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Old Age – Home?
Middle-Class Senior Citizens and New Elderscapes in Urban India

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION



Figure 1.1: Axis Bank Advertisement at a South Delhi Upscale Market.
Photo: Annika Mayer

The senior living sector in India is at a crossroad. With the relaxation of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) restrictions on investments in the sector and [an] increasing population of seniors (over 100 million seniors in India at present) to cater to, there clearly exists an untapped opportunity for investment and development in this sector. Unlike western countries where the senior living industry has gained maturity, India provides an opportunity to developers, service providers, healthcare players and operators to create solutions specific to India while leveraging learning from across the world. (M. Kumar and Gattani 2015)

This passage taken from a report of the global real estate consultant company Jones Lang LaSalle (JLL) evokes the image of India as the land of untapped opportunities for development in the senior market. Considering the changing dynamics of Indian society and demographics, investment in the senior market seems to be a promising business opportunity. Indeed, we currently witness the emergence of a variety of private elder care services for the well-off in India. Institutionalised elder care hardly existed twenty years ago except for few facilities provided for the destitute. The proliferation of middle-class old-age homes started in the mid-1990s (Lamb 2009, 4) and since the beginning of the new millennium retirement communities for an affluent clientele have come up, now mushrooming all over India, particularly in the vicinity of large metropolises. Many Indians regard the emergence of market-based elder care as representation of profound societal changes which accompany the country's economic liberalisation. The transformations are considered to include not only an increasingly scattered family life but also a shift in values to individualism and materialism.

In his research during the 1980s and early 1990s anthropologist Lawrence Cohen found that gerontological work as well as middle-class discourses in India were permeated by the narrative that modernity is accompanied by a loss of a morally superior state of Indianness, which comprised the care and respect for elders in joint families (1998, 103ff.). The "fall of the joint family" was conceived as a consequence of increasing urbanisation, industrialisation, modernisation and Westernisation (Cohen 1998, 17). Notwithstanding the fact, that the vast majority of India's elderly population still lives together with their children¹ and that cohabitation is even more prevalent among middle classes and upper classes than among lower classes (UNFPA 2012, 73), these narratives prevail until today. However, as anthropologist Sarah Lamb's (2009) recent fieldwork has revealed debates over ageing in modern times have increasingly become multi-layered. My research affirms that various positive accounts of extra-familial care can be found in Indian discourses about ageing. Quite a few recent newspaper articles, for instance, emphasise the potentials of retirement communities which are seen as a valuable alternative to family care. "Retirement apartments: Senior living in India comes of age"

¹ According to Sathyanarayana et al. (2014, 87), who use data of two rounds of the National Family Health Surveys, the countrywide percentage of older persons living with children (and grandchildren) accounted for 78.4% in 2005-06.

reads one headline of The Indian Express (A 2015). An article in *The Times of India* states that “modern senior housing is a world removed from the ‘old-age homes’ of yesteryears [...] Far from being a pejorative [sic], it is a *lifestyle statement*” (Sinhai 2016, my emphasis). Advertisements of banks, insurance companies, and real estate developers make use of images that highlight old age as a life stage of new opportunities.

This ethnographic study pursues the question how recent social and urban transformations in India have altered ways of ageing. The main focus lies on the transformations and transitions, “the changes that people experience and those that they create” (Danley and Lynch 2013, 3). I look at the dynamic interplay of larger transformations – India’s shift to a neoliberal economy, the increase of migration and urbanisation – and smaller transitions in individual life courses to come to a better understanding of how we conceptualise ageing in times of globalisation. I particularly examine the ways older persons among the urban Indian middle class navigate through the course of these developments, consuming, performing, validating or contesting urban and social change in their everyday lives as well as in their personal relationships. Reminiscing about a golden past where older people were respectfully integrated in a family and neighbourly environment was just as much part of my informants’ narratives as the appreciation of India’s development towards “world class,” a regard for new lifestyles, and the pride they took in their children’s careers. In the course of the study I pinpoint the particular ways informants fashion meaningful lives in modern times. I thereby show that neither transformations nor transitions are unidirectional changes of progress or decline. They are multidimensional processes that contain disruptions, gaps, discrepancies and contradictions (Olivier de Sardan 2016). My work departs from earlier anthropological studies discussing the entanglements of ageing and modernity in India, in particular Sarah Lamb’s ethnography *Ageing and the Indian Diaspora. Cosmopolitan Families in India and Abroad* (2009) and Lawrence Cohen’s work *No Ageing in India. Alzheimer’s, the Bad Family, and Other Modern Things*. Both academics examine how ageing marks scholarly and popular debates about India’s contemporary political economy. While Cohen elaborated on the dominant discourse of the “decline of the joint family” under the force of modernity Lamb shifted the focus on ambiguous narratives, “which vertiginously intertwined celebration with denunciation” (2009, 5).

While I have gained important insights from these approaches, I ventured into new directions. Central to this thesis is the analysis of *elderscapes*, of urban spaces and sites which have recently emerged for and by older persons. The upcoming of gated retirement communities and senior centres, peer-based activities in public space and new senior markets all constitute these elderscapes. I argue that elderscapes are spaces where interactions and friendships outside the family are stimulated. I also argue that the access to these spaces is highly class-based and that

therefore new elderscapes sharpen social inequalities at old age. By taking into consideration the multiple, recently created or changing urban spaces and living arrangements in the New Capital Region of Delhi (NCR), this work contributes to the much needed but still marginal research on ageing within cities. It builds on work in environmental gerontology but also goes beyond, arguing that in order to study the entanglements of ageing and the urban fabric the perspective has to be enlarged. It broadens the focus from the environment-person relationship to the question of how memories, spatial practices, current urban developments and urban imaginaries inform ageing in the city.

The study also tracks ways in which younger and older people work out care arrangements and understand their responsibilities towards intergenerational reciprocity. My elderly informants often mentioned that in the terrain of a “fast paced” life, it was the responsibility of all generations to carve out new ways of ageing. Within their means, younger people made considerable efforts to find new solutions in order to balance their lifestyle and their parents’ care. Intergenerational relationships are a rich repository to examine and to further challenge the often proclaimed view that with modernisation and Westernisation the respect for old people has allegedly vanished and multigenerational household or joint families have eroded. My fieldwork reveals that far from being deteriorated, the generations have taken new steps to renegotiate and to invest in intergenerational relationships, albeit not without struggles or rifts.

I focus especially on daily lives and practices of my older informants which allows me to address subtle and less visible changes taking place in times of social transformations. However, different media will also play an important part of my analysis as they reveal much about dominant discourses and imagined futures. As repertoires of narratives and as catalyst of social change, media sources are a valuable means to provide new insights into the imagination of ageing.² The AXIS Bank advertisement on the photograph which opens up this chapter (figure 1.1) promotes “senior privilege accounts” which promise priority treatment at their branches and discounts at partner healthcare centres. The assumed need for medical care stands in contrast to the picture of the lusty older people which frames the promotion. The advertisement incorporates the idea of senior citizens as appropriate recipients of respectful treatment and care. It also contains notions of an active lifestyle at old age whereby the responsibility of “successful” ageing lies with the individual. The idea of “active ageing,” of a productive and creative lifestyle in late adulthood, is rather new in India. It dominates much of Western discourses on ageing (Lamb 2014) but it is also globally promoted by Non-Governmental Organisations

² I follow Appadurai’s conception of the imagination as a social practice, as a “form of negotiation between sites of agency (individuals) and globally defined fields of possibility” (Appadurai 1996, 31).

(NGOs) and other stakeholders who raise awareness about ageing. I scrutinise how these images, as repertoires of global ideas, enter local notions and dynamics.

This thesis also contributes to the scholarly discussion about transculturality. The report of the real estate consultant company Jones Lang LaSalle, opening this chapter, calls on stakeholders to “create solutions specific to India while leveraging learning from across the world” (M. Kumar and Gattani 2015). My research proves that real estate developers have already followed this trajectory. They studied aged care facilities in the USA, Europe and Australia before coming up with their own ideas on how to implement such concepts in India. Western ideas about ageing inform many elderscapes in India. I look at these global flows of ideas from a transcultural perspective.³ This approach helps understand the way “difference is negotiated within contacts and encounters, through selective appropriation, mediation, translation, re-historicizing and rereading of signs, alternatively through non-communication, rejection or resistance or through a succession/coexistence of any of these” (Juneja and Kravagna 2013, 25). Transculturality pinpoints the context of these processes. While a *transnational* research perspective investigates global flows in a “territorial-cum-political logic of modern nation states,” a *transcultural* perspective continually defines its units of investigation. It understands culture “in a condition of being made and remade” and neither takes historical units nor boundaries as given “but rather constitutes them as a subject of investigation, as products of spatial and cultural displacements” (Juneja and Kravagna 2013, 28f.). A transcultural lens allows studying the influence, translation, appropriation and rejection of Western and Indian notions of ageing in India today. It enables a shift from a concept of culture as self-contained to a concept of culture as fluid and transitioning. Cultural ideas of ageing are negotiated through actual practices that are marked by many discrepancies and ambivalences. It is an essential aim of this study to add to a better understanding of these negotiation processes that take place in the context of urban and social transformations.

In the following, I briefly lay out the theoretical frameworks of globalisation, modernity, ageing, and elderscapes on which this study is based. I then turn to the question of how these scholarly categories help us analyse lived realities in urban India today, especially with regard to transformations in intergenerational relations and care arrangements. I finally reflect on the research group, the research context and the design of this thesis and give a short overview outlining each chapter.

³ With his conceptualisation of transculturality, Wolfgang Welsch (2000) created a valuable tool to critique the idea of culture as a closed and homogeneous sphere. Nevertheless, Welsch’s position has some weak points, particularly because he neglects pre-modern forms of border-crossings as well as “ethnocentric notions of culture” and because he “does not address issues of processuality” (Juneja and Kravagna 2013, 24).

1.1. Theoretical Frameworks

Modern Age

When reporting on the subject of my thesis I was once told that “ageing was the new gender” meaning that the preoccupation with ageing had become in vogue in academia (like gender had before). Indeed the global demographic change has directed attention to the processes of ageing in different social, cultural, and demographical contexts. But why is it relevant to study ageing? And what does the focus on different local contexts of ageing reveal about the production of cultural differences in times of globalisation?

Social scientist Gerd Göckenjan reminds us that age does not exist as given entity but as a concept or framework which is reflected in social practices (2000, 15). However, age is not just an imaginary construct, but – as an embodied concept – part of lived realities. The constant reference to age allows for the objectification of the term.⁴ Paradoxically, age is an important passage which structures the life course but there is hardly anything that is characteristic of age. Age as a concept only embraces reality if it is “on everyone’s lips” (Göckenjan 2000, 16). Biological, sociocultural, political and economic aspects are ascribed to the process of ageing. Therefore, anthropological scholars who promote a “cross-cultural” or a “global” perspective on late adulthood, make the point that studies on ageing in different cultural context yield “a wondrous array of social responses to the physical imperatives of growing old. [...] Each cultural system creates a perceptual lens composed of potent symbols and meanings through which a particular version of reality is developed” (Sokolovsky 2009, xxi).

“Global ageing” is currently gaining international attention. It refers to the worldwide process wherein – due to longevity and declining fertility rates – “a growing proportion of people occupy the older range within an age structure” (McDaniel and Zimmer 2013, 1). In 2002 delegates of over 160 states, intergovernmental institutions and NGOs gathered at the United Nations Second World Assembly on Ageing in Madrid and came up with a revised long-term strategy for ageing populations. Since 2013 the NGO HelpAge has published a Global Age Watch Index, ranking countries by the wellbeing of their population over the age of sixty.⁵ The United Nations (UN) and the World Health Organization (WHO) continuously publish reports on this topic and there are various research initiatives concerning global ageing. Cohen cautioned that these international initiatives have produced a unilateral discourse postulating a

⁴ Simplifying and generalising realities is an important part of everyday communication. Taking into account empirical diversity would constantly increase the complexity of discourses and cause their rupture. Generalisations enable communication because deviant realities do not have to be included (Göckenjan 2000, 16).

⁵ See: <http://www.helpage.org/global-agewatch/> (accessed 15 March 2016).

“universal gerontological order” (1992, 127). He pointed out that global ageing policies are dominated by “claims of truth of a particular [Western] worldview” aiming to universalise “a culturally specific epistemology,” an endeavour he names internationalist gerontology (1998, 95). Gerontological and cross-cultural studies also tended to generalise Western notions of ageing, seeking to distract claimed universal factors of ageing from sociocultural variations. These works generated the idea that there is only one course of development, marginalising cultural differences. Cowgill and Holmes (1972) developed a renowned modernisation theory which explains the influence of global changes on elderly populations. They claimed that the industrialisation and commodification of a society correlated inevitably with the deprivation of resources at old age. The elderly’s loss of status and power in modern societies would lead to their social and economic dependency and to a decrease of their social integration. However, cultural scientist Brett Neilson rightly emphasises that acknowledging population ageing as a common process does not mean to claim its universality but rather to affirm the singularity of the ageing experience.

Far from legitimating an approach that correlates sociocultural differences with some abstract process of modernization, the theory of aging and globalization must account for concrete differences that unfold within modernity itself. This means recognizing the existence of plural, overlapping modernities which are at once locally manifest and mobile on the global scale. (Neilson 2003, 175f.)

By speaking of alternative, coeval or multiple modernities scholars strive to unravel the equation of the West and modernity (Bonnett 2005, 508). Modernity has long been conceptualised as the growth of reason which spread from the European cradle of Enlightenment across the world and has brought along not only scientific consciousness but also market-driven economies and political nation-states. Sociologist Anthony Giddens (Giddens and Pierson 1998, 94) equals modernity with a “modern society or industrial civilization” distinguished by a set of attitudes (like the idea that the world is subject to human transformation) as well as by economic and political institutions (like market economy and democracy). Leading sociologists have developed theories of a “second modernity” or “reflexive modernity,” characterised by an awareness of risk and individualisation (U. Beck, Giddens, and Lash 1994). They were critiqued for tacitly incorporating Western historical patterns into allegedly universal categories (Calhoun 2010, 608). Anthropological theories shifted the focus of comparison from the “West” to other reference points within the “Global South” but more recent works speak of “entangled modernities” to overcome the notions of “centre” and “periphery” (Conrad and Randeria 2002). While rightly challenging the Eurocentrism of the “monolithic modernity approach,” speaking of alternative, coeval, multiple or entangled modernities does not solve the problem of what makes them modernities in

common (James 2015, 36f.). Political scientist Paul James stresses that it is more fruitful to think of the modern as the constructivist reconstitution of social practices in relation to prior ontological orientations, which he refers to as “valences.”

The modern is thus defined by the way in which prior valences of social life — analogical, genealogical, mythological, cosmological and metaphorical relations — are reconstituted through a constructivist reframing of social practices in relation to basic categories of existence common to all humans: time, space, embodiment, performance and knowledge. The word ‘reconstituted’ here explicitly does not mean replaced. Prior valences continue on, even if framed by the new ontological dominance of constructivist meanings and practices. (James 2015, 51f.)

I share this understanding which conceptualises the “modern” not as an opposition to “tradition” competing for taking precedence but rather as a part of differing ontological formations co-existing in more or less strained relationships (James 2015, 11).

A theory of ageing and globalisation must thus account for the different ontological orientations which are reconstituted within modernity. Because notions of age and ageing are rooted in cultural and social frameworks, a transcultural perspective on ageing is a valuable tool for unfolding the ways in which culture is being made and remade through the negotiation of difference within spaces of encounters. The focus on middle-class older persons in India and the ways they grapple with making sense of recent social and urban transformations is therefore an important contribution to an understanding of how culture is reified. In the course of this introduction and by means of case-studies throughout the chapters, I strengthen the argument that the modern is always related to prior valences, focussing on the modality in which individuals actually manage and navigate through these fields of tension.

Central to any study on global entanglements is the analysis of the ways in which life’s unfolding⁶ “exceeds both the disciplinary apparatuses of the nation-state and the decentered networks of contemporary globalism” (Neilson 2003, 183). Anthropological studies are equipped to contribute to the study of globalisation⁷ beyond a mere meta-perspective on the nation-state and global actors. They focus on the dispersal and dissemination of sociocultural phenomena asking which cultural differentiations and identities the “complex, overlapping, disjunctive order” of a “global cultural economy” (Appadurai 1996, 32) or of a “global ecumene”

⁶ Referring to Deleuze’s notion of the fold Neilson (2003, 168) describes the life’s unfolding as follows: “A life that unfolds is [...] a life-in-process: a life that consists in an undifferentiated flux of time and experience, but that nonetheless passes through a series of phases, transitions, and trajectories—structured interruptions that impact directly upon the body and are experienced as eruptions out of movement.”

⁷ I follow Anthony Giddens’ definition of globalisation as “the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa. This is a dialectical process because such local happenings may move in an obverse direction from the very distanced relations that shape them. Local transformation is as much a part of globalisation as the lateral extension of social connections across time and space” (1990, 64).

(Hannerz 1992, 218) produces. They enquire which global cultural flows of ethno-, media-, techno-, finance- or ideoscapes emerge (Appadurai 1996, 33ff.). They also pinpoint asymmetries of power as well as processes of exclusion and essentialisation which are equally part of globalisation. While demographic studies can highlight the transformations in age structure which take place across the globe, they are not able to reveal the contradictory local practices or ambivalences that accompany such transformations. The demographic shift in the world's population also reveals asymmetries and cultural beliefs that shape global flows. Despite the increasing interconnectedness, we currently witness a strengthening of national movements and a re-establishing of borders in many areas of the world, India included.⁸ Anthropological studies contribute to a better understanding of ageing in times of globalisation by drawing attention to particularities that inform ways of ageing in the present.

To trace the entanglement of ageing and globalisation I follow Neilson's approach to "partake in a radically jumping of scales, from the most intimate spaces of the body to the large-scale spaces of capitalist accumulation and control" (2003, 176). My ethnographical material indicates that the life of older middle-class persons in urban India is shaped by a multitude of processes, ideas, and images which challenge the analytical divide into micro and macro levels. Lived realities of my informants rather suggest a complex interplay of scales whereby scales must be understood as processes rather than as fixed categories (Carr and Lempert 2016). Scaling in and scaling out opens up a new perspective on global cultural flows as well as on the singularity of the ageing experience. While we all face the moment of death – howsoever this is understood – ageing is an individual process, determined by variables like gender, class, caste, or ethnicity but also by collective and individual experiences and expectations over the course of life. As individuals age, they develop a "more integrated and particular sense of self." They are exposed to an increasing number of "cultural pathways" and they are subjected to "inequalities that have been accrued across a lifetime" (Biggs and Daatland 2006, 1). In consequence, people become more diverse as they age. At the same time they are exposed to homogenised sociocultural expectations of what is seen as an appropriate behaviour or lifestyle at a certain age which must not conform to their personal circumstances or experiences. Although age stereotypes are not fixed but in flux, "their limiting influence on wider

⁸In public discourses large-scale immigration is – at least in Europe today – dominantly debated as a threat to the welfare-state and to cultural values. It is not regarded as a solution to shifting demographics even though scholars have discussed this option for many years (Neilson 2009, 354). More than a decade ago Neilson (2003, 165) already noted that the "gap in fertility and population growth rates between the global North and South is [expected to create] a growing demand for immigrant workers in the rich countries. But there is no more sobering indicator of the developed world's disingenuous attempts to offset its demographic deficit than the increasing efforts of wealthy nations to exclude immigrants and refugees, a phenomenon particularly marked in Western Europe and Australia."

perceptions of what it means to ‘age well’ is nevertheless pervasive” (Biggs and Daatland 2006, 2). It is the tension between the diversity of older individuals and the dynamic social expectations and cultural ideas concerning older age which is in the centre of my thesis.

Urban Elderscapes

While global ageing has attracted attention, the fact “that the ‘longevity revolution’ is taking place in the context of growing urbanization” (Gusmano 2009, 397) is only slowly moving onto the agenda of international stakeholders.⁹ Scientists and policy-makers often postulate an “urban age” because more than half of the world’s population now lives in urban areas. Yet, urban scholars Neils Brenner and Christian Schmid (2014) argue that the concept of an urban age is empirically unsustainable as well as theoretically cohesionless. Empirically, the urban age thesis faces the problem of a “continued lack of agreement on what needs to be measured, and at what spatial scale, in analyses of world urbanization” (Brenner and Schmid 2014, 740). Theoretically, the concept perpetuates an obsolescent distinction of the urban versus the rural which does not take into account the “*de facto* sociospatial fluidity and relentless dynamism of the urban phenomenon under modern capitalism” (Brenner and Schmid 2014, 743 emphasis in original). The urban and urbanisation must be understood as theoretical categories that denote processes, not universal forms (Brenner and Schmid 2015).

By now, there has been only little theoretical or conceptual discussion on ageing in urban spaces. A turn towards an urban focus of gerontological research is worthwhile because it can shed light on the various connections of globalisation and ageing. Like ageing, urbanisation must not be conceptualised as a “unified and integrated global process” because this approach loses sight “of complex urban situations as particular engagements with the global” (Ong 2011, 2). Recently, scholars have advocated to decentralise urban research and to refrain from attempts to explain the “periphery” through concepts, debates and research methods of the “metropolises” (Connell 2007, 64; Edensor and Jayne 2012; Ong 2011; J. Robinson 2010). Anjaria and McFarlane (2011, 5) campaign for a novel understanding of recent urban processes in South Asia, particularly in the light of national, regional and transnational histories and perspectives which considerably differ from those of Europe and North America, albeit being intrinsically tied to them. From this perspective, all cities “can be understood as both assembling and inventing diverse ways of being modern” (J. Robinson 2010, 90). Detailed fieldwork is necessary to reveal cities as “nexus of situated and transnational ideas, institutions, actors, and practices” (Ong 2011, 4). Admittedly, the formation of large-scale cities and metropolitan regions is only one significant aspect of

⁹ The WHO has established a “Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities,” striving “to promote healthy and active ageing and a good quality of life” for older people in cities and communities. See: http://www.who.int/ageing/projects/age_friendly_cities_network/en/ (accessed 16 January 2017).

many more multi-dimensional urbanisation processes (Brenner and Schmid 2015, 152). Yet, as sociologist Saskia Sassen (2007, 126) points out, large cities are places where we can analyse a plurality of globalisation processes that “assume concrete, localized forms”. Delhi and its surrounding satellite cities comprise over 16.7 million people and have undergone vast transformations in the past decades. Therefore, it is a suitable case study to illustrate the multiple ways and apparent contradictions by which older people ascribe meaning to urban change and globalisation.

It is a central concern of this thesis to pinpoint the entanglements of ageing and urbanisation. Throughout the chapters, I highlight that urban environment, urban history and urban imaginaries influence older people’s lives and vice versa. At many different sites older people invent new ways of urban life and therefore take part in bringing about urban change. These sites are part of emerging *elderscapes* in the city. The term “elderscapes” was first used by sociologist Steven Katz (2009) who does not consistently elaborate the meaning of this term. According to anthropologist Arjun Appadurai, scapes are “dimensions of global cultural flows” (1996, 33). Appadurai differentiates between ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, financescapes and ideoscapes which describe the flows of people, images, technology, capital and ideologies. These scapes are not “objectively given relations” but rather “perspectival constructs, inflected by the historical, linguistic, and political situatedness of different sort of actors” (Appadurai 1996, 33). Katz describes elderscapes as culturally created spaces for retirement (2009, 463). Drawing on sociologist John Urry’s concept of scapes as “networks of machines, technologies, organisations, texts, and actors that constitute various interconnected nodes” (Urry 2000 cited in Katz 2009, 469) Katz locates elderscapes in a gerontology of mobility, which includes “the transculturality of both people and places as they age and change” (2009, 470). However, I do not look at elderscapes as landscape of (global) retirement mobility. I define elderscapes as the *cultural spaces and sites that have emerged for and by older persons*, including residential spaces, leisure spaces and market spaces. They are shaped by real estate companies, diasporic networks, neighbourhoods, families, and individuals. Elderscapes are not necessarily market-driven but can be self-generated and informal. I argue that elderscapes in Delhi are key-sites for the strengthening of middle-class identity. Real estate developers try to promote “senior living” spaces as a new, desirable lifestyle. Although in daily discourses connotations of these spaces continue to be pejorative, residents make meaning of them by stressing the valued company of peers. In a similar vein, peer-based spaces in local clubs or parks are essential for belonging to a certain class irrespective of one’s ethnic background. While former spaces in Delhi used to be determined by the affiliation to ethnicity and caste, new elderscapes are determined by the affiliation to class and a specific lifestyle. Environmental

gerontological studies on ageing in cities of the Global North predominantly look at the ways older people are excluded from participation in urban space. My research on ageing in urban India evidences that older people are also actively pursuing social exclusion by distancing themselves from lower classes. Nevertheless, the focus on elderscapes should not lead us to ignore that older age can also mean a decrease or retreat from public urban life, be it at home or in an institution. Old age is accompanied by vulnerabilities such as immobility or health problems. This can lead to a shrinking range of movement. Cities offer advantages for older people by providing access to medical care, leisure opportunities and shopping facilities. However, cities can also be perceived as threatening environments which may provoke feelings of vulnerability that often result from changes in the neighbourhoods or communities (Phillipson 2011, 280).

In recent years there has been a growing number of studies in “environmental gerontology” focussing on the “use and meaning of place in old age and of the older person’s changing relationship with environment” (Bernard and Rowles 2013, 284). The meaning of place in the ageing process (*place in ageing*) and, more particular, the meaning of staying in a familiar environment while growing old (*ageing in place*) are key foci of environmental gerontological studies (Rowles and Bernard 2013a; Wahl, Iwarsson, and Oswald 2012; Smith 2009; Chaudhury and Rowles 2005; Oswald and Wahl 2005; Rowles 1993). In this thesis I depart from this scholarly work. I analyse place-making strategies of my informants, I enquire how they navigate the multiple layers of built environment, and I examine what “home” means to them. The concept of “home” is controversial as the term is used both for an object (the house) and for an object-subject relationship (the relationship of house and resident) (Rapoport 1995, 29). Nevertheless, “home” is a useful tool to scrutinise the way older persons emotionally connect to space. Therefore I do not equate “home” with house but rather ask how space can become home, meaning an emotionally significant place (see chapter 4). However, I also go beyond the person-environment relationship and take into account larger urban transformations and urban imaginaries like Delhi’s ambition to become a world-class city. I refer to gating practices in the context of urban fear and to the reworking of collective memories in the shaping of a city’s future. This broadening of perspective contributes to a better understanding of ageing in the city. Present experiences are affected by the city’s past as well as by imaginaries of its future. Literary scholar Andreas Huyssen (2008, 3) rightly points out that cities are more than built environment as they embed manifold experiences and recollections.

All cities are palimpsests of real and diverse experiences and memories. They comprise a great variety of spatial practices, including architecture and planning, administration and business, labor and leisure, politics, culture, and everyday life. (Huyssen 2008, 3)

Furthermore, Huyssen stresses the importance of urban imaginaries as individually embodied images that determine people's behaviour.

An urban imaginary marks first and foremost the way city dwellers imagine their own city as the place of everyday life, the site of inspiring traditions and continuities as well as the scene of histories of destruction, crime, and conflicts of all kinds. Urban space is always and inevitably social space involving subjectivities and identities differentiated by class and race, gender and age, education and religion. An urban imaginary is the cognitive and somatic image which we carry within us of the places where we live, work, and play. It is an embodied material fact. Urban imaginaries are thus part of any city's reality, rather than being only figments of the imagination. What we think about a city and how we perceive it informs the ways we act in it. (Huyssen 2008, 3)

Given the complexity of urban space, new approaches to ageing in the city are urgently required. Space is a constituent of identity as well as of power hierarchies. Sociologist Chris Phillipson calls for research tackling the question in which ways "cities are appropriated symbolically by particular groups in pursuit of their interests – commercial, social, cultural, and political" (2010, 602). He advocates "an 'urban ethnography' that captures the disparate experiences of living in cities now subject to intense global change and strongly influenced by complex patterns of migration" (Phillipson 2010, 604). This thesis aims at providing such an ethnography. The case study of Delhi is suitable for analysing the multi-layered processes and experiences that inform ageing within cities. Delhi's history as a migrant city and its imaginary as a "world-class" metropolis play a decisive role in how older people give meaning to recent transformations. Different elderscapes like new senior living facilities and peer based places show how different stakeholders shape urban space and how older middle-class people pursue their interests. Furthermore, elderscapes like old-age homes and senior living facilities are spaces where ideas of "modernity" and "Indianness" are negotiated. This thesis provides an analysis of different scales and contributes to an understanding of the complexity that informs ageing in a city. Based on this framework I now turn to discussions on ageing in India today, which lay the ground for the unfolding of my research agenda.

1.2. Care Arrangements and Intergenerational Transformations

The economic liberalisation of India's markets since the early 1990s has altered occupational conditions and income opportunities as well as it has intensified migration, affecting family structures and care arrangements. Market research companies highlight the emergence and growth of a new middle-class consumer group in India even though their estimates vary considerably.¹⁰ Reports and research on the country's middle class often focus on younger

¹⁰ A McKinsey study (Beinhocker, Farrell, and Zainulbhai 2007, 56) estimated the Indian middle class at 50 million people in 2007 based on the real annual household disposable income. They projected that in

generations which make up the majority of India's population. Yet, the number of affluent middle-class elderly is also increasing. According to a study of the Indian consulting company Images-KSA Technopak, there were nine million prosperous "arrived veterans" between the age of 51 and 60 in 2005 (Brosius 2011, 461) who are now past retirement age.¹¹ The increase in income has enabled people – both elderly parents and their offspring – to live independently and to afford the "outsourcing" of elder care to institutions (Lamb 2009, 51). Due to extensive migration and emigration¹² of adult children seeking new job opportunities and due to new notions of nuclear family living, there is a small but increasing number of elderly residing alone or with a spouse in India.¹³ Leading private property developers have recently started to build "senior living" projects all over India, amongst others Ashiana Housing, Paranjape Schemes, Max India Group, Covai Property Centre and Tata Housing.¹⁴ These companies provide gated residences, typically located in the surrounding area of India's metropolises, and promise a secure and "hassle-free" life after retirement. It is important to keep in mind that these firms exclusively target a small elite.¹⁵ However, they reach a larger audience by creating new imaginaries of ageing in India. Advertisements in newspapers and on billboards are aiming at overcoming the negative image of care institutions in India. This is a tough battle to be fought since ageing within the joint family and caring for one's elderly parents are still seen as Indian core values (Lamb 2009, 50). Therefore, it is of much interest to analyse how these new

2025 the middle class would have enlarged to about 583 million people, around 41% of the population. A Credit Suisse study (Credit Suisse Research Institute 2015) defining middle class according to wealth rather than income is much less optimistic assuming the Indian middle class to be only 23.6 million people by 2015.

¹¹ The demographer R.B. Bhagat (2015, 258) even estimates that out of the 103 million Indian people above the age of sixty counted in the 2011 census "38 million belonged to the lower class, about 40 million to the middle class and the remaining 24 million belonged to the upper class."

¹² With 13.9 million people emigrating out of India in 2013, India is the leading emigration country worldwide. (World Bank 2016)

¹³ According to Sathyanarayan et al. (2012:13f) the countrywide number of older persons living alone or with spouse has doubled from 1992-93 to 2005-06 (from 9% to 18.7%). Yet, a closer look at the data shows that there are vast local differences. While in Tamil Nadu the number of people living alone or with spouse has risen from 5.2% to 13.7%, the percentage in Delhi has not changed dramatically (from 2.4 to 2.9%).

¹⁴ See: <https://www.ashianahousing.com/senior-living-india/>; <http://www.pscl.in/athashri-homes/>; <http://antaraseniorliving.com/>; <http://www.covaiprop.com/>, http://www.tatahousing.in/senior_living.php (accessed 05 January 2017).

¹⁵ Buyers have to afford prices from 2,200,000 Rupees to 7,500,000 Rupees (31,000 to 105,000 €) for one of Covai's retirement apartments or up to 60,000,000 Rupees (843,000 €) for one of Antara's luxury apartments, developed by Max Group, near Dehradun (A 2015). Smaller companies, like Epoch Elder Care, equally address the affluent. For their home in Gurgaon, they charge 92,000 Rupees (1,300 €) per month for a long-time single occupancy. Taking into account that the average income per capita in Delhi is estimated 23,345 Rupees (330 €) per month in 2015-16 (Hindustan Times 2016) only few people can afford these homes. Unless noted otherwise, the conversion ratio is the average exchange rate of the year 2015. To ease the reading amounts are rounded.

concepts are negotiated by various actors. Such projects are still not well-accepted by a broader public, presenting a “key challenge” as the report of the real estate consultant company JLL puts it.

The largest stumbling block for senior living in India is the social stigma attached with the concept. While senior living projects by developers like Athashri and Ashiana have seen an increased acceptance of the concept in the community, a lot more needs to be done to reach out and garner interest and acceptance of the larger sections. Entry of professional and reputed corporate groups developing lifestyle senior housing projects with a strong emphasis on service delivery rather than real estate will change the perception of such projects and shift the positioning from social stigma to an ‘aspirational project’ to be in. (M. Kumar and Gattani 2015, 7)

This account gives no indication which “community” it refers to, but my research shows that only a small amount of affluent elderly embraced these new senior living offers as a valuable alternative to living with children or living alone. Aspirations, which have successfully been created for middle-class gated residential enclaves (Srivastava 2012, 58), have not worked out the same way in the senior sector. While gated condominiums have become a sign for “global standards” and “modernity” (Srivastava 2012, 62), senior living concepts have not been able to transform stigma into brand. Despite the rapid increase of and growing demand for upper-class and middle-class elder care institutions, living in such facilities is not desired yet and it remains to be seen if and how this will change in the near future. But why does institutionalised elder care not appeal to middle-class Indians? Anthropologist Bianca Brijnath finds that the cultural meanings and the legislative reinforcement of family care sustain the negative perception of private institutions.

Cultural meanings of care, the impact of caring, the coping mechanisms of carers, and the broader legislative and policy environment helped reinforce not only that care should be personalised and confined to the home but also bolstered the social perception that old-age homes were sites where one ‘abandoned’ relatives. Old-age homes were spaces which symbolised an abrogation of familial responsibility. For many carers even questioning them about institutional care was seen to be questioning them about their morality, decency and commitment to their loved one. (Brijnath 2012, 709)

My research confirms that cultural expectations of the reciprocity of care and the importance of doing *sevā* (care) remain despite changes in family structures (see chapter 3). In her study on dementia care in Delhi, Brijnath found that the seeking of *ilāj* (cure) was “a powerful marker of *sevā*” and “reiterated the family’s devotion and love for the person with dementia” (Brijnath 2014, 59f.). In a similar vein, Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) I spoke with often mentioned that they were seeking the best possible care option for their parents regardless of the costs, thereby indicating their devotion to their parents. *Sevā*, literally meaning “service,” is a multi-layered concept especially since it has also been understood as religiously motivated acts of

humanitarian service more recently (Beckerlegge 2015, see chapter 3). An important aspect of sevā is the bodily and mental care which elders expect from younger kin. Sevā includes providing food, massaging feet, keeping company, or mastering incontinence. It furthermore encompasses acts of paying respect to the elderly (Lamb 2009, 144; Vatuk 1990, 72). The commodification of care in institutions is controversial because sevā is supposed to be fulfilled by family members rather than by commercial service providers. Sarah Lamb notes that the emergence of middle-class old-age homes¹⁶ is not easily accepted because “Indians take such emerging and novel modes of serving the aging to represent a profound transformation – a transformation involving not only aging per se, but also principles underlying the very identity of India as a nation and culture and the foundation of society” (Lamb 2005, 80). In media discourses and everyday conversations there is a prevailing anxiety that economic prosperity comes with the baggage of the deterioration of Indian values including the downfall of the joint family and the neglect of the elderly. In those narratives “modernity” and “tradition” are often constructed as diametrical opposites, being seemingly incompatible with each other. Anthropologist Christiane Brosius, who researched new forms of leisure and consumption in urban India, shows that at many different sites “notions like tradition and modernity, change and continuity are related to each other in a field of tensions” (Brosius 2010, 4). Ageing is a further such site. An online article in the *The Times of India* (Sinhai 2016), for instance, presented a list of posh retirement communities in India. In the comment section one reader complained that the author glorified the facilities, while the “proper place for elders” was within their families. Another reader replied that this was “a reality of the changing times” and that it reflected “a stagnant and foolish mindset” to “simply and blindly harking for the ‘good’ old way of life.”¹⁷ The message is that it is time for Indians to look ahead, to find practicable solutions for altered lifestyles instead of reminiscing about the past.

Neo-liberal work culture presupposes long working hours and high mobility and therefore presents new challenges to people regarding their time management. The shift in lifestyles demands the search for new solutions regarding elder care. Not surprisingly, start-up companies have begun to target the home care sector. E-commerce websites like Senior Shelf¹⁸ are coming up, providing online shopping for seniors. In the past few years, private service providers like

¹⁶ I use the term “old-age home” as this is prevalent in India. New real estate developers speak of “senior living” to avoid negative connotations.

¹⁷ See: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Homes-that-help-start-new-life-at-60/articleshow/53549954.cms> (accessed 12 January 2017).

¹⁸ <http://www.seniorshelf.com/> (accessed 26 March 2016).

Epoch Elder Care have been mushrooming in India.¹⁹ They offer medical, legal or financial support and “intellectual companionship” where caretakers spend time with the elderly at home, thereby relieving primarily female members of the household from care responsibilities. The services also target elderly couples living alone to compensate for the absence of their children’s practical support. The founder and CEO of Epoch Elder Care, Kabir Chadha, was a former McKinsey analyst and started his own company in 2012, offering home care services for the upper and upper middle class in Delhi, Mumbai and Pune. According to a manager of Epoch Elder Care I interviewed in 2013, two thirds of their clients were NRIs who were not able to provide physical care on-site but who had the economical means to support their parents through private care.

