

Gendered invisible urban resilience

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Introduction

Cities are where the world's population lives and future growth will be in sites that have less than one million people (United Nations 2018). These cities are called regional cities, medium-sized cities, even ordinary cities (Robinson 2006). But no matter how they are described, they are not understood; thus limiting how we understand the governance dynamics in the urban Global South. Peake and Rieker, paraphrasing Simone (2004), argue “the urban, now more than ever, is a political stake that opens up and close off new possibilities and constraints” (2013, 12). This statement continues to resonate in places such as Nepal. When considering the everyday urban landscape in Nepal, the individual does not have much power and control, especially if the individual is a woman. The vital yet invisible (Escobar 2012) role of women's groups who serve as providers of social, environmental, and economic resilience in cities of the urban South warrants consideration. Women provide for those who are unable to manage on their own.

The conceptual framework for this chapter's exploration of resilience and reworking follows Cindi Katz's (2004) understanding of resilience and reworking. Katz explores the concepts of resilience, reworking, and resistance on politics of social reproduction and everyday life in Sudan and Harlem. Katz (2010, 318) distinguishes: “Between practices of resilience, reworking, and resistance so as to better understand the subtleties of people's oppositional practices and [to] not overestimate their counter-hegemonic effects (Katz 2004)”. Using a case study based on one of the largest cities in Nepal, a conceptual space is created to showcase the invisible and vital role of women. Women not only provide essential resilience in the city through social reproductive services, but also provide economic resilience through the financial provision of funds in times of crisis to those in need. The urban risk governance landscape allows women to be resilient and yet invisible. Rather, they are not allowed to rework the urban to suit the needs of themselves, their families and their networks. In this chapter, through the intersection of invisibility and gender, considerations of resilience and reworking the urban are furthered. The chapter is structured in the following manner: a brief description of urban Nepal, the conceptual framing of resilience and reworking, overview of women's groups, and how they provide social, environmental, and financial urban resilience, a description of neighborhood groups and how they rework the urban, followed by a discussion of power and invisibility and, lastly, the conclusion.

Investigating urban Nepal

Nepal is a post-conflict, hazard-prone country where international remittances are the backbone of the economy. The urban administrative landscape is radically changing in Nepal due to political wrangling over control of the country. For example, in 2001 there were 58 municipalities including the metropolitan city of Kathmandu and four sub-metropolitan cities (Tanaka 2009). In 2014, the number suddenly increased to 191 municipalities because of political infighting between central government ministries. In early 2015, an additional 28 municipalities were created, for a total of 219. Due to the Gorkha earthquake sequence in Spring 2015, the national constituent assembly promulgated a new constitution in September 2015 after deliberating for seven years (Ruszczuk 2018a). Within this changing political and administrative landscape, the political decision to allow municipal elections to take place in the Spring of 2017 (local elections were banned in 2002) is creating an environment for dramatic local change (Ruszczuk 2018b). By the end of 2017, there were over 700 urban and rural municipalities.

There is consensus amongst scholars that there is a “profound failure by the [Nepalese] state to provide services and stable government” for its citizens, but simultaneously the Nepalese government is able to continue to “reproduce itself and to function in some contexts” (Nightingale *et al.* 2018, 851). This research furthers this point by showing how the government not only functions but also furthers its interests by controlling who can be resilient and who can rework the urban context. The chapter is based on research carried out in an iterative manner over a period of three years (Ruszczuk 2017). Three fieldwork trips during November 2014 – October 2015 coincided with the phase commonly referred to by foreigners: “before, during and after” the high intensity earthquake of April 2015 (Government of Nepal *et al.* 2015). Subsequently, one other research visit in November 2017 was carried out to assess on-going urban changes and the impact on the (in)visibility of women. The situation has not improved for women. Rather the tremendous uncertainty regarding how the local authorities will implement their new responsibilities with unclear levels of financial and human resources is creating a situation where all stakeholders are waiting to see who will lead and how to engage in the changing local governance landscape.

