional channels of representation and accountability that link the governed and the governing, then my starting hypothesis was correct, as were the findings from my survey and the research I drew on to develop my hypothesis (Chandhoke 2005; Corbridge et al. 2005; Harriss 2005). All three provide a partial picture, however, if we consider the informal behaviours surfacing in my ethnographic findings.

In reality, much research on the state quoted in this thesis draws attention to precisely these informal behaviours. Nevertheless, when these studies focus on interactions with political representatives or with bureaucrats, they leave out many of the behaviours that in my ethnographic observations were characteristic of the unstable arrangements negotiated by people who are most precariously included in the framework of rights. Instead, these behaviours come up in other strands of literature where they feature not as political behaviours but as economic compulsion. Female routine interactions with the state blend into drudgery and unpaid work (Hirway 2009a; Hirway and Jose 2011). The Borderlanders' assertion of a right to live in India would appear to many as an example of 'poor economics' (Banerjee and Duflo 2011). When even the individuals who engaged in these behaviours do not deem them meaningful enough to be reported, am I right to be stressing their political nature?

This observation brings us back to the discussion about the nature of politics. Both examples above evoked a strand of studies that emphasise the political stakes involved in claims about everyday needs (Das 2011; Das and Randeria 2015, 4; Das and Walton 2015, 52). These are studies that distance themselves from the distinction between a politics of freedom that can only be engaged with once basic needs are satisfied, and the impulse of necessity that drives the poor (Arendt 2006, 49–105). For the women we saw arguing and getting mobilised in committees, the struggle to satisfy basic needs could become a stepping stone for the kind of complaint to political representatives that

featured in the survey. In the slums of Madanpur Khadar, the act of voting was rooted in compulsion, while survival as workers opened onto an assertion of belonging to the nation.

Surely, though, not all of these forms of involvement can be viewed as political. Where, then, should we draw the line of the political between individual inquiries about time, the mumbling about dirty grains when leaving the subsidised food shop, complaints about a shopkeeper who does not listen, the silent resistance of the labouring man? Asking what in these multiple behaviours really is political, brings us back to a basic definition of the political as the capacity to turn needs into collective claims on the state (Procupez 2015, 64). It requires us to pay attention to the conditions that turn the muttering, the arguing and the waiting into collective attempts to influence the state. From this perspective, women's repeated enquiries about time, their muttering and arguing became political when they entered a pattern of neighbours collectively enquiring about time in ways that put pressure on shopkeepers. Similarly, the labouring man's discipline in chapter seven was political because it was part of a collective resistance to the politics that denied the slum dweller a right to live on Indian soil.

As for Arendt's definition of politics as the exercise of freedom, perhaps the distance that separates this stance and the one summed up here, is also a reflection of how our understanding of freedom has evolved in the wake of yet another major thinker whose writing has shaped this thesis: Amartya Sen (2001) and his definition of substantial freedom. For, what are the behaviours above about if not that sort of freedom we have since learnt to see as substantial?

8.1.6 *Internalising the Lesser Worth of Time*

Beyond the meaning and representation of politics, the contrast between qualitative and quantitative has consequences for the reporting of time. I found that women seem to under-report the amount of time they spent accessing basic services. They seem to under-report the trade-offs involved in the time they spend waiting for unpredictable services. Their informal politics was a blind spot in my survey and in wider quantitative research (Chandhoke 2005; Harriss 2005). In discussions, they minimised such time investments as being 'nothing' or mere '*timepass*'. On the contrary, men seemed to over-report their involvement in accessing basic services.

For these patterns of under-reporting and minimising, the theoretical emphasis on the worth of time offers a ready explanation. Women's under-reporting would illustrate their interiorising the lesser value of such time involvements, while men's over-reporting their involvement in water and food chores would reflect their interiorising the greater value of these time involvements. Beyond this, the factors involved in this pattern expand on several insights of time-use research, by showing that the same factors that influence people's time allocation appear to influence their reporting of these allocations. I expand on institutional approaches to temporal choices (Bittman et al. 2003; Gershuny, Bittman, and Brice 2005) when arguing that gendered norms ascribing a lesser value to female unpaid chores are involved in women's minimising the time spent on these tasks.

The difference between what was for women a routine time involvement and an aspirational involvement for men was a second factor, which the contrast between water and food helped flesh out. Respondents were able to identify monthly chunks of time such as the ones involved in food with more accuracy than time involvements that blended into daily routines such as the water chore. While this observation is hardly surprising, its methodological consequence is not trivial, since it involves under-reporting many of the tasks that make up the daily burden of unpaid work that the time-use survey is meant to measure. They are the tasks involved in 'the vicious circle of unpaid work and poverty' (Hirway 2009b, xxv), which researchers of time use in lower and middle-income countries are seeking to reveal.

Issues of governance that undermine the predictability of basic services are a third factor that surfaced in the discussion of evidence. Unpredictable supplies constrained people's discretionary time much beyond the actual duration of a task. Thy had a temporal shadow that reached much beyond the actual amount of time devoted to it. For example, the women we saw waiting for a horn to blow in the opening scene were prevented from leaving the street until the horn blew. They were prevented from making plans in advance for the entire 10AM to 3PM period during which the horn could blow. Their under-reporting of the actual time spent on specific tasks during this timeframe, I argued, reflects their interiorising the reduced discretionary value of that period, as this quote by a female resident of Madanpur Khadar waiting at a subsidised food shop illustrates: 'What does it matter whether we wait here or there, it's just *timepass*'.[293]

In the chapter devoted to gender, finally, the under-reporting of certain tasks acquired a tactical significance. It became a way to deal with the tension between economic compulsions and gendered norms that oppose women stepping out to work or getting involved in politics. Whereas above people interiorised the factors that undermine their ability to devote time to things that matter to them, here they tactically reclaimed some discretionary leeway. It was a discursive loyalty to traditional gendered roles hiding behaviours that challenge these roles.