Looking at age and intergenerational relationships reveals new perspectives on family, gender, modernity, and globalisation and captures the interconnectedness of different scales. Capital, labour, redistribution of wealth, and movement of people are bound to social functions of the family. Neoliberal lifestyles have altered feelings and loyalties in intergenerational relationships. Sociologists Ulrich Beck, Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim, and Anthony Giddens argue that globalisation entails increased individualisation and enhances a pluralism of lifestyles. For them modernity is linked to the rise of new forms of self-hood and to the questioning of communal identities like family or the state. Individuals re-model personal identities evaluating numerous choices “not only how to act but who to be” (Giddens 1991, 81). They take decisions regarding education, family relationships, work, and lifestyle thereby creating “do-it-yourself biographies” (U. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002, 3) or fashioning “reflexive projects” of the self (Giddens 1991, 32). Giddens’s self is highly empowered, making choices in the striving for self-actualisation and self-worth. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim take a more sceptical position and argue that globalisation challenges individuals to navigate through conflicting identities. “Individual and social life – in marriage and parenthood as well as in politics, public activity and paid work – have to be brought back into harmony with each other” (U. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002, 26). They pinpoint insecurities that come with individualism, like unstable employment and the responsibility of the individual to take the “right” decisions. Like other scholars working on modernity in India (Belliappa 2013; van Wessel 2011; Lukose 2009) I question the claimed linearity of how individualisation takes place. While choices have expanded for individuals in neoliberal India, they do not necessarily lead to increased self-actualisation and empowerment. Studying female middle-class IT-professionals, sociologist Belliappa argues that individual subjectivity is inflected with cultural ideas and expectations.

¹⁹ For Delhi see: <http://www.pramaticare.com>; <http://www.whenat60.com>; <http://www.homital.in>; <http://www.maxhealthcare.in/home-care>; <http://www.medcareathome.com> (accessed 26 March 2016).

While some traditional discourses like transience in the parental home or subordination in the conjugal home have become weaker with modernity, others including the discourses on selfless motherhood and significance of marriage are strengthened by contemporary discourses on choice and responsibility. (Belliappa 2013, 91)

Thus, choice and responsibility for the creation of the self are not in contrast to family cohesion. Fieldwork among youth in the North Indian city of Baroda has led anthropologist Margit van Wessel to conclude that middle-class youth contest cultural norms and gerontocracy within the given framework of morality.

Young middle-class people often employ notions of reflexivity, reason and autonomy to challenge cultural conventions and the authority of elders. However, they do not do away with what they challenge. Within their arguments they incorporate and negotiate elements of 'traditional' morality, which they acknowledge as legitimate even as they attack them. (van Wessel 2011, 108)

These studies show that being exposed to modern ideas in a neoliberal environment does not generate the individualisation Giddens suggests. Reflexivity can also reveal the limitations of choice by social constraints like gender, caste, or class. The case studies in this thesis equally reveal that cultural discourses about elder care inform choices older and younger people make. Conflicting loyalties in regard to different family members and work make choices ambivalent. Cultural expectation can exert pressure on individuals who can fulfil, resist, and subvert them. Hence, substantial changes in the ways people conceive a "modern" way of life do not mean a collapse of familial structures but rather a renegotiation of responsibilities, expectations and relationships. The various ways in which these intergenerational relationships are worked out in lived reality is a recurring theme of this thesis.

The intergenerational discourse in India is filled with narratives of lack or loss. In daily conversations, many of my informants highlighted that the younger generations had allegedly moved away from what the elders took for granted when growing up. In a group discussion with elderly residents of a condominium Mr. Sharma, an outgoing man, remarked that 30 years ago, he had not imagined that one time "everybody" would have a car or a mobile phone. My informants often stressed the economic progress and the positive effects which have come along with the opening of markets. Mr. Sharma said that liberalisation has helped to change people's life for the better. "Of course, in some cases there are negatives to it but most of the time we feel that good things have happened" he proclaimed. This is in line with public discourses that hallmark India's new middle class as the driving force of upgrading "India's international reputation, shaking off the burden of the colonial past and the economic backwardness attached to 'Third World' countries" (Brosius 2010, 5). But on the other hand, the new economic freedom was often contrasted with the fear of losing Indian values. Mr. Sharma, as well as others in the round, also agreed that "moral devaluation" had taken place. Tradition and

modernity were repeatedly constructed as dichotomy in daily discourses which needed to be balanced. When asked which values were eroding Mr. Sharma argued that the respect towards the elderly had diminished.

Mr. Sharma: Children don't ask for advice or [rather] children don't listen to you. [To] ask for advice is [something] different. If I give advice [my children are] not prepared to take my advice, so that is the thing. Earlier, in India, [...] if I tell my son to do something he [...] will take my advice and do what I opted to do. Today he's not doing it. It's a change for the good. I mean, I'm not saying this shouldn't have happened. But these are the changes that are taking place and most of us are not comfortable with these changes. (21 November 2014)

Mr. Sharma's comment illustrates ambivalent feelings towards the growing autonomy of younger generations. While the independence of children – as a marker of modernity – was generally seen as a positive change, older people felt uncomfortable with the loss of their influence. Ageing comes along with the renegotiation of power relations within the household. Hierarchy and dependency that constitute intergenerational relations are often naturalised by age. Older people in India are supposed to “restrain the impulse to continue exerting close control in all matters over the younger generation” (Vatuk 1990, 73). The children's provision of *sevā* (care) is both a submissive behaviour of younger generations and a powerful way of acknowledging the declining body, shifting older family members to the periphery of the household (Lamb 2000, 58; Vatuk 1990, 73). The notion of loss of power at older age used to be accompanied by the uplift of elderly “on a hierarchical scale of junior-senior relations” (Lamb 2000, 59) which should be reassured by acts of deference by the young. Not speaking back, obeying one's parents (in particular one's father), and feeling “respectful devotion” are part of an expected deference behaviour (Lamb 2000, 61; Vatuk 1990, 72). Most of my informants felt that relations between generations were changing as young people contested this gerontocracy. Even though shifts in intergenerational relations should not be underestimated, my research shows that filial obligations of care are not eroding. They are rather reinterpreted and renegotiated by all generations, albeit not necessarily without struggle. My older informants frequently stressed that to achieve understanding elderly people needed to adjust as well. Adjustment was conceived crucial in the securing of their care by children. Children in general coped with their expected duties to care for their parents within their means. Many of them continued to feel obliged to provide care as far and as well as possible. Especially when children lived abroad it was not a question of their responsibility to care for their parents but rather a question of their response-ability, their abilities to respond to challenges faced by the ageing of their parents. Many of the case studies in this thesis give a detailed analysis of the negotiations of care arrangements transnational families undertake (chapters 3 and 4).

When analysing social transformations in the context of globalisation and modernity, scholars tend to identify younger generations as the driving force of change while older generations are often seen as unchanging. Therefore it is not surprising that studies on the relationship between age and globalisation mainly focus on the youth (Lamb 2009, 15). Lamb points out that although elderly people “tend to be viewed by others and to view themselves as in many ways emblematic of ‘tradition,’ those of the senior generation are at the same time very often actively involved in fashioning new modes of life for themselves and their descendants” (2009, 17). I follow Lamb’s approach to study elderly people as actors of the contemporary moment and not as spectators of it. This does not mean that older people always feel agentic.²⁰ Neither does it mean that they do not encounter limitations or vulnerabilities. But in this study I aim to overcome the dualistic thinking of age as a problem or age as a potential. I focus on the conflicting and ambivalent lived experiences of older middle-class people in urban India. As Lamb observes, my informants also “would have liked to have retained much of what they imagine to be the past; but since this past is not attainable, they work creatively to carve out a new life and mode of aging in the present” (2009, 6). My fieldwork reveals that in many ways older people feel a responsibility towards the world and future generations. The desire of older people for shaping social relationships and the great importance of a shared responsibility in the succession of generations is what gerontologist Andreas Kruse (2015, 446) calls *Weltgestaltung* (shaping of the world). At the same time, it is a central argument of this thesis that with changing intergenerational relations, elderly also see the necessity for a contemplation of the self, what Kruse (2015, 448) calls *Selbstgestaltung*. As adult children lack time for their parents, the elderly search for new activities and new forms of sociality among peers. I argue that the shaping of one’s life as well as of a greater community are not necessarily an altruistic endeavour but permeated by power relationships and class formation. Maintaining authority and influence at old age is an important constitutive of social engagement.

1.3. Locating Urban Senior Citizens

There has been a considerable amount of scholarly work on India’s middle class in recent years. Studies cover a range of aspects that shape the new middle classes in India, such as new consumption styles and their interdependence with cultural identities, the performance of class identities in public and domestic spheres, the importance attached to female respectability and education, the relations of the middle classes to politics, citizenship, and urban space as well as

²⁰ I follow Ahearn’s (2010, 28) definition of agency as “the socioculturally mediated capacity to act.” She argues that agency should not be mistaken as free will or resistance. Rather agency should be conceptualised around the capacity to act within culturally or linguistically specific notions of personhood and causality.

the internal stratification of the middle classes, also in regard to its colonial legacy (Upadhyia 2016; Ghertner 2015; Lobo and Shah 2015; Srivastava 2015; Gooptu 2013a; Baviskar and Ray 2011; Donner 2011a; Donner 2008; Radhakrishnan 2011; Brosius 2010; Ganguly-Scrase and Scrase 2009; Lukose 2009; Ray and Qayum 2009; Fernandes 2006; Mazzarella 2003; Joshi 2001) Scholars face difficulties in arriving at a definition and suggest speaking of middle classes in plural to do justice to the heterogeneity of this stratum of society. Class affiliation is often defined by assets, income, or consumption patterns of a household. Yet, reducing the study of middle classes to a definition of their size on the basis of economic factors misses to grapple with the “sense of uncertainty and fluidity” and with the vast differentiation that marks this social group (Fernandes 2016, 236). Fernandes (2016, 232) points to the contradictions of a claimed uniformity of middle-class identity in public discourses and to a considerable internal stratification which is based on economic and cultural capital, caste, religion, provenance, region, and, as this study reveals, also on age.

Heiman, Liechty, and Freeman (2012, 8) suggest to research middle-classness, namely middle-class practices and subjectivities, which are permeated by aspirations and anxieties. I follow their understanding of class “as a sociocultural phenomenon growing out of industrial relations of production and the modern state, at the same time incorporating notions such as status and habitus for the ways in which they are implicated in class relations [...]” (Heiman, Freeman, and Liechty 2012, 9). Class allows for individual upward mobility but equally bears the risk of social relegation. Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu’s analysis of class reproduction focusses on everyday practices that constitute class identities based not foremost on economic capital but equally on the accumulation of cultural capital (for instance in the form of qualifications, cultural commodities, or incorporated dispositions) and social capital (for instance in the form of networks). Bourdieu’s work also points to the role of cultural distinction in the making of class identities. Distinction allows for the drawing of boundaries towards groups of “lower” social or cultural status. The reproduction of difference depends on various skills, like taste, manners, or habitus that are embodied with socialisation.

Studies on the Indian middle classes tend to focus on the productive class segments, those who are working or those who are excluded through unemployment. In this thesis, I shift the focus towards those who have retired. They are an equally important subject of study because class is not necessarily bound to work. The case studies in this thesis reveal the various ways my informants draw boundaries in regards to lower classes. I argue that new elderscapes are sites for the reification of middle-class belonging of older people. The focus on middle-class elderly in India thus prepares the ground for a deeper understanding of the internal differentiation of India’s middle classes and the ways middle-classness comes into being.

Even though pensions or property of people varied, my informants shared similarities in important respects. Nearly all of them were economically independent and had sufficient means to finance themselves.²¹ The majority was both Hindi and English-speaking and had received a formal education up to graduate level. They shared a high caste background, but attached great importance on meritocracy. Hence, in accordance to Bêteille's analysis (1991) they ascribed their social status not to their position in a caste hierarchy but rather to their capital, qualification, and competences. The emphasis on class does not render caste distinctions obsolete. While both stratification systems are based on inequality, caste delimits a collective identity which is obtained by birth whereas class is based on the accumulation of individual assets or different kinds of capital (Bourdieu 1983).

All my informants were higher caste people. Most of them had "worked their way up" to an upper middle-class status after India's independence. A great number of them were Panjabi refugees or first generation migrants to the city who had achieved upward mobility in the 1970s. Among them were government officials, clerks or military personnel, college professors or lecturers, retail traders, company employees and managers. Women were predominantly housewives but a few had worked as (college) teachers or clerks. Some were thus part of what is understood as an "old" middle class, typically connoted with "a Nehruvian civil service-oriented salariat" (Mazzarella 2005, 1). Profiting from economic reforms in the 1970s and 1980s, a great number of them belonged to "an array of new, often markedly entrepreneurial pretenders to the title" (Mazzarella 2005, 1). They had not aspired upward social mobility lately, but the opening of the economy to foreign capital in the 1990s secured and strengthened the middle-class position of my informants' families as their children mainly worked in high level positions for private corporate companies. Nearly all of my informants had at least one child working abroad, most of whom had emigrated to the USA while others lived and worked in countries like Australia, the United Arab Emirates, China, Singapore, the United Kingdom, or Germany. With their children abroad, the elderly were economically, physically and communicatively integrated in transnational networks. Many of them had been highly mobile earlier in their life course, either travelling or working abroad or in different cities.

This thesis seeks to contribute to debates about India's middle classes by shifting the focus away from consumption that has dominated much of the discussion about the "new" Indian middle classes in the post-liberalisation phase. Even though my informants shared similar

²¹ In this thesis I refer to this upper spectrum of elderly middle-class Indians. I will use the singular term of middle class to denote that I only strive one part of the much larger group of middle-class elderly. On the rare occasions when I speak of middle classes I denote the larger social stratum. Unfortunately, the scope of my research did not allow including lower middle-class elderly. The inner differentiation of this age group needs much more scholarly attention.

aspirations regarding their consumption standards, which comprised at least real estate and car ownership, conspicuous consumption was not extensively pursued as this was considered unnecessary and not central to a social identity or status among peers (see chapter 5). Many of them had consumed considerably in younger years but often economised at older age even though they did not have to. One woman said she would only do “window shopping” in malls, as her needs at older age were on the wane. Although my informants could have taken part in brand-related consumption, they did not inevitably participate in Western consumption patterns “of repeat purchases of new brands or models of household items” (Fernandes 2016, 235). Furthermore, they did not show a distinctive brand-awareness. If they possessed iPhones or iPads, for instance, which mostly their children had bought, the elderly stressed the easy handling rather than their value as a status symbol. And yet, it was important, that they or their children could afford such items. My informants partook in the new leisure economy by going to malls or to fancy restaurants. However, they predominantly joined other family members for these shopping activities and seldom went in pairs or alone. Status among peers was obtained through what one had achieved in life – how one had succeeded in accumulating capital or virtues – rather than what one was consuming. When elderly men introduced me to male friends they first emphasised the achievements of their counterparts stressing how wealthy or influential they were. Economical capital was crucial while conspicuous consumption was not necessarily important.

For most of my informants the retirement age of 60 years²² marked them as “senior citizens.” The term senior citizen is linked to the idea of citizenship. While citizenship is often put forth as a concept of egalitarian rights and obligations towards the state, scholars increasingly acknowledge the fact that citizenship is contested and embedded in the principles of governmentality (Anupama Roy 2008). Understood as a social practice, citizenship becomes a struggle “over the definition of social membership, over the categories and practices of inclusion and exclusion, and over different forms of participation in public life” (Berdahl 2010, 88). The term “senior citizen” is used in a highly class-based manner in daily conversations, denoting almost exclusively urban privileged elders (Cohen 1992, 124). Listed members of the Senior Citizens Council of Delhi, for instance, lived solely in upper middle-class and upper-class localities of the city. Their activities and policy efforts were also class-based. While most of the efforts, like recreational activities, aimed at middle-class elderly, some incentives for the

²² Government employees in Delhi currently retire at the age of 60. In the corporate sector employees can receive full benefits from the age of 58 onwards, see: <http://wbl.worldbank.org/data/exploretopics/getting-a-job#Retirement%20ages> (accessed 07 August 2016).

lower classes were also promoted on their website.²³ Yet, underprivileged older people were not actively involved in these efforts but acted upon out of “charity.” As Cohen points out, the Indian gerontological object is divided into the privileged “senior citizen” or “pensioner” versus the “disadvantaged elder.” NGOs, media reports, as well as gerontological research frequently conflate the two into a “seamless gerontological object” masking class and power hierarchies.

The object of gerontology is thus split: the ‘disadvantaged elder’ - the disciplinary icon - and the [privileged] pensioner - the ultimate object of study. Analyses of the sociology of aging or proposals for government spending, usually constructed out of the experience of the pensioner, inevitably invoke the figure of the disadvantaged elder to legitimate their universality and claims for patronage. The pensioner and the disadvantaged old person come to stand for one another - through the denial of local disjunctions of class and power - in the constitution of a seamless gerontological object. (Cohen 1992, 124)

With liberalisation, the Indian middle classes have increasingly claimed “their rights” through middle-class activism within the civil society instead of the political sphere. This leads to rising political inequality as lower classes are not involved in civil society organisations (Harriss 2006, 445). “Increasingly, forms of consumer citizenship in the era of liberalization articulate the citizen through the notion of a right to consume, a right that must be protected through state action” (Lukose 2009, 8). The shift from nation-citizen to consumer-citizen creates new forms of national identity. Nationalist emotions have altered from the “the idea of nationalist solidarity to (middle) class solidarity” (Srivastava 2015, 93). Far from being eroded national sentiments are remodelled in the context of consumerist modernity.

Here, the middle-class consumer-citizen, installed as a representative of the ‘people’, is imagined as the intermediary between the market and the state. [...] The making of the ‘people’ in a time of consumerist modernity has specific consequences: it unfolds through differentiating ‘good’ consumers from the ‘bad’ ones, in turn identifying the ‘good’ citizen from ‘his’ antithesis. (Srivastava 2015, 94)

In a similar vein, “senior citizens” can be seen as antithesis to the poor “elderly.” Their privileged status in society, their hard work and disciplined lifestyle, as well as their continuous engagement in civil activism entitle them to the “citizen” status. In public discourses, they are the “pillars of society” (figure 3.2) having built the nation which rendered India’s uplift to “world class” possible. The disadvantaged elders, in contrast, are part of an undisciplined backward mass that is pitiable and in need of charity but no driving force in the nation’s progress. It is a central argument of this thesis that class formation plays a crucial role in the ageing process. Upcoming new elderscapes are based on “like-minded” peer groups. Ethnic

²³ See: <http://seniorcitizensdelhi.org> (accessed 02 February 2017).

identity is less crucial in these new sites. Important is the shared understanding of common values which distinguish those who had “earned” their lives from those who had not.

1.4. Research Context and Design

Methodology and Data Collection

In the last decades, there has been a lot of discussion within the discipline of anthropology how to conduct fieldwork in times of globalisation. Most prominently, George Marcus developed the framework of a multi-sited ethnography which is capable to cross-cut dichotomies like the “global” and “local” by relocating the field from single to multiple sites. It is often unnoticed that Marcus does not necessarily restrict these multiple sites to geographic locations.

The [...] less common mode of ethnographic research self-consciously embedded in a world system, now often associated with the wave of intellectual capital labeled postmodern, moves out from the single sites and local situations of conventional ethnographic research designs to examine the circulation of cultural meanings, objects, and identities in diffuse time-space. [...] This mobile ethnography takes unexpected trajectories in tracing a cultural formation across and within multiple sites of activity that destabilize the distinction, for example, between lifeworld and system [...], by which much ethnography has been conceived. Just as this mode investigates and ethnographically constructs the lifeworlds of variously situated subjects, it also ethnographically constructs aspects of the system itself through the associations and connections it suggests among sites. (Marcus 1995, 96)

My research follows this methodology and departs from the local sites in Delhi to examine transcultural entanglements of ageing. By basing my research in Delhi, I was able to pursue the question of how various interrelations matter in the everyday world of those who live and act in this city. I mainly focus on how flows of ideas and flows of people influence ageing in the urban environment. I draw on Levitt and Glick Schiller’s (2004) concept of national and transnational social fields to capture the links between those who move and those who stay. Social fields are “a set of multiple interlocking networks of social relationships through which ideas, practices, and resources are unequally exchanged, organized, and transformed” (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004, 1099). I furthermore enquire about the processes that take place as Euro-American concepts of generation, family, age and ageing travel to India. Studies on aging from a transcultural or transnational perspective have focussed on transnational caregiving (Baldassar and Merla 2014c; Brijnath 2009; Baldassar, Baldock, and Wilding 2007) and transcultural or transnational retirement migration (Laubenthal and Pries 2012; Hühn 2010; O’Reilly 2000). While these studies give important insights in the transnational flows of caregivers and older people, I decided to focus on specific sites as the conditions of the existence, transformation, and emplacement of global flows (Englund 2002, 268). This study provides a detailed

ethnography of elderly people in Delhi showing their entanglements with transnational migration and transcultural flows of ideas. In addition, the complex assemblages of stakeholders, institutions, discourses and individuals in the city form the subject of this research project.

This work is based on two extended stays in Delhi doing fieldwork, from September to March 2013/14 and 2014/15 respectively. My “field” was not given but had to be discovered and developed during these months. Deepa S. Reddy writes that one’s field is an “almost random assemblage of sites that come into coherence through the process of fieldwork itself” (Reddy 2009, 90), a statement I do not entirely agree with. While most paths certainly emerge during fieldwork (which always remains fragmentary), some sites of enquiry had been well defined beforehand.

I started to conduct research in the neighbourhood of Safdarjung Enclave where I had rented an apartment. Being a well-connected elderly man, my landlord facilitated the access to the field as he introduced me to neighbours and friends. Moreover, the president of a Senior Citizens Association provided a list of names and addresses of older persons in the neighbourhood. Further introductions and the network of these informants led the way. Anthropologist Manja Bomhoff describes this method by means of the metaphor of a cricket ball. The cricket ball analogy pays tribute to the fact that research is in no way linear but goes back and forth, sometimes leading us to new findings, sometimes going out of play.

Just as in cricket, the ball (or research) was batted in many directions and, in most cases, caught by any one of the older players in the field. As the batsman, I had considerable influence on the directions of the ball, but this influence was only effective at certain moments and not always very precise. (Bomhoff 2011, 58)

Throughout my fieldwork my research took indeed various directions leading me to different sites. I visited twenty households in the neighbourhood and got to know a lively woman who introduced me to a senior citizens’ yoga group that met daily in a park nearby. In the following months, I regularly participated in the early morning yoga sessions and became involved in the group members’ daily lives. I observed what was happening, I listened to what was said, and I formally and informally asked questions in semi-structured interviews or in daily conversations. I visited people’s homes, joined wedding celebrations and other functions, and I was invited to lunches, dinners and sometimes also for drinks. Simultaneously, I met with NGO representatives, government officials and private service company employees. I gathered further data by collecting newspaper articles, magazines, photographs, advertisements, brochures or by looking at more personal documents like poetry or books some of the elderly people had written. My goal to include a case study of an upper middle-class old-age home proved to be somewhat difficult in the beginning. As living in a care institution is connected to social stigma, proprietors were sceptical about my intention. Much media attention had been paid to some of

the homes and managers tried to protect their residents from too much exposure. One proprietor asked me on the phone why I did not do fieldwork in Germany and turned down my request to visit her institution. The management of a middle-class government-run old-age home I had visited did not understand my intent to regularly come back, as they thought I had gained enough information during my first visit. After exploring a couple of homes, I met Bhamini, the proprietor of the old-age home I named Nivasa, who has infrequently accommodated foreign students in her facility. She was very open-minded from the beginning and allowed or even encouraged me to live in her home for a while. I visited the institution a couple of times before I started my second field work period with a six-week stay on-site. Living in the home enabled me to witness processes outside “rush hours.” Although there were no fixed visiting times daily routines structured life in the home. Many people took a nap at noon and it was better to visit either in the morning or in the afternoon if one wanted to speak to residents. Yet, my stay at Nivasa enabled me to experience routines, interactions, solitude, and special incidents at all times of day. It also helped me to build up trust and intimacy with a couple of residents I chose to focus on. These intense relationships facilitated insights into the lives of these individuals and into the complexities that accompanied their living arrangements, especially their interactions with caregivers. Furthermore, I got to know the NRI children who visited their parents. By helping with the arrangement of skype calls I gained a deeper understanding of transnational family relationships. Ageing within the family is a highly valued ideal, while having parents living in an old-age home is a delicate subject. I was fortunate to meet some children of residents willing to share with me their perspectives on this matter.

After having left Nivasa to live in another part of South Delhi, I still visited the home regularly but focussed more on recently set up gated condominiums and senior living projects that mushroomed outside the city. I contacted real estate companies and was able to speak to their management, residents and staff. There were certain restrictions in my research on these new projects. While I was surprised how frankly managers would speak about problems they faced, access to the facilities was restricted. I was often accompanied by staff who showed me around treating me like a prospective client. The guided tours showed the idealised visions of these institutions, but concealed more contested lived realities of residents. Occasionally I spoke to residents alone and was able to address more complex questions about living in such a new environment. Yet, I was not able to do participatory observation like I did in Nivasa and it would be of much interest to study these new facilities in more detail. During my second field trip, I went back to the yoga group and the people of Safdarjung Enclave and gained further insights into the lives and relationships of these informants. I conducted expert interviews with Delhi Development Authority officials, the Delhi police, and NGO officials. I pursued an open

approach and followed many leads. The paths of enquiry became more evident during my fieldwork, leading me to focus on the daily lives of older people at different sites.

To generate one's field is not an easy endeavour and causes doubts. Researching individual life histories has made me aware of the uniqueness of individual lives, making generalisations difficult. In the beginning of my fieldwork I felt the urge to do a larger number of interviews, whereas later on I got more interested in the particularities of only a few informants. As Biggs and Daatland argue, it is important to draw attention to the diversity of ageing to avoid the pitfall of just confirming assumptions with empirical data.

Gerontology, [...] runs the risk of simply collecting confirming cultural evidence in the sense of uncritically answering questions set within an existing framework and finding solutions to the way the problems are posed there. An awareness of diversity in ageing has the potential to provide a powerful antidote to such an assumptive reality. (Biggs and Daatland 2006, 5)

Fieldwork is thus a powerful tool to raise new questions and issues outside existing frameworks. I conducted over 70 interviews with older people, caretakers, managers and staff of institutions, government officials, NGO representatives, and other stakeholders. More importantly, I led countless conversations and chats and observed interactions, reactions and other intangible forms of communication and behaviour. There were significant differences in the quality of my relationship to and in the quantity of time spent with the informants. Some encounters were restricted to 30 minutes. Other relationships were based on daily interactions or regular contact for several months. In every chapter only a limited number of protagonists take centre-stage in order to deepen the analysis and to point to the diversity of the ageing experience. Ethnographical data is not statistically representative but “what it loses in broad statistical replicability it gains in the sheer intensity of the ethnographic encounter—as intimacy, as privileged access, as listening to voices silenced on the outside by those who wield greater power“ (Herzfeld 2001, 23).

My age and gender determined my position in the field. Frequently I was addressed as “beta” (child). In India, using kinship terms is a common way of relating to others and of establishing networks through which lawful and unlawful activities are executed. “Class, gender, age, social capital, income, ethnicity and education are implicit within this paradigm” (Brijnath 2014, 17). Calling me “beta” meant that people were willing to establish a closer relationship with me. Yet, the age difference and my foreign origin certainly affected what people told me and how they spoke about matters. Therefore, it was essential to observe peer-based interactions in the yoga group or at the old-age home respectively to get to know the topics and issues the elderly were concerned with and to learn how they discussed them with their peers.

Writing Ethnography

Fieldwork often gets messy. It is the researcher's task to structure and link the bits and pieces of information she is collecting. After terminating the data acquisition the challenge of writing a coherent text begins. Anthropologist Clifford Geertz regards the process of writing ethnographies literary creations and speaks of ethnographies as *fictions*. He uses the term in its original meaning of *fictiō* as "something made" not as something false or unfactual (1973, 15). Anthropologist James Clifford added that ethnographies are always *partial truths* (Clifford 1986) as they are made up by the researcher in the writing process.

Ethnographic writings can properly be called fictions in the sense of 'something made or fashioned,' the principal burden of the word's Latin root, *ingere*. But it is important to preserve the meaning not merely of making, but also of making up, of inventing things not actually real. [...] Even the best ethnographic texts – serious, true fictions – are systems, or economies, of truth. Power and history work through them, in ways their authors cannot fully control.

Ethnographic truths are thus inherently partial – committed and incomplete. (Clifford 1986, 6 f. emphasis in the original)

Anthropologists have tried out many strategies to come to terms with the circumstance that every anthropological text is a social practice of knowledge production. I decided to reflect on my role in the field only when I considered it important. I am well aware that the personality of the researcher has a profound impact on the study but I do not believe that mere repetitions of self-reflexivity contribute to deeper epistemological considerations.

It is a central concern of my work to contribute to a nuanced understanding of ageing in neoliberal India. During the time of my PhD studies I sometimes faced prejudices concerning older age. A few people voiced the stereotypical opinion that my fieldwork might well be sad or depressing. Old age is subjected to a lot of negative stereotypes not only in public discourses but also in gerontological studies. Lawrence Cohen showed that a great number of scholarly works on ageing in India postulate age as a problem without demonstrating this assumption. Besides the problematisation of age these publications share similar titles and Cohen denoted them as *Aging in India* series.

The *Aging in India* books share not just a title but the narrative of the Fall. To demonstrate an imminent crisis, their authors rely exclusively on numbers. There are no detailed case studies demonstrating the crisis, nor any historical analyses documenting change. Any documentation of experience is lacking. [...]

The book begins by assuming 'problems,' but what they are remains unspecified and their timing is vague: 'sooner or later.' The numbers themselves are the principal signifiers here. Throughout the *Aging in India* series, demographics are used not to supplement but to represent the meaning of old age and the condition of old people. (Cohen 1998, 90f.)

To counter notions of old age as a problem, NGOs, policy makers and gerontologists began to draw attention to the positive sides of ageing. "The New Gerontology" promotes "successful,"

“active” or “productive ageing” ideals which point to the potentials of old age (Moody 2009, 68). Yet, as Lamb argues, by focussing on independence, productivity, and self-maintenance these approaches fade out vulnerabilities and human transitoriness that are part of the ageing process. She advocates to reconsider the active ageing paradigm so that experiences of dependence, weakness and mortality are not judged as “failures” of ageing well (Lamb 2014, 41). Scholarly works often either emphasise the negative or positive aspects of ageing, but life is everything in between. My writing aims at doing justice to emotional alterations and ambivalences that accompany ageing to overcome the dualistic thinking of age either as a burden or as an opportunity.

Time has passed between my last days of fieldwork and the writing of this ethnography. Ongoing changes in the lives of my informants are only included when they are decisive and important for my analysis. The things and events I describe belong to the past. I therefore decided to use the past tense when describing my research to acknowledge the historicity of fieldwork and to grant coevalness. I also focus on the dynamics in the lives of my informants to make clear that life continuously changes in the ageing process.

During my research, I gained insights in very personal stories and family affairs of many of my informants. To safeguard their integrity I changed their names using pseudonyms that reflect the caste and ethnic belonging of the individual. Only in the rare cases when persons voiced their own opinion publicly in a professional context (for instance employees in the real estate sector), I used given names. I also altered the name of the old-age home I studied (see chapter 4), whilst I did not do so with retirement communities like Ashiana Utsav or The Golden Estate. This is because I did not engage in participant observation in those homes but rather looked at images produced by the company and openly voiced opinions of residents.

Providing a Creative Archive: The Transmedia Project Elderscapes

This study was undertaken within the interdisciplinary research project “Ageing in a Transcultural Context” based at the Cluster of Excellence “Asia and Europe in a Global Context” (2013-2016). As part of this larger project, the anthropological filmmaker Jakob Gross, my colleague Roberta Mandoki and I conceptualised and implemented the interactive documentary “Elderscapes. Ageing in Urban South Asia” which presents outcomes of both, Mandoki’s and my research projects.²⁴

²⁴ See: www.uni-heidelberg.de/elderscapes. The interactive documentary was developed under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Christiane Brosius, Prof. Dr. Axel Michaels and Prof. Dr. Andreas Kruse and funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG). The shootings in Delhi took place in November and December 2013, after which Jakob Gross and I flew to Nepal to work with Roberta Mandoki on the Nepal part in January 2014. From August to December 2015 I edited the footage and we jointly built up the interactive web documentary released in January 2016.

Besides experimenting with ways of writing ethnographies, anthropologists have searched for new ways of visual representation. While the media of photography and film were initially ascribed a high degree of authenticity, doubts about their representativeness followed soon. Anthropologists now acknowledge that visual representations do not depict reality but rather relate to a reality which they create. This shift in paradigm has led to the commitment to subjectivity and self-reflexivity in visual anthropology (Hornung 2013, 342f.; see also Pink 2004b). Leading scholars in this field emphasise that the medium film has the capacity to “evoke sensory experience” (MacDougall 2015, 5) and to offer haptic images that appeal to multiple senses (Marks 2000, 162). According to MacDougall film facilitates a “language” to describe “the phenomenological reality” of the “social role of aesthetics” (2006, 116). By “social aesthetics” he does not mean beauty or art but the “sensory environment” of a place (MacDougall 2015, 2). Anthropological films may be more suitable to describe sensorial phenomena than written ethnographies because the filmic language is “a language operating in visual, aural, verbal, temporal, and even (through synesthetic association) tactile domains” and it is therefore “closer to the multidimensionality of the subject itself” (MacDougall 2006, 116). The upcoming of web 2.0 allows scholars to think of new ways in which multiple media types like video, text, sound and images can be productively interwoven. Even though or maybe precisely because academia dominantly relies on words, it is productive to make use of such new possibilities in order “to use the visual to enlarge the scope and impact of the theoretical on the ethnographic and vice versa” (Pink 2004a, 181). What Pink calls hyper-media – and I call transmedia²⁵ – combines the specific with the general, the individual with the abstract, anthropological theory with ethnography (Pink 2004a, 181).

The transmedia project “Elderscapes. Ageing in urban South Asia” enriches and transcends this ethnography in at least three important ways. Firstly, through the combination of textual and visual media it creates new connections between ethnography and anthropological theory. Besides describing the ethnographic field, the transmedia project generates multi-linear, multi-vocal, and reflexive “texts” which concurrently mediate both sensory experiences and theoretical anthropological discourses. A transmedia text is able to combine written theory and descriptive narratives with such representations of knowledge and experience that can only, or at best, be communicated audio-visually. It does not only make use of the potential of each medium but - through newly created entanglements - also produces interdependences between these media. Therefore, certain forms of communication and representations are only rendered

²⁵ I use the term transmedia because it aptly describes the entanglement of different media that this format allows. The prefix *trans* makes clear that within transmedia projects text, sound, and images are not merely assembled but *entangled* as they speak to each other.

possible through this format. Secondly, this new format does justice to the fact that fieldwork is always fragmentary and not organised around analytical categories as ethnography is. Certainly, transmedia also requires the structuring of video material and text. Our website's different themes focus on the social commitment of older persons, their everyday life and social bonding, on their memories as well as perspectives on what it means to grow old in a city. The different material is presented in a non-linear way so that the viewer is only partly guided by the author(s) which leads me to the third point. The new format enables a new way of participation of the recipients. The productive interweaving of multiple media types like video, text, sound and images on our website creates the opportunity for the user to engage with these diverse materials in a non-linear way. Therefore, the process of knowledge production and appropriation is at least partly regulated and controlled by the recipients themselves. Rather than producing a linear text or film, we provide a "creative archive" (Favero 2013, 265) which the viewer can explore. The narrative is no longer a "sequence of events imposed by an author" but it "actively interpellates viewers as co-creators of meaning" (Favero 2013, 267) . In this way "authorship appears as a collaborative endeavour and viewers as empowered, creative and 'emancipated spectator[s]' (Rancière, 2009) who actively produce meaning and understanding as they continue their exploration" (Favero 2013, 267).

The worldwide visits of our website show that transmedia might be able to attract an audience broader than academics. However, the production of such creative archive takes up a lot of time and means. In my view, visual anthropology would do well pursuing the funding and realisation of transmedia projects as this form of representation holds great potential for academia. I hope that reading this ethnography enriches viewing the transmedia project – and vice versa.

1.5. The Outline

The thesis has been designed around four topics: space, family, institution, and time. These subjects evidently overlap and are not separate entities. Yet, this structure helps me to contextualise the plenitude of research material theoretically.

The second chapter *Ageing in the City* ventures into histories and current developments of the urban area of Delhi. Leading from a historical outline of city development to the study of a semi-gated neighbourhood in South Delhi to newer gated residential enclaves and gated senior living facilities in the periphery of the city, the chapter scrutinises the relationship between urban change, class and ageing. It addresses boundaries and class-making processes of middle-class seniors in different elderscapes. Besides, it questions the role of locality for the ageing process, showing that various factors like urban planning, real estate development, migration, changing notions of family, security, and individuality but also cultural ideas of ageing are

essential when choices are to be made of where to age. The chapter also reveals how older persons shape their environment and actively engage with the city.