Bharatpur, the case study site for this research, is one of the largest cities in Nepal and has a population of 300,000. It is located on the plains of Nepal, in central province seven, bordering Bihar State, India (Figure 20.1). Bharatpur is a heterogeneous city; the main caste and ethnic groups are Brahmin, Chettri, Newari, Tamang, and Gurung (Bharatpur Municipality 2014). Internal migration continues and includes new affluent high caste migrants, migrants who are fleeing conflict in their villages and towns, as well as economic migrants from the neighboring Indian state of Bihar. Everyday lives are precarious because there is not a strong economic base in the city. The local (and national) economy is largely financed by remittances from young men working in the Gulf countries and Malaysia. Bharatpur’s residents have complex connections to each other, to the local authority, and to the urban environment. The way they live in the everyday and what they consider important provides an opportunity to know and learn (McFarlane 2010) about Bharatpur with the goal to make it a better place to live for all residents.

This research utilized a qualitative approach (McFarlane *et al.* 2016) investigating changes in risk perception and resilience strategies among different resident groups in Bharatpur. The intra-urban comparison strived to understand the features of intersection and difference (such as gender, caste and ethnicity, age, education, income levels, employment, length of time in the city, house ownership status, source of migration, sources of new knowledge, etc.) from a representative sample of the city’s inhabitants. Research methods included semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, photography, as well as observation of the daily flow of life in the two wards of comparison (ward 4 in the city center and ward 11 in a rural rapidly urbanizing part of

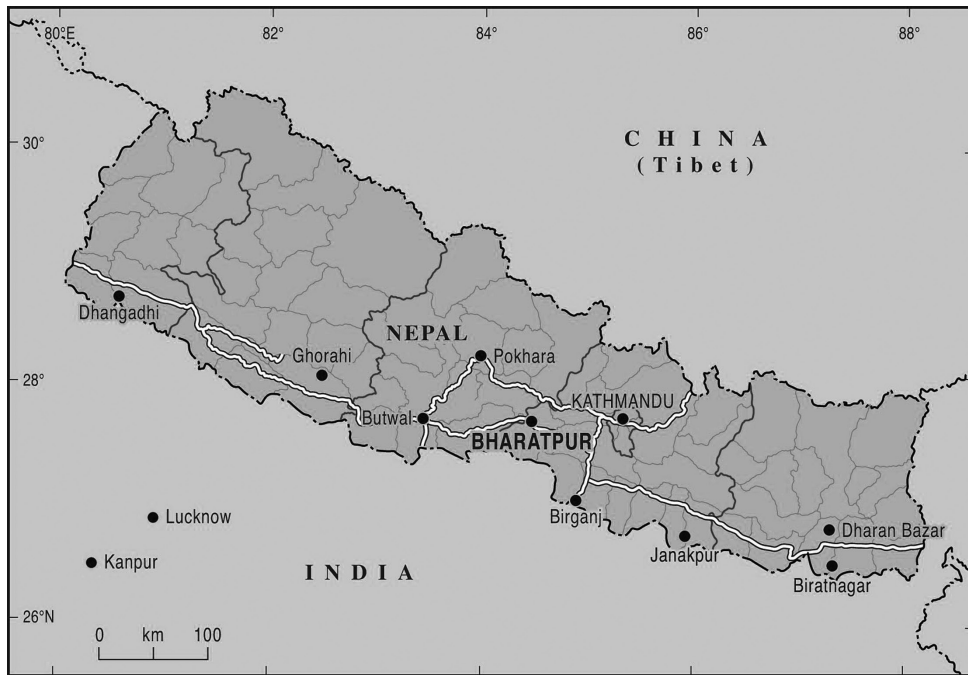


Figure 20.1 Nepal road network

Source: Cartographic Unit, Department of Geography, Durham University

the city) (Figure 20.2). The research also took a multiscale perspective, exploring how different scales impact each other and how power and influence flows between the scales (individual, community level, local authority, national, and international level). Over 100 people from the different scales were interviewed.