Whether tactical responses to constraints or internalisation of these constraints, these practices were all rooted in stark power inequalities. They minimised the temporal behaviours of those situated at the bottom of multiple social stratifications in the face of other household members and in the face of the wider research and policy community.

The observations above have implications for time-use research in India and across the world. They suggest that the Indian time-use survey, albeit an improvement compared to existing employment statistics, risks under-valuing exactly what it is meant to measure. They show that such surveys are particularly poor in assessing a task's shadow of reduced temporal freedom, whose importance is driven home by discretionary approaches to time (Burchardt 2010; Goodin et al. 2008). This pattern of under-reporting adds one further dimension to the vicious circle of poverty and

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[293] Madanpur Khadar, 4.11.2016

drudgery time-use researchers have highlighted (Antonopoulos and Hirway 2009, xxv). When poor people minimise exactly those moments they spend waiting for scarce and unpredictable resources, they close the trap of time poverty and drudgery on themselves by hiding it from society.

8.1.7 Safeguarding Temporal Integrity and Protecting from Temporal Alienation

Lastly, there are a few policy-oriented lessons that can be drawn from my findings, and which I suggest anchoring in the notion of 'temporal integrity'. I should say from the onset that this section presents tentative thoughts, which make the transition from the findings described above to the ideas for future work described in the next section. In line with the Latin root of the word *'integer'* or 'intact', I propose to speak of 'temporal integrity' somewhat like we speak of 'bodily integrity' to emphasise the importance of a person's self-determination of his or her time. 'Temporal integrity' from this perspective would be the characteristic of having self-determination over one's time. It would be the opposite of 'temporal alienation'. A paper that would develop this idea could pause on this notion of 'alienation' and situate it within a wider philosophical tradition; here, I will limit myself to a working definition of the term as evoking the subject's dispossession of his or her ability to do things that mater with his or her time.

While the judgement about whether a specific activity is worth a person's time is too personal to give a positive definition beyond the basic formulation above, the empirical discussion highlighted a number of factors that position people on either side of these two poles of integrity and alienation. Unpredictability could undermine a person's temporal integrity by preventing him or her from planning and engaging in activities that seemed meaningful to him or her, as were the overlapping and often contradictory institutions that were one cause of this unpredictability. The lack of inclusion in the institutions of the welfare state contributed to this situation as did the practices of those in and around the state who had a hand in delivering or divesting public resources. Gender played into these factors and resulted in women being the ones most likely to be trapped in such patterns of waiting and rushing. The violence of intimate partners also added to the unpredictability when its possibility hung over women's everyday lives much beyond the actual incidence of violence. When people under-reported precisely those moments of unpredictable waiting that result from this series of factors, they integrated the lesser value of their time.

When we ask what can be done to loosen the multiple constraints that prevent people from planning and engaging in activities that are of value to them, we recognise that time has a fundamental value that cannot be reduced to money but engages what a person can do with that time. The recognition that this value needs to be safeguarded is what the notion of 'temporal integrity' attempts to express.

What then can be done to safeguard the temporal integrity of those least endowed with resources and power? Clearly, there are no easy solutions to a problem so deeply rooted in the matrices of social inequalities, but the discussion so far points to at least three directions, the first linked to the design of social policies, the second linked to legal protections, the third linked to politics.

For policy makers, safeguarding the temporal integrity of target populations means bringing time into the picture when considering the trade-offs and benefits of a social policy. As we saw, this does not just mean bringing the direct cost of a task into the picture, but also its wider discretionary shadow linked to irregularity. Both should become variables of the policy's design and evaluation. They should be estimated, counted and weighed against other advantages and disadvantages for the user and for the entity supplying the service. Users should be able to claim compensation for delays.

Policy makers also need to pay attention to the temporal consequences of different models of service delivery. The water committees really did open spaces of participation that contributed to empowering some residents, but they relied on the involvement of those who could least afford to opt out, and whose time was neither paid for nor deemed meaningful enough to be reported. Because this involvement occurred in the shadow of a powerful figure who created the space of participation at the very extremity of the delivery chain without linking it to effective means of redress, the discretionary returns for the women involved were limited. Even the AAP, which claimed to turn the participatory decentralised ideal into a model of rule told sympathisers to devote time to participation but left them with little means to turn this time into meaningful involvements.

These examples drive home that participatory initiatives need to give people enough in return for their time, if not in monetary or in-kind terms, then at least in a capacity to demand better services and in the recognition that their involvement really counts. Apart from institutionalising the devolution of resources, meaningful participation demands that the information and know-how required to hold service providers or state representatives accountable be transferred downward. Because these transfers require an investment, not just from people who get involved in such participatory spaces, but also from people higher-up in the chain of decision making, they need to be framed by incentives across the chain of decision-making, and in fact involve a profound change in the culture of an organisation and in the everyday practices of everyone in the delivery chain.

Beyond such participatory models, all three services exemplified arrangements in which a public resource is distributed by a private provider. Long waiting times were the most banal consequence of the corruption that marred the distribution of subsidised food through private licensed shops. Around water, women were waiting and getting involved in committees around private tankers delivering a public resource. Around waste, an accepted system of informal privatisation meant that improvements were short-lived. Because all of these examples involve formal or informal privatisation, they offer no insights about the comparative advantages of private versus

public models of service delivery. They do, however, highlight the need to pay attention to the actual burden in waiting times and irregularity involved in each arrangement.