In the chapter *Family Matters* I address the question of how older persons and their families in urban India deal with different forms of living arrangements, migration and (distant) care. Middle-class joint-family living is changing as adult children as well as daughters-in-law are facing long working hours or are busy with their own children's education. Job offers, school admission or new ideas of family are some of the reasons for children to move within or out of the city or to migrate abroad. The number of older persons living alone or with spouse and new residences for older persons is on the rise. Yet, I illustrate that figures neither prove a disintegration of the Indian joint family nor reflect the multiple perceptions on change by the elderly. Far from being eroded, filial obligations of care and family "jointness" are being reinterpreted and renegotiated by both generations albeit not necessarily without struggle. I argue that the theoretical concept of "doing family" serves better to capture these developments. Moreover, intergenerational ambivalence as a concept helps overcome the dualistic thinking of family solidarity and family conflict as it encourages drawing attention to contradictions and paradoxes in intergenerational relationships.

The chapter *Old Age – Home?* is designed around the case study of an upper middle-class old-age home. The case study explores place-making processes and "ways of operating" (de Certeau 1984) within the institution. I follow three complementary lines of enquiry. First, I examine processes of place-making within the institution focussing on the proprietor's struggle to turn the institutional space into a *home*, that is, a meaningful place where people feel genuinely cared for. This is a challenging task as ageing within an institution is still not seen as the proper way of providing elder care in India. The proprietor's efforts to create a space which fosters a family-like form of cohabitation and feelings of belonging were partly undermined by residents' resistance to socialise, their resistance to be proactive, their varying expectations, and by economic factors. In the second part of the chapter I shift the focus from the proprietor's perspective to the lived realities of the residents pursuing the question if and how an institution can become a home for the elderly. Before entering an old-age home, residents often led a rather independent life, exercising power (e.g. over domestic workers) and making decisions on their own (for instance what to spend money on). The institutional framework frees especially women from housework but at the same time structures time and scope of the residents. I examine the lived realities of different individuals to show how differently people adapt to their new environment. Lastly, I turn to the relationships of care providers (staff and caretakers) and care receivers (residents). Differences in class and caste status, the various options of exercising

and resisting power, and the interaction of structural constraints and people's actions are scrutinised.

Time and the Life Course are the foci of my last chapter. The life course as a social institution has gained importance and hence the course of time is one of the central structural principles nowadays. This raises questions of what is culturally regarded as suitable behaviour in a certain life phase and how it is negotiated by individuals. It also draws attention to how time is passed “meaningfully” – be it active, be it withdrawing. I argue in this chapter that contrary to the ancient Hindu beliefs of this life stage as a phase of renunciation, middle-class elderly in Delhi are often still very active and interested in keeping ties and (power) relationships. The case study of a senior citizens' yoga group illustrates how elderly people spend time outside the family creating peer groups. I also explore other pastime activities of middle-class seniors such as engaging in social work, gardening or writing poetry. I show how daily routines play an important part in the structuring of time. Time-management is linked to discipline which is highly valued among seniors. I close this chapter reflecting on the time at the end of life and on notions of dying and death. However, this was not the focus of my research and I only address aspects that emerged during fieldwork.

CHAPTER 2

AGEING IN THE CITY

SENIOR CITIZENS IN THE NEW CAPITAL REGION OF DELHI



Figure 2.1: A Group of Male Elderly on the Premises of a Condominium, Gurgaon.

Photo: Annika Mayer

The role of place has recently caught increasing attention of environmental gerontologists who scrutinise the relationship of older persons and environment (Wahl and Oswald 2016; Rowles and Bernard 2013a; Wahl and Oswald 2010). But sociological and anthropological research on ageing in the city is still rare. For over a decade sociologist Chris Phillipson has called for more urban ethnographies “that can capture the experience of ageing within cities now subject to intense global change” (2004, 970; see also Phillipson 2010). But still there is a lack of socio-scientific studies addressing the entanglements of ageing and the urban fabric. While a number of publications focus on older persons in cities, the urban dimension is often not made explicit. There is of course no method of grasping the complexity of a city neither by means of statistics nor by means of ethnography (Vidal, Tarlo, and Dupont 2000). And yet, a city’s characteristics play a vital role in its residents’ lives. Therefore the entanglement of ageing and urban space needs more consideration.

Environmental gerontologists stress the role of changing person-environment relationships in the ageing process. They study the importance of staying put while growing old (*ageing in place*) or more generally examine the meaning of place for older people (*place in ageing*) (Wahl and Oswald 2016; Rowles and Bernard 2013a; Wahl, Iwarsson, and Oswald 2012; Wiles et al. 2012; Smith 2009; Chaudhury and Rowles 2005; Oswald and Wahl 2005; Rowles 1993). Besides focussing on “home” as a meaningful and important place for elderly persons, environmental gerontologists’ studies recognise neighbourhoods and communities as important factors for ageing in place (Wiles et al. 2012). These works provide valuable insights for my study. However, my research goes beyond the person-environment relationships spotlighting larger urban transformations as well as urban imaginaries. I am not only interested in a topography of ageing which reveals the importance of place for older persons. I also take an interest in class-based demarcation processes driven by a narrative of urban fear as well as by a discourse of belonging to “world class” which shape new elderscapes. I explore transcultural flows that inform gated retirement communities on the city outskirts and their embeddedness in Indian notions of ageing. And I look into the reworking of collective memories of elderly persons in the shaping of the city’s future. I argue that the broadening of perspective contributes to a better understanding of the various entanglements of ageing and urban space.

The key focus of this chapter lies on the relation between urban change, class and ageing. Living and ageing in a city is shaped by the past, for instance by historical moments which are remembered, by policies and economic factors that have assigned the outline of a city and the life course of individuals, as well as by personal attachment to place. But ageing in a city is also affected by recent parameters like urban planning and property development. Past, present and future (in form of imaginations) do all come together in myriad ways as change is an essential

component of time. David Harvey suggests that the “right to the city” is “a right to change ourselves by changing the city” (2008, 23). This change however, is “a common rather than an individual right since this transformation inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization” (Harvey 2008, 23). Imaginations and aspirations of how urban change should take place are highly class-based. And even though different interest groups might not always be deliberately opposed to each other, their desires and expectations are usually in conflict to each other (Tarlo 1996). As social scientist Véronique Dupont reminds us, location is never neutral but rather a space “signifying a political and societal vision of the city and access to it” (2007, 89). Studies on ageing and urban space often pinpoint the social exclusion of elderly people from urban participation (Buffel and Phillipson 2015). Whilst this is a crucial issue, scholars tend to ignore that the elderly actively take part in urban segregation. The relationship between space and power is addressed in this chapter by illustrating the historical and contemporary class-making and demarcation processes of stakeholders and (upper) middle-class seniors in different spaces. I argue that the creation of new elderscapes, which I define as cultural spaces and sites that have emerged for and by older persons, are determined by the affiliation to class. The ethnographical material illustrates that new elderscapes are key-sites for strengthening a middle-class identity at old age, reproducing social and economic differences in urban space.

I also look at the role locality plays in the ageing process considering altered global-local connections. The local has gained new attention by scholars of globalisation who acknowledge the challenge to redefine its importance in a globalised world (Donner and De Neve 2006). Global transformations have changed the political context in which individuals, communities, and regions are embedded and the local has “acquired radically new meanings and contents, often counteracting the homogenising tendencies of cultural globalisation” (Donner and De Neve 2006, 2). A topography of ageing which leads through this chapter describes localised processes through which social and spatial transformations realise themselves. Delhi’s neoliberal restructuring of space is not only taking place in large-scale projects of elite high-rise enclaves that have considerably changed the urban landscape but also in older neighbourhoods which are being remodelled through reconstructions of middle-class housing. Exploring existing and emerging middle-class spaces in the city will allow me to illustrate how senior citizens navigate through social and urban changes. Real estate development in India is key for framing middle-class ideas of citizenship and belonging. Urban development by urban bodies and private developers as well as narratives of safety play a vital role in growing old in the mega city of Delhi. Various stakeholders have recently developed retirement communities, so-called “senior living” projects. They try to evoke a new “lifestyle” at old age, marked by leisure

activities and the company of like-minded peers. In contrast to other middle-class spaces these senior living projects do not only indicate economic success but are also markers of the absence of family care and therefore remain socially ambivalent.

The structure of this chapter is threefold. The first part focusses on the interconnection of class and space. It provides a brief overview of the historical formation of (upper) middle-class spaces in Delhi, revealing how my informants have benefited from an urban development favouring the middle classes. It also shows how recent urbanisation processes have led to middle-class segregation which is no longer predicated on ethnicity, caste or occupation but based upon economic capital. Furthermore, it illustrates the recent discourse on urban safety, which drives much of the urban segregation processes. And lastly it investigates how older persons witness the restructuring of urban space and how they remember events that have coined the city's trajectory as well as their life courses. The second part of the chapter scrutinises ageing in an upper middle class neighbourhood in South Delhi. It examines how class, community, property, security and peer groups shape ageing in place. Older people have lived in this particular neighbourhood for over 40 years and have often developed an attachment to place. At the same time the composition of residents and families as well as the area's appearance are currently in flux, so that older persons are confronted with, respond to, and create urban change. The third part of the chapter looks into so called "senior living" projects that have emerged in the last decade. The ethnographical material shows that developers are inspired by western concepts of institutionalised care but equally seek to incorporate Indian ideas of elder care to overcome reservations against such projects. Marketers see great economic potential in services that target the elderly population. Yet, in contrast to very popular residential or commercial sites, like gated enclaves or malls, the senior living projects still struggle to attract customers. Apart from the private sector the state recently began to partake in this "silver market" economy developing a senior living project on a private public partnership (PPP) basis, a facet I discuss at the end of this chapter.

2.1. The Formation of Middle-Class Enclaves

Historical developments have shaped and still shape the life course of my informants. All of them have profited from an urban development that has turned property into profitable real estate. Furthermore, they have actively taken part in the shaping of spaces that are marked by class. The emergence of new elderscapes like enclaved senior living projects is related to a greater middle-class discourse of safety that not only produces demarcated spaces but also sets boundaries against lower classes that are perceived as threat. Therefore, the following insight into the history of urban developments forms the basis for the analysis of a topography of ageing in Delhi today.

Delhi – Development – Authority

In contrast to Mumbai and Calcutta, Delhi does not owe its population growth to a coastal location which increased involvement in the global economy. Delhi's rise to a mega city with a current population of more than 16.7 million people²⁶ is on the one hand due to a concentration of centralised resources to the capital. On the other hand Delhi's growth has been determined by a massive flow of refugees at many points of its history (Ahuja 2006, 10). Colonialism left an enduring mark on the city and shaped the management of land and housing. In 1911 the British shifted India's capital from Kolkata to Delhi and began to build a new part of the city outside of the historic core. While Old Delhi, which has been built and rebuilt since the 16th century, is an entangled space of private homes, workshops, workplaces, religious sites and government offices, the layout of New Delhi reflects the "cartography of colonial power" separating government buildings, residing bungalows and shopping facilities into different areas (Baviskar 2003, 90f.). In the course of the violent division of British India into the sovereign states of Pakistan and India on August 15, 1947 more than 10 million people were displaced and approximately over a million people died (Mann 2005, 120). Delhi was particularly affected and turned into a "refugee-istan" (G. Pandey 1997, 2263) where a dramatic number of Muslims were driven from their homes and even more Hindus sought refuge. The Partition not only caused one of the largest displacements of people in the twentieth century but also resulted in "sectarian violence at an unprecedented scale" (Dube 2015, 55).²⁷ On the longer run, the tragic event led to a class- and caste-based restructuring of the city. Between 1941 and 1951 Delhi's population had doubled from 700,000 to a little over 1.4 million inhabitants (Dupont 2000, 229f.). Even though initially a significant number of refugees organised their shelter either by occupying vacated houses or by moving in with their relatives or acquaintances, various agencies simultaneously tried to "restore a semblance of order in the city" (Kacker 2005, 69). The Ministry for Rehabilitation acquired large areas of land and developed residential areas, so-called "colonies", at the former outskirts of Delhi, the largest in the Southern part (amongst

²⁶ According to census data Delhi metropolitan area had a population of 16,787,941 people in 2011, see: <http://www.census2011.co.in/census/state/delhi.html> (accessed 14 March 2016).

²⁷ The Partition lies in a "pool of forgotten moments" that "do not fit comfortably into the national picture of how things are meant to be" (Tarlo 2003, 21). The extreme violence that accompanied the Partition did not fit into a narrative of successful independence. It is only twenty years ago that memories of the event have become public. During the 50th anniversary of Independence in 1997 newspapers covered personal stories of Partition, raising the younger generations' awareness of their families' past experiences (Raj 2000, 35). Many of my upper-caste Punjabi informants had recently put their experiences into writing or were about to do so. My ethnographical observations confirm Ravinder Kaur's findings, that the collective memory of the Partition is shaped by a specific upper-caste and middle-class narration which leaves out other experiences by lower classes and lower castes.

them Jangpura, Defense Colony, Nizamudin, Malviya Nagar and Chitranjan Park).²⁸ The Delhi Improvement Trust simultaneously operated in and around Old Delhi and expanded the city area to the west to “relieve congestion and control haphazard suburban development” (Kacker 2005, 69; see also D. Mehra 2013). State support of refugees depended on class and caste status. Ravinder Kaur points out that the possibility to become a “citizen” in the course of the state’s resettlement policy was very much dependent on the resources of the refugee:

The core principle of the official resettlement policy was *self-rehabilitation*, that is, the ability to become a productive citizen of the new nation state without state intervention. Thus, the onus of performing a successful transition – from refugee to citizen – lay on the resourcefulness of the refugees rather than the state. (Kaur 2009, 429 emphasis in original)

Resettlement policy was based on compensation which meant that higher losses were better recouped. This left many poor people behind, as they hadn’t owned much which could have been compensated²⁹ (Kaur 2008, 298). Besides, segregating allotment strategies for different castes maintained strong class and caste-boundaries within the city quarters and segregated lower caste and lower class migrants to housing colonies on the outskirts of the city (Kaur 2007; Kaur 2008).

In the 1950s urban planners began to map their vision of the city’s future development into the first Master Plan of 1962. Vast areas of agricultural land from villages around the city were assigned to the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) which was established in 1957 and had the monopoly of developing and selling these spaces (Baviskar 2003, 90). The Master Plan was drafted by foreign experts who proposed an urban development plan implementing a Western system of detached land uses. This did not meet local patterns of land utilisation and “its implementation over time has been characterized by non-conforming developments, which are later ‘regularized’ – to use planner’s parlance – through the democratic political process” (Menon 2000, 152). As public body, the DDA developed low income housing by using profits generated from auctions of commercial, industrial and (upper) middle-class estates (Kacker 2005, 73). Because the government allotted plots according to ethnicity and class, Delhi’s city quarters are often inhabited by people of similar background or profession. The affluent area of Defence Colony for instance was originally established to settle defence personnel of high rank, plots in the colony of Chittaranjan Park were auctioned to refugees who came from the Bengal side of the Partition and Punjabi refugees were settled in language area clusters within colonies (Raj 2000, 33f.). Housing for government employees equally reproduced segregation, not only

²⁸ See: http://www.rgplan.org/delhi/Basic_Statistics_of_Delhi.pdf (accessed 01 March 2016).

²⁹ Untouchable migrants for example “did not get even a fraction of the amount of various grants and loan schemes earmarked for upper-caste refugees” (Kaur 2008, 302)(Kaur 2008, 302).

between clerks and other working groups “but also among the government employees themselves since they have been supplied with different categories of housing according to their official status and range of income” (Dupont 2016, 231). The DDA has generally favoured the well-off and most of the flats for low income groups are inhabited by middle-class families³⁰ (Menon-Sen and Bhan 2008; Kacker 2005). The “state-sponsored speculation in land and the inherent subsidy on housing for urban middle and upper-middle classes” are what Sanjay Srivastava calls “state capitalism” pursued by DDA policies (2015, 60). Because the agency failed to provide housing for the increasing number of low income households, encroachment of government lands has been on the rise. According to Ravi Sundaram, in this context “[n]on-legal proliferation has emerged as a defining component of the new urban form in India” (2010, 4).

With the upcoming of affluent colonies in Delhi residents formed various neighbourhood or civil society organisations, most prominent Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs). These local associations were founded to pursue the interests of private property owners in civic matters, such as security and infrastructure, to create social and recreational spaces often in the form of exclusive clubs, and to promote aims and objectives to local bodies like the Municipal Corporation or Government Departments.³¹ They are institutionalised bodies that regulate public life in middle-class neighbourhoods, giving a sense of security, shared values and common interests, like clean streets and parks. Even though these local associations represent highly different localities and pursue diverging, often contradictory aims by various sections of the middle classes (Kamath and Vijayabaskar 2009), they nevertheless share a claim to middle-classness by articulating “a common set of issues that are seen to affect all ‘middle-class’ people” (Srivastava 2015, 86). Leading posts in the RWAs are generally occupied by elderly male residents. Mr. Kapoor, the then-president of a RWA of the neighbourhood, stressed in an interview that apart from having more leisure time than younger people, it was the good relations seniors usually had with representatives of the government that made them perfectly suited for the job.

Mr. Kapoor: Senior citizens manage to have good relation repo with the elected representatives of the government: Municipal cooperation, Member of the

³⁰ There is a salient mismatch of proposed housing in the Master Plan of 1962, assigning 40% of the developed housing to economically weaker sections and its implementation reaching only 30%. More pivotal are the results of a survey conducted by the Delhi NGO Hazard Centre in 2003 which found that 80% of the flats DDA developed for low-income groups (LIG) were actually occupied by middle-income families. “This is not surprising, considering that the average cost of these flats is Rs 200,000 [2,700€], an amount far beyond the reach of any working-class family. Buying and renting out LIG flats is now considered a safe form of investment for middle-income families in Delhi” (Menon-Sen and Bhan 2008, 17).

³¹ See for example: <http://www.dcwa.co.in/about-us.php> (accessed 04 December 2016).

legislative assembly - they have lot of funds to develop your colony. So [the residents] want a senior citizen who can keep liaison, good relations with [the representatives to] get something for the colony. That's why you have a senior citizen generally who is the president of a colony. (28 November 2013)

Mr. Kapoor, like many other presidents of RWAs, was a retired officer of the Indian army. Sanjay Srivastava supposes that RWAs may tend to occupy their posts with members of the armed forces in order to “attach the aura of military discipline to that of the modern housing locality” (2015, 89). In my view the appointment of military retirees is rather owed to the due respect paid to elderly army officers both by peers and by younger generations.³² Their status is regarded as beneficial for their capacity to lobby for the colony’s interests. The voluntary engagement of Mr. Kapoor as well as of other male senior citizens working for RWAs not only shows the desire of older men to keep a position of power but also shows their active involvement securing and expanding middle-class interests. Although middle-class activism is not a contemporary phenomenon³³ it changed from a leftist commitment to uplift the poorer sections of society to a protection of self-interests making claims against the state which is in general seen as favouring the poor (Srivastava 2015, 88f.). RWAs actively secure demarcated middle-class spaces and lobby with government officials to develop their residential areas, for instance by tarring roads or reconstructing local markets. Since the mid-to-late 1980s RWAs have installed and maintained gates at points of entry of colonies, not only reducing traffic but also monitoring the access of people to the residential area. According to Sanjay Srivastava RWAs “became the key vehicles for articulating an exclusionary urban politics of space” (2015, 113). These new modes of urban activism are a defining feature of the new middle classes in India³⁴ and senior citizens often actively commit to civil society organisations, which aim at gentrifying and “cleaning up” cities enhancing a greater political inequality in India’s cities (Harriss 2006; Harriss 2007).

As outlined above Delhi’s middle-classes have largely benefitted from public development of land, both by the state’s resettlement policy as well as by the development of housing through the public body DDA. Geographer D. Asher Ghertner (2011a) convincingly argues that recently the Delhi government has further strengthened urban middle-class power, giving in to demands of RWAs instead of the demands of the poor, thereby gentrifying state space in favour of the new middle classes. Recent scholarship has outlined that the privatisation of land and a

³² In my presence military retirees were often praised for their disciplined life as well as their service to the nation.

³³ During colonial and post-colonial times movements fighting for freedom or various social reforms were “important sites of public activity by the ‘educated classes’” (Srivastava 2015, 88).

³⁴ Nevertheless, this new kind of urban governance is not restricted to India but promoted globally, often supported by funding from international institutions like the World Bank (Upadhyaya 2009, 265).

deregulated real estate investment since the early 1990s have propelled a liberalised city-building based on the idea of “world class” at the further expense of the poor (see 2014; Baviskar 2003; Fernandes 2004; Ghertner 2008; Menon-Sen and Bhan 2008).

Urban Restructuring in Neoliberal India

The liberalisation of India’s market economy has increased the city government’s efforts to become a “world-class city.” The pursuit of turning Delhi into a hub for international trade and investment involved the reallocation of public funds and the justification of further slum clearances in order to generate an appealing urban landscape that can keep up to Asian urban counterparts like Hong Kong or Singapore (Truelove and Mawdsley 2011, 407; see also Baviskar 2014; Ghertner 2011b; Dupont 2011; Menon-Sen and Bhan 2008). Since the early 2000s public spending has been shifted from “education, public housing, health care, and food subsidies toward large, highly visible, and ‘modern’ infrastructure developments” and prestige projects like the Delhi Metro Rail or the Commonwealth Game Village (Ghertner 2011b, 280). Apart from public funds which are invested in modern infrastructure, private developers have taken over a huge part of the urban restructuring in neoliberal India. Over the last three decades several satellite towns have come up just outside of Delhi’s borders, marked by office complexes, huge shopping malls, five star hotels and high-rise residential enclaves promising “world-class” living in a secure and hassle-free environment. Since 2000 more than 55% of the National Capital Region of Delhi have been developed, including the satellite towns of Gurgaon, Faridabad and Noida (Burdett et al. 2014, 28). This means a massive urban expansion. Gurgaon, a satellite city about twenty kilometres southwest of Delhi in the state of Haryana, used to be an agricultural area with villages only twenty years ago. Nowadays it has become a major industrial hub, a city with over 1.5 million inhabitants³⁵ being the richest area in NCR.³⁶ The city’s “modern” outlook with a skyline of office buildings and shopping malls (see figure 2.2) is often cited as an example “of the vast spatial and social transformations underway in India today” (Searle 2013, 272). These eye-catching “global landscapes” primarily serve worldwide operating IT and service companies as well as the post-liberalisation middle classes and therefore have become signs of the not only economic progress but also the accompanying cultural and social transformations. “In popular media and everyday discourse, they signal India’s newfound footing on the global economic stage” (Searle 2014, 60f.).

³⁵ See: <http://www.census2011.co.in/census/district/225-gurgaon.html> (accessed 24 January 2017)

³⁶ Since 2004-05 the per capita income of Gurgaon has surpassed that of NCT Delhi, see: http://ncrpb.nic.in/pdf_files/Draft%20Revised%20Regional%20Plan%202021/07%20Chapter%205%20Economic%20Scenario_edited.pdf (accessed 01 March 2016).



Figure 2.2: Gurgaon Street View. Photo: Annika Mayer

Real estate development in India has not only turned into an asset but also into a key site for middle-class aspirations “to secure appropriate and exclusive urban space” (Srivastava 2015, xxix). “Improvement” in Delhi (mostly in forms of slum evictions) has always been at the expense of the poorer social strata but it also – at least partly – incorporated an inclusive attitude towards the poor.³⁷ According to a retired DDA planning commissioner I interviewed, the DDA has constructed 1.4 million dwelling units in the city since its establishment out of which two thirds were built for the economically weaker sections and low income groups.³⁸ Although he admitted that there have been many shortcomings by the DDA, he felt that the continuing privatisation of land has led to an even greater negligence of the weaker sections of society in recent times.

A.K. Jain: If you see the big picture, two third of the houses allotted to the low income group, middle income group, etc. are decided to house honest people who

³⁷ The foundation of the DDA for example was based on the shortfalls of its precursor institution, the Delhi Improvement Trust (DIT). The DIT, created in 1937, had both the power to coercively acquire land and to implement numerous “improvement” schemes which included various slum-clearances (Srivastava 2015, xxiii.f.). In the eyes of the Birla Committee, who wrote a report in 1951 evaluating the DIT, it was the “housing problem”, amongst other things, which the body not only had not tackled but worsened “through its policies of land acquisition and disposal that favoured the well-off” (Srivastava 2015, 59). Its successor body, the DDA, was appointed to put things right.

³⁸ Interview with A.K. Jain, 16 February 2015. As mentioned above, many of the housing for lower income groups are in fact inhabited by middle-class residents (Menon-Sen and Bhan 2008).

could not afford the market prices. This happened 'til 2001 or 2003 or 2004. Now the ministry of urban development has been favouring the policy of monetisation of urban land. [...] So the point is that the kind of housing which we now are planning or we are developing or we are facilitating in Delhi will be basically very expensive. [...] Everything is getting privatised, PPP public private partnership, or no subsidies, user-pay principle to be applied; everything is to be controlled by the real estate sector. This is something very worri[some] that what will happen to our people? [...] Nothing wrong with the privatisation but the thing is that if you are not able to take into consideration the social dimension, the dimension of the poor, informal sector, the labourers, the domestic servants, the drivers, the construction people, labourers, what you will be creating will be something like Lavasa, [...] something like Aamby Valley. It's all basically for very rich people. [...] Private developers [are] selling the same property 10 times the price of the DDA. And this is something which is happening since [the] last 5 years or so in Delhi. (16 February 2015)

Lavasa and Aamby Valey, which Mr. Jain referred to, are two privatised cities in Maharashtra, which exclusively target affluent buyers. Privatised cities, which gain popularity in the global South, aim to “create self-sufficient urban enclaves, separated from the chaos and congestion of the main city for a target market that can afford to pay for a higher quality urban experience” (S. Mitra 2015, 109). They are extreme examples of city developments which urban scholar Gavin Shatkin (2011) names “urban integrated mega-projects.” These mega projects transform large areas of urban land into self-contained entities which include not only commercial and residential areas but also spaces for leisure, education and health care. In contrast to state-controlled urban planning these projects are for-profit endeavours by single or multiple investors, at times in partnership with public bodies, commodifying urban space (Shatkin 2011, 77). In the last decades private real estate companies, like DLF,³⁹ have advanced to the most influential agents of urban development in the National Capital Region of Delhi (Srivastava 2015, 128). They have turned vast areas of land into exclusive commercial and residential areas. These gated enclaves are predominantly determined by the economic means of residents (Brosius 2010, 103) rather than by ethnical, social or professional affiliation. Equally to their Western counterparts, the new gated enclaves in Delhi reproduce a “moral gentrification process,” as “access to public spaces is privatised and regulated through a symbolic culture of fear, public safety and urban civility” (Brosius and Schilbach 2016, 224f.). And yet, ethnographical studies have shown that gated communities in Delhi have distinctive local features and are enmeshed in local land use politics (see Dupont 2016; Srivastava 2012). Condominium living is mainly advertised for younger generations and associated with nuclear family living. Nonetheless, a growing number of older persons reside in these kinds of facilities, either with their families or alone. Recently, real estate developers have started to directly

³⁹ DLF has operated in Delhi since 1946. But with the establishment of the DDA in 1957 and its monopoly of developing land, DLF's business was put to a preliminary end, reviving only in the 1970s.

address older persons and have come up with a number of senior living facilities that cater to middle-class aspirations for secure and hassle-free spaces (see later this chapter).

Concerns of security and insecurity are omnipresent in Delhi. Véronique Dupont (2016) speaks of a “security phobia” that has driven well-off urban citizens to isolate themselves to counter their fear of crime and of the urban poor. The current fear of murder, crime and gendered violence often evolves from migrants who are said to make the city an unsafe place. Although Delhi has always been a migrant city, poor newcomers are often stigmatised.

Despite Delhi’s history as a city of migrants, where the overwhelming majority of the population consists of first or second-generation migrants, the fact of migration is selectively used to stigmatise certain social groups. While attempts by the bourgeoisie to construct a genealogy explaining its presence in Delhi are granted legitimacy, similar strategies are denied to the property-less. Perceiving the poor as migrants and as newly arrived interlopers on the urban scene is a strategy to disenfranchise them from civic citizenship. (Baviskar 2003, 96)

Daily newspaper articles on rape and murder cases add to the perception that Delhi’s public places are insecure. Local news has gained importance in print media and has been shifted to the front pages from 2005 onwards. Accounts of consumption and spectacle coincide with reports about death and disorder “sharpening the sensory experience of the growing metropolis” (Sundaram 2012, 173). Political and national news had to make way for stories of violence, pollution, and crime or accident statistics, evoking “an injured public body of the city” (Sundaram 2012, 174). Ravi Sundaram (2012) points out that the urban fear in Delhi today is mapped and managed with the knowledge and the technologies of new and old urban players like the police, courts, urban bodies, media managers, and civic groups. The skills to govern fear are what he calls “technologies of fear,” which now intervene in a language of hazard.

Rather than care for a social body, the language of risk and uncertainty is increasingly the favored terrain for technologies of fear today. Plunging into the new media (text campaigns, blogs, and media management), these technologies of fear suggest an out-of-control urban experience, needing radical new points of endless intervention. (Sundaram 2012, 167)

A growing number of middle-class elderly live alone or – like Mr. Malik – stay alone during the day as their children work during daytime or moved elsewhere. In this social setting, security is often of great concern to the elderly and their children. Narratives of vulnerable older persons at the mercy of the dark city are perpetuated through different media and stakeholders. An article in the Times of India (Mandal 2013) reports about a 40% increase in murders of seniors (see figure 2.3). It includes an infographic entitled “Elders in danger.” Since the 1990s such statistical charts have become ubiquitous explanations for the contingencies of felonies, the weather, polls or public opinion (Sundaram 2012, 177).

The more unpredictable, dangerous, and contingent the urban experience became, the more widespread was the use of the statistical image as a knowledge form. [...] Allied with the idea of expert knowledge, and popularized by the digital interface, there is little doubt that statistics offers a significant response to the widespread anxiety and unpredictability of life in the postmodern era. (Sundaram 2012, 177f.)

The infographic “Elders in danger” claims that “Delhi’s elderly are unsafe even inside their own homes, often ending up as targets of gruesome crimes.” Thereafter a table informs the reader about the numbers of senior citizens being killed in the last years, accounting 35 murders in 2011 and 48 murders in 2012. Compared to Delhi’s elderly population of over 990,000 people at that time⁴⁰ the actual probability of becoming a victim of crime is very low. Nevertheless, the evaluation of such statistical charts produces rather insecurities than reassurance (Woodward 1999, 198). The report also dramatises the risk in comparing absolute numbers and stating a 40% raise in murder rate. Personalised cases of murders and crimes picture a frightening reality intensified by the assumption that the police do not have sufficient resources to guarantee safety.



Figure 2.3: Article in *The Times of India*. 05 December 2013, page 6.

⁴⁰ According to the census of 2011, 5,9% of Delhi’s population were over the age of 60, giving an approximate elderly population of 990,000 people. See: http://www.censusindia.gov.in/vital_statistics/srs_report/9chap%20-%202011.pdf (accessed 15 March 2016).

In 2004, the Delhi Police have established a Senior Citizen Cell with the objective of monitoring “all matters related to Safety & Security of [the] vulnerable category of Senior Citizens of Delhi.”⁴¹ In an interview Police Inspector Gaur acknowledged that the insecurity of older people was more perceived than real. In his view, it was the physical weakness and especially loneliness rather than a real threat that made elderly people feel insecure.

Mr. Gaur: When a person gets [older] so [he] morally and mentally feels insecure. It's not that he's actually insecure. But feeling comes there. Because of loneliness. More of the problem is of loneliness, not of insecurity [because] insecurity comes from loneliness. (02 March 2015)

Loneliness certainly increases the feeling of vulnerability of older persons. And yet the Delhi Police Senior Citizen Cell speaks exactly the language of risk and uncertainty, which Ravi Sundaram refers to. On their homepage, for instance, the police give instructions for safety measures. They recommend to install grills on doors or windows and to avoid opening doors to unknown people.⁴² They thus add to narratives of insecurity which are prevalent in daily discourses in Delhi.

Witnessing Urban Change

Older people have witnessed Delhi's urban transformation during their life-times. The city has not only transformed into a landscape of global living but also into an urban fabric with overcrowded settlements, land encroachment, massive air pollution and high traffic volume. Yet many elderly are proud to be part of an aspiring metropolis that is able to compete globally. When I asked Mr. Goswami in what way the city had “improved” or “gotten worse” in the last twenty years, he stressed that a growing city implicated deterioration but that urban development predominated.

Mr. Goswami: Nothing has gone worse. It's an individual [perspective]... like people say: 'Look, my health has deteriorated.' [The] question is: your health, what you were at twenty-five, you cannot have the same health at the age of seventy. There is a natural decay. So when the city grows, some things do happen. Law and order situation, cleanliness, there's hardly any space, mushroom localities are coming up, illegal localities are coming up, because people cannot afford. People sleep on the roads, there's more begging. These are things, they have [come]... but then development you see all around. Now at least we are at par with any world-class city. Of course we're the best in India, but it can be compared with any world-class city. [...] Any facility you ask for, it is here. We feel ourselves in a fairy land, you see. Now I have seen Delhi where we used to... one could do free cycling. I mean, I used to drive a cycle with both hands like this [makes a gesture of cycling free-hand]. But today you can't drive even a car without putting your hands on the steering wheel. So things did happen. But there is a tremendous development,

⁴¹ See: <http://www.delhipolice.nic.in/seniorcitizen/history.htm> (accessed 15 March 2016).

⁴² See: <http://www.delhipolice.nic.in/seniorcitizen/dos-dont.htm> (accessed 06 January 2017).

unimaginable. You could not even conceive that this will happen. (20 December 2013)

Mr. Goswami compared the city's growth to the ageing of a body, which in his opinion also included a "natural decay." While having been able to cycle through spacious roads in his childhood, he now had to stick to his driving wheel to navigate through heavy traffic. In his narrative, the increase in population inevitably led to a decline in order and cleanliness, as well as to the development of illegal settlements. By assuming that this was the ordinary course of events, Mr. Goswami naturalised inequality. In his view, this condition needed to be accepted rather than complained about. Instead, one should actually look at the developments that have placed Delhi "at par with any world-class city." Mr. Goswami's equation of Delhi with a "fairy land" is based on the notion that Delhi is rapidly moving forward and upward and can now keep up with other global metropolises. Many metaphors, which express a vision of the country's successful rise to world status, are created in the context of India's neoliberalisation. In contrast to the years of a socialist economy, middle-class aspirations of a capitalist lifestyle are now something to be proud of.

After years of socialist economy, ranging from restrictions against the market of western goods to a moral universe that, in theory, promoted that less was better than more and that, first of all, the entire population of India had to be uplifted before economic liberalisation could be allowed into the country, capitalism was embraced and translated into a national virtue (Fernandes 2006). While capitalism was previously [sic] identified with lack of patriotism, members of the new middle classes now consider themselves as motors of a new national revitalisation, both in terms of economy and moral values. (Brosius 2010, 11)

Mr. Goswami was also engaged in the Resident Welfare Association of his neighbourhood and therefore was actively advocating the "improvement" of the city. Other informants were not as impressed by Delhi's transformation as Mr. Goswami and not only complained about traffic and pollution but also about societal changes that had led to a social isolation of people (see later this chapter). And yet, I was rather surprised that despite the negative image of the city in general, nearly all of my informants felt attached to Delhi and stressed they would not want to move anywhere else.

Mr. Malik: Because I'm more familiar with this place, I'll have difficulty in adjusting to a new place. I can go for a certain time, two months, three months, for a change. But ultimately I would like to come back to this place only. My daughter frequently asks me: 'Papa, come to this place, Pune, it's a nice place.' Of course it is a very nice place, but for a few days I just enjoy. After that I get bored. I say: No, I'll go back to my place. Even though I know I'll be alone here during the day, but still I go back to this place. (14 November 2013)

Mr. Malik's comment reveals a strong attachment to place. He lived with his younger daughter and his son in an apartment in a South Delhi neighbourhood. Although both his children were in

their offices during the day, he preferred to stay alone in an environment well known to him rather than to move to his elder daughter's family in Pune. Mr. Malik connoted the shift to a new setting with boredom that would arise after a while. And in spite of the loneliness he experienced in Delhi at times he appreciated the familiarity of place. His phrasing that he always wanted go back to *his* place reveals that he feels more agentive in his own housing and that he identifies with this space. This marks a wish to stay in control of one's own environment. It also shows the difficulties Mr. Malik connected with adjustment not only to a new home but also to a new city. His familiarity with Delhi, even though the city has undergone major change, gave him a sense of belonging.

Many of my informants were part of an apparatus of bureaucrats and administrators which has determined the image of Delhi lacking a "modern urban rhythm" that characterises Bombay or Calcutta (Sundaram 2012, 168). Until today Delhi's conservatism has contributed to its image of an "unloved city". Inhabitants would not rave about its reputation but rather be indifferent or actively dislike it (Vidal, Tarlo, and Dupont 2000, 16). Recent citizens' initiatives rebrand the city by evoking a favourable image of Delhi mingling urban nostalgia with urban activism. The website of the movement "Delhi – I love you" for instance states that they are "an independent socio-cultural movement of love in the city."⁴³ It is interesting that part of the project is a series of conversations with senior citizens called "My City My Memory"⁴⁴. Writer and filmmaker Sohail Hashmi, himself senior, speaks with older persons to "bring their neighborhood's memories back to life."⁴⁵ The short video clips put on the website and Facebook evoke nostalgia both by their filmic language (colours, music, depth of field blur) and by the stories told. In the first episode, two senior men are reminiscing about their childhood days in Old Delhi, talking about a functioning neighbourhood community and joking about their efforts to impress girls. By the use of media an urban cultural memory⁴⁶ is created. These two seniors are witnesses of a past time, keepers of memories that create an urban nostalgia which younger generations identify with. It is telling that Old Delhi has been chosen as the first site of those conversations, as the old part of the city has become a site of nostalgia for the globalised middle class (Gandhi 2015).