Conceptual framing of resilience and reworking

The concepts of resilience and reworking are a lens to consider how groups of residents address risk in the urban context of the Global South. Cindi Katz utilizes an urban, feminist understanding of resilience, reworking, and resistance in her scholarly work that is particularly useful for considering rapidly urbanising and changing Nepal. Katz (2010, 318) proposes: “Resilience, as the name suggests, is a means of getting by and recuperating one’s self, community, or resources in the face of dominant social forces. Resilience expresses and fosters what Gramsci (1971) called autonomous initiative.” Oftentimes, this can be perceived as “everyday acts of neighboring – the mutual relations of care giving, the sights on the future that help both young and old people keep hope, stay alive” (Katz 2004, 246). Katz continues that these practices “not only enable material and spiritual survival, but also the recuperation of dignity in a range of small transactions”. This can be seen in the activities of the women’s groups of Bharatpur to be discussed shortly.

On the subject of reworking, Katz argues (2010, 318):

Reworking travels a different register. With more explicit recognition of the social relations that produce the difficult conditions of everyday life, the practices of reworking are intended

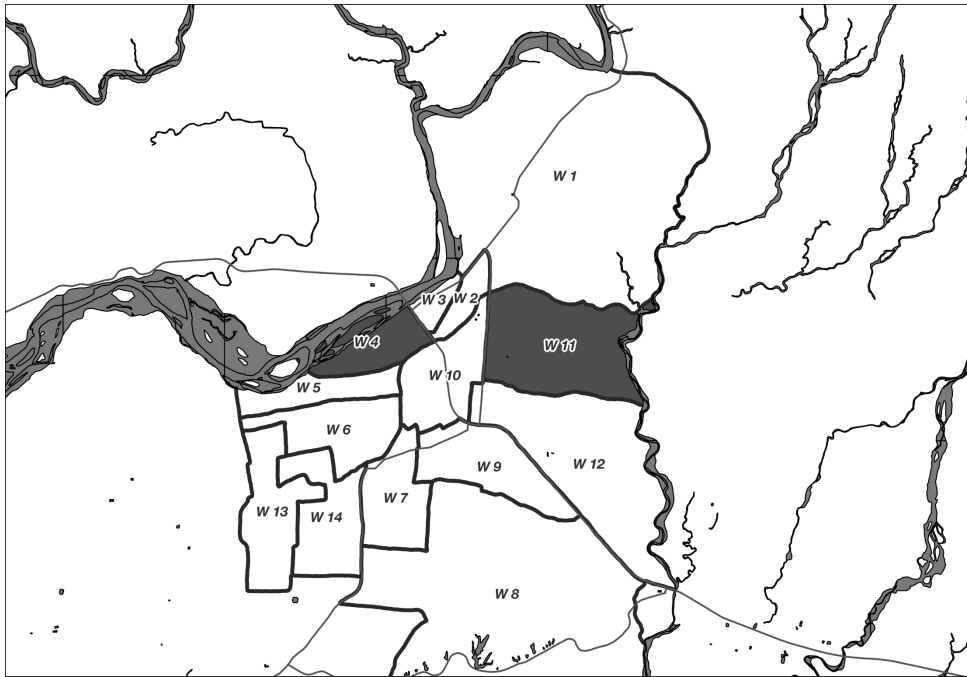


Figure 20.2 Bharatpur wards 1–14

Source: Author

to alter if not remake them entirely. The practices and strategies of reworking tend to be pragmatic and focused, staged in the realms and at the scale in which a problem is encountered, although their effects may be much more far-reaching in time, space, and consciousness-building. Their intent is to recalibrate power relations and respond to injustices more so than to challenge the grounds and social relations upon which they are built and sustained.

Katz continues by suggesting there are two interconnected aspects to the material social practices of reworking (2010, 247): “One is associated with redirecting and in some cases reconstituting available resources, and the other is associated with people’s retooling themselves as political subjects and social actors.” Social forms of engaging in the city can be witnessed in the form of localised, geographically based community groups: women’s groups and neighborhood groups. Through this chapter, the collective acts of managing perceived everyday risks are described. The women’s groups and the neighborhood groups strive to bring resilience and or reworking to their communities to mitigate against everyday risks. The male dominated neighborhood groups are engaging in practices of reworking the urban political context in a way that the women’s groups are not allowed to. This will be discussed below.