This observation speaks to a wider point about how we assess the outcomes of interventions to improve service delivery. As long as time, other than when commodified as labour, is not included in these assessments, measures to increase the efficiency of state and private providers are likely to off-load time-consuming aspects from providers onto users, with consequences that have direct costs in time and in temporal integrity. These will have disappeared from the policy's assessment, but they will weigh on users and on society. Temporal integrity, in sum, will become one of these negative externalities mainstream economic models have so often ignored. This suggests that Gary Becker's (1965) original call to consider time as a resource in its own right should be applied to economic models underpinning the provision of basic services. There is a need to close the circle. After Becker applied mainstream economic models to issues that until then had been marginal in economics, we should apply insights from this once marginal issue that is time, not as labour but as a resource in its own right, to mainstream economic questions of efficiency and productivity.

Apart from integrating temporal integrity in the design and evaluation of public policies, my findings emphasise the importance of institutionalising accountability to deliver services in a timely regular manner. As we saw, activists in India are well aware of this requirement. They have used registers to check opening hours and filed Right to Information requests to speed up delivery (Peisakhin 2012; Rekha 2012). The AAP itself championed a bill to tighten the timely delivery of services (GOD 2015b), which however was pending at the time of research.

Beyond such punctual legal tools, there is arguably a case for exploring expanded legal instruments to protect the temporal integrity of people least endowed with resources and power. One observation imposes itself in light of the discussion so far: labour rights, which are today the main framework outlining the temporal rights of those who do not own other capital than themselves, do not protect many of the forms of temporal alienation described in this thesis. They do not protect recipients of services in their interaction with officials or contractors in rich and poor countries alike. They do not protect workers affected by precarious employment. Nor do they protect the temporal integrity of migrants who, despite often being formally entitled to a status find themselves trapped in administrative limbos. Labour rights are not sufficient.

In light of these situations, the 'right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours' in article 24 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN 1948, 50) seems too limited. Focused as it is on the rights of a labourer, it has no leverage on the situations described above. If instead, we consider time as a resource in its own right and in fact as the 'currency of life' (Krueger et al. 2009), then we should view the right to temporal integrity as something more fundamental that deserves a protection of its own.

The difficulty when thinking about how to formalise this right to temporal integrity brings us back to the multiple facets of time as something that has a value in its own right but is also the unit of labour. It suggests the need to think about the different regimes that could anchor a right to temporal integrity. Labour rights would need to be expanded to safeguard workers independently from the long-term interaction with an employer. Beyond labour rights, the temporal integrity of individuals might need to find an anchor point in social rights and have a ramification in legal texts and guidelines protecting people in their dealings with the administration and with private service providers.

Commercial laws allow a claim for redress for delays and guarantee the predictability required to make long term plans in ways that effectively protect the temporal integrity of companies and owners of capital. Douglas North (1987), who observes that formal institutions reflect the interests of the powerful, leaves us hardly surprised that no similar protection applies to the temporal integrity of individuals who have little other capital than their own time. If, however, we see institutions as being just a little less hierarchic than this, and instead see them as an object of political struggles where the powerful have an advantage, but can be cornered into making concessions, then the vision of a right to temporal integrity for those who do not have other resources than themselves becomes a battle worth pursuing. If we consider that rights such as these can be rallying points in a political struggle, a right to temporal integrity could offer a tool of visibility linking local struggles to a larger demand.

This political note brings us to one last lesson of the thesis: after including temporal integrity in policy designs, after framing it in institutions, what about collective action to challenge the relations of power that result in temporal alienation? Here again, the evidence hardly points to a fast and easy route, but the contrast between Madanpur Khadar and Sunder Nagri does provide a few directions. In both areas, informal networks of collaboration existed, but in Madanpur Khadar these networks evolved at greater distance from institutionalised channels of accountability rooted in political parties, and they coalesced around intermediaries in whose hands tools of accountability became means to concentrate power.

In Sunder Nargi, in contrast, informal networks of collaboration were less hierarchical and better connected with mechanisms of accountability rooted in the state. Partly, the contrast was linked to the setting in which services were more predictable, and the state more responsive overall. But a look back at the history of the area allows us to end on a more hopeful note than merely returning to the contrast that underlies my premises and to the grim perspective of a trap of unaccountability, poor services and disillusion that would have closed on some people once and for all. Returning to Elinor Ostrom's question, it suggests we ask what gave Sunder Nagri's residents 'the capabilities' to shape 'the constraining rules of the game to lead to outcomes other than' a remorseless tragedy (Ostrom 2015, 7)?

We saw people progressively getting socialised into local networks that valorised collective involvements and spread the know-how required to challenge corruption in the state. In all these cases outside interventions played a role in transferring the information and know-how required to challenge corruption in the state. From the start, however, residents from the area were the ones drawing in their neighbours and kin. As outsiders withdrew and interventions ended their main legacy were the practices, values and know-how that had taken root in such informal networks and eventually seeped into the social texture of the area.

In these involvements, NGOs and movements played a role, which nuances the critique that stresses the lack of representativeness of such associations and more broadly their political irrelevance (Chandhoke 2005, 2013). Saheli and Action India, which were classical NGOs funded by external grants, played a role not because they were representative, but because they channelled the resources required for some residents to engage in the early phases of collective mobilisation. Parivartan, which was not a registered NGO and funded its flat salary structure through individual donations, then channelled these collective involvements against corruption. It was a social movement that was an embryonic political organisation directed towards shaping state power.