⁴³ See: <http://www.delhiiloveyou.com/> (accessed 14 March 2016).

⁴⁴ See: <http://www.delhiiloveyou.com/my-city-my-memory> (accessed 03 January 2017).

⁴⁵ See: <https://www.facebook.com/Delhiiloveyou> (accessed 06 June 2015).

⁴⁶ Jan and Aleida Assmann differentiate between a communicative and a cultural memory. The former is shaped by the biographical horizon of experience (Erfahrungshorizont) of the generation witnessing the events. The latter exists in remembering persons but also in things like texts, images, symbols or actions (J. Assmann 2006, 70). A transition of a communicative memory into a cultural memory is only possible through media (A. Assmann and Assmann 1994, 120).

[W]hile Old Delhi, for some elites, is an antiquated and unhygienic relic, it is at the same time a shared touchstone, a guarantor of common feeling. The simultaneous valorising of, and disdain towards, Old Delhi in the collective imagination makes sense given that, as Svetlana Boym notes, nostalgia, as a historical emotion, is not opposed to modernity but its contemporaneous double and mirror (2001, xvi). (Gandhi 2015, 4f.)

The example of the “Delhi – I love you” initiative is interesting because the rebranding of the city not only includes the city’s new “global landscapes” but equally its tangible and intangible heritage. Thus, the intangible heritage of memories which older persons share and which stands for a conservatism in the city is taken as the basis for the creation of a urban nostalgia which generates the sense of belonging to a “modern” and creative city with its distinctive history.

In the following I analyse the composition and respatialisation of different localities with a closer look at the involvement of elderly people in these spaces. In the topography of ageing in the city, neighbourhoods play a central role. South Delhi’s middle-class neighbourhoods have been developed by the state after independence and can be seen as precursors of the privately developed gated enclaves. Both localities are marked by a uniformity of (upper) middle-class residents, a “modern” housing style and the anxiety for compartmentalisation.⁴⁷ Yet, there are differences in these urban spaces, as the middle-class neighbourhoods within the city are often characterised by a different sense of community that stems from long attachment to place and a similar background of residents while condominium living is foremost marked by class affiliation.

2.2. Ageing in a South Delhi Neighbourhood

Community and Ageing-in-Place

Safdarjung Enclave was developed in the early 1970s by the Delhi Development Authority. Even though it is not one of the rehabilitation colonies developed for refugees after Partition,⁴⁸ the history of displacement played a significant role in the formation of the colony. Mr. Goswami, a man in his mid-seventies for example, came to Delhi with his parents during Partition leaving behind their home in West Punjab. His narration sounded like a rags-to-riches story. Although coming with “nothing” to the city, Mr. Goswami was allowed to study economics a few years later. His graduation enabled him to get a job in the medical sector where he progressed fast “by virtue of working very hard, honestly, sincerely.”

Mr. Goswami: I came to Delhi in 1947. It's after partition; we belong to Lahore and Amritsar. [...]

⁴⁷ For a similar urban development in Kolkata see Donner (2015, 331).

⁴⁸ See: www.rgplan.org/delhi/Basic_Statistics_of_Delhi.pdf (accessed 15 March 2016).

AM: And how old were you at that time?

Mr. Goswami: Five years.

AM: And did your parents move when the riots had already started or did they move before?

Mr. Goswami: No, no, we were lucky. My father had a factory in Orissa. So it was a summer vacation and we had gone to spend our summer vacation there. So we were lucky and we got the news there that there is a Partition. And our everything has gone. So we were bloody reduced to nothing.

AM: So you couldn't take any...

Mr. Goswami: Anything! Not even a shirt. [...] The lowest grade labourers we had to start. I sold small, small eatables on a railway platform. I did the labour. For one or two Rupees I had to carry certain things from one place to another. And that's how we made the living. [...] My father tried to take some job. I used to help him but my father insisted that I should study. So I was working also and I was studying also, helping my parents. [...] So that's how we worked, struggled. And were so poor that sometimes we didn't know if we would have breakfast, we didn't know whether we had lunch or not and if we had lunch, we didn't know whether we'd have dinner or not. So we were living hand to mouth. [...]

AM: So how did life go on or what did change?

Mr. Goswami: It's only the determination. My father never said that it's easy this thing. We were very egoistic. In Hindi, you know Hindi: *svābhīmān* [self-esteem]. [...] We never begged. Not from our own relatives. We ate whatever. We both, my father and me, earned. We didn't ask anybody for help. Not anybody came for help, because they themselves were also very poor, so how could they help? But then God was very kind. I kept on studying and my father's business also grew up. So when you work very hard then God also helps you. So that's how we're here. (20 December 2013)

Mr. Goswami's life story illustrates two important points. First he belonged to a privileged class who spent their summer holidays outside of Punjab. Even though he was of the opinion that this was a mere coincidence, Ravinder Kaur points out that upper middle-class migration preceded the mass migration. Many affluent people left the risky areas ahead of Partition either transferring their residences in Hindu-dominated cities or spending early summer vacation at hill stations to await the development of events (Kaur 2007, 69). Secondly, Mr. Goswami recalled a great sense of loss that was linked to a narrative of success by his father's and his own hard work. His narration is part of what Ravinder Kaur calls the "master narrative" of Partition among Punjabis in Delhi, a collective memory of loss and of successful self-rehabilitation created and perpetuated by public authorities, intellectuals, and affluent Punjabis (2008, 286). It is important to note that although the mass displacement during Partition was a collective experience, it did not overcome social distinctions as state support and compensation depended on class and caste status. This is also reflected in the life histories of my informants in

Safdarjung Enclave. None of them had been placed in one of the refugee camps established in the city. Instead, their families mostly moved to the neighbourhood of Karol Bagh⁴⁹ on their arrival and bought plots in Safdarjung Enclave later in the 1970s. Managing successfully “to survive outside of refugee camps and state institutions was linked to one’s prospects of becoming relevant and full-fledged citizens of the new nation” (Kaur 2009, 430). Thus, the success of upper-caste Punjabis in regaining affluence in Delhi was not only owed to their self-esteem (*svābhīmān*) and hard work as Mr. Goswami’s account conveys but also decisively to privileges they enjoyed. And yet, the trope of the hard working Punjabi, that we encounter in Mr. Goswami’s narration, is a trope that has “reached somewhat mythical proportions” (Raj 2000, 37).

As the post-Partition government allotted plots according to ethnicity, caste and class, Delhi’s city quarters are often inhabited by people of similar background. In Safdarjung Enclave, Punjabis numbered half of my informants (ten households) while the others came from surrounding North Indian states, namely Uttar Pradesh (five households), Haryana (two households), and Delhi (two households). Only one family was originally from South India. The neighbourhood is predominantly populated by Hindus and a minority of Sikhs.⁵⁰ The area spreads from Ring Road in the North to Deer Park in the South and from Africa Avenue in the west to Green Park in the East. It is divided into different blocks (A&B) and sub-blocks (A7, B4, etc.) and includes two urban villages, Arjun Nagar and Humayunpur. In the process of urban expansion after Partition, agricultural land of surrounding villages was acquired and subsequently developed for industrial and residential use by the DDA. Villages were incorporated into the city⁵¹ (A. K. Mehra 2005, 265). Land use in these urban villages was restricted to merely residential purposes but the low-rent areas have attracted commerce and small enterprises (A. K. Mehra 2005, 280). While Humayunpur is an official urban village acknowledged by the DDA,⁵² this is not true for Arjun Nagar. Nevertheless it is referred to as such by the residents of the enclave. The colony provides several schools and markets (B4 & B7

⁴⁹ Karol Bagh used to be a middle-class Muslim neighbourhood. After Partition it had been vacated by its Muslim inhabitants as it was one of the main areas of communal violence. It has turned into a residential and commercial Punjabi upper-caste colony (Kaur 2008, 283).

⁵⁰ Communal violence in the history of Delhi has led to a clustering of people along religious lines (Dupont 2016, 230).

⁵¹ “The Master Plan of Delhi, 1961 used the expression ‘urban village’ in a special sense to designate the clusters of villages chosen on the fringes of urban Delhi to relocate certain small industries with village-like character, for instance pottery, handloom weaving, tanning, rearing milch cattle. However, in later years the DDA did not use the term in the specific sense it had defined. It used the term to denote all the villages which had lost their agricultural land either to the DDA, or to a private agency in the process of urbanization” (A. K. Mehra 2005, 281).

⁵² See: <https://dda.org.in/ddanew/pdf/Planning/Scanning%20A4English.pdf> (accessed 03 July 2015).

middle-class markets, Arjun Nagar market), as well as a number of small parks, a temple and a Gurudwara. The majority of my informants had lived in the neighbourhood since the 1970s and therefore had known their neighbours and the environment over a longer period of time. Both women and men regularly went to neighbouring parks for a morning or evening walk (see chapter 5). Elderly women's routine often involved shopping in one of the urban villages within the colony while elderly men often pursued banking business nearby or looked after their gardens.

The Western debates on "ageing-in-place" address, amongst other topics, the advantages and disadvantages of ageing in a familiar environment. Over the years people develop attachment to their surroundings, their homes, neighbourhoods, places of worship, shopping areas, parks, etc. These ambient spaces influence the behaviour and identity of the residents. "Personal identity is constantly spatialized because people narrate the things and places around them as part of their biographical development" (Katz 2009:465). Ageing-in-place studies often stress the positive effects when elderly people stay in their community. Policy makers and intergovernmental organisations like the World Health Organization equally favour this option, as home-care services are less costly than institutionalised care (Wiles et al. 2012, 357). However, Graham Rowles (1993), a trailblazer in spatial gerontology, points out that aging-in-place reasoning must neither overstate or romanticise familiarity with and emotional attachment to place nor exaggerate negative effects of a change of residence for the elderly. Instead, it is necessary to "take into account all the pragmatic, intergenerational, income-related, situational and technical realities that go into residential decision-making" (Katz 2009:465). It is these realities that I analyse in the following.

The composition of residents in Safdarjung and other colonies of Delhi is slowly changing as real estate has become very expensive and people sell their property to buy new residences elsewhere (see also Nakatani 2015, 173). Older people felt that bonds within their neighbourhood had weakened over the last decades and that new generations were less family-but more self-centred which had altered the solidarity in the neighbourhood.

Mr. Goswami: You see, India is a vast country, cast, creed, culture, habits. There are all sorts of people, but by and large earlier people were simple, honest, trustworthy, sacrificing. But now people have become self-centred. I find this is the very major change. Difficult now to trust everybody. Earlier we could. You see, my mother used to leave us with the neighbour for two to three months. My neighbours, although they were poor, they were too happy to look after us. But now, [it is] even difficult to socialise because of people's [reservations about] interference. Interference in privacy. (21 December 2013)

Mr. Goswami contrasted the simple but upright life of his parents' generation with the self-centeredness of younger generations who in his opinion were less inclined to help neighbours

and even worse could not be trusted likewise. Besides the altered neighbourly relationships and the decrease in mutual trust, Mr. Goswami addressed a change in privacy that many of my informants mentioned. While people used to see neighbours or acquaintances spontaneously, people nowadays refrain from unannounced visits. In the perception of my informants the boundaries of public and private space had become more rigid in times of neoliberalisation, when new ideas of nuclear family living came up and people minded the interference in their privacy. Yet, it was not only the private sphere but also the public sphere which has become delimited. Mr. Malik, a widower in his mid-seventies, had lived in the area since 1980 and felt that social bonding had weakened.

Mr. Malik: Significant social changes have come. In the past, when we went out in the neighbourhood, our neighbours would greet and talk about this and that. Now, your neighbour will not bother to ask you, you have to especially.... That kind of isolation has increased. We don't bother, it's ok, no problem.

AM: It was not like that before?

Mr. Malik: It used not to be like this, of course. Now, the other thing is, that my family and my brother's family are separated. The people who used to live here - we were 125 people with allotted plots here, we knew each and every family. So as it is in my case, similarly is the case of others, neighbours also. Their children, the next generation, they don't mingle too much. So when they go outside they say 'Hello uncle', that's all. Before, the mixing was much more. (14 November 2013)

According to Mr. Malik it was the decreasing family cohesion which led to a decreasing social cohesion. He remained alone during the day as both his son and his daughter went to work. Other young neighbours did likewise and no longer showed interest in mingling with neighbours. For Mr. Malik ageing-in-place led to an increased isolation of older people and was therefore primarily connected to negative change. Mr. Goswami had a more ambivalent attitude towards ageing-in-place. He stressed that in his son's novel neighbourhood in Gurgaon it was actually easier to socialise with new people. Yet, his attachment to Safdarjung Enclave was very strong and he enjoyed the long-term relationships in his neighbourhood.

AM: And [...] in Gurgaon for example [...], do you feel the neighbourhood is different?

Mr. Goswami: It's much better. You see, what we [were] used to in this site, say forty years back, now it is there in Gurgaon at this time. Maybe [because it is an] upcoming locality and most of the people have come from outside; and they are also lonely and they want to live in company. So they have greater respect and when I go there, I find the same environment which we used to have about forty years back in Delhi.

AM: So it wouldn't be too difficult to shift to Gurgaon for you, because there also you...?

Mr. Goswami: No, no, not at all. Not at all. Not at all. Rather I have a good company, many people now know me because I am a frequent visitor to my son. So whenever I go, people of my age, when I go for the morning walk, they invite me for breakfast, they invite me for drinks in the evening. I mean they're also very friendly. Very friendly. So that's why my son says 'You've got friends here [in Gurgaon], you've got friends there [in Safdarjung Enclave], why don't you come here?' So, but you see the bondage here is much greater. Plus I get a lot of visits because I have grown up in this, I mean... most of the people they know me. Even from grandfather to grandchild they know me. So I feel more homely here. (20 December 2013)

The move to a newly built neighbourhood made it easy to make new acquaintances and while Mr. Goswami liked to meet new people he felt more at home in Safdarjung Enclave, where he had developed long standing relationships. Besides, Mr. Goswami was a very active resident, being president of the neighbourhood club and holding an office in the local Resident Welfare Association. As mentioned earlier the RWAs are local bodies which create a community of residents primarily through the control and exclusion of people. The neighbourhood club, which Mr. Goswami was committed to, fostered community through common activities, like swimming, dining, or playing cards in an exclusive space. Both assignments enabled him to participate and strengthened his network in the neighbourhood. Furthermore, he regularly invited neighbours over to his house for playing cards or having a drink.

Most of my other informants were less active in the neighbourhood. Some residents thought about moving elsewhere feeling that the neighbourhood had become too crowded with people who shifted from lesser developed neighbourhoods to Safdarjung Enclave. Numerous single-storeyed houses had been redeveloped into multi-storeyed buildings, so more cars and people frequented the colony and fewer parking space was available. Upper middle-class people moved to posher residences and the composition of residents has therefore changed.

Deshna Kaushik: Nowadays, some people have moved away from here to places like Gurgaon, where there are private houses. And from other places like Chandni Chowk and East Delhi, which were crowded areas, these people have shifted to settle here in Safdarjung. [...] Those who had a house here, those people from here all shift to Gurgaon, Noida, and also Faridabad. But Gurgaon is a little better, college-wise, and the area is developed a little better.

Sundhya Pahuja: So many malls.

Deshna Kaushik: There are also malls.

AM: Which place do you like better, Safdarjung or Gurgaon?

Deshna Kaushik: I used to like this place, but now we also thinking we should move from here. [...]

AM: But if you move to Gurgaon or Faridabad, then you won't know your neighbours, no? Now, here, you know most of the...

Deshna Kaushik: No, no. There has been a lot of change in this aspect as well. In former times there was space around. This lane, when I was in A2 block, that time, there were only few DDA staff, since my husband was in DDA. So in our back lane, the housewives who lived there, they came, sat down, all asked ‘How are you?’, there was a lot of social gathering. Today if a house is constructed, nobody knows who has made it. [...] Everybody is shifting. In this lane how many old neighbours are left? All is rented out. (15 November 2013)

The neighbourhood can be conceptualised as “a specific type of urban locality where politics and power struggles are *located* and *take place* on a day-to-day basis [...]” (Donner and De Neve 2006, 9). However, as the comment of Ms. Kaushik shows, it cannot be seen as an isolated unit but it is always related to other city spaces. My informants evaluated and reproduced middle-classness in the locality, for instance by reconstructing their houses into posh multi-storeyed buildings, by creating middle-class elderscapes in the nearby park, or by distancing themselves from other lower classes living in the urbanised villages. One lady told me: “Arjun Nagar is [a] reasonable [area]. Because as you see this is not a very forward area type. This is like a village”⁵³ (16 December 2013). Hence, the reproduction of a middle-class lifestyle in older neighbourhoods is always in competition with newer forms of housing like gated condominiums which promote a middle-class lifestyle from the outset.

Of Builders and Buildings

For senior citizens social upward mobility is connected to the neighbourhood. The vast majority of my informants had purchased their plots in the 1970s, when this area was still on the outskirts of the city. Due to the incredible expansion of the city, the area is now in great demand and property prices have risen enormously.

Mr. Goswami: You see, when we came [to Delhi] the population was seven lakhs [700,000]. Now it’s one point five crores [15 million]. It’s twenty times. You see, this place, it was dead cheap. Rather people used to be scared to take this place. When I purchased this plot, I purchased this plot for fifty seven thousand. You can say now one thousand dollars. And now it costs five hundred thousand dollars. And that time there [were] no buyers. Now, you just ask and there are twenty buyers. (20 December 2013)

Real estate has indeed become a major factor for the accumulation of wealth and status in Indian metropolises (De Neve and Donner 2015). Housing in urban India has turned into real estate and “property has enhanced both monetary gains and social status for those individuals and communities benefiting from post-liberalization ownership regimes” (De Neve and Donner

⁵³ In a middle-class imaginary the village stands for a backward Indian life that is marked by authenticity but not by modernity. Emma Tarlo’s research about the urban village of Hauz Khas reveals how the aspirations of urban villagers to realise their dream of concrete housing are in strong contrast to the fashion elite’s striving to build an “authentic” village (Tarlo 1996).

2015, 255). As Mr. Goswami owned two other houses in posh localities, his rental income was higher than his service income. Many others of my informants sublet one or more floors of their property and thus gained additional revenue.

As indicated above neighbourhoods have undergone visible changes during the last decades. Delhi's urban planning was heavily influenced by the garden city movement which envisaged a garden environment in the city (Khosla 2005, 56:13). The Master Plan of 1962 restricted the heights of buildings⁵⁴ making the city grow horizontally instead of vertically. Plots in middle-class neighbourhoods typically included a garden and a single or two-storeyed house. Since the late 1990s private builders have convinced property owners in (upper) middle-class areas of Delhi to turn their low-rise residential houses into posh multi-storeyed buildings (see figure 2.4).



Figure 2.4: Newly Rebuilt House in the South Delhi Neighbourhood Safdarjung Enclave.
Photo: Annika Mayer

⁵⁴ The maximum height of a building is calculated from the affair (floor area ratio) and the ground coverage. However, in some areas there exists a restriction of maximum building height. (Interview Arunava Dasgupta, head of the department of urban design at the School of Planning and Architecture Delhi, 12 February 2015).

Middle-class status demands a level of consumption that includes housing. To maintain a status among peers people feel the need to “improve” their houses, making them look modern. As part of the many policies which aim at transforming Delhi into a world-class city “private developers increasingly fight height restrictions in the city and promote upper-class residential enclaves [...]” (Bhan 2009, 140). According to urban scholar Arunava Dasgupta⁵⁵ additional storeys became possible, because the DDA has continuously changed building specifications. In the process of reconstruction the builders usually bear all the expenses including the temporary replacement of the owners. In return the builders get one or two floors which they can dispose of. Disregarding the compulsory height limits, builders often illegally generate additional levels (A. Kumar 2000, 159). This middle-class ambition for larger and posher estates often comes along with hassle for the parties involved. Elderly people who decide to renew their house frequently face problems. In one case I encountered, an elderly couple had a lot of trouble with maintaining the new house as the construction materials used were of poor quality. In another case the builder cheated on the couple starting to tear down their house without having permission to build the new one. As the plot was next to a protected monument in Deer Park, the old man had to fight with municipal and legal bodies for more than two years until he was allowed to construct a new house on the same plot. His status as a retired army officer and the authority that comes along with it helped him to solve this problem in the end.

There are several reasons for rebuilding a house. For some families it is an opportunity to gain more space. Grown-up children can move into the flat above their parents’ apartment thus being close to them while securing more privacy for themselves. Sometimes the additional flats are sublet and account for an important extra rental income for the elderly. The reworking of a house was also pursued to secure class status. Some other time reconstruction is based on property disputes within the family like in Mr. Lal’s case. In the 1970s he had bought his property which had been registered under his parents’ name. When his parents died, the property was inherited by all eight siblings. Mr. Lal feared that if he died earlier than his wife, his siblings would not let his spouse stay in this house. For Mrs. Lal, like for many women in India, “the fact that her husband had been coparcener in a joint family home did not in any way guarantee access to legal share in the property” (Donner 2015, 326). Mr. Lal did not want to reconstruct his house as he was a passionate gardener and spent a lot of time in his yard. In older houses, the elderly normally lived on the ground floor and frequently maintained a garden. At present however, new regulations make it mandatory to provide parking space on the ground

⁵⁵ Interview with Arunava Dasgupta, 12 December 2015.

level and to construct the new buildings on columns.⁵⁶ This means that gardening, a frequent pastime of predominantly male elderly, is no longer possible. It also implies that the mobility of the elderly gets more restricted when they face health problems. New buildings often have elevators, but they are frequently out of order, so that the ability to walk the staircase determines the mobility of the elderly. This is of course also true for older houses without elevators. One 87-year-old man I spoke with who lived on the third floor, had acquired a pain in his leg and therefore stopped going to the market or to the temple on his own. He was restricted to the flat and the terrace of the house. Only sometimes he would ask his daughter-in-law, who took care of him, to take him along for shopping and to help him to climb the stairs.

Emerging Peer Groups

Almost all my informants assumed that their children were very busy and tended to have less time than previous generations. Consequently, many of the elderly felt the need to search for additional activities outside their household. Going to nearby parks for a morning or evening walk is a very common activity among the elderly. Most of my informants went to Deer Park, a spacious park south of the neighbourhood, which was easily accessible by foot. The gated neighbourhood around the park is of advantage for elderly people as the slowdown of traffic enables them to walk in the area more at ease. In Deer Park, numerous elderly meet in various groups. I conducted field work among a senior citizens yoga group who met daily at 7:30a.m. under a pavilion for yoga exercises, chatting, singing, and reciting poems or telling jokes (see chapter 5). On Sundays they would elaborate this social gathering by organising tea and snacks, and many more elderly joined who did not take part in the yoga exercises. The group was strongly middle-class-based and people stressed that it was pleasant to be in the company of “like-minded” people and to form an advantageous network outside their families.

Mr. Ahuja: [...] the people are from different strata. Professionals are there, doctors are there, engineers are there, lawyers are there. So if you got any problem, you can talk to them and they will give you advice. (12 December 2013)

Indeed the “yoga family” (*parivār*) as people called this group was a source of relationships that secured social cohesion amongst middle class residents. For elderly women this was a favourable opportunity to leave the private sphere of their house. Anthropologist Henrike Donner observes that to protect their image of dutiful housewives, many middle-class elderly women in a central neighbourhood in Calcutta “withdraw from the public sphere” and “devote more time to food preparation and religious activities than the cultivation of relationships within the neighbourhood” (2008, 149f.). Elderly women in Safdarjung Enclave also spent most of

⁵⁶ Interview with Arunava Dasgupta, 12 December 2015.

their time on household duties but they would nevertheless meet with their friends in the colony, go for outings like kitty parties or wedding celebrations, or take part in religious singings or in other activities in the park. An elderly lady who had to look after her grandchild in the mornings, as her daughter-in-law had a job as a school teacher, was eagerly looking forward to Sundays when she was able to join the yoga group and leave the house.

Mrs. Agrawal: It feels fresh when one walks in the morning. It also feels good when you talk to someone. [...] We don't have any neighbour here even to talk to. It feels good to meet people. There [in the yoga group] we get to meet many people. Someone tells jokes, someone tells poems, someone dances. It's quite fun there. (09 December 2013)

Andrews et al. remind us that often “there is a tendency to treat place simply as a context (clinical or living), rather than seeing it as productive of particular outcomes for older adults, as well as being shaped by them” (2007, 162). The pavilion in Deer Park, where the elderly met every day for their yoga session is an elderscape that is created by older people themselves. It is a respected middle-class space for both gender where older persons from neighbouring areas (mostly Safdarjung Enclave and Green Park) get together and establish friendships. This formation of peer groups, where older middle-class persons engage with each other, is a fairly new phenomenon. Even though cultural and spiritual organisations have been formed by older persons since the 1950 to provide the possibility of interaction (Nayar 2003, 200), these informal peer group gatherings in public space have gained popularity and significance for older persons. There are numerous groups of senior citizen who meet daily or weekly for common activities in the park, creating a space for social interaction. And yet, the use of such elderscapes depends largely on the mobility and the personality of people (see chapter 5).

Surveillance and Security

As mentioned before a large number of Resident Welfare Associations started to mount guarded gates at the entrance of their residential neighbourhoods during the mid to late 1980s to control both people and traffic and therefore to mark out “privileged, delimited and ‘secure’ spaces” (Srivastava 2015, 113). Out of the twenty neighbouring households I visited three couples and three singles lived alone, which is a recent phenomenon in India (see chapter 3). For those living alone or staying alone during the day security was of concern, even though most people felt that the neighbourhood was relatively safe. In May 2015, there was a burglary in the flat of Mr. and Mrs. Lal. When the couple came home, they found their closet broken open and valuables like cash and jewellery stolen. It was the first time this happened to the elderly couple but according to Mr. Lal burglaries were not uncommon in the area. Mr. Lal was upset that the police were neither able to safeguard the area nor to restore his financial loss. Nevertheless, he stressed that the robbers could not “snatch away his happiness” and actually the incident did not

seem to make him feel insecure. However, the writer of an article in a neighbourhood online forum used the incident to promote the intensification of safety measures in the neighbourhood like police patrolling and CCTV surveillance.

The entire area is under shock, especially the senior citizens who live by themselves. Their security is greatly at risk. [...]

This particular block is a safe target of robbers as the location is highly vulnerable with many open points of escape. Street lights and day and night police patrolling is the need of the hour. Police needs to draw exhaustive plan to secure the area as our seniors are soft targets. Their confidence into police needs to be restored at the earliest. The RWA'S also need to be more vigilant and more CCTV Cameras need to be installed at strategic locations.

We all need to be very vigilant and each of us should take care of the seniors living in our area. Any suspicious activity should be immediately reported to the police. Such incidents shake our faith in the system. Now the police and senior citizen forum needs to come into action to instill a sense of security among seniors of the colony.

Encroachment on Govt land is also on the increase and there is no check by police. Police cooperation is absent even when they are intimidated by residents about the encroachment in their area. Many phone calls made for encroachment near B-[block] have gone on deaf ears. (Tiwary 2014)

The article reproduces middle-class anxieties around the loss of state control over infrastructure, crime and unruly people (Baviskar 2003, 96). According to the author the failure of the state to provide security makes it necessary for RWAs and citizens to take action and to self-monitor the neighbourhood. Like many other middle- and upper-class colonies of Delhi, Safdarjung Enclave was semi-gated. Barriers were deployed at the entrances of the colonies (see figure 2.5). Some of them were guarded by a watchman and closed during the night, but others were permanently open because the RWA of this sector did not raise enough money to employ security guards. These are the “open points of escape” the article refers to. Besides the heightened vigilance of residents the author promotes a strengthening of day and night police controlling to restore a “sense of security among seniors of the colony.” In the writer’s view lower class people, who encroach upon the area, are to be blamed for the increase in insecurity. These people are seen to make the area unsafe through their mere presence. Indian publisher Urvashi Butalia reports that in the locality where she lived tea stalls and street stalls which addressed a poor working class clientele had been removed from public space “in order to make, as the welfare association claims ‘the colony safer for our residents, particularly our elders, our women and children.’ The assumption is that the mere presence of working class people, no matter that these same people work in the houses of the wealthy, somehow renders a public space ‘unsafe,’ perhaps because here is where they may loiter, and therefore get up to no good” (Butalia 2012, 3).



Figure 2.5: Entrance Gate to B4 Block, Safdarjung Enclave. Photo: Annika Mayer

Middle-class life highly depends on domestic workers who manage different tasks like cooking, cleaning, gardening, and driving. In former times “servants”⁵⁷ used to be employed for a longer period of time and often patron-client relationships evolved. Now elderly people in the neighbourhood complain that servants have become very unreliable and are making too many demands. There is a lot of anxiety concerning lower-class workers in middle-class residential spaces who are also hired to provide security (Webb 2013, 4). One elderly woman, who lived together with her husband in a recently rebuilt house, worried about hiring a “trust-worthy” security guard. She wanted to get “professional guards” – one at night and one during daytime – who in her opinion were more reliable but also more expensive than the guard they employed at the time. That is one of the reasons why the private security industry has boomed in recent years. It did not only benefit from state policies outsourcing security measures to private-public partnerships but also from the middle-class perception of urban fear which led to a “deployment of private security guards at all manner of public and private sites [...]” (Gooptu 2013b, 16). As Sanjay Srivastava rightly observes the gating of Delhi’s colonies indicates several middle-class anxieties, namely “the lack of confidence in the police to provide security, the strong sense of a ‘middle class’ under threat from urban under-classes, and the overwhelming perception that

⁵⁷ The word servant is commonly used in India. I only use the term when referring to the opinion of my informants.

such threats can only be countered through localized and locality specific means that convert public thoroughfares into private and highly regulated spaces” (2015, 114).

Serving the middle-class longing for security the Delhi Police Senior Citizen Cell started an initiative to address people over 60 living alone or remaining alone during daytime. They are now able to register with the police. Police officers will then periodically conduct visits or call registered elderly to check on their status. When I asked police inspector Gaur which advice they would give senior citizens on how to secure their private space in middle-class neighbourhoods, he suggested a mix of security measures.

Mr. Gaur: First [...] we advise them to get their domestic help[er]s - whether it is washerman, gardener, whatever service he is providing - we ask them to get him or her verified. Main thing is, get your servants and helps advised... no, verified and if you have some tenants also get them verified. Second thing, we check their premises. And advise them to get it secured. If they don't have grills on walls or windows and so you should put grills on your walls, on the windows, you keep a magic eye on your door, safety chain. And if you can afford then install a CCTV camera. So these are the things. (02 March 2015)

The middle-class perception that lower classes are potentially threatening and therefore need to be monitored is fortified by the advice of the police to verify domestic workers. The verification and the installation of grills or CCTV cameras are ways to draw clear boundaries between assumed upright middle-class residents and suspicious lower-class people. Distinction is at the core of class formation and the shielding is a way to normalise dominance and inequality. The proclaimed menace deriving from the urban poor reproduces class lines in which lower classes “intrinsicly” threaten middle classes. One elderly couple had indeed followed this suggestion and installed a grill in front of their door to keep back potential intruders. Yet, aside from this couple, elderly people living alone were in general less anxious about their security but more concerned about the lack of support in case of medical emergency (see chapter 3).

2.3. Gateways of Ageing

Gated Enclaves

As mentioned previously, the gating of housing in Delhi is not a new phenomenon but rather an expansion of the “logic of separation” that has motivated gating practices of neighbourhoods in the city since the 1980s (Srivastava 2015, 114). And yet, the development of wholly private cities like Lavasa or Aamby valley is an extreme form of putting this logic into practice. The recent government initiative to promote so-called “smart cities,” which provide “core infrastructure” (like adequate water supply, electricity, sanitation and urban mobility, affordable

housing and a sustainable environment) and give a “decent quality of life to its citizens”⁵⁸ also supports an economically driven rather than a socially driven urban development (Datta 2015). Part of Delhi’s modern urbanism are gated residential enclaves that have been developed extensively in the National Capital Region (NCR) of Delhi for the last two decades (see for instance Dupont 2016; Srivastava 2015; Searle 2013; Brosius 2013; Dupont 2011). Real estate developers have transformed vast agricultural areas into residential enclaves. These enclosures are spatialisations of middle-class notions of their “right” to isolate from a range of “nuisances” that are caused by the poor (Ghertner 2013). Geographer Véronique Dupont (2016) elaborated three driving forces for the appeal of such gated living facilities: the desire for security, the retreat from a poorly managed and a polluted common city, and the longing for prestige and distinction. Advertisements for condominium living generally address younger generations, especially well earning middle-aged parents with children.⁵⁹ Nevertheless the secluded forms of living also attract older persons who reside in these kinds of facilities either with their families or alone. In a group discussion I spoke with seven elderly who lived in “The Nile” (see figure 2.1), a condominium in the booming satellite city of Gurgaon, thirty kilometres south west of Delhi. Four out of seven lived with their spouse whereas three lived with their spouse and their son’s family. The residents declared security as the main reason for them to live in a gated enclave. Mr. Dasgupta for example had shifted to “The Nile” as all of his children lived elsewhere in India or abroad. When he and his wife visited their children they had to leave their house unattended which was not very “secure” in their view.

Mr. Dasgupta: It was not very secure to leave [the house] unattended. So that's why we thought better we shift to a locality where security problem is not there, then other facilities are all available here. So that was our main choice. (21 November 2015)

Being asked about the advantages and disadvantages of living in a condominium, Mr. Sharma, a man in his 70s, replied:

Mr. Sharma: We have seen change happening in the last thirty, forty years, whatever changes have taken place. We witnessed all those changes. So, urbanisation has happened, this kind of living [has come up]. One thing that most of us have is that we are living independently; most of the children have gone away. So we are looking at security. And this is a place where one could find some kind of security; at least the physical security is there. That is one. The second is of course, you come across different kinds of people; you come across people with different experiences. [...] Probably in another place you could not have this kind of a great mix of people of all kinds. (21 November 2014)

⁵⁸ See: <http://smartcities.gov.in/writereaddata/What%20is%20Smart%20City.pdf> (accessed 02 January 2017).

⁵⁹ See for example: <http://theultima.dlf.in/pdf/DLF-ULTIMA-spreads.pdf> (accessed 02 January 2017).

Mr. Sharma emphasised that the two main differences between living in a neighbourhood in Delhi and living in a gated enclave in Gurgaon were safety and the composition of residents. As noted above colonies in Delhi are often community based due to allotment policies of the government. In contrast, condominium living is rarely attributed to ethnicity in the first place. It is class, not ethnic affiliation that makes residents part of this “world-class” lifestyle. Mr. Sharma, as well as other informants, emphasised that it was good to get to know people from different backgrounds because this provided an opportunity to learn from each other. And yet, the “company” of like-minded residents was different from the bonding South Delhi neighbourhoods, where older people had known each other for a long period of time. Moreover, the fabric of the locality was a different one. While certain market places in South Delhi neighbourhoods were shaped by bustling activities, the residential enclaves appeared like sanitised spaces. Elderly informants liked that these spaces were “clean” and “orderly.” They stressed that in contrast to Delhi, Gurgaon offered better facilities in terms of restaurants, malls, and cinemas. On the other hand, they felt there was not much to do in Gurgaon if one did not engage in a lifestyle of consumption. They did not frequent the malls regularly and if they did it was only for “window shopping,” as they had “little needs.” In the evening many of them - groups of women and groups of men - met in the park of the condominium for chit-chatting and this was the time for the most vigorous interaction in the enclaved space.

Mr. Soni, a man in his sixties, commented that the major change he had witnessed in recent decades was a decrease in sociality in general. In contrast to former times, he would no longer visit friends in the neighbourhood or relatives spontaneously. He felt that condominium living was reinforcing this trend.

Mr. Soni: Earlier, there was a lot of social interactions, people would visit each other in their houses. We would go to a friend's place. That is all now lacking for the last 10, 15 years. TV, or for whatever reason, people don't visit each other. People don't like to visit each other. So this is one area where I find that this change has come. Earlier if I felt like, I would go to his house. But today, in the last 10, 15 years all this has changed. Now we don't visit each other, we don't visit relatives, we don't visit friends.

[...]

Mr. Malik: When I visit somebody, I have to phone him. Earlier we used to just drop by and it's ok.

Mr. Verma: It's like the Western World.

Ms. Dasgupta: Now people go around to see the world, not to see the relatives. (21 November 2014)

The isolation of people and new notions of privacy were seen as trends complicating spontaneous visits to friends and relatives. For people living in “The Nile” it was also a problem of mobility as there was no public transport to the condominium and the closest metro station

was five kilometres away. Therefore all couples owned a car but indicated that it was sometimes stressful to drive and that the roads were in poor condition. Heavy traffic between Gurgaon and Delhi also hindered spontaneous visits to acquaintances. This kind of physical isolation was of concern to the elderly as they feared not only social isolation but also insecurity in case of medical emergency. Mr. Soni reflected that therefore it might be of advantage to live in one of the senior living communities which have come up recently.

Mr. Soni: Some corporates are trying to [build] old-age communities. In fact near Gurgaon we have 'Ashiana' where they have sold houses to only senior citizens. And there they have hospital facilities, they have community facilities, they have doctors to look after the people. And people of same age group living together. I mean, it may be some kind of a disadvantage also but surely it provides a better kind of social community system where people can look upon... take the comfort of each other, rather than being totally [isolated]. Here if I fall sick tomorrow, only my neighbour or my close friend may look after me, my children are away - so by the time they come it may be late. So in a community like [Ashiana] at least you have the comfort that there's someone to look after you immediately. (21 November 2014)

The comment of Mr. Soni shows that the peaceful seclusion that gated enclaves advertise comes with the fear of anonymity and loneliness. Even though the premises are constantly monitored by CCTV cameras this does not mean that there is help in case of emergency. If people live without family, there is no social network that can provide care in case of illness. And because young people are busy with their children or work, Mr. Soni assumed that a community of older peers would provide a better social community. Institutionalised senior living residences have been developed by huge real estate companies in the last years, addressing precisely those issues.