Women’s groups provide urban resilience

Women’s groups have been a feature of rural Nepal and are being introduced to the urbanizing areas with migration (although in urban Kathmandu Valley, women’s groups have existed for many years in the indigenous Newari community). Women organize themselves into women’s

groups (or mother's groups in the Nepalese language) with 60–100 members, on a geographic basis that appear to overlap with neighborhood groups if they exist. The groups are between one and ten years old (mostly around two years old as of 2015 when this particular data was collected) and for the most part, have been established without international donor intervention. Rocheleau *et al.* (1996, 18) highlight women have “visions of their rights, roles, and responsibilities and they are aided by participation in groups and organisations”. Unanimously, women interviewed explained that they established groups because they worried about social and economic issues that were not being addressed by the local authority and or by the neighborhood group (if one existed in the area).

The Little Flower Women's group is an example of a women's group in Bharatpur which contains many features of the women's groups interviewed. The members of the Little Flower Women's Group located in the city center (ward 4) include housewives, teachers, and are “job holders” (the respondents' term); many of their husbands are absent – they are abroad working. These women are primarily high-caste Brahmin and Chettri and are newcomers (arrived in the past five years) who have built homes in the center of town that is rapidly transforming into a middle class area. Through participation in the Little Flower Women's Group, they interact with other women. Otherwise, they are restricted to their houses if they are not employed. Through engagement in a women's group, they can learn about diverse subjects such as health care and earthquake awareness, they build relationships with others, and make networks that can support them in a time of need. This is especially important for those wives whose husbands are abroad working and away for long stretches of time.

Dilu is a recent newcomer, with a secondary education, from the Newar ethnic group and a self identified social activist who helps people in the community. Dilu explains how the Little Flower Women's Group serves as environmental and social resilience in the city:

The women's group cleans the roads and during religious festivals we coordinate with other organisations. We work for empowerment of women. We solve problems in the community and resolve disputes. Women have great power in the community. We do a lot of work but it is unseen [by the local authorities]. The major issue is that the municipality does not want to communicate with the women's groups. We are working for them, the government, [doing their work] but they still not seeing it.

Dilu continues by explaining that women solve problems in the community and that women's groups offer a range of social services: they support children who cannot access schools due to lack of money, they intervene in domestic disputes as well as attempt to address alcohol and drug abuse in the community. In the city center (ward 4), the women's groups are noticeable and serve a vital role in the city. The women's groups are leaders in many areas associated with urban society in the mixed usage commercial and residential part of the city. This is due to an absence of neighborhood groups in the city center. Businessmen's clubs are visible but neighborhood groups are not. It is not clear why this is the case, but the outward migration of many men for remittances may be part of the explanation.

In the rural, rapidly urbanizing area of the city (such as ward 11), there are few women's groups and more neighborhood groups. Some of the women's groups have been established with the support of a donor-funded project targeting economically poor and socially marginalized residents of Bharatpur. The goal of the project was to create a link between residents and the local authority. From discussions with one such newly created women's group on “Jungle Road”, the members explained that they have learnt the value of participation in a community group. The women's group has changed the way they (as women) interact with the newly established (by

the donor project) neighborhood groups and the local government. They value the opportunity to share their household and family problems with other women and also to learn about health programmes. The leader explains that by participating in the women's group:

It has made us aware; we did not know how to speak before, now we are confident... We are proud of our cleanliness campaign [to pick up litter] and also the fact that we are more aware. We save money and distribute to each other in a time of need. Controlling this money, this gives us grounds to participate, we can now speak to the men, and we have a voice.

From a gender perspective, in Nepal financial security can be addressed not through jobs, but through a safety net in the form of group lending. Women value the guaranteed financial support in case of a crisis or an emergency. The savings and credit schemes are critical to all women's groups. Both the Jungle Road Women's Group in urbanizing Bharatpur and the Little Flower Women's Group in the city center explain that all members contribute 200 NPR monthly (equivalent of \$2) and, each month, one woman can access the funds (if necessary) – up to 30,000 NPR (equivalent of \$300) with minimal interest. The most common uses for the money include medical treatment, private school tuition fees and materials and, less frequently, construction of a house.