Where the analysis did echo the critical references above was in noting that precisely these functions of transferring know-how and fostering such collective involvements seemed to be the ones ceding to the pressure of delivering tangible results across organisations as diverse as Action India, Parivartan and the AAP. For activists and funders, this means they should pay attention to what can safeguard such investments and balance the dynamics that in most organisations structure time and other resources of visibility and recognition away from places like the lanes of Madanpur Khadar and Sunder Nagri, away from transferring know-how and information about claiming entitlements towards the human communities that can emerge in these lanes.

8.2 Future Research

Beyond the above, my thesis points to several more avenues for future research. First, the multiple discrepancies I observe suggest that we need more mixed-methods research to identify the over and under-reporting of time spent on a task. Beyond Sunder Nagri and Madanpur Khadar, we would need to understand how this over and under-reporting applies to other sections of the population and across larger scales. Even in rich countries, where time-use surveys have long been a regular statistical exercise, mixed methods studies would be needed to provide the evidence base required for a more systematic exploration of biases. There too, we would need to understand the impact of unpredictability on the temporal perceptions and reporting by populations.

Second, because references to belonging and return featured so prominently in the narratives of Madanpur Khadar's slum dwellers they became the starting point to explore the articulation of past and future around present behaviours. In the main colony, these longer time horizons were often

implicit and blended into a trajectory, but they were no less worth an enquiry. About the past and the shock of resettlement, some of what surfaced in interviews echoes Emma Tarlo's (2003) account of how resettlement and sterilisation were linked during the emergency.

About the future, though, there is arguably much that remains to be said. One aspect that would deserve an elaboration, for example, is the role of children in these temporal subjectivities. Illiterate parents find their future tied to the task of grooming their children to a world of literacy, from which they are themselves excluded: 'I am blind, but I do not want my child to be',[294] this sentence summed it up powerfully. For the three who spoke of being blind and for the many others, the child became the key to a projected escape out of a stigmatising present. In imaginations of society, as in the practices that saw children mediate alien scriptures of the state, children played a central role that was both intimate and vertiginously alien. The relation between present behaviours and the future of children again played a central role in negotiations between husband and wives. All of this, in sum, would deserve an additional chapter which the scope of the thesis does not allow.

Third, the temporal imaginations mobilised by political parties beyond India would be worth studying. The analysis of discourses and forms of mobilisation could inform a cross-country comparative study of the interaction between registers of politics and temporal regimes. How do representations of past and future overlap? How are they related to the political identity of a party? Do the common features converge in a typology? How is unpredictability and suddenness used in politics across the world?

Fourth, Madanpur Khadar and Sunder Nagri are in themselves interesting objects for a longitudinal study. How will the contrast for which I chose the places evolve? Will the legacy of mobilisation remain despite widespread disenchantment with the AAP? As yet a new government report warns of a dramatic worsening of the water situation with demands reaching twice the available supplies by 2030 (GOI 2018, 15), how will the crisis shape the politics of time surrounding this basic need? What collaborative behaviours will emerge? What divisions? Beyond these neighbourhood-level features, what kind of political agents will be the first generation of educated youth I saw translating the state's scripture for their parents? How will these youth fare as their time comes to enter the labour market? How, in particular, will young women fare? This longitudinal research I hope to undertake in the future.

More than any of the aspects above, however, the Borderlanders deserve attention in the current context. The publication of the definitive register of residents is expected in summer 2019. Already the battle lines are hardening around the issue ahead of the national election in 2019. Borderlanders in Madanpur Khadar and across India will find themselves engulfed in yet a nastier turn to their already precarious condition. How will the lives of those who will feature on the list diverge from individuals who will not have made it onto the list? What divisions will these divergences

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[294] Madanpur Khadar, 09.09.2016, 20.10.2016, 21.10.2016.

create inside their group? What collaboration? What will be left of that fragile sense of belonging we heard in Faisan's final quotes? What furthermore should we make of this troubling sort of legal activism that had the Indian Supreme Court spearheading a process that cornered such large numbers of residents into this zone of non-right?

Beyond such questions, several other aspects would deserve an elaboration. How do gender dynamics among Madanpur Khadar's slum dwellers interact with the fact that women are over-represented among the 4 million who do not feature on the draft register, because many of them neither have documents nor a registration in their local village council? What will happen when the divisions around the border enter the household and women are deemed foreigners while men are not?

In my thesis, furthermore, the ballot box was the space around which the slum dwellers exposed themselves to the state. This left out another tool that allows the Indian state to 'see' (Scott 1998) its population, the biometrical Aadhaar card, which focuses on exactly those everyday behaviours around services for which the slum dwellers hid from the state. The government has been doing its best to subsume as many aspects of life under the scheme as it can, making it mandatory for many basic services. Even its voluntary nature is today the object of a political and legal battle in which the courts have played a key role. What, to come back to the slum dwellers, does this new tool of governance entail for strategies of avoidance? When the grey zone in which the slum dwellers evolved shrinks, how can they adapt?

These questions about margins and technologies of governance are all the more troubling that such biometrical tools do not recognise the finger prints of people dealing with hard and corrosive manual labour. In Madanpur Khadar's slum, the corrosiveness was such that many residents had lost their finger nails not to speak of their finger prints. That same labouring body through which they asserted a positive belonging to the nation became what ascribed them to the illegible margins of this country's new governance. All of these call for an elaboration that arguably is relevant not just for the large number of people who are directly affected by the situation, but many more people across the world confronted with new technologies of recognition and hostile political climates—migrants whose asylum is undermined in rich countries and people whose claims to citizenship across the world are caught in contested borders.

8.3 Was it Worthwhile?

As I conclude this thesis, it is time to revisit the few ethical reflections I made at the beginning of the thesis, and give a reflexive bent to the question that has accompanied me throughout the discussion: these hours some of my respondents spent speaking to me, were they worth it?