Senior Living

The senior living industry has come up only very recently in India. Huge real estate developers like Max India Group, Covai Property Centre, Serene Senior Living, Ashiana, Paranjape Schemes and Tata Housing but also smaller players offer retirement communities mostly at the periphery of major cities, designed for people over a certain age (usually 55 years and older) with sufficient financial background. They offer independent flats in a shared, gated compound which can either be bought or rented. The flats are equipped with safety precautions like emergency buttons so that residents can call for help in case of need. The companies also provide common areas which can be used for recreational activities. In the following I concentrate on four different aspects of these new elderscapes by means of two case studies. First I analyse those projects as transnational phenomena which are informed by Western notions of an "active" lifestyle at old age but which likewise are embedded in local notions of care and ageing. Secondly I address the aspect of security which is a primary reason for choosing to live in an institutionalised senior enclave. Thirdly I focus on the urban dimension of

those projects before lastly pointing to the “stumbling blocks” that such new middle-class projects face. Two case studies serve as the basis for my observations, Ashiana Utsav, a condominium compound in Bhiwari, and The Golden Estate, a senior residency in Faridabad.



Figure 2.6: Ashiana Utsav Compound, Bhiwadi. Photo: Annika Mayer

Ashiana Utsav is a huge retirement community 70 kilometers east of Delhi comprising 640 flats, a large green area, a cafeteria, an activity centre, a (Hindu) temple and a nursing home (figure 2.6). The Golden Estate is a smaller retirement home 30 kilometers south of Delhi, consisting of 75 bedroom units, an outside pavilion, a recreational area, and a medical unit (figure 2.7). In 2014 Ashiana Bhiwari sold their two to three-room flats for 25-45 lakhs (35-63,000 €) while The Golden Estate let their one bedroom unit for a monthly rent of 35,000 Rupees (490 €) plus a 27 lakh deposit (38,000 €). Both options were affordable to an affluent clientele only.

To my knowledge Ashiana was the first developer to construct condominium housing exclusively for older persons around Delhi.⁶⁰ In 2007 the first project was constructed in Bhiwadi, an industrial hub in Rajasthan. Up to now they have pursued six housing projects for senior citizens in the vicinity of major metropolises of India (Delhi, Pune, Chennai and Kolkata). Om Gupta, founder of Ashiana, came up with the idea of building senior living residences because he had come across this kind of retirement home during his studies in the US. In the

⁶⁰ According to their website India Covai Property Centre preceded Ashiana and started their first retirement community in 2004, see: <http://www.covaiprop.com/about-us/> (accessed 25 January 2017).

1990s he decided to invest in retirement communities in India. In the initial phase the company focussed its activities on intensive research on retirement homes in the US, Canada, and Europe.



Figure 2.7: The Golden Estate Compound, Faridabad. Photo: Annika Mayer

The management of The Golden Estate likewise studied senior living schemes in the US, Europe, Australia and New Zealand. Thus, these projects were highly influenced by Western concepts of elder care. And yet, Amit Vaidya, management leader of The Golden Estate, stressed that he had realised they had to come up with their “own” model, as there were significant cultural differences between India and the West. To him, it was important to add a “human angle” to the concept which was “too process-driven” and “too professional” in Western countries. He contrasted a Western model of a rigid personal space with a more inclusive Indian model of common space that allowed for social interactions. In his opinion the Indian intrusive “nature” was helpful because people were enquiring about other people’s problems. He claimed that people were willing to share their problems as well as their solutions and therefore did not – like in the West – need to consult a coach or psychiatrist to solve their problems. Amit Vaidya compared the spatial design of the compound with the spatial design of large family houses. As the joint family is an icon of the ideal form of aged care in India (see chapter 3) it is not surprising that stakeholders in senior living projects try to establish a link between familiar living concepts and these new spaces.

Amit Vaidya: The way we have structured ourselves is borrowing from what we already had - that was a joint family system. So we used to have huge houses, shared by a very large family where your bedroom was your personal space and the rest is shared with everyone. So we have tried to structure ourselves like that.

AM: In what way, can you give an example?

Amit Vaidya: See, the way we have structured the whole facility is like that. So in terms of, like a simple thing like - we made it compulsory to eat food in the dining area, so you can't cook in your room. So by design we have ensured that all of them come and interact with each other, no one is left isolated, even if a person wants to – or is going into that path of being withdrawn and into himself which happens to a lot of single people who stay with us – the other person tends to detect it. (05 December 2014)

According to Mr. Vaidya their design of the premises prevents isolation, as no one can evade common interaction during meals. It is interesting that the institution objects to the withdrawal of residents as, according to the Hindu model of life stages, it is part of the ageing process to renounce one's social ties at old age (chapter 5). The renunciation model has – in contrast to the old-age homes Sarah Lamb researched in Kolkata (Lamb 2009, 161ff.) – not become part of the mission of these new senior living projects. The image they are promoting is highly influenced by global discourses on “active ageing.” During one of my visits to Ashiana one man referred to the institution as kind of a “modern *sannyāsa* ashram”⁶¹ but a lady sitting next to him strongly disagreed: “Nobody is a *sannyāsi* here”, she intervened. The man explained himself saying that it was an ashram in the sense that you lived your life independently and with self-respect. He was “100% happy” not to be dependent on his children who had their own commitments and could not be blamed for not having time.

Senior living is a new phenomenon and is guided by Western concepts of ageing and institutionalised care. Transnational flows are always in flux and many anthropological studies have proven that concepts or commodities travelling from one country to the other are not passively adopted but rather actively appropriated, transformed or rejected. The senior living residences I encountered were marked by distinctly Indian features. Ashiana Bhiwadi provided a Hindu temple on their premises where residents could pursue their religious activities. Singing devotional songs was a particular popular activity among elderly women. When I visited the compound together with a colleague we first had lunch in the restaurant where a group of women were having a kitty party.⁶² This is a common activity among middle-class women in

⁶¹ According to Hindu thought *sannyāsa* is the last of four life stages which entails a complete renunciation of the world (see chapter 5).

⁶² At a kitty party all participants hand in a fixed amount of money to a cashier. At every meeting the “kitty” – the amount of money raised – is handed over to one member of the group who is chosen by lot. Each woman can only be picked once up to the time when everybody will have taken their turn. This procedure enables the participants to save a bigger amount of money over a period of time.

Delhi. Kitty parties not only offer the chance for women to form new friendships outside their household but also to reinforce a middle-class standing. Dressing up, eating out and gossiping are part of an “exposure” that comprises “both exposing oneself to others and being exposed to the influence of others” (Anne Waldrop 2011, 177).

In contemporary India this also entails being exposed to global imageries. From such a perspective, the kitty-party with its dressing-up, eating out, gossiping and meeting of friends is a great place to be exposed to - and through gossip and discussion, digest - [sic] new global, commercial trends” (Anne Waldrop 2011, 177).

The company of middle-class peers was highly valued by many residents. Yet, this did not mean that family was no longer important to the elderly. When I spoke to the estate manager, he explained that most of the disputes between residents and the company arose from the restriction that the sum of all family visits must not exceed two months a year. As to the rules of the company, people had to be aged minimum 55 to buy and to live in a flat within the compound, the spouse could be younger. Apart from that, only a single unmarried or divorced daughter was allowed to live with her parents in the premises. People undermined the restriction of visits by exceeding the time-span or by letting their grandchildren live with them, a practice which was soon suppressed by the company. Ashiana’s staff argued that the older persons had chosen this place to have some peace and quiet and would be disturbed by the noise of children. At the same time the company stressed that they did not want to close off the older persons and that they had consciously built the condominium in a greater area of condominiums, where the elders would be included in a “family living environment.”

Another reason for conflict was the strong commitment of the older persons to influence or control the management of the place. Bulbul Mankani, the Assistant General Manager, told me the following:

Bulbul Mankani: We had a very high degree of transparency [...] in the present [project] which was actually backfiring a little bit because seniors have a lot of time and there is a tendency to get to try on micro managers. [...] Ashiana is very very transparent and very open communicable company, it's very accessible. And we will probably not allow for as much transparency [in the new project].

AM: But what was this backfire for example?

Bulbul Mankani: For example, we are very often questioned about how many straws were bought and why is the money going into buying? You know very tiny [things]. Now the thing is that the more transparent you are the more you are happy to share but then there are multiple points of view so it gets very difficult just to manage so many points of view and to some degree time spent on very productive work gets taken away and you're actually busy managing the RWA management. (01 December 2014)

Ashiana had a Resident Welfare Association just like the colonies had where seniors (mostly men) would voice their ideas of how to shape the place. Bulbul Makani's comment makes clear that the residents thought they had the right to make demands on the private company, which however was not willing to respond to all their requests.

The Golden Estate rents out furnished units and provides all other services like cooking, cleaning, washing, and monitoring of medicines in-house. Ashiana, in contrast, sells their apartment units fully equipped. People are able to decide if they want to cook "at home" and adjourn to their flats or to engage with others in the restaurant, in the activity centre or in the park. Ankur Gupta, the son and joint managing director of Ashiana, emphasised that they catered especially to the "sense of security" of older persons in their senior living projects.

Ankur Gupta: We followed the financial model which we thought would be best in India, the sales-model. We sold our senior living unlike the US and Australia where it's a deposit model. We thought there's this sense of ownership and safety [which] is still you know... We are very insecure about ourselves, right? And there is no other financial security in the country which is available to us, so the security we grab on is real estate. So when you are a Senior Citizen and you don't have security - sense of security - you grab on real estate. (19 November 2014)

The sense of insecurity Ankur Gupta refers to is not only corporal – catered to by the gatedness of the estates – but also mental and financial. As ageing outside the family is still a new phenomenon in India, it is connected to insecurities about care arrangements (see chapter 3). Residents stressed that they felt safe living in these senior living enclaves, referring not only to physical safety but also to security concerning health care issues. As children often work during the day or live abroad, they are no longer reliable care providers in case of emergency. Mr. Chadha, a resident in The Golden Estate, hoped that the considerable amount of money he pays would make the institution care for him, at best like a family member.

Mr. Chadha: In advanced age problems are going to come, health problems. Then as we see over here, there is an organisation to look after [you]. Their job is to look after us. They have a vehicle. They take you to the hospital. They have a doctor, who may not be there to treat you, but he will monitor your treatment in the hospital. [...] Your child, your son or your daughter-in-law may not have that much of time to look after you. So we are hoping..... we are hoping that this organisation will be responsible enough to treat us like their own family member. [...] Now for an example, people who have their children staying abroad, if the parents fall sick in a place like this, they will be first all reasonable sure that [their] parents have been looked after by an organisation. There is no need for panic for them over there. And even if they come, they can't stay over here for long. They will speak to the director, they will speak to the medical officer and they will say that 'I see, now we have to go and look after business' and they will leave. So they go back reassured that their elders are not left to fate. (05 December 2014)

To cater to the feeling of safety The Golden Estate provides emergency alarms within the units. Furthermore the common areas of the premises are supervised by CCTV (figure 2.8) and the

single entry gate is constantly monitored. The supervision and the disciplinary measures to integrate residents remind us of Foucault's panopticism (1977) in the way that human populations are systematically and spatially controlled by invisible structures.



Figure 2.8: CCTV at The Golden Estate, Faridabad. Photo: Annika Mayer

Most of the residents in both senior living projects were still very mobile. In 2012 Ashiana had opened up a home-care facility within the enclave for severely ill or incapacitated elderly. 22 out of 26 rooms were occupied. In contrast to the 640 flats on the compound these apartments were not sold but rented out. Depending on the size, Ashiana would charge 35,000-80,000 Rupees (490-1,100 €) per month. Following the “concept of the family doctor” a general practitioner would visit the residents every day. Questioned if the residents mingled with the more active seniors on the compound, the doctor of the care home station replied that if they were mentally fit they did but if they were mentally deranged there was not much contact. He told me that when the nursing home was started, residents disapproved the facility as it confronted them with vulnerabilities at old age. After two years people had accepted the institution, but there were still reservations to meet frail residents. As a result there was a clear separation between those who were able to take part in an “active” lifestyle which Ashiana promoted and those who depended on full-time care.

Apart from safety, proximity to the city was important to many residents. In 2008, Ashiana started to invest in a senior living project in Lavasa, a planned city in Maharashtra, targeting

affluent buyers exclusively. However, the company had great difficulties in attracting buyers partly because of its location in a remote hilly area. According to Ankur Gupta, they did not face these problems in Bhiwadi where most of the flats were bought by elderly couples from Delhi some of whom even kept their flat in the city and commuted between the two localities. Over the last years other senior living residences which are even closer to the city have followed, also catering to the financially well-off elderly. Amit Vaidya of The Golden Estate stressed that they had consciously chosen Faridabad, a satellite city on the outskirts of Delhi, because their own research had revealed that elderly people wanted to stay in the city.

Amit Vaidya: Doing our research we found that most of the people - unlike what was thought of - actually didn't want to be out of the urban fabric. Their entire lives they had lived in cities, so I found that it was a myth that people want to go and be in a resort kind of a situation. So then we decided, ok if people want to be within urban fabric then we need to build within the urban fabric. But the land prices in Delhi area is very high, in the entire NCR for that matter. So in any project the land becomes one of the major components of costs and as we were doing something which was very new as a concept, especially in Delhi, so we thought ok let's keep our costs down and try and find land which is within the urban fabric. Plus we had some other criteria, like we wanted to be located within thirty minutes driving distance of a hospital; we wanted the infrastructure to be easily accessible, like banks, parks, theatres. So this, where we are sitting today, is like the heart of Faridabad, everything is accessible within ten, fifteen minutes of driving distance, and plus it is very peaceful. So in spite of being in the heart it has got its peace and quiet also. (05 December 2014)

The “vision of safety and peaceful seclusion” Amit Vaidya refers to is a prevalent narrative of urban Indian lifestyle advertisements for residential enclaves (Brosius 2010, 94). Senior living developers not only revert to these imaginaries of “world-class” living but also to discourses on successful or active ageing which have “taken hold in global public policy and popular cultural worlds as well” (Lamb 2014, 44). Ashiana brochures promote a new “freedom” to enjoy life on one’s own terms, following an “enviable lifestyle” in a “hassle-free” environment pursuing new hobbies or “discovering a new passion” (Ashiana, n.d.). A billboard along the highway from Delhi to Bhiwadi advertises an “active life after retirement” depicting two senior men playing football (figure 2.9). Successful ageing discourses in the US have a strong focus on being able to keep control, being independent and being productive while ageing. Moreover, they create a vision of not ageing at all (See Lamb 2014). Senior living advertisements in India make use of these images but they do not negate ageing per se. An Ashiana brochure states:

Since time immemorial, people have been searching for the elusive “Fountain of Youth”. This desire has motivated millions to search for solutions that can reverse the effects of aging. But the pursuit for such “magic potion” has not been very fruitful.

At Ashiana Senior Living, we might not prevent aging, but we have definitely helped in transforming the way you age. By offering a lifestyle that is active,

healthy, carefree, dignified and independent, we have mitigated the impact of aging. We constantly facilitate our residents in finding ways to be more productive and more creative, by adding more opportunities to their lives. (Ashiana 2014)



Figure 2.9: Billboard on the Highway Between Delhi and Bhiwadi. Photo: Annika Mayer

Even though the real estate companies have put a lot effort into advertising their facilities emphasising an active and dignified lifestyle, both Ankur Gupta and Amit Vaidya admitted that it was a major struggle to “break the mind-set” of people in India as there were still many reservations about or resentments against moving into such a facility. Bulbul Mankani, the assistant manager of Ashiana Bhiwadi, was confident that prejudices against senior living would decrease in the near future.

Bulbul Makani: Well, culturally India is quite different. What I saw is, in the US senior living is very well accepted. So one of the big things is: how to bring that level of acceptance in India? Because in India the family structure is very close knit. And to not live with your parents and not live with your children is almost like a little bit of taboo - whereas it is so accepted in the West. So, just, you know, one of the things I am hoping - and it'll happen naturally in its own rhythm - I mean, societies change, thinking changes. But I think it in next five, six years there will be lot of change in urban middle-class thinking. But in this transition stage where people don't really understand, people associate senior living a lot with old-age homes, you know, charitable organisation or various places where you're sort of shut away. (01 December 2014)

Like Bulbul Mankani, a report of a global real estate investment consulting company on the senior living sector in India lists four key challenges. Apart from affordability, manpower and

legal framework, stigma is the number one issue. They recommend advertising the provision of services rather than real estate to “change the perception of such projects and shift the positioning from social stigma to an ‘aspirational project’ to be in” (M. Kumar and Gattani 2015, 7). Through brochures and other advertisements Ashiana and other senior living developers try to evoke a positive image of ageing focussing on the opportunities to actively shape one’s life after retirement.

Ankur Gupta: We tried doing PR-work with videos and online activities and advertising and all of that. [...] So if you look at these brochures the idea is that, you know, you think of destitutes – [but] we look at them as the people who’ll have fun, who’ll add a lot of value. So you know we are converting it [the notion of living in a facility for the elderly] completely. The actual product will be closer to the active but it’ll not be that bright, right? But by giving a lot of visual impact we are trying to just break the mind-set [and to show] that there is life after [retirement] which is a high value. Why waste it? (19 November 2014)

Ankur Gupta suggested that people needed to visualise the difference between old-age homes for the destitutes and their retirement homes where people could experience an active lifestyle at old age. At the same time he admitted that “the actual product,” and I assume he was thinking of their senior living projects, would not be as bright as the advertisement pretended. But by using positive images the company intended to break the mind-set, so that people could see the potential of these new elderscapes. One resident of The Golden Estate told me that although he enjoyed living in such a posh institution equipped with a spa, a cinema hall, and a fitness centre amongst other things, relations nevertheless pitied him on their visit and could not understand his decision to live there. Despite the negative image senior living facilities are confronted with, residents often stressed that they felt comfortable in their new living environment. They especially valued the “companionship” of peers from different backgrounds. One man at the age of 68 told me that first he had been quite reluctant to move to Ashiana as he did not want “to feel old.” Now he was happy about his decision because the different experiences of his peers kept him “healthy” and added new perspectives to his life. Women in The Golden Estate would appreciate that they were freed from tiresome duties like cooking, cleaning, etc. as these kinds of domestic work were taken over by the institution. Women in Ashiana would organise group activities like kitty parties, yoga or prayer sessions and enjoy each other’s company. Hence, when standing apart from other residents, one woman told me confidentially that this place did not mean home to her. She said: “To tell you the truth, this is not home, I mean what is there? It is peaceful, there’s a lot of greenery and the people are nice but otherwise there’s nothing. No market, no shopping, nothing is there.” To her the place was like a cut off island that lacked urban life. She therefore often commuted to the city where she and her husband still owned their house.

PPP: Private – Public – Partnership?

On February 20, 2015 I came across a newspaper article in the *The Times of India* which stated that the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) was going to build new apartments for senior citizens. The headline read “DDA planning 2,500 affordable service apartments for elderly” and the article stated that according to officials, it was for the first time in India that reasonably priced apartment units for citizens above the age of sixty would be developed on a large scale by public authorities (Munshi 2015). As a matter of fact Senior Housing projects I had looked at previously were built and maintained privately and this was the first public initiative to construct housing for older middle-class persons I encountered during my research. The DDA had launched its biggest ever housing scheme in 2014, developing over 25,000 flats. Part of that scheme was the above mentioned senior housing project of approximately 2,500 flats which were expected to be completed within the following three years. The first building project was set up in Dwarka, a South West Delhi upmarket residential area.

I was interested in the reasons and motives for the DDA to come up with this project and contacted them over the phone. I told them that I was interested in their plans for the Senior Housing Project and the official replied: “You know we have ourselves to figure out what to do, so we asked architects and consultants to apply for the project” (field notes, 02 March 2015). When I finally met the chief architect in his office, he wasn’t too sure of what to tell me, as it was the first project of its kind and they had neither consulted any other city governments nor any private developers on how to undertake such an endeavour. After being sent from one contact person to the other in the office building, I realised that the DDA was indeed at a very early stage of development and had no experience to draw from. When I finally asked Mr. D.P. Singh, the chief engineer in charge, who they intended to build these flats for, he drafted the following scenario:

D.P. Singh: A government servant at a middle level, he retires and during his life time he tries to have best education to his children and after getting education of engineering or anything or medical they go abroad. So they need this type of accommodation because one is security reason. If they are living in some apartment even the neighbour cannot look after them, nobody [of] their own relative is there to look after them - if we have some proposal they can shift to these houses, studio apartment, senior citizen home where [...] 24/7 all needs will be taken care of. (02 March 2015)

Mr. Singh’s comment was quite revealing because it made clear that the DDA was developing housing for their “kind,” namely for middle class government employees. With this project the state realises middle-class interests and caters to a stratum of society that is already secured by a steady pension and could afford private market care. According to a newspaper article in *The New Indian Express* (2016), the DDA finalised their plans for their retirement housing project in

September 2016 in cooperation with the Indian Navy. A part of the flats are said to be earmarked for retired Navy personnel.

I was interested in the “representations of space” (Lefebvre 1991, 38), the conceptualised space of these new housing complexes, and so I visited the DDA office in Dwarka where I was allowed to have a look at the five proposals shortlisted for the final architectural competition. I was enthusiastically welcomed by two engineers, both eager to present the new endeavour. Sitting around a large desk I examined large sheets of architectural designs and imaginaries. The shape and ideas of these plans revealed both imaginations about middle-class living aspirations in general and the way planners and architects merged these with what they conceived as “needs” or “requirements” for the elderly. The architectural plans were in line with other advertising strategies to downplay the urban dimension by highlighting the natural and environmental aspects of these new spaces (Dupont 2005, 82). All blueprints reverted to key words like *open space*, *greens*, *landscaping*, *green architecture* or *eco-friendly*, evoking a space of natural peace and a possibility to withdraw from the noisy, dusty and crowded city. Most of the layouts included renewable energy projects and cost-effective as well as environment-friendly construction which can be seen as part of a greater “bourgeois environmentalism, the (mainly) middle-class pursuit of order, hygiene and safety, and ecological conservation” (Baviskar 2011, 392) pursued in the privatised common space of the housing complexes.



Figure 2.10: Atrium View. Contribution to the Architectural Competition of a DDA Senior Housing Project. Photo: Annika Mayer

In one of the proposals the architects claim that the created environment will ensure that a “sense of community” is fostered “both within the building and in the surrounding area.” Strikingly the space itself is meant to be able to cultivate a “sense of community.” As Sanjay Srivastava (2015, 167) points out, a condominium community has not much in common with older forms of community or neighbourhood life (the *mohalla*), even though aspects of this cohabitation (like being greeted in the street, having people around) is still longed for by many people. So how is this new “sense of community” supposed to be generated? The architects refer to the “central atrium” (figure 2.10) of the complex linking it with the Hindu notion of “*nyasa*.”⁶³ However, the draft does not elaborate the idea of *nyasa* and it remains unclear if this central atrium is meant to congruently “divinise” the residents in any way so that a community life can come into existence. However, this is part of a “new presence of religion in secular and urban spaces” (Brosius 2010, 145) and might evoke the idea of a space intrinsic “connectivity” allowing for a socially vivid atmosphere. Yet, in my opinion, the atrium does not especially encourage social exchange as it stays peculiarly void. Maybe this ought to underline the secure space of “peaceful seclusion,” a prevalent element of urban Indian lifestyle advertisements (Brosius 2010, 94). Moreover, in the architectural design, the atrium is conceptualised as a “smooth transition between the outside and the inside” even though this transition is rather bounded by guarded gates at the entrances of the complex. This image of a transitional space might intend to invoke a semi-public place, where one is both in open space and safe at the same time, something which is not seen to be true for the city.

The architects propose two models of financing, either a rental or a sales model. With a sell rate of 110,000 Rupees (1,500 €) per square meter or a rent of 12,000 Rupees (170 €) per month, plus extra costs for memberships and health services, the apartments again cater to an affluent segment of society. One project proposes to divide the complexes into bronze, silver, gold and platinum units depending on their size and décor. “The specifications of sites, apartments, infrastructure and services, leisure time activities (exclusive club, swimming pool, tennis courts, golf course, etc.) reinforce the image of luxury, excellence, and class” (Dupont 2005, 87). While these features are more general specifications of middle-class spaces, all except one of the projects address special needs for senior citizens. Apart from health care facilities, barrier-free and wheelchair-friendly spaces are conceptualised and various reasons are given why India is actually in need of such facilities. One of the proposals states:

The elders’ realization that they, too, need care and the improvement in pension coverage will drive future demand.

⁶³ Nyasa is a component part of Tantric rituals where the worshipper touches various parts of the body while reciting a mantra to empower or “divinise” his/her body and to identify with the deity (Johnson 2009, 224).

Reasons for Senior citizen seeking separate residential options are:

Joint Family – Nuclear Family: People have started in believing in Nuclear family rather than combined/joint.

Migration – From towns and villages to cities for better Health care and social facilities

Changing Life style – Senior citizens want to be more independent and take their own decisions.⁶⁴

The architects juxtapose an Indian scenario, where there is a “necessity but lack in number” of senior living to a “world-wide impression” where care homes are “as warm as your homes” and have “well organized retirement living service at every level of care and state-of-the-art facility” as well as “world class medical care systems”. They claim that the soul of their project is to provide “not just a home to live but a way of life.” As discussed above, this “way of life”, namely ageing apart from one’s own family, is still not longed for by many middle-class Indians. The new interest of the DDA to get into the senior living business might be a sign that housing for senior citizens as well as institutionalised care are becoming part of the state agenda. However, it is also an indication that the state sees the assets of the elderly as additional possibility of further revenues. The PPP-model is part of a larger shift from what used to be state assignments (to develop housing for the whole of society) to private endeavours. This again opens up the question of who has the authority to make claims to the city and who has the power to make use of their “right to the city.” It is symptomatic that the DDA develops senior housing for middle-class elderly on a grand scale while neglecting poorer strata of society that are more vulnerable at old age. “In state-supported programmes for ‘citizen-state cooperation’ [...] the interest of the state and the middle class appear to collapse into one another, both driven by the ideology of globalisation and corporate-led development” (Upadhyaya 2009, 265).

2.4. Conclusion

As any other city Delhi is unique in its history and marked by particularities. Being the capital of India, Delhi is a city of bureaucrats with a particular history of migrant flows and spatial expansion. It is also a “world city” in the sense that it is “affected by the structural realignments of capitalist economies across the world” (Huysen 2008, 11). In its urban imaginary, the city is marked both by urban fear and by striving to rank as a “world-class city”, as an “eventful, safe, clean and ordered” place (Brosius 2010, 42). To explore the entanglements of urban space and ageing this chapter was designed around the ways urban histories, spatial practices, urban imaginaries and current developments in the New Capital Region of Delhi inform ageing in the metropolis.

⁶⁴ Excerpt of a proposal for the construction of senior housing. Primary source in possession of the author.

As shown there are multiple reasons for residential decision-making amongst (upper) middle-class older persons in Delhi. The choice of residence not only depends on the locality but also on family support, mobility and perceived (in)securities and is connected to cultural notions of the right way to age. The case studies illustrate that urban spaces of “world-class” living are embedded in local and cultural contexts and marked by uncertainties and ambivalences. The new elderscapes of retirement communities are advertised through notions of “active ageing” and “global living”, which are informed by Western concepts of market based elder care. They aim at appealing to middle-class aspirations for a cosmopolitan lifestyle, status and safety. However – in contrast to other new middle-class spaces like gated communities – they struggle to attract customers because they are not able to overcome strong negative connotations that accompany ageing outside the family. In daily discourses these projects are not associated with a cosmopolitan idea of an “active ageing” community but rather with the neglect of children to care for their parents, an aspect which is subject of the next two chapters. Thus, it is not surprising that primarily the Non-Resident Indian (NRI) children found out about these projects and convinced their parents to consider such an option. Marketers see great potential in the senior living sector in India, because the numbers of affluent elderly living without children is on the rise, but it still remains to be seen and studied how the imaginaries of an active lifestyle at old age, but also the discourse on urban insecurity, translate into aspirations and spatial practices of middle-class elderly. Until now, these projects have not the same appeal as other neoliberal living complexes, which are also an option for senior citizens who seek a retreat from the buzzing city. The case studies also reveal that negotiations about space not only take place in these insular neoliberal spaces. Established middle-class spaces like neighbourhoods have a longer history of spatial and social segregation, but they are also affected by an urban restructuring which changes not only the texture of housing but also the social composition of residents. Place-making strategies of elderly in these localities are equally marked by aspirations to belong to “world class,” an altered understanding of leisure activities in common spaces (for instance in parks), and a longing for “clean,” orderly spaces.

My analysis also shows that changing urban spaces do not only shape the lives of my informants in many ways, but that the elders themselves very much influence the changing processes. This engagement of course has its limits when people are not or no longer able or willing to play a part in their social and spatial environment. Still – as Sarah Lamb suggests – it is necessary to consider older persons as “potential agents in the workings of social-cultural transformation” (Lamb 2010, 85). Middle-class elderly actively create elderscapes, for instance in forms of groups in neighbouring parks, thereby claiming their “right to the city.” Elderscapes like new senior living compounds, old-age homes, or meeting points of older persons are spaces

where negotiations around class and belonging crystallise as the following chapters indicate. On these grounds, I suggest a more comprehensive reading of the entanglements of ageing and the city, which takes into account the multiple interrelationships between space, events, institutions, and community, which characterise much of modern life.

CHAPTER 3

FAMILY MATTERS

FAMILY, MIGRATION, AND INTERGENERATIONAL TIES



Figure 3.1: Grandfather with Granddaughter Watching a Wedding Ceremony.
Photo: Annika Mayer

In Rohinton Mistry's novel *Family Matters* (2002) Nariman, a Parkinson diseased 79-year-old retired professor, lives together with his two middle-aged step children Coomy and Jal in Mumbai. When Nariman's health status decreases, Coomy assigns the care obligations to Roxana, Nariman's biological daughter. She cares dutifully for her father but the additional family member becomes physically, financially and emotionally challenging for Roxana's family and pushes Yezad, Roxana's husband, into scheming and deception. Family both matters and is a matter of ambivalence: "As the double play of the title suggests, family is important both as the site of primary loyalties – 'filiation', as Edward Said might say – and the locus of tangled and often unresolved issues" (Morey 2004, 128).

The questions of care and intergenerational relationships, which are at the core of Mistry's novel, are subject of this chapter. I scrutinise how family, as the locus of elder care, is evaluated and practiced in times of economic and socio-cultural transformations. Care responsibilities and care arrangements provide insight into larger sociocultural ideas about modernity, family, gender, generations and the state. Individuals and the government make sense of and react to changes in longevity "in ways that are simultaneously grounded in particular histories and understanding, but also constitute the ground on which new realities and ways of understanding are built" (Danley and Lynch 2013, 17). In India, sociopolitical discourses have conceptualised the family as integral part of society. Since colonial times discourses on the decline of the Indian joint family have co-existed with its continuance. Psychoanalyst Sudhir Kakar and anthropologist Katharina Kakar argue that despite India's economic transitions the ideology of the family retains its importance, being one of the "key building blocks of Indian-ness" (2007, 4). Kakar and Kakar highlight that the Indian joint family has remained the desirable family structure regardless of younger families' inclination to live apart from their parents, and therefore "has a *psychic reality* independent of its actual occurrence" (2007, 9).

Neoliberal transformations have reshaped existing forms of economic capital which influence intergenerational dependencies. As outlined in the introduction, middle-class-ness not only depends on economic means but on the creation of an understanding what middle-classness constitutes. Contemporary articulations of middle-classness are shaped by practices and values that already feature collective identities, including "morality and respectability, gendered identities, material cultures, and the symbolic role of family values as a marker of Indian modernity" (Donner and De Neve 2011, 3). Uncertainties about moralities often unfold with regards to consumption practices, gender relations, and women's independence (Donner and De Neve 2011, 5). Anthropological studies illustrate that despite Indian women's employment in new market sectors their orientation toward the family continues (Belliappa 2013; Radhakrishnan 2011; Donner 2008). Furthermore, young people make meaning of the family in

their conceptualisation of selfhood, tradition, and modernity (van Wessel 2001). In her study on Indian women working in the IT industry, Smitha Radhakrishnan (2011, 146) identifies a new kind of Indian femininity, which she calls *respectable femininity*, characterised by being both professional and yet – through the focus on family – distinctly “Indian.” She stresses that for Indian professional women family values are of high importance and the commitment to the family is often set before one’s own career. Therefore female professionals “play a critical role in re-inventing the Indian family and thus, a new kind of ‘global Indianness’” (Radhakrishnan 2009, 1). Patricia Uberoi (1996) links the iconising of the family to the retreat of the state’s welfarism in post-liberalisation India. In political statements and popular culture the Indian family “indexes the moral and spiritual superiority of India *vis-à-vis* a degenerate West, where family life is seen to be under constant threat from a combination of wifely infidelity, filial insubordination, and an excess of self-interested individualism” (Uberoi 1996, 144).

Family is a prevalent theme in Bollywood movies. Coinciding with the opening of the diasporic markets in the mid-1990s, Hindi cinema produced a number of films affirming the Hindu joint family. In her excellent study on Hindi cinema after India’s entry in the global marketplace film theorist Sangita Gopal remarks that representations of family values and conjugal love were much more heterogeneous and socially progressive in Bollywood movies of the 1970s and 1980s (Gopal 2011, 66). New Bollywood movies in the 2000s depict the family as a locus of intergenerational harmony and cooperation rather than of tension and conflict (Gopal 2011, 60–90). In these films, the family serves as a conveyor of values, shifting the emphasis from its legal or economic power to its affective enforcement. Older generations do not dispute the yearnings of the young but ease them so that the youth have nothing to rebel against. “Affective rather than material ties structure family life, and emotional attachments modify and regulate filial hierarchies” (Gopal 2011, 77f.). Here, the family is reinvented as a “liberatory (and liberal) space” (Gopal 2011, 79). The ideal of the joint family which is promoted in those films is well received among Indian audiences (Uberoi 2006, 157f.).

The family is not only reinforced through daily practices and popular media narratives but also by legislation. In 2007 the Indian parliament passed *The Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act* (Ministry of Law and Justice 2007) reinforcing the family as social institution responsible for elder care through legal obligations. With this new legislation, children can be fined or even jailed if they neglect their parents’ wellbeing.

This chapter navigates through these issues, focussing on how older persons and their families in urban India deal with different forms of living arrangements, migration and (long distance) care. I argue that intergenerational frictions do not prove a disintegration of the Indian joint family but rather demonstrate the dynamics in the negotiation of resources, roles, and values.

As generations work through and adapt to the resulting social transformations, they are, in effect, reshaping the life course. Old and young alike are implicated in this process of life-course shaping that involves the reconfiguration of relationships of care, conflict, recognition, and exclusion. (Danley and Lynch 2013, 5)

The case studies demonstrate that family matters in many different ways. Far from being eroded, filial obligations of care and family “jointness” in Indian families are being reinterpreted and renegotiated by all generations albeit not necessarily without struggle. I argue that the theoretical concept of *doing family* serves better to capture these developments. Furthermore *intergenerational ambivalence* as a concept helps overcome the dualistic thinking of family solidarity or family conflict as it encourages drawing attention to contradictions and paradoxes in intergenerational relationships.

The structure of this chapter is twofold. The first part focusses on the iconicity of the Indian joint family in connection with lived realities. I continuously analyse scholarly works, media sources, and daily discourses in regards to their preoccupation with the Indian joint family and its alleged decline. I outline the cultural understandings and the expectations which the different generations have towards the family. And I draw attention to the ambivalences that constitute the negotiation of family relationships in daily lives.

The second part deals with long distance family relationships. It scrutinises the implication of the dispersal of family for the arrangements of care. I argue that the concept of *transnational social fields* helps conceptualise the complex power structures in which transnational families quest for family bonding. By drawing attention to the mobility of elderly people, I recognise all generations as important social actors in transnational relationships.

3.1. “A Joint Family Is More Than Living Together” – Doing Family

Decline-Narratives and Semi-Joint Families

In her elaborate article on the family in India Patricia Uberoi states that

[...] few questions have been as confused, or as confusing, as that of the Indian joint family: its definition; its composition; its functions; its history; and, of course, its future trajectory. The ideal of the Indian joint family has long been an important ingredient in national self-imaging as the social institution that uniquely expresses and represents the valued aspects of Indian culture and tradition, and it has become rather difficult to separate fact from value, behaviour from norm; indeed, to talk about the subject at all dispassionately. This is the more so since the joint family and its supporting value system (often termed ‘familism’, as distinguished from ‘individualism’) are widely believed to be under threat from alien values and an alien way of life. (Uberoi 2005, 362)

Even though the decline of the joint family is often referred to as a recent phenomenon coherent with a growing influence of the West, a glance at history of science shows that the discourse itself has had a long history in India. Uberoi (2005) argues that the Indian joint family has been

consolidated as a key feature of Indian culture by British colonial administration. The discourse of its decline was established through early British census which did not empirically prove this type of family structure “as prevalent as the strength and persistence of the ideal would have led one to expect” (Uberoi 2005, 366). The thesis of disintegration of the joint family in India was further elaborated by census officials in the 1950s and 1960s and not only became popular in sociological thinking, political and medial discourses (T. Patel 2005, 38) but also made its way into Indian gerontology:

Indian gerontology is built around a narrative of the inevitable decline of the universal joint family secondary to the four horsemen of contemporary apocalypse: modernization, industrialization, urbanization, and Westernization. (Cohen 1998, 17)

Cohen outlines how this narrative became popular both in public and academic discourse in the 1980s and 1990s. A remarkable number of scientific publications have reinforced this discourse by depicting a golden age of the faultless caring Indian joint family in former times. Cohen (1998) terms these publications the “Aging in India series” and stresses that these works assume a gerontocratic Indian society by reverting to normative texts while neglecting alternative sources.