Through the provision of informal financial resilience in the form of the group saving and credit schemes, they are addressing economic security through the financial schemes. The schemes are a safety net if a family faces extreme difficulty in their livelihood's strategy, if health deteriorates, in case of death or other everyday crises. It is valuable to note, in Bharatpur, the women's saving and credit schemes do not provide income-generating loans; rather the group approach enables women to ensure household subsistence and survival, and, less frequently, planning for the future. Through the management of funds, the women are empowered to "have a voice" and power to support themselves and other women in a time of need without needing to ask for approval from husbands.

In the Global South, Chant (2013, 1–2) argues: "Women make significant contributions to urban prosperity through a wide range of paid and unpaid labor, including building and consolidating shelter and strategizing around shortfalls in essential services" that should be provided by government. This can be seen in various ways in Bharatpur. For example, women's groups are essential in the organization and implementation of environmental and cleanliness campaigns in their neighborhoods, as well as the regular and ongoing collection of rubbish at pre-defined municipal collection points in their neighborhoods. The women's groups effectively provide unpaid governmental services related to the maintenance of streets. In some cases, this is done willingly and, in some cases, the neighborhood groups require the respective women's group to serve as environmental resilience for the city. More often in urbanizing ward 11 where there are strongly managed neighborhood groups and few women's groups, the wives of neighborhood group members provide the same environmental cleanliness services that women's groups provide in other parts of the city.

Miraftab (2007) suggests that in third-world cities, women's informal labor is not only within the family but also in the community through the provision of neighborhood care and municipal services such as those mentioned above. These forms of urban resilience provide a mechanism to consider the significant role women enact in the urban. Men in neighborhood groups in both wards of comparison view pollution and environmental cleanliness as a concern. The municipality also is interested in maintaining the cleanliness of streets. Rather than employing municipal workers, the local authority and the neighborhood groups pressure the

wives and women's groups' members to serve as environmental resilience in the city in the form of unpaid labor.

Of critical importance for all women interviewed in the city was participation in women's groups. Women value participation in the women's groups more so than participation in neighborhood groups because their voice is heard – their opinions matter more in the women's groups rather than in groups where men dominate discussion and action. Mohanty argues, "Women are central to the life of the neighborhood and communities [and] they assume leadership positions in these struggles" (2003, 515). This can be seen not only in Mohanty's research site of India but also in different ways in Nepal. The women's groups provide a range of services: social support to each other as well as to vulnerable individuals in the neighborhood who are not members, organization of festivals and, lastly, environmental cleanliness campaigns in the neighborhood. The groups also attempt to influence ward-level decision-making although with minimal success (Ruszczyk 2017). The local authority does not want to communicate with women's groups. They do not see a reason why they should, according to interviews with the local authority. The local authority interacts with those who it deems important. Women, irrespective of caste and ethnicity, affluence or even location in the city are deemed not worthy of engagement. It is this aspect of gender that is of significance in the understanding of resilience. Katz (2010) proposes that resilience is a means of getting by, surviving utilizing the resources at hand in the face of oppressive dominant social forces. Resilience is comprised of everyday acts of neighboring, giving of care to others, staying alive with dignity if possible. This is what was made visible in Bharatpur.

Neighborhood groups rework the urban

Neighborhood groups are a voluntary grouping of self-selected residents, between 50 and 150 households (most frequently approximately 100 households), from the same geographic area comprising approximately four blocks. This information is based on numerous interviews with groups throughout the city and the local authorities. There is never geographic overlap of neighborhood groups; rather in places there are no neighborhood groups (where many tenants or businesses are located such as in the city center). Men, with limited participation of women, are managing the neighborhood groups through committees. This self-organization on a geographic basis has been taking place since the late 1990s. These older neighborhood groups in Bharatpur were established under the auspices of a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) project called Rural Urban Partnership Project (RUPP). RUPP started in 1997 working in 13 municipalities (of which Bharatpur was one) and concluded in 2007 working in 30 municipalities. According to an UNDP Nepal interviewee, the original mandate of the UNDP neighborhood groups (also called tole-level organizations) was three fold: poverty reduction including saving and credit schemes, social development (addressing health, sanitation, disaster, and pro poor infrastructure), and, lastly, planning and governance (linking people to local government).