More than any of the people I interacted with, residents from Madanpur Khadar's slum are, in my mind, the test case for this question because every hour out of work was for them an hour lost

to the long-term perspective of a return to their village. Let me therefore once again invoke the resident of that cluster who featured prominently in the discussion so far. 'It's all right. You will tell our story. You will write it up somewhere, won't you, and people will read', said Faisan Islam when I, for the hundredth time explained: 'I am just a researcher, this won't bring any benefit for you'.

Of course, not all respondents thought the same, and several broke off the discussion soon after we had started. Most, however, did not and spent a considerable amount of time speaking to us. Neither was Faisan alone in telling about having his story written down. Clearly some hoped that this would help highlight their plight. But it seems to me that something else was at stake: the promise that a fragment of their voice would feature somewhere, stable and audible beyond the precariousness of their everyday life. This, I believe, was also what was at stake when Faisan said: 'you will tell our story', while around him, the narration of a life shrunk to a series of losses and to the assertion of the distant hope of a return. More broadly, in many of these moments when people took time to tell private and often painful memories to the strangers we were, a bit of this permanence and recognition seemed to be at stake.

I admit, this is a convenient thought for someone in my position. So convenient that it ought to be treated with a fair dose of scepticism. Yet, it is also a demanding one. Will I, in the coming months and years, manage to tell these stories to more than the handful of people who will have read this thesis? Will I do justice to these stories? Ultimately, this will define whether it was worth their time.

And what about my time? These four years and a half, perhaps counting as a little more if I believe the furrow I noticed on the left corner of my mouth when returning from my fieldwork: was it worthwhile? For an entry ticket into an academic world, which for starting researchers is commanded by a temporality that, though incomparably more privileged than the ones described so far, is nonetheless averse to long-term planning, I am not certain.

These years were worth the time, however, to slow-down and reflect on what was being said, compare sources and discover under the obvious first layer, the hidden second layer. While I did start with a critical inclination towards the quantitative approach I had used earlier, the full scale of the paradoxes above only surfaced later. They did so, in fact, towards the end—not while preparing for fieldwork, nor while doing research in Sunder Nagri and Madanpur Khadar, but when really starting to write each chapter and immersing myself in the contrast between different sources, battling the complexity they brought with them. I did not expect the coherent pattern of under-reporting that emerged when contrasting observations and survey findings. I was sure caste really was what drove people apart when I started writing up the two scenes of queues, until I checked this assumption against the actual caste profile of the neighbourhood. For that right to slow-down and get to the bottom of a question, for the discussions, the comments that helped me in this enquiry, these years

were, I believe, worthwhile, never mind that the result of that slowing down only yields more questions and ideas for future research.

Ultimately, however, the response to the question of whether it was worth my time lies ahead. Throughout this thesis, judgments about the worth of time were bound to another judgment about the worth of the person judging. Here, the question 'is it worthwhile?' points to another relation engaging the worth of my time and the worth of my respondents' time. For the answer to the question 'was it worth my time?' will ultimately depend on my ability to live up to Faisan's expectation. Beyond the academic exercise of the thesis will I, in the months and years to come, manage to tell his story? Will I do justice to these voices and experiences?

Resident, Sunder Nagri resettlement colony.

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Annex 1. Questionnaires

I. Household questionnaire

Name of researchers

1. Household ID

2. Location	1) Madanpur Khadar	2) Sunder Nagri

3. Row number	**4. House number**

A. Composition

5. Name Start with head of household, then other adults, then children	**6. Age** In years	**7. Gender** 1) Male 2) Female	**8. Education** 1) Illiterate 2) Primary 1-8 3) Secondary 9-12 4) Above	**9. Work** 1) Regular 2) Daily labourer 3) Self employed 4) Student 5) Unemployed 6) Retired 7) Before school	**10. Health** 1) Good health 2) Poor health 3) Bedridden 4) Disabled	**11. Individual questionnaire** 1) Yes 2) No
1.						
2.						
3.						
4.						
5.						
6.						
7.						
8.						
9.						
10.						

B. Wealth and identity

Wealth Index		**1. Yes**	**2. No**
	12. Thresher		
	13. Scooter, motorcycle		
	14. Phone		
	15. Refrigerator		
	16. Colour TV		
	17. Black and White TV		
	18. Bicycle		
	19. Electric fan		
	20. Radio		
	21. Sewing machine		
	22. Mattress		
	23. Pressure cooker		
	24. Chair		
	25. Cot/bed		
	26. Table		
	27. Watch, clock		
	28. Livestock		
	29. Car		

30. House type	1) Pucca 2) Kachha	31. Lighting	1) Electricity 2) Kerosene, gas 3) Other
32. Cooking	1) Electricity, gas 2) Coal, kerosene 3) Other specify	33. House title	1) Owner 2) Tenant 3) Sub-tenant 4) No title
34. Religion	1) Hindu 2) Muslim 3) Christian 4) Sikh 5) Buddhist 6) Other	35. Social Group	1) SC 2) ST 3) OBC 4) Other
36. Caste			
37. Household monthly income in INR			

C. Water amenities (if drinking and non-drinking water is fetched at different sources, circle both and specify)

38. Location?	1) In premise 2) Out of premise (Less than 100 m, or 300 feet) 3) Out of premise (100-500m, 300-1600 feet) 4) Out of premise (more than 500m, 1600 feet)
39. Type of installation	1) Pipe 2) Pump 3) Well 4) Tanker 5) Bottles
40. Provider	1) Government 2) Private (formal) 3) Private (informal)
41. Monthly cost for the household (in INR)	
42. How often does water come? (Probe for the usual.)	1) Whole day 2) Every day regular, specify time 3) Every day, irregular 4) Less than every day, specify
43. How long are the gueues in number of people (probe for the usual)?	