Normative exhortations to honor one's parents and the filial piety of moral cynosures such as Lord Ram or the devoted son Shraavan Kumar are taken as evidence for an unambiguously gerontocratic society stretching from ancient Vedic days to the fondly remembered childhood of the author in question. Other traces of ‘tradition’ – the elaborate descriptions of the decrepitude and humiliations of the old body in the texts known as Puranas, the stress in Ayurvedic medicine on the avoidance of old age altogether through longevity (rasāyana) therapy, the extensive soteriological use of the figure of the old person within Buddhist and Epic texts as sign of the materialist fallacy at its most pathetic – all are ignored in these readings. (Cohen 1998, 93)

Scientific analyses of the Indian joint family frequently ignore inconstant sources of Hindu scriptures and thereby glorify former times. Scholars have also related the discourse of the decline of India’s joint family to the modernisation theory in which the Western nuclear family, centred on the married couple, was seen to be inevitably bound to a “modern” industrial society (Uberoi 2005, 366). In 1963, American sociologist William J. Goode published his book *World Revolution and Family Patterns*. He analysed the changes in family patterns across six distinct parts of the world, namely China, Japan, India, the Arabic world, Sub-Saharan Africa and the West. Albeit acknowledging differences in forms and routes of change he predicted a cross-cultural pathway towards the institutionalisation of a “conjugal system” – which he defined as having “fewer kinship ties with distant relatives and a greater emphasis on the ‘nuclear’ family unit of couple and children” (Goode 1963, 1, cited in Uberoi 2005, 366). Yet the Indian case turned out especially troubling, as he admitted. Uberoi states:

Firstly [...] there was in fact no conclusive evidence that the majority of Indians had *ever* lived in extended families in the past (notwithstanding ideals to the contrary), nor that Indian families were at present moving decisively towards a conjugal family pattern. Secondly, to the extent that there appeared to have been some changes in this direction (for instance, increased emphasis on the husband-wife bond as against that of mother and son; a higher level of contact between a married woman and her natal family; a decline of patriarchal authority in the family; greater freedom of choice of marriage partner), these changes could not plausibly be attributed to the impact of industrialisation *per se*, since they had in fact preceded any significant level of industrialization. (Uberoi 2005, 367, emphasis in the original)

This made Goode reflect on the reason for the unruly Indian case. He proposed that the external influences of industrialisation had less impact on family patterns since these patterns embodied or expressed “most of the factors that have impeded India’s social development” (Goode 1963, 203, cited in Uberoi 2005, 367).⁶⁵

India’s turn towards a neoliberal economy and its associated concomitants, like materialism and a declining respect for the elderly, have fuelled the decline narrative. During my fieldwork I was repeatedly told that with the Western influence Indian morals were declining, as expressed by this elderly lady:

Ms. Gupta: Sometimes we, the people of our generation, we really feel, I mean we are not very happy that with the economic growth there's a deterioration of human values. For example we were having very strong bond of family life. The children, they used to respect their elders and they used to take care. But now we are breaking the joint family, it's on the verge of collapse. And the senior citizens they really feel totally isolated and deprived. [...] So that is the greatest drawback of this modernisation that we are losing the human values. (16 December 2013)

Ms. Gupta perpetuated this narrative even though she herself lived with her son’s family. Modernisation is often blamed to be responsible for the “collapse” of the Indian joint family, even though anthropological studies emphasise that the neglect of elders is not unique to recent times and that modernity is often passed the buck for a phenomenon that has always been present although not prevailing (Lamb 2009, 36f.; Vatuk 1990). Anthropologist Henrike Donner, working on Bengali middle-class families in Calcutta, found that even with India’s rapid socio-economic changes after the economic liberalisation “solutions to the pressures experienced by families are often surprisingly different from what one would expect” (2008, 129). Parenting and the increasingly demanding school education have fostered joint living arrangements and despite the discourse of its breakdown “the joint family has proven itself to be extremely resilient once again” (Donner 2008, 129). Data does also not support the thesis that in contrast

⁶⁵ For an elaborate critique of the modernisation theory see Cohen (1998: 100ff.).

to a golden past the joint household⁶⁶ is indeed disintegrating. Quite on the contrary, household size in India has steadily increased since the middle of the 20th century which means that today more elderly live in joint households than before.

[A]s far as the living arrangement for the elderly is concerned, many more of them are living in joint households with their one or more married sons or some other relatives today than about 50 years ago. The only exception to this unorthodox conclusion seems to be the westernised, professional, middle class in urban centres among whom the emphasis on joint household life appears to be declining. (Shah 1999, 1180)

More recent statistics highlight that the number of elderly living with family is indeed decreasing – albeit slowly.⁶⁷ Data provided by the UNFPA show that there are fundamental differences in living arrangements based on class status.⁶⁸ Out of India's overall population above 60 belonging to the lower classes 10.2% lived alone and 20.2% lived with a spouse. Of the middle class elderly only 2.5% lived alone and 12.7% with a spouse. For the upper class the numbers drop to 1.3% elderly living alone and 10.7% living with a spouse (UNFPA 2012, 73). This means that “elderly people from the lower class not only suffer economic hardship but they also lack family support and care” (Bhagat 2015, 259). It also means that among the middle and upper classes in India it is still very rare to live alone but more prevalent to live with a spouse. Yet, the majority of all classes still live with their children and grandchildren and it remains to be seen how family arrangements develop in the next decades.

According to a government survey, Delhi's population over the age of 60 amounted to 5.5% in 2004, which equates to just fewer than 830,000 people. Thereof 79.5% lived with their children (either with or without spouse) while 17.5% lived without children, either with spouse (14.4%) or alone (3.1%). The remainder lived with other relatives or acquaintances. Out of those living

⁶⁶ The sociological preoccupation with the Indian family shifted from the concept of *family* which was strongly connected to normative, Sanskritic notions to the ‘dimension’ of *households*, “defined as a strictly commensal and co-resident group [...] ‘Is the joint *family* disintegrating?’ is rephrased as ‘Is the joint *household* disintegrating?’” (Uberoi 2005, 369)

⁶⁷ According to Sathyanarayan et al. (2012, 13f.), who use data of two rounds of the National Family Health Surveys, the countrywide numbers of older persons living alone or with spouse have more than doubled from 1992-93 to 2005-06 (from 9% to 18.7%). Yet, a closer look at the data shows that there are vast local differences. While in Tamil Nadu the number of people living alone or with spouse has risen from 5.2% to 13.7%, the percentage in Delhi has not changed drastically (from 2.4 to 2.9%). Furthermore, these numbers say little about the arrangements people make (e.g. if their children still live in the same house) or if they consider themselves living in a joint family.

⁶⁸ The UNFPA study (2012, 4) selected a sample of 1280 households in seven states of India. The class categorisation was based on the wealth index which includes household assets and housing characteristics. The sample was divided into quintiles (UNFPA 2012, 20f.). I subsumed the first two quintiles as lower classes, the third and fourth quintile as middle classes and the last quintile as upper class.

alone or with spouse almost 40% lived in the same building as their children and 28.5% lived within the same city (Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi 2006).

It is the general shortfall of statistics that they reflect neither the multiple perceptions on change by the elderly themselves nor the different arrangements families would make to keep their ties. When talking to older persons living with or without their children in the middle-class district of Safdarjung Enclave,⁶⁹ I noticed that notions of joint family living were quite diverse. Some couples living “alone”,⁷⁰ still considered themselves living in a joint family as their children stayed in the flats above while others who shared their flat with their children did not speak of joint family living. Mr. Malik felt that he had stopped living in a joint family when in 2010 his brother (together with his wife and children) moved in the apartment above. Even though he shared his flat with two of his children, he spent his days on his own as both his son and his daughter worked.

Mr. Malik: There was a time about up to 2010 we lived as a joint family and there is no problem. If time I was sick or unwell, something [happened], so the other person will definitely come to know. Now I especially have to tell [my brother]. [...] That problem is there because I'm staying alone. (14 November 2013)

Mr. Mathur who lived with his spouse (his three daughters had moved out) was of different opinion. As his brother lived upstairs he felt that he lived in a “semi-joint” family, a family constellation which “in India” he would “prefer.” He explained that his semi-joint living arrangement with his brother had advantages over a more joint living.

Mr. Mathur: At that time [when I was young] we had uh... we had lot many joint families. So, we never felt the problem of that. But the problem of joint family [is] that everybody [is] having their own different opinions. And difference of opinion creates lot of problems. So, that was there at that time. Now, if there is a difference of opinion then you stay alone - there is no problem. Like my brother is staying upstairs. It is a semi-joint family. Semi family means, he is handling his own house affairs and I am handling my own affairs. But whenever any function is there or anything is required we are together. (14 November 2013)

In the course of our conversation Mr. Mathur pointed out that he and his wife took care of the daily tasks related to his brother's flat, like signing the post or handling electricity, water or garbage. He also stressed that there were less differences of opinion because both households were cooking their own food. To share a kitchen is usually an important marker of living in a

⁶⁹ Out of the 20 households I visited, three couples and eight single elderly lived with their adult children in the same flat, three couples lived with children or other relatives in the same house, three couples and three singles lived without family close by.

⁷⁰ Note that living alone may in India also mean living with spouse but without children (Lamb 2009, 174).

joint family,⁷¹ as commensality is an important part of family relationships (see later this chapter) but – as Mr. Mathur’s comment documents – cooking is also a matter of taste and a source of quarrel.

As to my informants, these different interpretations of family jointness show that living in a joint family does not necessarily mean sharing a kitchen or sharing a household. Likewise sharing a kitchen or household with children not automatically means living in a joint family. These flexible interpretations of joint family living are neglected in quantitative data on household size.

Media Narratives and Mobilising Statistical Panic

The discourse of the integration of Indian families is a common topic in the Indian media. Social changes and their impact on the elderly receive a great deal of public and media attention. Television, newspapers, magazines and reports on the internet stress the joint family as a central “traditional” Indian way of caring for the elderly but also report on recent demographic and societal changes. Media sources, as repertoires of narratives and catalysts of social change, provide valuable insights into how family and ageing are perceived and contested. In this section I only look at newspaper articles, as these disclose ongoing debates in public discourses. The depiction of the family in Hindi cinema, which provides valuable sources of sociocultural imagination, is discussed briefly later in this chapter.

Printed newspaper reports in *The Times of India*,⁷² which I collected during my fieldwork, showed that the topic of the joint family was not predominant. By far the majority of articles reported on violence against senior citizens (17 out of 56 articles). Nine articles dealt with the provision for post-retirement, giving financial advice how to provide for one’s retirement. Eight articles reported about changes in pension schemes, six articles covered medical news e.g. concerning Alzheimer’s or giving advice on how to protect parents from cold weather, whereas only three articles quoted from NGO reports or surveys on ageing or reported on government policies concerning senior citizens. Although none of these articles focussed on the Indian joint family per se, many of them perpetuated the discourse of its disintegration. An article on how to save for post-retirement life was titled: “Do Not Delay Plan To Build A Golden Nest Egg. Higher life expectancy, collapse of joint family make retirement planning a must” (Sinha 2013).

⁷¹ Anthropologist Arjun Appadurai (1981, 497) notes that the kitchen in culinary orthodox Tamil Brahmin households is “the most sacred area of the house” and that food served in the kitchen implies “visual and proxemic access” to that space. The kitchen is thus a central space marking a distinction between family members and guests.

⁷² I surveyed *The Times of India* articles related to ageing during a period of eight months, namely from October 2013 to January 2014 and from November 2014 to February 2015. I selected this paper as most of my informants had subscribed it.

This article implies that people need to envision a future where the family is no longer the site of economic security. Therefore economical means have to be outsourced to the market. The headline incorporates ideas of independence and of the market as alternative to family or state care, topics which are discussed later in this chapter.

Online articles of English speaking newspapers⁷³ focussed on the “golden life” of well-to-do older people who enjoyed their lives in retirement residences stressing the evolving market opportunities (see chapter 2). On the other hand, they raised concerns about the growing number of poor elderly who required elder care. A considerable number of these online articles focussed on the joint family. In March 2015 *The Times of India* online edition published a newspaper article entitled “A joint family is more than living together” (I. Mitra 2015). It started with a description of a vanished Indian idyllic family life.

The living room, which once brimmed with incessant chatter in the evenings with family members surrounding the television, has gone silent.

Resting in his armchair, an ageing Mr. Biswas, a South Delhi resident, reminisces, ‘Those days, evenings would be time for family reunion, my sons would come back from work, daughters would prepare tea and snacks and all of us would sit together in front of the television to watch Chitrahaar (a popular musical show in the 80s on national television). Now, my wife and I seldom visit our children settled in different parts of the country’.

A joint family is on a disintegrating path ever since society graduated into an age of technological advance, changing gender roles and better employment opportunities. Interdependence on each other in large families seems to have been replaced by independent living and self-sufficient attitude. (I. Mitra 2015)

Comparable to the “Ageing in India series,” analysed by Cohen, the article contrasted a “harmonious co-existence” in former times with a more “self-sufficient attitude” in today’s families. In this view “tradition,” associated with collectivism, and “modernity,” associated with individualism, were conceptualised as opposites which seemed to be incompatible. The article also stressed the long-term positive outcomes of joint living exemplified by Mrunalini Deshmukh, an endocrinologist living in the US. She was reported to lead an independent life with her husband, but at the same time she stated that she had only become a successful “compassionate and altruistic physician” because of her joint family upbringing. Her own research allegedly proved that the joint family stood for a healthy life:

Medical research shows how more than diet, exercise, genes or location; a family-oriented lifestyle ensures a healthy life. Mrunalini informs, "As a physician, I have observed that patients, struggling with decision-making, conflict management or illness, recover better when they come from a joint family. (I. Mitra 2015)

⁷³ I browsed different English online newspapers for articles on senior citizens. The articles I found were published between 2004 and 2016, most of them (33 out of 41) more recently (between 2012 and 2016).

The message is that joint-family living in general contributes to the well-being of individuals as it promotes social skills (competences in resolving conflicts and competences in decision-making) and a sense of security (support in case of illness). Joint-families as potential sites for female oppression, harassment and domestic violence, in which gender and generational hierarchies interact (Fernandez 1997), are disregarded. The paragraph is interesting because in contrast to Western active ageing paradigms, which centre on physical activities, the medical focus here prioritises the mental well-being of elderly.

Although the article started with reproducing the narrative of Indian tradition and modernity as two opposite poles, it then turned to a more nuanced understanding of the recent trend to live independently in later life. The author reflected that “to believe that familial ties are unbreakable in cases where members are living together too can be bit of a misnomer” (I. Mitra 2015). The report pointed to the assumed advantages of living apart. It took up the idea that with the change of social structure separate living arrangements could still contribute to the fostering of family relationships as long as family members cared for each other, therefore still being “joint.”

Every social structure dissolves and takes a new shape. Families entering new systems indicate a sign of thinking and evolving culture. Explaining this emerging phenomenon, actor and film maker Sudeshna Roy feels, ‘Little condominiums are the new face of joint families wherein every family living in independent housing estates/flats contribute in the well-being of extended families.’ (I. Mitra 2015)

Ipshita Mitra, the author of this article concluded:

Staying away or close, the spirit of togetherness in a family should remain alive, forever! (I. Mitra 2015)

The article acknowledged that it was the nature of the intergenerational relationship rather than the form of housing, which was essential for family cohesion. Other online articles on the joint family also reported on new living arrangements or trends which did not affirm the decline of joint families. In January 2016 an online article in *The Times of India* was entitled “Say hello to the nuclear joint family” (Agarwal 2016). It reported that elderly parents and in-laws nowadays moved closer towards their children as living close to one another was a “good support system” for all generations. I even found an article saying that it was in fact the nuclear family which was on the decline in India (Samuel and Raja 2015). Drawing on the Census data of 2011 it reported that even though the absolute number of nuclear families had increased from 135 to 172 million from 2001 to 2011, this was “at a slower pace than the overall population.” Furthermore it proposed that “the share of nuclear families had declined by 1.84 percentage points in urban areas but had grown by 0.32 percentage points in rural areas” (Samuel and Raja 2015). A professor of population studies explained that this phenomenon was due to a shortage of housing and a change in working conditions in urban areas. To him, India was witnessing a

“new kind of nuclear family” as working couples did not mind “having one of their parents living with them to balance taking care of children and work” (Samuel and Raja 2015).

Besides reporting about the joint family most of the online articles stressed the new opportunities that “golden agers” were now enjoying in India, like “Gold from Silver” (Kaushik 2013) or “Boomer Boom” (Punj 2014). Digitally published newspaper articles also raised concerns about the growing number of the elderly, e.g. “Concerns over an aging India” (Dhar 2012). In both kinds of reports the authors often did not differentiate between social strata in India and “the elderly” became one demographic group regardless of vast differences. On July 5, 2013 Amy Kazmin (2013), a Delhi-based South Asia correspondent for the London based *Financial Times*, published an article in the online edition (ft.com) heading “India’s demographic time-bomb: the elderly.” Under this caption a photograph was posted showing a medium close-up of an apparently poor elderly man wearing an oversized light purple shirt and a rose plaid scarf. Tucked under his right arm was his wooden walking stick which was, besides his wrinkled face, a clearly visible sign of his old age. His left hand was grasping the front of his cap, the only reference to “modern times.” Thereafter followed a report on Mr. & Ms. Saxena, two doctors whose adult children all lived abroad. Even though Mr. & Ms. Saxena belonged to an affluent middle class minority of elderly in India, they were seen as *pars pro toto* for society as a whole. The article stated:

The Saxenas are part of a little discussed demographic group now posing a new challenge for India: the elderly, whose numbers are rising fast at a time when the traditional extended family safety net is being eroded by rapid social economic transformation. (Kazmin 2013)

Interestingly the article claimed that the majority of pensioners belonged to India’s middle class or upper class, “where better long-term nutrition and healthcare [had] extended lifespans far beyond the current national average of 66 years” (Kazmin 2013). Yet this claim came without any proof.

Framing urban middle-class elderly as “ultimate object of analysis” (Cohen 1998, 103) is not new and has recurrently been practiced in gerontological work. Cohen (1998, 89) points out that in several works on the sociology of ageing in India “the pensioner” – meaning the urban middle-class elderly – is taken as point of reference while the disadvantaged elder is invoked for the legitimisation of claims. Thus, class and power differences are ignored and a “seamless gerontological object” (Cohen 1998, 89) is constituted. The *Financial Times* article reproduces this “seamless gerontological object” by taking the middle-class couple Saxenas as an example for India’s future challenges concerning “the elderly.” The article’s headline furthermore perpetuates another popular topic in discourses on ageing in India, namely the “problem of aging” being caused by an increasing number of older people and by less family members

willing to take over care-responsibilities. Considering the elderly population as a threat to the young is part of what Rüdiger Kunow (2005, 28), professor for American studies, calls “ageing as perspectivation of risk.” This perspective dominates a huge part of recent preoccupations with ageing in the Global North. The demographic development of those countries is medially but also scientifically often depicted as a disaster scenario. While the increase of younger people is celebrated as “baby boom,” a growing number of older people is regarded as “age doom” (Kunow 2005, 29). The expectable risks for fiscal structures or health systems provide statistical evidence for the perspective of ageing as a potential threat for society as a whole. Kunow refers to Ulrich Beck’s important analysis that the crucial point in respect to risk is its creation of public awareness. Using a term of Kathleen Woodward, this phenomenon can be referred to as “mobilizing statistical panic” or “[c]atastrophic statistical discourse about large-scale concern” (Kunow 2005, 28f.). Woodward stresses that catastrophic statistical panic is highly unstable and may not always be of concern to us but

[...] when our own individual epidemiological, familial, and financial futures are at stake, statistical panic can strike with compelling and sustained force. Statistical panic: fatally, we feel that a certain statistic, which is in fact based on an aggregate and is only a measure of probability, actually represents our very future. (Woodward 1999, 185)

As Lawrence Cohen (1998, 89) points out, numbers are often taken matter-of-factly and are merely used as a proof instead of a means of analysis. The “problem” of an ageing population is thus taken for granted and not demonstrated in any way. As shown earlier in this chapter the decline of the joint family is not as drastic as it is often imagined and depicted in different media. I argue later in this chapter that a new contribution to the overall discussion on the Indian family is to look into every-day familial practices as *doing family*. This avoids opening up a dichotomy of family solidarity versus family conflict which is often done in media reports.

Intergenerational Relations and the State: Filial Piety, Sevā, Property, and other Expectations

Expectations about ageing are culturally shaped and influence the way we perceive and organise our daily life and social bonding. As individuals age they consider care arrangements by drawing both from expectations and assumptions which are culturally shaped and from observations and experiences they have gained in the past and present. Cultural expectations also inform the emotional responses with which we respond to changes in the life course (Vatuk 1990, 64). They equally influence responses of the state, which I analyse in this sub-chapter. I continue with the exploration of cultural notions of elder care in India. Lastly, I turn to two cinematic texts and interweave them with the opinions of my informants to gain a complex understanding of intergenerational relationships in India today.

The Family and the State, or: Who Is Responsible?

Care responsibilities indicate how societies negotiate the role of and the relationships between the family, the state and the market. Policy responses to global ageing tend to replace state-run pension schemes with incentives for private old-age provision exposing individuals to an increased risk (Neilson 2009, 351). In poorer countries social security is often fractional and care of the elderly is granted through the family, a continued participation in working life, or through the non-government sector (Neilson 2009, 350). In India, care for the elderly remains a central task of the family as cultural notions of care and family jointness construct elder care “as critical to family functioning and family cohesion” (Brijnath 2012, 689). Recent incentives of the state enforced the family as locus of elder care. In 2007, the Indian Parliament passed *The Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act* which regulates the support of senior citizens by their relatives.⁷⁴ The Lok Sabha⁷⁵ report, which in 2007 was presented to Parliament by the standing committee, is a good example of the line of reasoning:

1.4 The traditional norms and values of the Indian society laid stress on showing respect and providing care for the aged. The aged members of the family were normally cared for by the family itself. However, *in recent times, society is witnessing a gradual but definite withering of the joint family system*, as a result of which a large number of parents are not being maintained by their children, as was the normal social practice. Consequently, the elders are now exposed to emotional neglect and to lack of physical and financial support. They are facing a lot of problems *in the absence of adequate social security*.

1.5 The Committee have further been informed that with their dwindling financial resources and weakening health, parents are often being perceived as burden, even while living within the family. Many older persons are now living with spouse and without children, while many persons, specially widowed women are forced to spend their twilight years alone. This clearly reveals that *ageing has become [sic] a major social challenge* and financial support, care and treatment are required for the older persons. Unfortunately, *the time has come when the moral obligation of children to look after their parents in their old age has to be backed by a legal obligation*.

[...]

1.11 Recognizing that the *family is the most desired environment for senior citizen/parent* to lead a life of security, care and dignity and to ensure that the progeny performs its *moral obligation* towards their parents who may otherwise be left uncared for and destitute in their old age, the proposed legislation aims to ensure *that maintenance of older persons by their family will be a matter of right* for the parents. [...] (Ministry Of Social Justice and Empowerment 2007, para. 1.4, 1.5, 1.11, my highlighting)

⁷⁴ For a discussion of the *Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act* see also Lamb (2009, 237ff.) and Brijnath (2012, 701ff.).

⁷⁵ The Lok Sabha is the lower house of India’s two-chamber parliament.

It gets clear that this legislation defines the family as moral and cultural site of elder care. With social and cultural transformations undermining “traditional norms and values of the Indian society,” the government feels impelled to secure this “normal social practice” by legal regulations. In this new social scenario the state does not aim to develop general welfare state principles which provide securities outside the family, but to reinforce care within the family. Negligence of parents should be countered by compelling children to fulfil their obligations by law.

But who exactly is responsible for elder care? In the Hindu patrilineal family system, older persons are expected to be cared for by their sons, but who is supposed to step in if there are none? In the novel *Family Matters* (Mistry 2002) the daughter Roxana is torn between her duty to care for her family and her felt obligation to care for her father Nariman. As there is no blood-related son in the family but one step-son, one step-daughter, and the biological daughter Roxana, the question of who can be held accountable for taking care of Nariman is not easily resolved. Legally, they are all obliged to care for him. According to state’s policy, all relatives who are in possession of or inherit a senior citizen’s property are legally bound to their “maintenance,” which includes provision for food, clothing, residence and medical attendance (Ministry of Law and Justice 2007, para. 1.2.b). The following paragraph regulates care responsibilities among heirs:

4.4 Any person being a relative of a senior citizen and having sufficient means shall maintain such senior citizen provided he is in possession of the property of such citizen or he would inherit the property of such senior citizen: Provided that where more than one relatives [sic] are entitled to inherit the property of a senior citizen, the maintenance shall be payable by such relative in the proportion in which they would inherit his property. (Ministry of Law and Justice 2007, para. 4.4)

Children, grandchildren or other heirs who “neglect or refuse to maintain a senior citizen being unable to maintain himself” can be penalised to pay a monthly allowance of up to 10,000 Rupees (140 €) (Ministry of Law and Justice 2007, para. 9.1, 9.2). If they do not meet their obligations, carers can be fined up to 5,000 Rupees (70 €) or imprisoned for up to three months (Ministry of Law and Justice 2007, para. 24). The Act also appeals to state governments to establish old-age homes for elderly who do not have any relatives to support them. Yet, governmental and NGO support is clearly of secondary importance to the state’s policy. Anthropologist Bianca Brijnath criticises the act for not being supportive of caring family members, who experience fatigue from their work load or face financial difficulties.

The punitive measures which seek to locate care responsibilities on families without adequate support do not positively engage with the changes that Indian society is undergoing and fail to meet the growing needs of those caring for frail elderly relatives [...]. (Brijnath 2012, 702)



Figure 3.2: Advertisement in *The Times of India* by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. 24 February 2015, page 23.

To notify the public about the act, the provisions are to be promoted publicly. During my fieldwork I came across an advertisement by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment⁷⁶ in *The Times of India* (figure 3.2) which informs about the legally enforceable rights and obligations of family members. The advert is entitled “Elders are the pillars of our building.” The building is a metaphor of the children’s life, which rests on the fundament their parents have created for them. To protect the building from collapse those pillars need to be maintained and the state now watches over this upkeep, if necessary through legal punishment. The text is framed by a photograph depicting a young man, dressed in business clothes touching the feet of an elderly man receiving his blessings. The gesture of bowing down to the feet of elderly (*pranam*) is widely practised in India and expresses respect for elder persons (Lamb 2009, 33). The older man, assumingly his father, is wearing a polo shirt and trousers, while the woman sitting next to him, apparently his mother, is wearing a sari, both being respectable attire for middle-class elderly.⁷⁷ The dress as well as the outlook of the apartment – equipped with a white

⁷⁶ The Department of Social Justice and Empowerment is entrusted with the task of empowering socially and economically marginalised groups, amongst them senior citizens, see: <http://socialjustice.nic.in/SSSU-English/mobile/html5forpc.html?page=6&bbv=1&pcode=> (accessed 23 January 2017).

⁷⁷ For a discussion of fashion and respectable femininity for the Indian urban middle class see Gilbertson (2014).

shag-pile carpet, a beige sofa, and a glass front in the back – mark the persons as middle class. All members of the family have smiling faces, apparently enjoying the gesture. The message is that family is a site for mutual intergenerational support and joy. Economic success, illustrated by the business suit of the son, is not in contrast to reverting to Indian values like the respect for one's parents. This directive is underlined by the slogan “sabka samman, sabka utthaan” (everyone's honour, everyone's progress). The advertisement suggests that progress is not achieved through selfish interests but through upholding Indian morality.

Irrespective of legal obligations, economic flows, including inheritance and property, play an important role in intergenerational relations. Even though elder care should be provided without any financial expectation, property inheritance can be an important motive for filial piety. Inheritance is still gendered in India as daughters usually do not inherit a major part of their parents' property, even though their legal rights have been enhanced.⁷⁸ Media and public discourse often sustain the narrative that children only love their parents as long as these keep their wealth (Lamb 2009, 99). In *Family Matters* (Mistry 2002), the 79-year-old protagonist Nariman regrets to have signed over his spacious flat to his step-children who now refuse to care for him sending him to his biological daughter Roxana when he gets sick. He compares himself with King Lear, a “character who has become the global incarnation of anxiety concerning the issues of miserable old age” (Kletter and Dackweiler 2015, 226), as he mistakenly assumed that signing over property would not diminish his respect within the family. Whereas media accounts of children taking away their parents' property are often highly dramatised, there is a grain of truth in this narrative. Out of 561 murders in Delhi in 2014 10.5 % were by reason of “disputes over property/money matters” (Hassan 2014, 25). According to police inspector Rajesh Gaur of the Senior Citizen Cell of Delhi Police, the main reasons to call the helpline are family related.

Most of the complaints they're related to family quarrel or family dispute, including property. Because there is generational gap, you know. So the main bone of contention in Delhi is property. So, more than 40% of the complaints, they are related to domestic issues. (02 March 2015)

The officer said that in these cases the police tried to convince families to solve the matter internally or to search for legal consultation as in India the police cannot take action in civil matters.

There are two sorts of problems, civil and criminal. In criminal cases, police can take action but in civil cases police can't. So in those cases, if the matter is not

⁷⁸ With few exceptions, in India property used to be owned and inherited jointly but only by male successors. In 2005 the legislation authorised women to be coparceners by birth. However, in practice women's property is often transferred to their marital family with marriage (Kodoth and Rajan 2008, 85; see also Deininger, Goyal, and Nagarajan 2013).

solved, then they are advised to approach other agencies like courts and disputal resolution services. But we try to convince the parties to resolve the matter. (02 March 2015)

The Non-Governmental Organisation HelpAge India⁷⁹ runs age care service centres throughout Delhi, where elderly can spend the day reading books, playing games, availing the services of a physiotherapist, or – once a week – can consult an advocate free of charge. On one of my visits to a centre in South Delhi in November 2013, I was astonished to see that the elderly made great use of the consultation hours of the advocate. I witnessed how an old lady accompanied by her daughter told the lawyer that her daughter-in-law was abusing her and that her son was pressuring her to sell the house. The daughter explained that her parents lived in a duplex and due to a prior notice her brother and his wife had shifted to the upper floor but paid neither the rent nor the electricity bill. To cover the expenses, her 62-year-old father continued to work seven days a week. She supported her mother in taking actions and fighting for property, even against her father's will who was afraid of a bad family reputation. The fear of losing respect in the neighbourhood and being subject to gossip held the couple back from calling the police.

Lawyer: If you say: "I was tortured by my daughter-in-law", where is the proof? Court will not hear you without any proof.

Daughter: My father is this... very this thing that neighbours will get involved and everybody will know that in the house we are fighting and all that.

Lawyer: I know this is social stigma. This is very right, this is absolutely right, we all think about that. But at certain point of time - [your daughter-in-law] is not bothered about [your mother] - wrong is wrong. You have to raise your voice against wrong doers. Otherwise, how can you get justice? (4 November 2013)

The lawyer advised the two of them to file a police report because this was the precondition for going to one of the tribunals to get a court order and throw both the son and daughter-in-law out of their house. She further urged the old lady to disown her son, because in this case both the son and the daughter-in-law would not be allowed to enter their premises. "It means you don't have a son, then you don't have a daughter-in-law. So, this is what you have to do." To enforce the new legal rights constituted in the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act the government of Delhi has established nine Maintenance and Appellate Tribunals,⁸⁰ which are free of charge. However, the case of this family shows that legal provisions cannot solve the

⁷⁹ HelpAge India is one of the most prominent NGOs aiming at improving the lives of older people in India. Other NGOs in this sector are AgeWell Foundation, Dignity Foundation and Age Care India. As Cohen observed, HelpAge India, even though it "matured" from a British-run to an Indian-run institution, did not abandon "the agency's one-way ties to British knowledge" (1998, 90).

⁸⁰ See: http://delhi.gov.in/wps/wcm/connect/doi_socialwelfare/SocialWelfare+New/Home/Our+Services/Social+Security+and+Old+Age-Welfare/Maintenance+Tribunal (accessed 14 February 2016).

difficulties and insecurities people face, when families break apart. The barriers of going to court are considerable because people seeking legal measures against members of their families fear being stigmatised or marginalised by neighbours or relatives. The enforcement of parental care through jurisdiction might also fortify abusive behaviour by elder or younger members of the family.

According to newspaper reports the government is about to present a new national policy for senior citizens which is said to reinforce the younger generations' involvement in elder care (Press Trust of India 2016). In this context, marketers sense a substantial opportunity for the "silver market" in India. Private companies increasingly develop retirement communities and promote home care services for Indian families that can afford such market-based elder care. Consequently, economic assets become more important for the choices families can take. If the state misses to provide support for lower classes, existing class differences at older age will further expand.

Reciprocity, Caring Daughters, and Sevā

In her talk on the Indian family Ravinder Kaur explored the question what makes the idea of family so resilient in India. In her view it is the ethics of duty rather than the ethics of love which lies at the heart of the ideal of a joint family. The network of mutual obligations and the force of duty reproduce the family spirit. This does not mean that love is absent in Indian families (see e.g. Trawick 1992), but the glue which sticks families together is an implicit intergenerational contract of mutual care and sharing. This duty entails high potential for conflicts, for example when resources are redistributed. But, as Kaur asserts, these are cooperative conflicts, which means that the parties involved are seeking for a solution.⁸¹

In her article about providing elder care in a transnational context Bianca Brijnath (2009, 92) also deliberates upon the role of duty and internalised guilt. Living abroad relieves family members of the daily, often burdensome tasks of care work, but at the same time feelings of guilt for "being so far away" and "for not doing enough" are still internalised. Reflecting her own experiences as member of a transnational Indian family, she writes:

Certainly caring in my family is part of the moral and ethical prerequisites for being a 'good' Indian family. Obligations and duty are organised along hierarchies that brook no resistance; hence, there is no other response to give but 'yes' when called upon to help. (Brijnath 2009, 93)

⁸¹ Keynote lecture: Kaur, Ravinder: Querying the 'Iconic' Indian Family in the Age of Media and Technology, January 14, 2016, Berlin. In the context of the international workshop: Media, Technology and Family: Changing Concepts and Practices of Relatedness in India, 14-15 January 2016, Humboldt University, Berlin.

Central to the joint family system is the idea of generalised reciprocity.⁸² In India, physical and emotional care as well as material support parents have invested in their children's upbringing are expected to be returned years later when they grow old. Adult children are inclined to care for their parents "out of love, a deep respect for elders, and a profound sense of moral, even spiritual, duty to attempt to repay the inerasable debts they owe their parents for all the effort, expense and affection the parents expended to produce and raise them" (Lamb 2009, 32). In the dominant Hindu patrilineal family system⁸³ sons and even more daughters-in-law are seen as prime care takers. Upon marriage daughters generally move into their husband's family home and thus their care obligations shift from their own family to their in-laws (Lamb 2009, 32) which means that daughters are normally not expected to care for their biological parents. Yet, in recent times a shift towards daughter-care has been noted in several Asian countries like China and Japan but also in India (Croll 2006, 481). "Interestingly, the increasing numbers of younger generations living in separate nuclear households better facilitates [sic] the spread of daughter-care between both parents and parents-in-law" (Croll 2006, 481). Bianca Brijnath's (2012, 704) ethnographical research shows that daughters are counted among primary carers for family members with dementia. Although not many of my informants lived with their daughters, they would often stress that daughters were emotionally more attached to parents than sons. One lady in an old-age home told me:

Ms. Chandra: You know today I was telling you that there's an old lady who was going to [the] hospital. And she used to cry because her sons have just left her here and forgotten about her. So I used to tell her: every day I thank God that I have two girls. Because they may not live with me but they are concerned about me. (10 January 2014)

Ms. Chandra's opinion that daughters were more concerned about their parents than sons was shared by other informants. In their study of 150 middle-class old-age homes in South Indian cities Kalavar and Jamuna (2008) found that residents more likely maintained close contact with their daughters than with their sons. This shift in family relationships is interesting to study, because normative Hindu notions make sons responsible for the care of their parents. However, as both child and elder care are mostly feminised labour, daughters-in-law generally take over the practical work. There are many scenarios where sons (and daughters-in-law) might not function as care takers, for example if they live elsewhere, if they reject to take on care responsibilities, or if there are only daughters in the family, which becomes more likely with

⁸² *Generalised reciprocity* is based on long time returns in various forms, while *balanced reciprocity* is based on the timely return of a gift. *Negative reciprocity* occurs when one partner does not meet his/her obligations (Heidemann 2011, 169).

⁸³ Note that even though this family pattern is dominant, multiple other forms do exist which cannot be included at this point, e.g. the matrilineal context of South Indian families (see e.g. Bomhoff 2011, 77).

lower fertility rate. Further studies are needed to follow up on the question if Indian working women – with higher economic independency – might opt to support their own parents, either additionally to their in-laws or instead. My study reveals – as will get clear throughout the chapters – that daughters played a significant role in the lives of my elderly informants although elderly people expected foremost their sons to look after them. They were disappointed or deeply hurt if children did not fulfil their reciprocal care obligations. However, there were heterogeneous opinions of how this “duty” should be fulfilled and few people even opposed this way of thinking. One woman in the old-age home I extensively studied (see chapter 4) disliked the expectations parents had towards their children. Ms. Rani Shastri, a very energetic 87-year-old lady did not think her son owed her anything.