The UNDP unsuccessfully lobbied the central government to introduce the neighborhood groups as a lowest level of formal government in Nepal (one level below the wards). Parallel to the project's implementation and institutional support of neighborhood groups, local elections were held in 1997 and the elected officials served their five-year term. The king subsequently dissolved local representation due to the ongoing conflict with the Maoist rebels and the state of emergency. Since 2002, the lack of elected representation on a municipal and ward level has created a governance space where the ability of residents to influence the urban local authority is constrained because the local government officials are central government appointees. Affluent high-caste newcomers are creating new neighborhood groups (less than three years old as

of Spring 2015). These new neighborhood groups are able to address in a collective manner some of their perceived urban everyday risk in relation to poor physical infrastructure. They appear to have the social connections with formal government to bring infrastructure to their neighborhoods faster than the older neighborhood groups established by the ethnic or poorer high caste groups. For example, the newly created neighborhood groups in ward 11 are more powerful than the older groups. Narayan, a high-caste Brahmin shopkeeper who recently moved to urbanizing Bharatpur ward 11 with his wife and family states: “Our TLO (neighborhood group) is two years old. There are 100 households in the TLO. It was started in order to make a link to the ward secretary and municipality. People group themselves so they could talk to the municipality about physical infrastructure. The TLO also works for [environmental] cleanliness.” Overwhelmingly, the male-dominated neighborhood groups are working to address a specific, perceived everyday risk – the poor condition of dirt roads. The groups have aspirations for modernity in their neighborhoods through the provision of paved roads. The municipal government is also concerned with providing visible forms of physical infrastructure in the city. The municipality has *informally* declared that it will bring modernity in the form of paved roads to parts of the city. The caveat is that there must be an informal neighborhood group that can provide 25–30 per cent co-financing for the construction of the tarmacked road. The local authority does not communicate directly with all neighborhood groups; rather, information is communicated informally in a managed, gray space (Yiftachel 2009) only to some neighborhood groups according to interviews conducted with neighborhood groups and with the local authorities.

Based on their research in Nepal, Nightingale and Rankin (2015, 169) propose that people’s ability to make “claims on the ‘everyday state’” depend on social position and articulation with broader political economic currents. This can be seen through the influence of the different caste groups, length of time in Bharatpur, their geographic location in the city, and affluence. The Brahmins and Chettris who have lived in Bharatpur all of their lives, those who migrated into Bharatpur during the past 20 years and also the poorer newcomer Brahmins do not have the same political influence as the affluent high-caste Brahmin newcomers who have recently settled in Bharatpur. The long-term residents are watching, learning, and enthusiastically embracing the methods and links to the government brought by these newcomers who live in their area and who are willing to engage with them.

This collective “we” ness (Simone 2015, 2) of the neighborhood groups cannot be underestimated because it is allowing for unexpected actions by groups of people who might not be expected to work together due to their social and cultural histories. This is how the urban disrupts some relationships and allows new workings or manoeuvrings to transpire and at times creating new spaces for collective forms of “reworking” (Katz 2004) to address perceived risks. It is this weaving of diverse people with multiple identities as urban reworking that is useful as a conceptual tool to understanding the empirical setting of Bharatpur, Nepal. On the subject of reworking, Katz argues (2010) that reworking travels a different register than resilience. The practices and strategies of reworking tend to be pragmatic and focused, staged in the realms and at the scale in which a problem is encountered and at the scale in which it can be addressed or solved.