D. Toilet facilities

44. Location of toilets	1) In premise 2) Out of premise (less than 100 m, 300 feet) 3) Out of premise (100-500m, 300-1600 feet) 4) Out of premise (more than 500m, 1600 feet)
45. Type	1) Flush, Pipe 2) Pit 3) No facility
46. Provider	1) Public 2) Private
47. Cost per visit in INR?	

E. Ration shop

48. Does the household have a ration card?	1) No (move on to part II) 2) APL 3) BPL 4) Antyodaya
49. How long does it take you to reach the shop? (Indicate time in minutes).	
50. How long are the queues in number of people (probe for the usual).	

51. How many times a month does the shop open?	1) 26 days in a month 2) Once a week, regular 3) Once a week, irregular 4) Once a month, regular 5) Once a month, irregular 6) Less than once a month
52. How many times do you need to visit before you get your ration? (Probe for the usual.)	
53. How do you know when the ration arrives?*	1) Official SMS or call 2) Informal communication from the shop keeper 3) Hearsay 4) Goes and checks 5) Does not receive any information 6) Other, specify

II. Individual questionnaire

Researcher's name:	
54. Individual ID (household ID + individual ID from question I.A.5)	
55. Among all basic services available in your area, which have done most to improve your every day life? Choose two.	1) Aadhar card 2) Ration card 3) Pension 4) Bank account 5) Better water supplies 6) Better toilets 7) Electricity 8) Better roads 9) Better housing 10) Better healthcare 11) Waste collection 12) Security 13) Caste certificate 14) Other, specify 15) Better school 16) Sewers
56. If you had to choose two areas that require improvements, what would they be?	1) 2)

A. Access to water

57. Who goes to fetch water usually?*	1) Adult women 2) Adult men 3) Girls 4) Boys
58. Do you fetch water on a regular basis?	1) Yes 2) No (move on to section B)
59. Do you take measures to ensure your safety when fetching water?*	1) Nothing special 2) Avoid certain times of the day 3) Avoid going alone 4) Avoid certain places 5) Other, specify
60. Do you have to give up other things in order to fetch water?*	1) Nothing in particular 2) Sleep, rest, watching TV 3) Work 4) Education 5) Caring for family members 6) Socialising 7) Religious activities 8) Being involved in associations, or parties 9) Other, specify 10) Household chores

B. Toilets

61. When does the toilet open?	1) All day 2) Twice a day (specify time) 3) Less than twice a day, specify
62. How long is the queue in number of people?	
63. Do you take measures to ensure your safety when going to the toilet?*	1) Nothing special 2) Avoid certain times of the day 3) Avoid going alone 4) Avoid certain places 5) Other, specify
64. Do you have to give up other things because of the time it takes to go to the toilet?*	1) Nothing in particular 2) Sleep, rest, watching 3) Work 4) Education 5) Caring for family members 6) Socialising 7) Religious activities 8) Being involved in associations, or parties 9) Other, specify 10) Household chores

C. Ration card

65. Who usually buys groceries from the ration shop?*	1) Adult women 2) Adult men 3) Girls 4) Boys
66. Do you regularly buy groceries from the ration shop?	1) Yes 2) No (move on to the section D)
67. Do you take precautions to ensure your safety when going to the ration shop?*	1) Nothing special 2) I avoid certain times of the day 3) I avoid going alone 4) I avoid certain routes, or shops because they are unsafe 5) Other, specify
68. If you did not have to spend time going to the ration shop, what would you do instead?*	1) Nothing in particular 2) Sleep, rest, watching 3) Work 4) Education 5) Caring for family members 6) Socialising 7) Religious activities 8) Being involved in associations, parties, etc. 9) Other, specify 10) Household chores

D. Pension and other cash schemes

69. Do you get any cash from the government, pension or other?	1) Yes, specify what scheme 2) No (move on to section E)
70. How do you get the money?	1) Cash in hand 2) Transferred to your bank account 3) Cheque
71. How much time does it take you to reach the place where you get your pension? (In minutes.)	
72. How long is the queue in number of people (probe for the usual).	
73. How often do you get your cash?	1) More than once a month, specify 2) Once a month, regular 3) Once a month, irregular 4) Less than once a month, regular (specify) 5) Less than once a month, irregular (specify)
74. How many times do you need to visit the office or bank in order to get your pension?	
75. If you did not have to spend this time trying to get your pension, what would you do instead?*	1) Nothing in particular 2) Sleep, rest, watching TV 3) Work 4) Education and learning 5) Spending time with family members 6) Socialising 7) Religious activities 8) Being involved in associations, or parties 9) Other, specify 10) Household chores

E. Identity

76. Do you have any of the following documents?*	1) Nothing (move on to section F) 2) Aadhar 3) Birth certificate 4) Voter ID 5) Caste certificate
77. Where did you get it made? (If more than one document, choose the most recent).	1) In Delhi, after moving to Madanpur Khadar or Sunder Nagri 2) In Delhi, but before moving to MK or SN 3) Outside Delhi (move on to section F)
78. How much time does it take you to reach the office where documents are made? (In minutes.)	
79. How long is the queue in number of people?	