Rani: Especially in India, I don't know abroad, parents think that their children have to do for them, because we [the parents] did something for them [our children]. My dear, we didn't do any favour to them. If we produced them we produced them because we wanted to produce, or even if they were unwanted children, it is not the children's fault. [B]etween two human beings, and as parent and child, there should be give and take. But I shouldn't take it for granted because I have brought up my son he must do a lot of things for me. [...] Either you bring him up in such a way that there is a lot of give and take, and the child feels no obligation but he wants to do it, [it] makes him happy, not because it is his duty... I don't believe in that duty business.

AM: That's nicely said, yes, but here people have expectations.

Rani: Too many expectations! [...] And that creates so much unhappiness all around. We should do for our children whatever we can afford to do. And [...] don't feel like a sort of martyr: Oh, I did so much for you, why don't you realise how much I looked after you. - Okay, you looked after me, that's your outlook. I didn't [tell you] to look after me, you produced me so you looked after me. (02 October 2014)

Rani rejected the idea of generalised reciprocity. In her opinion, it was the parents' choice to have children while the children did not opt to be born. A mutual relationship of giving and taking should not be taken for granted but be worked out during the life course. Rani Shastri held progressive views which were reflected in her life history. As she was very pretty in younger days, she received a lot of proposals of marriage which she all turned down. She studied philosophy and post-graduated in psychology. After her studies she fell in love with a man whom she decided to marry in her early thirties, although both parents objected as it was an inter-caste marriage. She wore jeans and drove around with a scooter in the 1950s and has ever since been doing things her own way. She lost her husband in 1995 and one of her two sons died of heart attack at the age of 51. The other son stayed in Canada and even though he supported her financially, Rani did not expect him to do so as she was able to take care of herself. It was important to her that she would give something in return someday.

I know, when I die, whatever I have will go to my children. My son, the son who is no more, but his children are there. Many people tell me, even my brother told me the other day: ‘Your grandchildren or my niece, they don’t care so much they don’t do anything.’ I said: ‘Well, it is their outlook. But as well as I’m concerned they are still my grandchildren.’ And I don’t expect whether they do anything for me or not do anything for me. Whatever I can do for them, I’ll do it. You know, see, love is not a barter system. Love is love. You either give it because you feel like it, or you keep an account of ‘so much love I gave, you give me back.’ (02 October 2014)

Rani’s comment shows that while she felt a great responsibility towards the younger members of her family, she did not expect reciprocal care. And yet, her view remained the exception. Children are taught their moral obligation to care for their elderly parents during their upbringing. In her study on Bengali middle-class families, anthropologist Henrike Donner (2008, 133) observed that mothers were anxious to encourage their child’s independence. Instead, children would be discouraged from building up profound friendship with peers. Mothers would prefer their children to keep company with a limited number of relatives and neighbours in the domestic sphere as this would – in their view – lead to a stronger family bonding securing the reciprocity of care.

In conversations it turned out that mothers saw these restrictions as part of a situation within which the decline in the birth rate, the rise in living standards and the modification of residential patterns led to concerns about security in old age. By encouraging their children to stay within the confines of the home, parents try to ensure that their offspring develop a very close attachment and internalize the responsibility they carry as their parent’s source of support in old age. (Donner 2008, 133)

While in the North American and European context keeping one’s independence and being able to look after oneself at old age are central to ageing “successfully,” dependence on children is seen as a valuable feature of a later life stage in India (Vatuk 1990; Lamb 2014). Being “appropriately dependent on kin for material, emotional, and bodily support” is part of sustaining family ties and is expected by many elderly (Lamb 2013, 174). Anthropologist Lawrence Cohen was “enthralled” by the residents’ independence he witnessed in an old-age home in Kolkata as well as “by the openness of the institution” (1998, 117). Yet in the eyes of both residents and outsiders, this was a sign of the neglect of institutional and familial duties. “Each of the multiple choices available to residents invoked their absent or uncaring children; their institutionally intensified individuality signified abject solitude” (Cohen 1998, 117).

A key element in the proper care for one’s elderly parents or older people in general is the provision of *sevā*. Ideally, *sevā* means that sons and daughters-in-law attend “to the elder’s daily bodily and emotional needs and comforts” like “preparing and serving food and tea, massaging tired limbs, combing hair, hanging up a mosquito net before bed, reading aloud, escorting to the doctor, managing incontinence, and offering respectful love” (Lamb 2009, 144). But *sevā* is a

multi-layered concept and first of all translates as service. The notion of *sevā* “evokes principles of selflessness and sacrifice” (Ciotti 2012, 149). During late 19th century the individual-centred notion of *sevā* as doing service to god, the family and oneself acquired a new religio-political dimension (S. Patel 2007, 1092). While earlier *sevā* was localised in the private sphere, Swami Vivekananda was the first to transform the concept into “organized humanitarian service” (Beckerlegge 2015, 210) at the end of the 19th century. Since then the practice of *sevā* has been adopted by numerous Hindu movements (Beckerlegge 2015, 209). It has also been a “principle of political action” connected to class, gender and caste in colonial and postcolonial politics (Ciotti 2012, 150) being linked to upper-caste and class notions of philanthropy and charity (Ciotti 2012, 154).

In the family context *sevā* should not be mistaken as an expression of unidirectional relationship which marks the children’s lower standing in hierarchy. For children providing *sevā* also means to exercise power and to symbolically relocate the aging body to the margins of the domestic activities. Brijnath and Manderson pinpoint that *sevā* is an important aspect of power negotiations among older and younger generations of the household.

The social expectations of performing seva, the acts mandated by it – feeding, cleaning, clothing, sheltering, listening – underlie the disciplinary transitions that aging bodies and aging identities must undergo: from doing to accepting; from authoritative to ethereal selves. Similarly, seva serves to discipline younger family members, setting out the types of activities (knowledge) they should perform (discipline) and where they should perform them (in the home). (Brijnath and Manderson 2008, 610)

Care is an important aspect of intergenerational relationships and thus its commercialisation in form of institutionalised or professionalised care services is not without difficulties. Private companies have recently started to offer care at home in order to support adult children in their care duties, or to assist older persons who live alone. Often these services are paid for by children. In an interview a manager of Epoch Elder Care, one of such home care service providers, revealed that employees sometimes did not disclose the fees to the elderly or even pretended to work voluntarily, because otherwise older people might be reluctant to accept the care services. He told me:

The elderly themselves are not open [to pay for] services. So these kinds of services, if there’s a financial aspect involved in it, they might not want it. Such is a resistance they have in their mind. So that is the reason we involve [their] children into the picture. Because the need is there. The need is pretty evident. They need someone to visit them and take care of them, that is there. So the finances shouldn't come in the [way] for us to serve them. So [...] that's the reason we don't disclose [...] how much their kids are paying, or with some, we even say that this is a non-paid organisation, non-paid services. Cause we don't want that to interfere and that to spoil things for them. (16.10.2013)

This statement illustrates the ambivalence of care outside the family. The need for care does not justify its commodification and people grapple with how to give meaning to such transformations. According to their website, Epoch Elder Care does no longer offer home care services but have shifted their business towards “assisted living homes.”⁸⁴ Now, they have two homes, one in Gurgaon and one in Pune, which in 2016 charged 92,000 Rupees (1,300 €) per month for a long-time single occupancy. Taking into account that the average income per capita in Delhi is estimated 23,345 Rupees (330 €) per month in 2015-16 (Hindustan Times 2016) this is affordable to only a small elite. Therefore Epoch Elder Care continues to address foremost wealthy adult children to pay for the services. They state on their website:

Good care comes at a price. In India's nascent assisted living industry, many believe that good care can be attained for as little as 20 or 30 thousand rupees / month [280 to 420 €]. However, as operators we can confidently say that that is not true - especially if you would like an experienced, educated and adequately staffed team to care for your elderly loved ones. We request you to please carefully consider if our offering is financially feasible for you and your elderly loved ones.⁸⁵

The justification of pricing aims at the duty of children in regard to their “loved ones.” Their inability to provide care themselves should prompt children to pay for the best possible alternative. The company asserts that if children want their care to be exchanged with someone experienced and educated, they need to spend a large amount of money. An image video on the website focusses on the mental and psychological needs that are taken care of in these homes. It shows Neha, a manager, who physically cares for the elderly, sitting at their bed, arranging their sari, listening to them, holding hands and touching the elderly, all aspects of *sevā*.

NRI children whom I spoke to often stressed their efforts to seek the best possible care solution for their parents. Their willingness to spend a large amount of money and their quest for the “best” care facility can also be seen as a marker of *sevā*. This shows that money is an ambivalent matter. On the one hand there is the notion that care services should not or cannot be paid for. On the other hand spending a large amount of money on parents can be seen as a marker of showing care and affection. The Epoch Elder Care manager claimed that children were in general open to pay for such services. Yet, this is only true for a small stratum of society, foremost for affluent children living abroad. As Brijnath (2012, 709) notes, in Delhi, family members caring for their relatives would even consider being asked about the option of making

⁸⁴ See: <http://www.epocheldercare.com> (accessed 30 August 2016). Unfortunately, the company did not reveal the reasons for this shift. I could not find out if providing assistant living facilities was more profitable than providing home care services. Studies which scrutinise practices and obstacles of home care services in India will be necessary to give insights into the social impact of market based elder care.

⁸⁵ See: <http://www.epocheldercare.com> (accessed 30 August 2016).

use of institutional care as doubting their morals and dedication. Many of the younger people in Delhi I talked to were surprised that old-age homes for the affluent even existed in India.

A Glimpse into Bollywood Care Arrangements

The family is a predominant theme in Hindi cinema. In the following I examine two examples of Bollywood movies I came across during my research. The family drama *Baghban* (2003) is of my interest because it is a cinematographic version of the decline of the joint family narrative and it was well known among my informants. The comedy drama *PIKU* was a blockbuster in 2015, grossing 19 million US-Dollars worldwide.⁸⁶ Both movies are starring Amitabh Bachchan who in recent Hindi cinema has generally embodied the iconic “senior citizen” – righteous, caring, and middle-class. Yet, my study does not focus on the family in Indian cinema in particular as this goes beyond the scope of this thesis and was done elsewhere (Gopal 2011; Uberoi 2006). In my discussion I rather foreground how issues that have been addressed in this chapter are negotiated in those movies and in the opinions of my informants.

In *Baghban*, the middle-class bank employee Raj Malhotra (Amitabh Bachchan) supports his children financially up to the point when all his savings are gone. His boss warns him of giving all his money to his children as Mr. Malhotra is about to retire: “The truth is that with retirement your own money is your greatest strength (*tākat*).”⁸⁷ But Mr. Malhotra is convinced that his children will take care of him if he wants them to. “Sir, my strength is the smile of my children. What good is the money that is of no use to my children? In any case I'm not worried what will happen after retirement. By the grace of God I have four sons. Four priceless fixed deposits.”⁸⁸ After retirement Mr. Malhotra decides to spend more time with his children, and tells them that he and his wife Pooja want to move in with them. To the surprise of the couple, none of their children are willing to take over the care responsibility as they are used to a different “lifestyle.” The children come up with the plan to separate their parents, taking only one of them in at a time. They think separating the elders would make them stay in their own house. But Mr. Malhotra decides otherwise and from that moment the parents live separately shifting from one child to the other. They both grapple with the abusive behaviour of their children. Heart-broken Mr. Malhotra starts to write a novel about his experiences which gets very successful. With the book being a financial success, the children apologise to their father hoping to get a share of the gains. But neither Mr. Malhotra nor Pooja are willing to forgive their children who neglected

⁸⁶ See: <http://www.boxofficeindia.com/movie.php?movieid=2864> (accessed 24 January 2017).

⁸⁷ *Baghban* (2003) TC: 28:25-28:34.

⁸⁸ *Baghban* (2003) TC: 28:34-28:53.

them. Instead they live with their adopted son, who was the only one to support them during the family dispute.

When I asked older people about the movie, I assumed they would critique the film, as I personally found the story very cliché-ridden – the loving parents being neglected by their cruel children. But people would praise the movie. Ms. Lal, a 67-year-old lady, for example often emphasised that she generally did not like Indian serials or Bollywood movies as these were “fabricated stories” and not depicting “reality.” But she stressed that *Baghban* was different, portraying a real problem in Indian society.

Ms. Lal: It’s a real story of Indians, no doubt. In some houses. Because the parents they sacrifice everything for their children. From their childhood, and [so the children] should fulfil their dreams also. But [in] most of our families [...] we are not disappointed by our children. In most of the families. In lower classes there is much do and cry between the daughter-in-law, parents, son-in-law, there is. (21 December 2013)

Ms. and Mr. Lal lived in a small house in Safdarjung Enclave on their own, apart from their two sons. One of them lived in Canada with his family, the other one worked abroad but his wife and his two sons lived in Delhi. Even though Ms. Lal wanted her elder son to come back from Canada to Delhi, they were – as she said – not disappointed in their children as they had made a career abroad and supported their parents in different ways (see later this chapter). It is interesting that Ms. Lal made these family conflicts into a matter of the lower classes, especially because *Baghban* is a story of an upper middle-class family and not of the poor. Disappointment in children was in fact not restricted to any class. A considerable number of inhabitants of an upper middle-class old-age home, I did intensive fieldwork in, were sometimes deeply hurt that their children would not care for them at home (see chapter 4). Not only did Ms. Lal conflate middle and lower class seniors, she also reproduced class distinctions by opposing middle-class family harmony to lower-class family disputes.

More than once older persons spoke about the efforts all generations had to invest to maintain family bonds. Adjustment by the older generations was in my older informants’ view crucial for keeping good ties with the younger generations. One lady from the neighbourhood told me:

Ms. Goel: For me, nothing has changed. It depends whether you change with this younger generation, your kids or not. If you feel that no, this is all wrong - they should not force me in changing my lifestyle - and if you feel it to be a big shock or forceful behaviour, then you can think like that. However, if you decide to change with your kids by holding their hand and walk their path then the kids will also ensure that you are safe and they take care of you. [...] There are lot of old people who also end up in senior citizen old-age homes who do not adjust with their kids. If they will not adjust with their children then the kids are not wrong. If old people destroy their ego then kids are good. You should always adjust with kids. Now whatever we have belongs to our kids. Whatever the kids have is ours. Nothing is separated. (20 November 2013)

In Ms. Goel's opinion older persons need to change along with their children. Filial piety is not only a matter of the children's but also of the elderly's behaviour. This is in stark contrast to the narration in *Baghban* which puts the sole responsibility for family bonds, but also the blame of failed family relations, on the children. The film does not answer the question how or why the children, raised by such altruistic parents, have become so self-centred. Their modern lifestyle is the given reason for their misbehaviour, totally detached from their parent's comportment. On the contrary, in Ms. Goel's opinion children cannot be blamed for separating from their parents if the latter are reluctant to change. Furthermore she believed that good family relations depend on shared property – an issue which in *Baghban* did not lead to tighter family bonds but to the old couple's misery.

In the Bollywood movie *PIKU* (2015), the family situation is more ambiguous. The 70-year-old upper class Bengali widower Bhashkor (Amitabh Bachchan) and his daughter Piku (Deepika Padukone), who is an architect, reside in a posh house in the Bengali colony Chittaranjan Park in Delhi. Bhashkor is obsessed with his constipation. The subtitle of the movie "Motion se hi emotion" ("From Motion Comes Emotion") is clearly an allusion to the protagonist's bowel movement, which features prominently in the film, but it also refers to a road trip he and his daughter take to his native place Kolkata. Piku is the only child and she cares for her father and his stomach problems, even though they constantly argue over his insulting behaviour towards other people. Piku is an independent and self-confident woman of great appearance, working around the clock. She is in her early thirties, unmarried, and has a pre-marriage sex life her father knows about and is tolerating.⁸⁹ Her father even encourages her not to get married unless she maintains her independence. Marrying and getting a house-wife is a "low IQ" decision in his opinion. Even though there are a lot of arguments between Piku and Bhashkor, Piku is never disrespectful to her father. Albeit Bhashkor is encouraging Piku to be a self-reliant woman, he simultaneously patronises her by not accepting any other opinion than his own. Bhashkor also does not admit that he is dependent on Piku. Only Rana Chaudhary (Irfan Khan), the taxi company owner who is driving them to Kolkata encourages Piku to reflect her father's behaviour. In the movie he functions like a commentator, observing and analysing the father-daughter relationship. He admires Piku for what she does for her father but he is also sceptical because she does not oppose the self-centeredness of Bhashkor.

⁸⁹ It is significant that Bhashkor is an upper class Bengali as this contextualises his liberal attitude towards the pre-married sex life of his daughter Piku. "The setting of the film is crucial because we cannot imagine such a movie being filmed in the backdrop of a state like Haryana, or Uttar Pradesh for that matter because they harbour conservative attitudes and lifestyles especially in relation to women" (Sircar 2015, 98).

Rana: How old is your father? He must be around 70.
Piku: Exact.
Rana: And the way you treat him medically he will live another 20 years, which makes him 90.
Piku: Touch wood.
Rana: And in 20 years you will be 50, approximately.
Piku: So?
Rana: Just looking after your father, when you are 50?
Piku: One Minute. Why are you saying all this? You know my situation. You know he depends on me. He can't hear properly, his eyes are deteriorating. Should I abandon him?
Rana: No, no.
Piku: How will he manage on his own?
Rana: No, I'm not saying you should leave him. I have also not left my mother. I'm just saying I hope you realise he is a selfish man.
Piku: No he's not.
Rana: He is.
Piku: And even if he is, he's my father.
Rana: If he's your father why do you behave like his mom?
Piku: Because, Rana, after a certain age parents do not have to live their own life, their life has to be maintained. And it's the children's responsibility.
Rana: [nods slowly]
Piku: So if someone wants to marry me...
Rana: ...he will also have to adopt your 90-year-old child.
RC: You bet! [laughs]⁹⁰

The film touches many aspects I have already discussed in this chapter. As Piku puts it when talking to Rana, dependency at old age is part of the life course and it is the children's responsibility to maintain their parents. The film also depicts the expectations parents have of their children; Bhashkor wants his daughter to have higher aims in life than just marriage and at the same time he wants her to spend time with him and his constipation problems. To be both successful at work and providing at home puts a lot of pressure on Piku. In this respect the movie is negotiating the question of care in contemporary times. Being an only daughter it is Piku's responsibility to look after her father. Consequently she is juggling her job, her father's demands, and her private life. In the end, the question whether she would continue her care-work even at the age of 50 becomes obsolete as the father dies happily in his native home. The whole film centres on bodily fluids and food. Constipation is the major topic of conversation between father and daughter. As Kakar and Kakar (2007, 122) remark, digestion

⁹⁰ PIKU (2015) TC: 01:31:37-01:32:59.

and matters of defecation are the “most common, pan-Indian preoccupation” related to food. Piku and Bhashkor constantly talk about the right food and medicine for facilitating bowel movements. Piku measures Bhashkor’s blood pressure several times a day, she regularly gives him his medicines and watches over her father when he needs to go to the toilet. Bhashkor informs his daughter daily about the composition of his stool. In this film body fluids are not just a matter of intimate conversation but a way of *doing family*, a concept I will discuss later in this chapter. Through their talks about constipation and food there is a close emotional bonding between father and daughter and the movie takes the viewer into an intimate family space.

The Way to an Indian Family is through its Stomach – Food and Family Ties

Not only in PIKUs but also in the lives of my informants food mattered in the negotiation of family relationships. I argue in this sub-chapter that food is essential in keeping up relations within a family. Home-cooked food is both a sign for the integrity of the middle-class household and a medium of care and intimacy between spouses and other family members. Food plays an essential role in daily life in India and it is much more than the preparation and intake of nutrition. Through commensality (cooking, eating, and receiving food) the family, power relations, age, gender, caste, religion, and class are negotiated and reproduced (see e.g. Marriott 1976; Khare and Rao 1986). As to Hindu thinking food is closely related to the self and the body, “feeding and eating unite morality and action as food practices simultaneously constitute personal health, self/identity and group status” (Donner 2011b, 51). Yet gastro-politics, which are the conflictual social transactions around food (Appadurai 1981, 495) have been incorporated into a “more recent gustatory landscape that focusses on consumption, identity and change” (Brijnath 2014, 117). Fast food and lately also fancy restaurant chains are mushrooming within Indian cities. Food and drink-related consumption patterns have become part of cosmopolitan food practices that construct a middle-class identity (Donner 2011b, 49). Food consumption is not only (re)producing middle-classness in public spheres but maybe more importantly so in the domestic sphere. Donner stresses that it is “the importance of middle-class consumption patterns located in the home, which provide an important ideological and social site for the establishment of personhood, gendered identities and intimate relationships” (Donner 2011b, 48).

In the late 1990s pre-packed food flooded the markets in India. It facilitated daily cooking for working women as Indian dishes tend to be quite time consuming in their preparation (Srinivas 2006, 199), but at the same time it created a “meta-narrative of loss.” As a mediator between the nostalgia of “food as mother made it” and a cosmopolitan lifestyle this kind of food transforms eating into a performance of “gastro-nostalgia” (Srinivas 2006). However, Donner reports that most of her Bengali middle-class informants rarely consumed this kind of food as it “indicated a

lack of commitment to the ideal of devoted wife and mother among the women in the house” (2011b, 62). Until today mothers have been guarding the home-cooked meal, holding the responsibility of the domestic sphere, which restricts their activities at home and in public.

This focus on self-made home food formed part of the larger discourse that stressed the importance of the joint family and strong gender role models. [...] Since women were considered responsible for good home keeping and this included many ideas on food, this restricted their activities both within and outside of the household sphere. (Bomhoff 2011, 100f.)

In Delhi people attached fundamental importance to home-cooked food (*ghar ka khānā*). Many of my older middle-class informants emphasised that they disliked the new trend of having food items delivered as it is common practice for the younger generation. “Eating out” was something older people would do, but mostly with family or friends, inviting their children or grandchildren for example. But my female informants in Safdarjung Enclave usually cooked at home. Home-cooked food was not only denominated as particularly pleasant but also healthy and the women put a lot of efforts in preparing these meals. Ms. Lal for example told me that her husband did not like food from outside. When she left her house to visit her daughter-in-law over night she took preparations so that her husband would not be deprived of his home-cooked food.

Ms. Lal: I prepared the vegetables yesterday and asked my maid to make chapattis for him and pack the lunch for him. Because he doesn't take outside food. She packed it, I called her in the morning [and told her] just make two, three chapattis and put it in the lunch box and the vegetables I had prepared myself. (21 December 2013)

Food is an important medium of social and bodily relations. It is a sign of care which women provide their husbands, children and other family members with. Deshna Kaushik, a woman that is featured later in this chapter, did no longer enjoy preparing food for herself after her son had left her home. Thus “bodies become the site of care, the source where love is taken and given” (Brijnath 2014, 122). Men also praised the food of their wives and were thereby acknowledging how much their wives loved them and cared for them. Mr. Lal would repeatedly speak very highly of his wife's food.

Ms. Lal to Mr. Lal: Annika was asking whether [I] prepare the food [myself]. I said yes. Up to now. I don't know what will happen in the future. After two, three years. Will I be able to do my home-course or not? Because sometimes...

Mr. Lal: She is a very good cook.

Ms. Lal: Not now.

Mr. Lal: I'm the most...

Ms. Lal: I used to be.

- Mr. Lal: I'm a very lucky man to have delicious, nutritious, heart[ily], freshly prepared chapatti and vegetables prepared by her [my wife].
- Ms. Lal: Not now. In past I was. [laughs]
- Mr. Lal: Listen to me, just listen to me. Whenever I leave my home, I carry a bag [...], I carry a tiffin of three [boxes]. One, two, three. One is filled with *chapātīs* [bread], another one is filled with vegetable, and the third one is for any salad, vegetable or *achār* [pickle]. I enjoy that food. (21 December 2013)

In Hindu scripts the last life stages (*vānaprastha* and *sannyāsa*) are marked by a retreat from everyday life (see chapter 5) which includes a dietary restriction to simpler, less spicy food. “Hot” food like meat, onions and garlic excite worldly fervours and therefore should be avoided so that the body increasingly “cools” down with old age and withdraws from worldly passions and attachments (Lamb 2000, 126). In contrast, as Mr. Lal’s example illustrates, my informants showed great interest in food. They worried about its health aspects but did not care much about eating age-appropriately according to Hindu belief.

Household work is a gendered domain and rests on women alone. As long as the wife is still able to provide home-cooked food, both the routine and the integrity of the household are assured. Ms. Lal was worrying if she would still be able to bear the work load in future. As the couple lived alone, she was the only one responsible. This shows that household work can become a burden on elderly women, especially when they live without their children. On the other hand many elderly people stressed, that household work was also a way of keeping oneself occupied and that therefore ageing was less difficult for women than for men. All of my informants were able to afford one or several domestic workers. They normally supported them with cleaning and cooking which eased the women’s extensive work load. Yet, often the domestic helper would only do the chopping of vegetables while the cooking remained in the hands of the landlady. The workload of older women is at times acknowledged by their husbands. Two men living in a posh retirement home outside Delhi stressed that they no longer expected their women to cope with any household tasks. One man told me that a cohabitant had given the following “beautiful answer” when asked once why he had chosen to move into a retirement home.

[The cohabitant] said that: ‘I have been working first with the air force, after that with certain private companies in various capacities. And I have been very busy. And after that I have now retired. So, I am very free, I can enjoy life, I can go and play golf, I can do whatever I want. I am free. But my wife, she was busy then and she is busy now. She's still running the house. She has to catch hold of the maids, she has to catch hold of the servant to get the house clean, to be ready for the lunch and be ready. If I go out, by the time I come back the lunch has to be ready, the dinner has to be ready. So she never retires. So, I have come over here so that she also retires.’ (05 December 2014)

Doing Family and Intergenerational Ambivalence

In the following I argue that the concept of *doing family* overcomes the dichotomy of family solidarity versus family conflict, which is prevailing not only in daily discourses of my informants but also in scholarly discussion. The concept of *doing family* did originally evolve within Gender Studies.⁹¹ Nevertheless it can be used in a broader sense as family is not “merely a natural constellation of individuals connected by biology and the state with some set of behaviour” but “must be achieved and constructed on a daily basis” (Naples 2001 cited in Nelson 2006, 782). The *doing family* perspective stresses the process-related actions that fabricate and maintain family bonds. It not only looks at these inclusive processes but also takes into account the boundaries that are being drawn as inclusion always entails exclusion. Furthermore *doing family* also means negotiating of what is seen as appropriate roles of different family members. In *doing family* “we decide who counts as family and we assign to those who do count what we consider to be appropriate behaviors, tasks and obligations” (Nelson 2006, 783). Similarly to doing gender, *doing family* also includes cultural practices which are performed unconsciously. Natalia Sarkisian (2006) furthermore stresses the ambiguities and ambivalences (indecision, conflicted feelings, and uncertainties) that come along with the negotiations within families what she calls *doing family ambivalence*.

Ambivalence as a concept⁹² derives from psychology. In postmodernist and feminist theory of the family it was regarded as helpful to overcome the dichotomous scholarly thinking of either family solidarity or family conflict, the “love-hate relationship with the family” (Lüscher and Pillemer 1998, 414). *Intergenerational ambivalence* was coined by Lüscher and Pillemer as a concept to “designate contradictions in relationships between parents and adult offspring that cannot be reconciled” (1998, 416). The contradictions were seen to happen on two different levels, namely the “level of social structure, evidenced in institutional resources and requirements, such as statuses, roles, and norms” as well as the “subjective level in terms of cognitions, emotions, and motivations” (Lüscher and Pillemer 1998, 416). This differentiation has been criticised by Connidids and McMullin to the effect that it is “restricted to competing normative systems, a relative abstraction that divorces ambivalence from social structure and

⁹¹ This concept has been adopted from the far more elaborated theoretical concept of *doing gender*. In two crucial senses gender is socially constructed: “it emerges through interaction in particular institutional setting and individuals are evaluated according to the norms that prevail in those settings [...]” (Nelson 2006, 782). Scholars highlight that this is not a voluntary act and stress the “internal and external coercive aspect of gender” (Nelson 2006, 782).

⁹² Kurt Lüscher conceptualizes ambivalence as a situation “when polarized emotions, thoughts, volitions, actions, social relations, and/or structures that are considered relevant for the constitution of individual or collective identities are (or can be) interpreted as temporarily or even permanently irreconcilable” (Lüscher 2004, 36).

from its negotiation by individuals acting with agency in a constraining social world” (2002, 561). They stress that ambivalence means “structurally created contradictions that are made manifest in interaction” (Connidis and McMullin 2002, 558).

[A]s social actors, individuals seek to exercise agency in the negotiation of relationships, and they experience ambivalence when social structural arrangements constrain their attempts to do so. [...] [T]he ambivalence created by the interface between social structure and individual agency is the basis for social action, which may either reproduce the social order or introduce change to existing structural arrangements. When framed this way, ambivalence can be a bridging concept between social structure and individual action, made evident in social interaction. (Connidis and McMullin 2002, 559)

Structural constraints vary from place to place and are entangled with cultural normative ideas. Models focussing “exclusively on structural sources of intergenerational ambivalence are likely to miss an important part of the explanation” as cultural values play an important part. When cultural values “operate in contrast to structural constraints” they are likely to generate ambivalence (Sarkisian 2006, 808).

Even though the concept of (intergenerational) ambivalence was developed in the context of Western societies to analyse new forms of partnerships and parenthood, divorce and reconstituted families, I argue that it is useful for the middle-class context in India where I did my research. My informants have experienced severe changes in joint-family living. To draw attention to the particular organisation of change and ambivalence which come along with it, I will look at two examples, one of a widower and one of a widow both living alone. These case studies are examples of *doing family* euphemising neither family dispute nor family solidarity. The detailed accounts give insights into how intergenerational ambivalence is related both to an individual level and to social and cultural norms.

A Widower Alone at Home

In the global North leaving one’s parental home is often conceived as “an essential stepping-stone toward adulthood” (Ting and Chiu 2002, 614). Yet, as Ting and Chiu argue for the Chinese urban context, moving out is a practice determined by social norms and institutions which differ locally. “Although privacy and autonomy are highly cherished modern values among young adults, leaving home does not follow a simple logic of individualism propelled by modernization” (Ting and Chiu 2002, 614).

Even though today young people in India may leave their parental house for multiple reasons, the cohesive family is still a strong value in Indian society. Leaving one’s parents’ residence is less interpreted as a step towards adulthood but is rather seen to be coherent with filial obligations and gender. Women are expected to leave their parents’ home when getting married moving in with their husband’s family. When married sons set up separate households from that

of their parents, the situation gets more complex and is marked by a play of emotions and sentiments. Different kinds of relations develop, which A.M. Shah (Shah 1998) calls “inter-household family relations”.

Filial piety is still a strong ideal and I often observed that my informants would both stress and appropriate its importance to their own family situation. Whereas a certain critique of recent changes was often formulated in general terms (e.g. the bad habit of mothers feeding their children fast food nowadays or the general neglect of parents by their children) changes in personal family situations were judged positively. One can interpret this attitude as avoiding constructing one’s own family as the “Bad Family” (Cohen 1998), but I would rather argue that the reasons are more complex. Perspectives of older persons are manifold and incorporate social change. Mr. Goswami for instance, a man over 70 whom I visited frequently, has lived with his wife and two children in a house in Safdarjung Enclave since the 1970s. A couple of years back his wife fell ill and died. He kept living in the house with his son’s family residing in the flat on the top floor. Mr. Goswami’s daughter moved to one of the Chinese metropolis together with her husband. When his son’s children were admitted to a school in one of the huge suburbs outside of Delhi, the strain of driving through the city every morning and evening became too great for his son’s family so they decided to move to the suburb. Mr. Goswami approved this step, even though he did not join them as he had many acquaintances and social tasks in the neighbourhood and felt more at home in Safdarjung Enclave. He did not word it but I had the feeling that a further reason for him not to leave his house were the memories of his wife which he did not want to leave behind. When I first asked him if living apart from his family had not been a big challenge for him, he dismissed the issue saying that it was no problem as his son’s family was normally visiting him at the weekends and that he went over to his son’s place for dinner about three times a week. During my stay and my close contact to him I nevertheless witnessed that the son’s move was a more ambivalent issue for the elderly man than first depicted.

Mr. Goswami stressed the importance for his son to be happy as this would make him happy as well. On Diwali he celebrated with his son’s family. He told me that they had dinner and drinks afterwards. At midnight Mr. Goswami wanted to go to sleep so he drove back home. When I asked him why he had not stayed overnight at his son’s place he replied that his daughter-in-law would have had to behave and dress differently with him being around because of relationship norms. Then he posed the rhetorical question: “So why not letting them stay with their friends if I want to sleep anyway? Then they can behave like they want” (field notes, 4 November 2013). He often emphasised that it was important to leave room to the young people.

Mr. Goswami wanted to show me around Delhi and initiated a joint trip to Akshardham temple complex⁹³ as none of us had visited the place before. Being obviously impressed by the temple Mr. Goswami purchased tickets for the theme halls at the temple site. Having finished the 3rd hall's boat trip, we passed through the last hall with scenes depicting different social scenarios with non-moving, life-sized puppets. The scenes took up motives from the first hall's dioramas promoting "the importance of vegetarianism, non-violence (ahimsa), family harmony, morality and prayer" (Brosius 2010, 156). Mr. Goswami suddenly exclaimed: "You have to see and read this. This is absolutely true." He pulled me in front of a "nightmare scenario" showing the decline of the Indian joint family. A pile of luggage in the middle of the scene was pulled in different directions by ropes each held by a different family member. The text on the plate in front of the scenario referred to the Indian family as the most valuable institution which was falling apart as the elderly got pushed away. At the time of our joint visit to the temple I did not know Mr. Goswami too well yet and so I was surprised to see him so deeply touched by this scene which I regarded as rather oversimplified and stereotyped. Only later I would understand that his attitude towards social change was ambivalent; sometimes he was coping well with his unconventional living situation as a single widower, defending his son's decision to move out, but at other times he was struggling – especially when situations of loneliness (see chapter 5) arose. This means that he both stressed normative notions of the joint family and appropriated them to his own family situation.

One evening, he invited me and my Japanese neighbour for some coffee. He had prepared the coffee himself as his full-time domestic worker had gone to his native place and his replacement was not available at that particular hour. Later the temporary domestic worker came in and asked Mr. Goswami why he had not called him as he could have prepared the coffee for us. This made Mr. Goswami think out loud that instead of his children, his servant cared for him, giving him tea and food, waking him up, providing help. He asked, "Who shall I respect more, my servant or my son?" He complained that apart from not caring physically, children nowadays did not even care about money anymore as they were well off themselves. Interestingly enough he argued that a greater number of children could secure familial care – also in affluent families.

Out of ten children (this is the number of children his parents had) two might be reckless, two might be bright, he says - they would be the ones 'taking the family forward'. But the two reckless children will care about you; they will massage your feet when you're old because they are 'dependent' on you. Nowadays the children are moving abroad leaving the elderly at home. So the strong family bonds 'which

⁹³ The Akshardham Cultural Complex (ACC) in Delhi is "a large structure that opened its gates to the public on 7 November 2005, and has since stirred discussions about the legitimacy and authenticity of the place. The ACC is an expression of the process of blurring the boundaries between religious belief and profane consumption and leisure activities [...]" (Brosius 2010, 145f.).

you cannot find out there' – meaning outside of India – are decreasing in recent times. At some point of our conversation he is inclined to say: 'not my children'! I speak about the society in general, I'm very blessed with my children, my daughter comes every third month, my son is coming every other day, he is very caring and has asked me to join them in his home. But women have become independent, children enjoy their own life, so why should we interfere, 'they are happy so I am happy' - Why don't live the life happily? (field notes, 17 December 2013)

Mr. Goswami resorted to normative notions of elder care and filial piety, but he never complained about his own family constellation even though he frequently experienced loneliness (see chapter 5). He tried to shape his daily life actively by his social commitment in the neighbourhood, by visiting his children regularly and by keeping company with a number of friends and acquaintances.

Mr. Goswami's example shows that with India's economic liberalisation its social fabric is undergoing severe changes. Although the number of elderly living on their own is increasing slowly, it still encompasses about 25,000 elderly people in Delhi (Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi 2006). This form of living is an entirely new idea in India and has been deemed as "unnatural" or "unthinkable" by many (Lamb 2009, 13). Yet, Delhi might be a special case, as many of my informants have worked in government jobs. During their work life they used to move to different cities every three years. Thus elderly couples often lived apart from their children for some time and it was not unnatural for them to live on their own (see later this chapter). As we could see in Mr. Goswami's case, the cultural value of filial piety and joint family living operates in contrast to the structural constraints, namely the stressful mobility within the city. It is also in opposition to new ideas of nuclear family living and therefore generates ambivalence. "The ambivalence created by the interface between social structure" or in this case rather by cultural values "and individual agency is the basis for social action, which may either reproduce the social order or introduce change to existing structural arrangements" (Connidis and McMullin 2002, 559). Mr. Goswami repeatedly stressed that this form of living had its own "charm" as he could do whatever he liked and became used to doing things "in his own style." He could sleep late, he could have a drink, and he could see friends whenever he felt like it. In a social scenario like this relations outside the family gain importance (see chapter 5).

A Widow Alone at Home

Not only Mr. Goswami but also other people profoundly struggled with these social changes. Deshna Kaushik, a 69-year-old retired college teacher, had been living alone for five months when I visited her. She had lost her husband 15 years earlier. Thereafter she lived with her son and his family, who shifted to Vasant Kunj after a family dispute. She told me that she had sent her son and his family away so that they could gain new experiences but she hoped that this was only temporary and that they would be living together again soon.