All neighborhood group representatives interviewed speak of the benefits of being in a group (as did the women’s groups’ members). Only by working together, as a collective or group, can they “rework” (Katz 2004) the urban reality, to address their risk perceptions in their everyday life. For example, the indigenous group, the Kumals, have learnt how to engage with others, how to work in a social environment that is unfamiliar. The ethnic Tamangs who live in the same area have more money to invest in physical infrastructure projects (paved roads and street lighting)

through the financial contribution of the Kumals. People are learning how to plan for the future, to make collective decisions that will impact and benefit their wider communities. They are acutely aware of the financial limitations of the local authority. The neighborhood groups are skilled at managing the women's groups to support their community resilience activities while simultaneously not allowing women to change the urban radically. The neighborhood groups are not only exhibiting resilient behavior but they are actively reworking their urban context. They are making vertical connections to the local authority that is allowing the groups to enhance their environment. The neighborhood groups are not trying to challenge the municipality and the political powers; they are instead attempting to "undermine its inequities on the very grounds on which they are cast" (Katz 2004, 247).

The neighborhood groups have retooled themselves as political subjects that the local authority can work with. They organize themselves into units informally acknowledged by the government and with the financial contribution expected by the government to provide physical resilience. Katz (2004, 239) utilizes the phrase "negotiating the recent future". This is an apt phrase for the rapidly changing urban reality in which people function, but the reality can change very quickly due to events that are occurring on scales that are beyond the control of residents. People's aspirations are bounded by their experiences with government, society, and due to their economic resources, location in the city, and other intersecting, identifying factors. The time-scale for reworking is also relatively short. People comprehend that their area of influence is limited in time, space and place; they can negotiate and rework only the recent material future.

Power and invisibility

Women's groups in Bharatpur provide vital social, environmental, and financial resilience to the everyday fabric of urban life. They enable the city to function. Women understand the value of the services they are providing and are proud of their accomplishments (Ruszczyk 2018b). However, women are dissatisfied with the invisibility imposed upon them by the patriarchal, hegemonic urban governance structures. Several women's groups highlight limitations of women's groups due to social constraints imposed by men (women need permission from husbands to join women's groups and men who steer women's groups (to do the bidding of men and neighborhood groups) and the government (which is not interested to engage with women's interpretations of urban risk). This is the same local authority that is willing to use women to clean the streets, thus serving an environmental maintenance function in the city most commonly associated with public sector provision.

There are tensions between women's groups who control their own financial schemes and male-dominated groups. For example, the newly elected president explains that the new management of the River neighborhood group in the city center will no longer "take" the money of the women's group and distribute it to the neighborhood group members as grants. The River women's group is very angry that their money was appropriated. They have no recourse and they unwillingly support the neighborhood group in cleaning the streets and completing other tasks the neighborhood group "asks" of them. In discussions with many women's groups, issues of power, control, and tension-filled relationships with neighborhood groups are often raised. At times, women's groups are a source of tension for the male-dominated neighborhood groups. Tensions arise when women's groups become too visible in terms of their activities and requests for changes in their communities and too powerful in terms of the money they have under management. Subsequently, attempts are made to take away the financial resources of the women's groups and to decrease women's ability to request social change.