80. How many times do you need to visit the office in order to get your document?	

F. Initiatives taken to access to services

81. Did you take any action to improve the basic services available to you?	1) Yes (move on to 83) 2) No (after question 82 move on to 87)
82. If no, why not? (Probe for the primary reason. After this question move on to 96.)	1) No time 2) No point in trying 3) Did not know how 4) Did not have the right contacts 5) Feared reprisal 6) Other, specify 7) Family restriction 8) Recent arrival 9) Unable to unite
83. If yes, what service was it for?*	1) Water 2) Toilets 3) PDS 4) Pension 5) Aadhar card 6) Caste, birth, and other certificates, specify 7) Other, specify 8) Education 9) Electricity 10) Safety
84. What did you do?*	1) Applied 2) Asked someone to make a request for me 3) Demonstration, sit-in, 4) Self-provisioning 5) Other, specify 6) Attended meetings
85. Did someone help you?*	1) No one 2) The slum lord or Pradhan 3) The local representative 4) A bureaucrat (specify) 5) A party representative (specify) 6) A relative (specify) 7) An NGO 8) A lawyer 9) A religious leader 10) A union 11) A caste-fellow 12) Someone from your region 13) Your employer 14) Other specify 15) Landlord 16) Police
86. For how long did you try to get the service before you obtained it or stopped trying?	
87. If it was not as time consuming, would you have tried other ways to improve basic services available to you?	1) Yes (specify) 2) No

G. Politics

Do you devote time to local associations?		1. Never	2. Daily	3. Weekly	4. Monthly	5. Less than monthly
	88. Political Party					
	89. Neighbourhood association					
	90. Religious association					
	91. Caste association					
	92. Cultural, sports association					
	93. Welfare association					
	94. Women's association					
	95. Other, specify					

Are you in touch with: 1) Yes 2) No	96. Lawyer	97. Bureaucrat	98. Politician	99. NGO	100. Local strong man	101. Religious leader	102. Other power-holder (specify)
How often? 1) Daily 2) Weekly 3) Once a month 4) Less than monthly	103.	104.	105.	106.	107.	108.	109.
What links you to him/her?* 1) Acquaintance 2) Friend 3) Family member 4) Caste fellow 5) Same religion 6) Same region 7) Business partner 8) Other, specify 9) NGO	110.	111.	112.	113.	114.	115.	116.
How do you keep in touch?* 1) Visits 2) Attend weddings 3) Spend time helping 4) Give money, gifts 5) Phone calls 6) Nothing special 7) Other, specify 8) Attended meeting	117.	118.	119.	120.	121.	122.	123.

124. Did you vote in the past elections?	1) Never 3) National 2) State 4) Municipal
125. If not, why?	1) No right to vote in India 2) No right to vote in Delhi 3) No time to vote 4) It does not make a difference 5) Other, specify 6) No voter card 7) Not aware about votations

Is the party you voted for in power?		1. Yes	2. No	3. I don't know
	126. National			
	127. State			
	128. Municipal			

129. If a politician asked you to tell him one thing you expect from him, what would you say? Choose two.	1) Improve access to services (water, health, education, etc.) 2) Safety 3) Protect you from being discriminated because of your caste, religion or origin 4) Improve the economic situation to create more jobs 5) Provide a clean environment 6) Protect our culture and values 7) Other, specify

Annex 2. List of Caste Groups

Sunder Nagri Resettlement

Abassi (1)
Alawi (1)
Ansari (4)
Birasi (1)
Darzi (1)
Kayast (1)
Kumar (1)
Mansoori (1)
Meerakash (1)
Nevafardosh (1)
Pathan (3)
Qureishi (4)
Rajput (2)
Rangrez (1)
Siddiqui (1)
Saifi (1)
Salmani (1)
Sheikh (1)
Thakur (1)
Valmiki (1)

Sunder Nagri Slum

Abassi (1)
Ansari (6)
Dhobhi (1)
Fakhir (1)
Khatik (1)
Koli (6)
Mallah (1)
Mansoori (1)
Mughal
Pathan (2)
Pasi (1)
Rajput (2)
Sayid (1)
Saifi (1)
Siddiqui (2)
Sheikh (1)
Sunni (1)
Turk (1)
Valmiki (2)
Yadav (1)

Madanpur Khadar Resettlement

Abassi (1)
Ansari (2)
Baniya (1)
Bharma (1)
Brahmin (1)
Chauhan (1)
Dhobhi (1)
Kharwat nonia (1)
Marathi (1)
Mansoori (1)
Mahatvatull (1)
Meena (1)
Pathan (1)
Rainbanadai (1)
Rajput (2)
Rangrez (1)
Thakur (3)
Vaishya (1)
Valmiki (6)
Yadav (2)

Manapur Khadar Slum

Baniya (1)
Islam (4)
Kathi (1)
Mallah (2)
Sheikh (2)
Sunni (10)
Valmiki (1)

Annex 3. List of Interviewees

The list does not include families interviewed for the survey. It also does not include families interviewed for the ethnographic component, since discussions with them were repeated and eventually blended into informal interactions. For details about these families, see chapter three.

Researchers

Institute for Social Sciences	Vasant Kunj	05.01.16
Ambedkar University	Delhi Gate	06.01.16
Jawaharlal Nehru University	Jawaharlal Nehru University	14.01.16
Ambedkar University	Delhi Gate	15.01.16
Water Aid	Connaught Place	15.01.16
Ambedkar University	Delhi Gate	22.01.16
Delhi University	Janpath	27.01.16
Centre for the Study of Developing Societies	Civil Lines	28.01.16
Delhi University	Defence Colony	31.01.16
World Bank	Defence Colony	05.02.16
School of Urban Planning	Rama Krishna Puram	08.02.16
Institute of Social Science	Vasant Kunj	16.02.16
Institute for Social Science	Vasant Kunj	04.04.16
Right to Food Campaign	Jawaharlal Nehru University	03.10.16
Film maker, researcher	Noida	07.10.16