Power dynamics between neighborhood groups and women's groups force women's groups to be (only) invisible resilience in the urban. Relationships are negotiated, often to the benefit of the male-dominated groups. In the rural areas of the city, the tole-level organizations are powerful and influential (partly due to the affluent newcomers' high-caste status). They do not generally support the establishment of women's organizations suggesting that women do not need their own groups since "Neighborhood groups take care of everything" according to a president of a neighborhood group in rural Bharatpur. This same president continued: "The tole level organization looks at the overall problems of the community but women's groups – they are only confined with women's problems." This translates into concerns perceived by women in relation to social issues, children's education, health for the family, and other everyday issues. A member of the women's group on "Jungle Road" in rural ward 11 (created through an international aid project) comments on the one-way relationship with the neighborhood group and the municipality: "Lines of communication flow from muni[cipality] – to – ward – to – TLO [neighborhood group] – to – women's group. This is the process. We work on how to implement it [what others decide is important]." Stronger, more influential neighborhood groups are effectively silencing women and their significant power through collective action. Women's groups are allowed to be resilient but are not allowed to do more, not allowed to rework the city in their vision. Dilu, the strategic advisor to a women's group in the city center, explains that women's groups are "working but we are in the 'shade', not in the sun" of the local authority. They wish to be seen, acknowledged and engaged with by the government. Chant (2013, 1) argues that there is a "stark contrast between women's input to and benefits from the accumulation of wealth in cities" [of the Global South]. Chant continues (2013, 2): "Women often reap limited reward in terms of equitable access to 'decent' work, human capital acquisition, physical and financial assets, intra-urban mobility, personal safety and security, and representation in formal structures of urban governance." Chant's description of the Global South and this empirically-driven work based in Nepal augment each other. Escobar (2012) discusses how discourse, visibility and power are interconnected. He suggests if people are brought into conversation, then it "consign[s] them to fields of vision" (2012, 156). Urban residents want to be "seen" by the government. Peake and Rieker (2013) explain that women's organizations in the Global South have argued for women's engagement with social and collective rights and issues above those of the individual. They argue that "women are an important node in the constellations of power, and thus in the production of centers and margins, in imaginaries of the urban" (2013, 2). Existing governance practices in Bharatpur, Nepal and the ensuing negotiation for governance space have created multifaceted sites of contestation between the community groups and the government and also between the two forms of collective action (neighborhood groups and women's groups). We can see in Bharatpur some of the "contested, dynamic processes through which social inequalities in Nepal are produced and entrenched" (Nightingale 2011, 161) but also how some boundaries are being reworked and are shifting in the urban.

The government and groups such as political parties and neighborhood groups influence whose resilience and whose reworking matters in the city. In the city center, where there are few neighborhood groups, there is no mechanism in place for the voices of women's groups to be heard outside of the neighborhood level. They are effectively silenced as islands of collective governance with minimal opportunities to change the urban. Women's perceptions of urban risk are not as important as men's perceptions of risk. Women's invisibility is enforced not just by the government but also by a multitude of subordinating layers in the patriarchal society. Women are informed by the actions of the patriarchal hegemony that they are viewed as forms of gendered, invisible, urban resilience. Only the neighborhood groups can rework the urban.

Conclusion

The opening paragraph of the chapter states that the urban is a political stake that opens and closes new possibilities and constraints. This is the reality in the urban spaces of the Global South whereby residents are influencing the urban setting and are simultaneously being changed by it. The empirical evidence suggests both resilience and reworking (Katz 2004, 2010) can be found in the rapidly urbanizing and changing setting of Bharatpur, Nepal. Women's groups showcase forms of gendered, invisible, social, environmental, and financial resilience, but they are not allowed to rework the urban to their benefit. In an atmosphere where local government provision is absent or organized according to factors including caste, affluence and geographical location, some residents are allowed by government to attempt to rework the urban through their collective efforts. The male-dominated neighborhood groups are enabled to rework the urban to achieve changes in physical infrastructure (paved roads) thus impacting the changing of ethnic and caste boundaries on a local level. Unfortunately, gender roles and norms appear unchanged throughout these processes.

Groups aspire for more than they have in the everyday; they desire a link with local authority in order to create a better future. The government is ambivalent towards women's groups, rendering them and their urban resilience activities invisible, but does engage with some neighborhood groups who have similar social and economic characteristics to those in power. The government decides who will be visible and the government manages the gray space of informality to suit its agenda rather than addressing the full range of risks as perceived by all residents. If agendas overlap, as in the case of physical infrastructure provision and preferably in locations where high-caste and affluent residents live, the local authorities engage.

Sustainable development goals number 5 (gender equity) and 11 (sustainable cities and communities) are intertwined and require understanding and debate because they are fundamental to our collective future world. It is in this context where existing forms of social mobilization need to be made visible, understood, and strengthened in the most appropriate ways. There are opportunities for intervention to foster progressive change and sustainable development by tackling the root causes of structural inequality that keep women marginalized in the city. This could involve prodding local authorities to create a policy space where informal groups including groups created by urban female residents can contribute to social and economic discourse as well as by supporting women's groups to advocate for change (in a way they view appropriate). Given the current context in Asian cities where the local level is the site where risk governance is increasingly decided, socially just futures can be gained by making visible, listening to, and engaging with women more substantively.

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