NGOs and activists

Water aid	Defence Colony	08.01.16
Hazar Centre	Defence Colony	12.01.16
World Food Programme	Hauz Khas	28.01.16
Water Aid	Connaught Place	29.01.16
Lawyer and activist	Defence Colony	03.02.16
Lawyer and activist	Ramlila Maidan	03.02.16
Activist, urban poverty	Ramlila Maidan	03.02.16
Centre for Financial Accountability	Ramlila Maidan	04.02.16
Yuva	Green Park	04.02.16
Efrah	Sarita Vihar	07.02.16
Efrah	Madanpur Khadar	09.02.16
Jaghori	Madanpur Khadar	13.02.16
Youth group, Jaghori	Madanpur Khadar	13.02.16
Staff member Josh, former Parivartan	Trilokpuri	05.02.16
Staff member Pardarshita, former Parivartan	Seemapuri	06.02.16
Staff member Pardarshita, former Parivartan	Seemapuri	06.02.16

Staff member, Chetanalaya	Sunder Nagri	18.02.16
Founder, Chetanalaya, former Parivartan	Sunder Nagri	18.02.16

Civil servants and service providers

Advisor, Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board, Government of Delhi	Ramlila Ground	03.02.16
	Delhi Secretariat	26.02.16
Nodal Secretary, Gender Department	Delhi Secretariat	25.02.16
Member, Delhi Dialogue Commission Government of Delhi	Delhi Secretariat	25.02.16
		15.03.16
Public Grievance Cell, Delhi Government	Delhi Secretariat	10.02.16
Tanker driver	Madanpur Khadar	16.09.16
Nodal Engineer, Delhi Water Board	Sarita Vihar	16.09.16
Head of dispensary	Sunder Nagri	20.09.16
		30.09.16
Head of dispensary	Madanpur Khadar	21.09.16
School Principal and teachers	Sunder Nagri	22.03.16
Sanitation worker, team manager	Madanpur Khadar	25.08.16
Sanitation worker	Madanpur Khadar	26.09.16
Sanitation worker	Madanpur Khadar	26.09.16
Sanitation worker	Sunder Nagri	22.10.18
Subsidised food shop owner	Sunder Nagri	21.09.16
Subsidised food shop owner	Sunder Nagri	14.10.16
Subsidised food shop owner	Madanpur Khadar	05.11.16
Director Social Statistics, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation	Rama Krishna Puram	24.10.16
Superintendent of Police	Madanpur Khadar	25.10.16
Communications advisor, Office of the Chief Minister	Delhi Secretariat	10.10.16
Food Security Officer	Sunder Nagri	25.03.16
Civil servants, district administration	Sunder Nagri	29.08.16

Political representative and members of political parties

MP, Okhla	Kalindi Kunj	07.11.16
MLA	Sunder Nagri	05.10.16
		15.10.16
MLA	Jamia Nagar	11.11.16
Assistant, MLA	Sunder Nagri	25.09.16
		05.10.16
		01.11.16
		10.11.16
Councillor, BJP	Madanpur Khadar	26.02.16
Acting Councillor, husband of elected Councillor	Sunder Nagri	29.10.16
		28.08.16
		14.11.16

Convenor, BJP	Madanpur Khadar	12.02.16
		24.02.16
		09.04.16
		29.09.16
		25.10.16
		27.10.16
Convenor, BJP	Sunder Nagri	22.10.16
Convenor, Congress	Madanpur Khadar	24.02.16
		17.03.16
Convenor, Congress	Sunder Nagri	15.02.16
		23.10.16
		09.11.16
Convenor, AAP	Madanpur Khadar village	22.10.16
Candidate to the Councillor's ticket, AAP	Madanpur Khadar	18.02.16
Candidate to the Councillor's ticket, AAP		07.11.17
Coordinator, AAP	Sunder Nagri	25.02.16
Head of women committee, BJP	Madanpur Khadar	09.02.16
Head of women committee, BJP	Madanpur Khadar	09.02.16
Head of women committee, AAP	Madanpur Khadar	18.02.16
President, Aam Sabha Party	Madanpur Khadar	09.10.16
		02.11.16
		01.12.16

Other

Head of Neighbourhood Welfare Association	Madanpur Khadar	24.02.16
		29.10.16
		14.09.16
Head of Neighbourhood Welfare Association	Sunder Nagri	25.02.16
Site supervisor	Madanpur Khadar, slum	02.02.16
		15.10.16
Contractor	Madanpur Khadar, slum	12.11.16
		02.02.16
		12.11.16
Member, All Assam Labour Union	Madanpur Khadar, slum	04.03.16
Former volunteer, Parivartan	Sunder Nagri	06.02.16
		18.02.16
		20.02.16
		28.03.16
		25.08.16
		23.10.16
		08.11.16
Former volunteer, Parivartan	Sunder Nagri	06.02.16
Mother of Santosh Koli	Sunder Nagri	06.02.16

Sister of Santosh Koli	Sunder Nagri	06.02.16
Brother of Santosh Koli	Sunder Nagri	07.02.16
Resident, Congress street leader	Sunder Nagri	26.02.16
Former volunteer, Parivartan	Sunder Nagri	25.02.16
Former Community mobiliser, Action India	Sunder Nagri	01.11.16
Member of water committee 1	Madanpur Khadar	13.02.16
		09.11.16
		11.11.16
Member of water committee 2	Madanpur Khadar	21.10.16
		02.10.16
Member of water committee 3	Madanpur Khadar	16.09.16
		09.10.16
		11.10.16
Coordinator of the water committees	Madanpur Khadar	15.02.16
		25.03.16
		20.10.16
Community mobiliser, EFRAH	Madanpur Khadar	15.02.16
Community mobiliser, EFRAH	Madanpur Khadar	19.02.16
Activist and AAP volunteers	Madanpur Khadar	09.11.16