Ms. Kaushik: All parents want their children to be with them. Everyone wants that. Even if I asked them to go away in anger, they know that their mother wants them to be with her. [My son] said, "Okay I will pack your bags and will take you with me. You stay with us." But my daughter-in-law didn't say so. So, I didn't go. By heart, I want to. (15 November 2013)

Ms. Kaushik did not like living on her own in a big house. Instead of "proper meals" she would eat raw food or fruits as she did not have the desire to cook for herself. "When there's a family, you make nice things. Of course you need to prepare food also when you are alone, but there's no happiness in that" (field notes, 15 November 2013). She also expressed security concerns which however did not keep her from driving around the city at night. Because her son's family had moved out of the house and had taken her domestic worker with them, she had to continue to do her household work, as these responsibilities were not taken over by her daughter-in-law. Despite the spatial separation Ms. Kaushik looked after the grandchildren during the day, as her daughter-in-law worked. Ms. Kaushik accompanied the children during the day and cooked for them. She liked having her grandchildren around but at the same time she missed her teaching activity.

Ms. Kaushik: I like working. [Now] I am jobless. I am in the house only. That is a very difficult work [laughs].

AM: So what has changed after you stopped [teaching] last year?

Ms. Kaushik: In one year I find myself healthwise I'm down, just [being] in the house. You're enclosed living that way. So it's not a life. I like to go out to places. Since there are many kids around [in school], it feels good. If there is physical or mental pain, once you are out of the house and sitting in front of 40 to 50 students, I feel fresh again. I think, till the body is fit, one should work. (15 November 2013)

Ms. Kaushik's desire to still be productive beyond housekeeping at old age stood in contrast to her sense of duty to help her son's family despite the family dispute. She felt being exploited because she took over her daughter-in-law's child care but her efforts were not reciprocated.

Ms. Kaushik: Now some things have changed. [My daughter-in-law] doesn't talk much to me. And I feel that I do [her] work, that's [how she is able to] do [her] job. In the morning, 9 o'clock [she goes] and leave[s] the child and 7, 7.30 [she] come[s] back]. Sometimes she goes out from the office as well. I'm doing your work, so you should be little giving but children [are not]. (15 November 2013)

Mr. Goswami's as well as Ms. Kaushik's examples show that family matters for middle-class elderly in India even when their children do not live in the same household. Yet, familial responsibilities like taking care of grandchildren can generate ambivalent feelings as in the case of Deshna Kaushik. She enjoyed having her grandchildren around but at the same time felt exploited by her daughter-in-law who did not value her contribution. In her view, this pattern violated the expected reciprocity between the generations.

In the first part of this chapter the Indian joint family was at the centre of analysis. I outlined how a dominant narrative of its decline determined the discourse throughout the 20th century. Since the 1980s the decline narrative has been fuelled by the invocation of four horsemen of the apocalypse: “modernisation, industrialisation, urbanisation, and Westernisation” (Cohen 1998, 17). In line with this narration, the government has recently reinforced the family as the moral but also legal site for elder care. After India’s entry into the global marketplace, the Indian media and everyday conversations revolved around the question how the family, as elementary component of Indianness, could be safeguarded. I showed that recent media reports present a more distinguished picture of intergenerational relationships in India today. My case studies illustrated that the recent social and cultural transformations in India are accompanied by *intergenerational ambivalences*. They foregrounded the ways, in which older and younger individuals are *doing family*, navigating between expectations and lived realities, negotiating family ties. This navigation is accompanied by ambivalent feelings of love, affection, neglect, loneliness, and disappointment. The following part of the chapter assesses the ways in which transnational families are *doing family*. The emigration of children brings its own challenges in the nurturing of family bonds.

3.2. Transnational Families and Mobile Elderly

The Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (2015) estimated that in 2015 the Indian diaspora covered over 28 million people worldwide. Thereof the highest number lived in the US (4.5 million). In 2015 India received the highest remittances worldwide, namely 72.2 billion US-Dollars (World Bank 2016). This illustrates that transnational family life is a common phenomenon in India. External as well as internal migration have had a long history in South Asia and is not a phenomenon of recent globalisation processes (Chatterji and Washbrook 2013; Amrith 2011). Yet, “[c]ontemporary globalization represents an intensification and acceleration of a longer-term historical process” (Amrith 2011, 153).

Older people are entangled in transnational movements in manifold ways (Horn and Schweppe 2016, 1).⁹⁴ This sub-chapter examines the multiple ties and interactions that link families across

⁹⁴ There has been a growing academic interest in the transnational entanglements of older people. This includes retirement migration of older people both to countries in the global North and South as well as research on transnational movements either in regards to older persons receiving care or giving care (e.g. to grandchildren). There has also been a substantial body of research concerning global care chains, namely the migration of care workers from poorer to wealthier countries (for an overview see Horn and Schweppe 2016).

nation-states and constitute “transnationalism” (Vertovec 1999).⁹⁵ It also analyses care arrangements in a transnational family setting. As will be shown, caring for elderly parents depends not only on the commitment of the children but also on structural settings, like immigration laws and visa regulations. What is more, mobility is not restricted to the children’s generation as the parents themselves were often highly mobile during their work life and continue to travel at old age.

Transnational Social Fields

Transnationalism describes a condition in which, despite great distances and notwithstanding the presence of international borders (and all the laws, regulations and national narratives they represent), certain kinds of relationships have been globally intensified and now take place paradoxically in a planet-spanning yet common – however virtual – arena of activity [...]” (Vertovec 1999, 447)

While research on globalisation processes often focusses on macro-processes, studies on transnationalism give consideration to a “globalisation from below,” looking at transborder social strategies as well as at the everyday life of people who are involved in transnational relations (Pries 2010, 33). Yet, transnational migration studies were critiqued for their focus on the nation-state. Although “nation-states are still extremely important, social life is not confined by nation-state boundaries” (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004, 1007). For the analysis of Indian transnational family life it is helpful to work with the concept of social fields. Bourdieu’s notion of field draws attention to power structures within networks which comprise both individuals and institutions (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 97).⁹⁶ Based on Bourdieu’s work, Levitt and Glick Schiller define a social field as “a set of multiple interlocking networks of social relationships through which ideas, practices, and resources are unequally exchanged, organized, and transformed” (2004, 1009). *Transnational social fields* “connect actors through direct and indirect relations across borders” (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004, 1009). The concept of social fields relates migrants to those who stay back and therefore takes account of social actors across borders. “It takes us beyond the direct experience of migration into domains of interaction where individuals who do not move themselves maintain social relations across borders through various forms of communication” (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004, 1009).

⁹⁵ According to Vertovec “‘transnationalism’ broadly refers to multiple ties and interactions linking people or institutions across the borders of nation-states” (1999, 447).

⁹⁶ According to Bourdieu “a field may be defined as a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions. These positions are objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations they impose upon their occupants, agents or institutions, by their present and potential situation (*situs*) in the structure of the distribution of species of power (or capital) whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field, as well as by their objective relation to other positions (domination, subordination, homology, etc.)” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 97).

The majority of elderly people I met during my field research had at least one child who lived abroad. Family was of great value amongst my informants and they actively engaged in a transnational family life. Elderly parents would regularly talk to their children or to other relatives on the phone, use information and communication technologies for communicating, send photos and cards or visit their family members. Equally children and relatives living abroad would come to India for visits, send photos and call regularly.⁹⁷ In some cases, children also sent medication or geriatric gadgets to their elderly parents.

With children living abroad and parents staying in India new challenges but also new opportunities for families arise. For children the distance from their parents can imply more personal liberties and it frees them from daily, sometimes very exhausting care work. At the same time this may lead to internalised feelings of guilt for “not doing enough” (Brijnath 2009, 92). The lack of proximity might also result in not being fully informed about sensitive issues. Sometimes elderly people do not inform their children abroad about illnesses because they do not want them to worry. Accordingly, one lady in an old-age home was severely ill but would not notify her daughter via phone in order not to trouble her. Moreover relatives can often only take limited days off which does not correspond to the amount of time children would like to, feel obligated to or are supposed to spend with their parents. Even though most of my informants acknowledged that this was a consequence of modern times and that it was not their children’s fault, some had difficulties in accepting the changes. Deshna Kaushik, the lady living in Safdarjung Enclave, told me about a financially well-off couple in her neighbourhood whose two sons and one daughter all lived abroad. After her husband’s death only one of their sons and the other son’s wife came for the cremation which Deshna Kaushik found quite disturbing. In Hindu religion the deceased is a restless soul who has to be freed from his/her state of in-betweenness to reach the heavenly world. The eldest son takes on an important function in the death rituals which aim to enable the deceased to arrive at the communion of ancestors (Michaels 2006, 148ff.).⁹⁸

Ms. Kaushik: [I]n our Indian tradition, [...] there is a function on the 10th day after death when the priest asks the family to perform a ritual, after which it

⁹⁷ On the importance of information and communication technologies in transnational families see Baldassar (2016) and in the Indian context Ahlin (forthcoming).

⁹⁸ The last sacrifice (*antyeṣṭi*) denominates the “death ritual and funeral rites performed in the first thirteen days following death, and marking the last *saṃskāra* (transformative ritual) of a twice-born person according to Brahmanical legal texts (Dharmaśāstra). The ritual is designed gradually to remove death, and the impurity associated with it, from the family of the dead person, so allowing them to re-enter normal social life. It is also designed to create a body for the deceased (*preta*) in the next world, and unite him with his ancestors, thus preventing his spirit from wandering homelessly, and bothering the living” (Johnson 2014). The funeral rites are usually performed by priests or the eldest son (Johnson 2014).

is believed that the soul goes to another world. It's also believed that on the 10th day's ritual the soul comes back to meet its family. I'll give my own example. When my husband died, my family and close relatives came together to perform the rituals. I was sleeping, and at night I heard a sound as if he was calling me. I woke up and felt like he was near and was calling me. [...] Then our elders told us that the soul doesn't go simply. It comes to its house, meets its family and then goes. [...] Since then I felt the importance of the 10th day. On the 13th day, the connection of the soul with us goes away. After the ritual, the soul departs from the world. I forgot why I am telling you all this.

Ms. Pahuja: You were talking about the neighbours.

Ms. Kaushik: Yeah. Sorry. On the 13th day of his [the neighbour's] death, his children - I am telling you all this because life moves so fast [nowadays] - the children gave money to the servants and asked them to do the rituals with the priest. At that time, there was nobody from the family. They left. The kids went back abroad because they didn't have holiday. Thereafter the wife was alone. Then the lady died too this year. When she died, her daughter and the other son came. They represented the others. Some came on father's death, and the others came on mother's death. We couldn't digest that thing, but now our children are changing in that direction. May be it's like that in other countries?

Ms. Pahuja: No, it's not like that. I was serious this time when I got sick. And my elder son didn't come. [...] Children are also tied up. Even if they wanted come, they cannot come.

Ms. Kauhik: Earlier the children were nearby. Now, everyone is far away. These days there is lots of money, but there is no love in between. Actually our generation who have seen love all around are feeling this way. But the new generation is comfortable in their current life. It should go like this.

Ms. Pahuja: We have to change our old way of life according to our circumstances.
(15 November 2013)

It's obvious from both Deshna Kaushik's story and Ms. Pahuja's personal account that disappointment was especially bitter when children did not show support or did not care in times of crisis. A correct performance of the death rituals which helps the soul of the deceased to enter the next world was of great importance to the old lady, but it does not correspond to the time-frame children have nowadays. However, with children staying abroad the question arises who is responsible for the daily care of parents in India. *The Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act* of 2007 holds the children responsible for their parents, even if they live abroad. "The Act applies to Indian citizens within and outside India and should children be residing overseas, they may be served with legal summons by the Tribunal through the Central Government of India" (Brijnath 2012, 702). Irrespective of this legal obligation, adult children in my case studies put a lot of effort in keeping family bonds and I now discuss the role of distant care in transnational families.

Care Entanglements

Transnational caregiving ties kin “in intergenerational networks of reciprocity and obligation, love and trust, that are simultaneously fraught with tension, context and relations of unequal power” (Baldassar and Merla 2014a, 7). Responsibilities towards family members are certainly tied to cultural expectations and obligations but Finch and Mason rightly emphasise that responsibilities derive from constant *negotiation*. This approach takes account of the processes of *doing family* which is a manoeuvring between expectations and commitment (Finch and Mason 1993, 59). The biographies of people are a fundamental part in this negotiating process, as the histories of relationships are decisive for the care arrangements. “Assumptions about who will do what for whom, and in what way, are built upon previous negotiations and the reputations people have established through their conduct in those negotiations” (Finch and Mason 1993, 78). Even though care can be conceptualised as reciprocal, circling within families, it is certainly not given and received equally. Women are both transnationally and locally prime care givers and they commonly give more than they receive (Baldassar and Merla 2014a, 7). Baldassar and Merla argue that the concept of “circulation” takes account of “the fact that the mobilities of care are multidirectional, can take place simultaneously and diachronically and go beyond the migrant/nonmigrant chain of exchange” (2014b, 29). Yet, I argue that the term “circulation” implies a circular flow of care and does not correspond to the asymmetries of giving and receiving care. Framing transnational care as “care entanglements” helps to capture more precisely the various trajectories familial care can take. Irrespective of asymmetries, caregiving and care, arrangements are constitutive of transnational family life (Baldassar and Merla 2014a, 7) and a considerable amount of support and communication are exchanged between dispersed Indian family members (Kalavar, Zarit, and Ferraccio 2015). Baldassar, Baldock, and Wilding have identified five types of transnational caregiving. They differentiate between economic support and emotional/moral assistance, which can also be provided from abroad and “accommodation, practical support and personal care, which in most instances can only occur during visits” (Baldassar, Baldock, and Wilding 2007, 80).

New communication technologies play a pivotal role in “virtual forms of care exchange.” I follow Baldassar and Merla in their argument that “not all caregiving has to be embodied or proximate in order to qualify as care” (2014a, 12). This does not mean that embodied forms of care are equal to virtual forms. Nonetheless, it must be acknowledged that the displacement of family members does not prevent them from exchanging care. Using a case study I explore care entanglements in a transnational family looking into the efforts and hurdles children face to care for their parents.

Neeti Dogar, an 80-year-old lady I met in an old-age home (see chapter 4) used to live with her husband in South Delhi. As her husband was in the Foreign Service, they led a very mobile life spending three years abroad and then six to twelve months back in India. They had a son named Sajit and a daughter named Anita. The son settled in the US in 1986. Neeti and her husband used to live near their daughter's house in Jangpura. When the daughter's family moved to Ghaziabad⁹⁹, they moved with them and bought an apartment close by. In 2007 the daughter moved to Canada and for the next five years the couple constantly travelled back and forth between India, the US, and Canada. In 2011 Neeti's husband suffered a heart attack and around 2012 Neeti developed Parkinson's, so the couple stopped travelling. They looked after each other with the help of three domestic workers. They hired a cleaner, a cook, and one attendant doing care work like helping them to take their medicine or giving Neeti a bath. The caregiver was a live-in domestic worker. In June 2014, when Neeti's husband died, her children started to become concerned with her care arrangement. Her son Sajit told me:

Sajit: After dad passed away, she [my mother] stayed at home. Cause I [...] was here [in India] in June and then I went back [to the US] in July and I left her with my cousins in Roorkee. [...] You know we thought about it a lot, what was the best place for her to be. And we decided that rather than her staying home by herself – cause she was very uncomfortable, you know how things are in Delhi you can't trust the maids, [...] forget about stealing, they can kill you and take everything, so she was very uncomfortable there – so we decided that she will stay with my cousin. And you know, she was there, everything was good, but while she was there she fell. That's why she broke her hip. [...] I had just come back from India, this was maybe three and a half weeks after I came back [to the US]. So they called me and my sister came from Canada. She has two little ones [children]. So she left them there. [...] So she came, mom had surgery, [...] I think [Anita] was here for a month. Then at the end of that month I came. [...] We couldn't leave mom at home. And we couldn't take her to the US, and we couldn't take her to Canada because she was not able to travel because of the surgery.

(31 January 2015)

Finch and Mason (1993) make the important distinction between crisis support and routine support in care arrangements. Even though Neeti's children had not provided routine support in form of personal care over the last years as they both lived abroad, they immediately responded to the crisis when their father died. At first this crisis support encompassed also other relatives, namely Neeti's nephews in their ancestral home in Roorkee. But when Neeti broke her hip, the situation became worse and the relatives were no longer capable of fulfilling the care responsibility. So during this second crisis, it was up to her daughter Anita to leave her own family behind in order to give support to her mother. Then Sajit came to India again to search

⁹⁹ Ghaziabad is an industrial city in Uttar Pradesh which lies within the National Capital Region of Delhi. In 2012 it counted a population of over 3 million people, see: <http://ghaziabad.nic.in/indexprof.htm> (accessed 10 January 2016).

for a long-term solution. He found an institution in Bangalore which was rather a nursing home for dementia patients than an elder care facility. As Neeti could hardly move and was not able to help herself he took her there, but after a couple of days she was so unhappy that she asked Sajit to take her back. Meanwhile Sajit had found an old-age home in Delhi which he liked and so he accommodated his mother there. In the first week he stayed in a hotel close by and frequently visited Neeti to make sure that his mother was settling in.

Sajit: I was staying here [in the hotel] but I was spending a lot of time [with her], I wanted to make sure she was ok. [...] My work starts usually around 10.30 at night and goes on till about 2 o'clock in the morning. And then I start again at 6 in the morning till about 10, cause I'm working with the US-hours. (31 January 2015)

While I was living in this old-age home, I witnessed that Sajit regularly visited his mother during the time he was in Delhi. He also bought medicines, medical and electronic devices and he brought her sweets or fruits. When Sajit left for the US, Neeti was in constant contact with both her children. She called them up to five times a day. Sajit had organised a tablet for her so that she could also “see” her family via video call, and she was clearly moved when seeing her family on the screen. She told me that it felt as if they were present while calling. Sometimes I helped her to make the video call as she was not familiar with the technology and her care-worker also did not know how to operate the device. I witnessed how much her mood lightened when she saw her family. Neeti not only suffered from Parkinson’s but also from depression and panic attacks and there were definitely limits to the virtual care the children were able to provide. Once I was called into her room when she had an anxiety attack and nobody knew what to do. I was handed a phone and her daughter in Canada was on the line. She told me that they had gone through these attacks many times before and that it was of no use taking her to hospital. She told me how to calm her down and what to do to make her feel more at ease.

The case study shows that Neeti’s children¹⁰⁰ were engaging in all kinds of care. They supported her economically and morally, took care of her accommodation, and supported her with practical support when they were in India. They also tried to enhance their personal support. During my last field work period Sajit and Anita were preparing Neeti’s visa papers for Canada. Sajit told me that after assessing different options they had decided on trying to take her to Canada because of three reasons. 20 minutes from Anita’s place there was a day care facility run by Indian people who could take care of Neeti from 8a.m. until 6p.m. providing activities, Indian food and company. Being highly subsidised the institution would charge an affordable fee of 70\$ a week. Besides, Anita had apparently already found caretakers of Indian origin who spoke Hindi and would cook Indian food for a reasonable amount of money. Secondly,

¹⁰⁰ Of course Sajit and Anita’s spouses were also involved in the care arrangements for Neeti, but researching their involvement in the procedure would have exceeded the extent of my case study.

insurance would be a lot more reasonable in Canada than in the US and insurance coverage would actually be available in Canada. As Neeti had already turned 80 years old, insurance policies in the US would be very limited so that the costs for her caregiver, insurance and medicines would add up to 8,000-9,000 US-Dollars per month which would exceed Sajit's financial capacities. Thirdly, Anita had two children who would keep Neeti occupied. Sajit and his wife were a childless couple and both worked during the day, so that Neeti would have to stay all by herself during the day. Hence, the main factors for the decision-making were the availability of care services, financial strains and the possibility of keeping Neeti occupied during the day. Yet, as we will see in the next sub-chapter, transnational family care is embedded in a political economy of migration and depends decisively on state regulations.

Structural Settings

Neeti's children applied for a super-visa which is a special Canadian visa for grandparents visiting their children. It allows for multiple entries up to two years in a period of 10 years.¹⁰¹ Sajit and Anita were not sure whether this would be granted due to Neeti's state of health. When I asked Sajit about this issue, he replied: "We don't know, we are hoping but with her medical condition, it's fifty, fifty. It may happen – it may not happen" (31 January 2015). If the visa was not granted Neeti would stay in the old-age home and their children planned to then visit her regularly.

Sajit: Otherwise she will stay [in the old-age home] and I will come three, four times a year. That's all I can do. [...] She only wants to go there [to Canada] for two or three months. She wants to go and spend time with the little ones. And then come back here and you know it's very difficult for me because I don't want to leave her here but I don't see any other way. So I, I'll come back five, six, seven times a year if I have to, I'll come back every two months if I have to. I have no problems doing that. Even if she doesn't want me to do that. So it's you know it's like we are trying to see what's best [...]. (31 January 2015)

Fifteen years before Sajit had tried to convince his father to file immigration papers with the US authorities to get a green card. It would have taken the couple five years to become US citizens. Thereafter they could have decided if they wanted to stay in India or in the US. But both Mr. and Ms. Dogar rejected the idea because in those five years they would have had to stay in the US for six months annually. As they preferred to stay in India, they did not want to be forced to stay in the US for such a long time. Sajit started several attempts to convince his parents but gave in after some years. He regretted the decision as his mother was now not very likely to get a visa: "I wish I hadn't stopped. If I had insisted, maybe we wouldn't be facing the situation right now" (31 January 2015).

¹⁰¹ See: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/visit/supervisa-who.asp> (accessed 10 January 2016).

As to Levitt and Glick Schiller, nation states determine access and actions of individuals as they define (il)legitimate margins of manoeuvre.

[S]tates regulate economic interactions, political processes and performances, and also have discrete nation-state building projects. Individuals are, therefore, embedded in multiple legal and political institutions that determine access and action and organize and legitimate gender, race, and class status. (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004, 1013)

The case study of Neeti showed that besides gender, race, and class, age is an important determinant in the mobility of people.¹⁰² The case study also revealed different “factors that impact on the capacity and sense of obligation for transnational caregiving” (Baldassar, Baldock, and Wilding 2007, 31). Macro-structural factors like visa regulations and insurance policies limited the choices the family could make as well as it obstructed the realisation of the planned care arrangement in Canada. When I contacted Sajit in January 2016, they were still waiting for Neeti’s visa to be granted. This impacted their ability to care transnationally. However, as India was accessible for both Sajit and Anita, they were able to continue visiting their mother in Delhi. Meso-factors involved “community attitudes and support structures that affect both capacity and sense of obligation to care” (Baldassar, Baldock, and Wilding 2007, 31). In the case of the Dogar family, the fact that Sajit had lived a considerable time in the US certainly reduced a cultural reluctance to accommodate his mother in an old-age home. The availability of upper middle-class old-age homes in Delhi opened up a care arrangement which would not have been possible three decades ago. A further meso-factor refers to professional flexibility, the possibility to take time off at work. The fact that he was a freelancer doing business in India helped Sajit to care for his mother. Micro-factors are “related to family history, attitudes of other family members, gender, [and] family life cycle, as they influence family negotiations regarding obligation to provide intergenerational care” (Baldassar, Baldock, and Wilding 2007, 31). Sajit had moved to the US almost 30 years before but was still in regular contact with his mother who he apparently granted a lot of care. His sister had a more proximate relation over a longer period of time, having lived close to her parents until 2007. She was the one to eventually take over the “hand on” care, should Neeti’s visa come through. Micro-factors include the financial capability to afford flights as well as the health status of the person in transit. Sajit and his sister gave careful thought to how Neeti’s transport to Canada could be realised. The flight from Delhi to Toronto takes 17 hours with one stop-over and therefore logistical problems would arise, as Neeti was not able to walk properly. As wheelchairs are not

¹⁰² Neeti’s case is not exceptional. In another case study which will be elaborated in the next chapter the daughter living in the United Arab Emirates was not able to get a resident visa for her mother as she was over 60 years old. So the family had to pay a daily fine for exceeding the three-month tourist visa.

allowed on board, Neeti would have to walk with the help of a walking frame. But even if she managed to get to her seat, the necessity to go to the toilet would be a big challenge during transport.

Acknowledging transnational care entanglements does not mean that transnational caregiving is easy or without any conflict. Neeti would have liked to be with her children but visa regulations prevented the family reunion. She missed her children very much and the constant phoning could not replace their “hand on” care, especially when she suffered from panic attacks. Yet the case study showed that “it is the quality of the relationships, rather than the form or mode of caregiving, that is important” (Baldassar and Merla 2014a, 12).

Mobile Elderly

Many of my informants regularly visited their children abroad for a period of one to six months. Women would often help to take care of their grandchildren, a phenomenon denominated as “flying grandmother” (Goulbourne and Chamberlain 2001) or “mobile grandmothers” (Donner 2008). In the course of migration both within India and abroad “shared parenting” is not declining but has rather been revitalised, yet not without ambiguities (Donner 2008, 137). If grandparents are simultaneously involved in childcare activities at home and abroad, travel plans and family arrangements can get complicated.

Because working couples in the city commonly rely heavily on their parents for help with childcare, the travel plans of both sets of parents become critical to their own domestic arrangements and may in turn cause tensions between siblings and affines. (Fuller and Narasimhan 2007, 147)

Sometimes elderly people also do “child hopping”, which means that they fly from one child to the other and then back to India. When Neeti and her husband were still in good health they would constantly travel from India to the US, Canada and back. Other couples I met went to Germany, England, Australia, the US, Canada, Hong Kong, Abu Dhabi or pan-Indian cities for several months to spend time with their children and grandchildren. Living abroad is often linked to ambiguous feelings as elderly might feel lonely or exploited by their children but also productive in terms of contributing to the household’s prosperity (Lamb 2009).

Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2014) have analysed long-distance love relationships of what they have coined “world families.” However diverse such forms of relationships may be, they share the common feature of being embodiments of a globalised world.

[W]orld families in all their varieties share one feature in common: they are the focal point at which the different aspects of the globalized world literally become embodied. Global society simultaneously generates contradictory features in world families: unrest, confusion, surprise, pleasure, joy, breakdowns, and hatred. We inhabit a world in which our loved ones are often far away and those from whom

we are distant may well be those dearest to us. (U. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2014, 2)

According to Beck and Beck-Gernsheim the crucial point in world families is that they form new combinations as the family members disperse to different continents across the Global North and Global South. In world families “we find the meeting points of different languages, different pasts and different political and legal systems” (U. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2014, 2). Many older middle-class Indians were part of such world families, sometimes even long before India entered the global marketplace. Thus we have to look carefully at the historicity of world families to reveal continuities as well as breaks from the past.

A considerable number of my informants had frequently travelled throughout their lives as part of their professional life. One elderly man had been sent to Germany as a diplomat, namely as a cultural attaché by the Government of India in the late 1970s. He stayed with his family in Bonn for five years. His son did not move back with them but has stayed in Germany up to now. The elderly couple thus continued to spend longer periods of time in Germany. Other informants had worked in the central government or in the army and therefore had been very mobile during their professional life, being posted to different Indian cities every three years. This is certainly a special feature of Delhiites, as Delhi is the site of both national and state government. However, anthropologist Manja Bomhoff also reports about a high mobility of her elderly informants in Kerala. “Their own movements were (and continued to be) just as significant as their children or grandchildren’s” (Bomhoff 2011, 156). Neeti’s son Sajit told me about his parents’ mobile life. His father was in the Foreign Service and was posted to China, Holland, England, Italy, Mauritius, and Lebanon.

So I was born in China, then [my parents] came here [to India], they went to Holland, then they came here, England, then came here, so it was basically three years outside, one year or six months here. That's how it kind of went. [...] I spent maybe four years of my life in India. And then after we came back from Italy, it seemed just better for me to go to the US, so that's kind of how it worked out. (31 January 2015)

The constant shifting of families to different places may be subject to many uncertainties and opens up questions of belonging. Belonging can be conceptualised as “an emotionally charged, ever dynamic social location – that is: a position in social structure, experienced through identification, embeddedness, connectedness and attachments” (Pfaff-Czarnecka 2013, 13). As I argued above, being mobile and transnationally dispersed does not mean that families stop belonging together. Growing old in transnational families can rather be seen as belonging to multiple persons in multiple localities.

Being mobile was often described as positive by my informants. Mr. and Ms. Ahuja, a couple living in the neighbourhood of Safdarjung Enclave, shifted within India every three years as Mr.

Ahuja was employed in the Indian air force. They both were very enthusiastic about moving around India because this opened up chances for new encounters.

Mr. Ahuja: We have been moving all over India - north, east, south, west, we have covered.

Ms. Ahuja: He used to look forward. Now three years, from [here] we will go to a new place, how that place will be?

Mr. Ahuja: You meet new people.

Ms. Ahuja: We pack up, we enjoyed packing. Then, moreover you see, with all the service officers you won't find too much luggage with them. [...] Since we have to move, so we discard a lot of things. So that when we go to a new place we buy new things. So we look forward to that. Yes, now we'll go to a new place, I don't know where. So we keep discussing: Oh, I think we might go to Agra, then he'll say: Oh, we might go to Jaipur. So like that we keep guessing where we will go, so like that it's good for you.

Mr. Ahuja: And best thing is: you come to meet different people of different castes, religions, you learn from them, their traditions and their food habits, how they eat and you learn how to cook also.

Ms. Ahuja: Yeah we learn a lot of new things.

Mr. Ahuja: These are the best things when you move around. If you stick to one place, you can't do anything new. (13 December 2014)

In Ms. Ahuja's voice we hear the excitement which accompanied their relocations. A change of place meant meeting new people and getting to know new things. After their retirement Mr. And Ms. Ahuja settled in Delhi but they even intensified their travels. En route, they enjoyed taking their time, stopping whenever they were tired. Being mobile was important for them, also at old age.

However, the mobility of my informants did not lead to their identification with a cosmopolitan lifestyle. Even though they liked travelling or visiting their children abroad, they would not describe themselves as cosmopolitans. Levitt and Glick Schiller differentiate between two modalities in social fields: ways of being and ways of belonging. "Ways of being refer to the actual social relations and practices that individuals engage in rather than to the identities associated with their actions" while "ways of belonging refer to practices that signal or enact an identity which demonstrates a conscious connection to a particular group" (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004, 1010). My informants were engaged mostly in ways of being as they lived in transnational families and were related to their relatives but they did not particularly demonstrate a cosmopolitan lifestyle.

3.3. Reprise: Family Matters

Sociologist Patricia Uberoi wonders in her article on the Indian family:

Is it not possible for the sociologist of the family to engage in a more constructive way with people's own understanding of their family life, rather than simply dismissing this understanding as the empirically unfounded product of cultural nostalgia? (Uberoi 2005, 387)

There are many ways in which family still matters to Indian people. As I demonstrated in this chapter my middle-class informants' own understanding of their family life was marked by ambivalences. Both younger and older people highlighted that family cohesion had to be subject to mutual adjustments. Care responsibilities were anchored in sociocultural expectations and obligations but they had to be constantly negotiated. I argue that it is not helpful to perpetuate the discourse of the decline of the Indian joint family, especially because neither historical accounts nor recent numbers prove that Indian families are indeed disintegrating. It is rather the concepts of *doing family* and *intergenerational ambivalence* that are suitable to grasp the complexities of how middle-class families deal with change in times of sociocultural transformations, including the rising transnational dispersal of families. As a socioeconomic strategic unit the family is in flux. Thus it is of great scientific importance to investigate the ways in which family relationships are lived and reworked over space and time.

The intergenerational contract, which in India means paying back the debts of care to one's ageing parents, is renegotiated in many ways in middle-class families. As Donner's (2008) as well as my research showed, the parental investment in children in urban Indian middle-class families has intensified (to increase the sense of obligation children feel towards their ageing parents), has been prolonged (as older parents often keep supporting their children in domestic work or child care), and has been broadened (as it includes daughters as possible care takers). And yet, because the intergenerational contract operates within the family, it stays risky and has to be constantly renegotiated. It requires the manoeuvring between expectations and commitments. In her article on the demographic change in India anthropologist Patricia Jeffery (2014, 129) rightly acknowledges that multiple intergenerational contracts will co-exist in India, given the country's regional discrepancies in fertility decline as well as the vast economic inequalities.

In the near future the Indian state will presumably not take over a major responsibility for the care of its senior citizens, so that the family remains the locus of elder care. Insurance companies target the insecurity of the intergenerational contract and offer investment plans, so-

called “pension plans,”¹⁰³ to cushion the economic risks at old age. Many younger people I talked to were worried about the health-care expenses for their parents. They, themselves, are more inclined to take out private insurances and therefore shift economic responsibilities from the family to the market. The market has also begun to offer care support for those who can afford it. As care work of children and of elderly parents is usually carried out by daughters-in-law, their care responsibilities conflict with their labour force participation. Moreover, the emigration of children makes care arrangements highly complicated. Visa restrictions or the wish of elderly people to stay in India exclude the possibility to care for one’s parents abroad. The growing demand for alternative options has recently been met by private care initiatives. This includes private care at home as offered by companies providing care services to help elderly persons with their daily activities. In addition to that, retirement communities and care homes for the affluent have also mushroomed throughout India. In the following chapter I analyse such an institutionalised care facility in detail.

¹⁰³ On the website “policy bazaar,” prospects can compare retirement plans in India, see: <https://www.policybazaar.com/life-insurance/pension-plans/> (accessed 24 January 2017).

CHAPTER 4

OLD AGE – HOME?

ETHNOGRAPHIC INSIGHTS INTO A CARE INSTITUTION



Figure 4.1: Residents of an Old-Age Home on the Roof-Top Terrace (Author in the Centre).
Photo: Roberta Mandoki

Old-age homes¹⁰⁴ for the middle classes are quite a new phenomenon in India. While a few old-age homes had already been established in the early 18th century (Nair 1995), these were occupied only by either Anglo-Indians or the very poor (Lamb 2009, 57). In the last 20-25 years old age-homes for the (upper) middle classes have mushroomed throughout India. The NGO HelpAge India¹⁰⁵ listed 61 old-age homes in the National Capital Region of Delhi in 2013. More than half of these catered to the upper or middle classes. The growing number of private elder care institutions in urban India goes hand in hand with several simultaneous developments. With rising life expectancy and population growth the number of the elder persons in India is continuously increasing.¹⁰⁶ A high internal and external migration of children leads to more elderly living with a spouse or alone who may need institutionalised care. Furthermore, the growth in assets of both Indian middle-class older persons and their adult children provides a financial security that allows for the emergence of costly elder care institutions.

In Indian public discourses the emergence of old-age homes often symbolises the disintegration of the joint family and therefore is a visible sign of the country's social and moral decline (see chapter 1 and 3). While most of the narratives still stigmatise living in old-age homes, a growing number of positive accounts arise from the media, stakeholders and residents of old-age homes. These evaluations affirm that institutionalised elder care offers a valuable option for people without kin to depend on, creates more leeway for both younger and older generations, eases care takers' workload, and provides the opportunity for elderly people to find new companionship or to pursue a new lifestyle at old age (for a similar observation see Lamb 2009, 56).

The idea of institutionalised care is sometimes linked to the Hindu concept of four life stages (*āśramas*).¹⁰⁷ In this conception a person entering old age is supposed to withdraw from worldly life, first as a forest dweller (*vānaprastha*) and then as a wandering renouncer (*sannyāsī*). Sarah Lamb reports that in India care homes and their residents often refer to the forest-dweller model comparing old-age-home-living to the practice of *vānaprastha* (2009, 161ff.). During my research on recently established senior living facilities in Delhi I did not encounter many people who would relate to the *āśramas*. Only few old-age homes in Delhi were labelled as *vriddh āśrams* (spiritual shelter for the old). Among these the vast majority catered to the lower classes

¹⁰⁴ When referring to residences for the elderly, Indians frequently speak of “old-age homes.” I use the term old-age home without valuation.

¹⁰⁵ For details on HelpAge India see footnote 79.

¹⁰⁶ The life expectancy of Indians has risen from 41 years in 1960 to 68 years in 2014, see: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.LE00.IN?locations=IN> (accessed 25 July 2016). According to estimates India's population over the age of 60 will rise from 71 million in 2001 to 179 million in 2031 and further to 301 million in 2051 (S. I. Rajan, Sarma, and Mishra 2003, 24).

¹⁰⁷ For more detail on and a discussion of the *āśramas* see chapter 5.

and the destitute.¹⁰⁸ The management and residents of (upper) middle-class old-age homes rather emphasised the societal change in India which led to the requirement of institutionalised care. One of these care homes stated in its online mission: “We are a society in transition. We live longer. We have more money and less time. More possessions and smaller families.” Therefore the institution offered a “safe, secure and carefree haven for senior citizens.” This conforms to Lamb’s observation that elite old-age homes espouse “a distinctly secular image, promoting modern, middle-class activities” (Lamb 2009, 167f.). This does not mean that (upper) middle class residents do not pursue religious or spiritual activities. Spirituality mattered to many of my informants (see chapter 5). Yet, the narratives of upper middle-class old-age homes focus on the societal change requesting an alternative to home care arrangements for affluent families. In this context modernity is used as a means of legitimising and reinterpreting negatively connoted societal changes, namely the outsourcing of care duties from the family to the institution. Upmarket aged care facilities do neither promote the Hindu concept of *vānaprastha* (withdrawing from the world) nor conceptualise their institution as an *āśram* (spiritual shelter). They rather rely on the “narratives of a ‘successful’ process of modernisation by which Indians can embrace their cultural heritage and face the challenges of social or civil responsibilities” (Brosius 2010, 10). As elaborated in chapter 2, more recent residencies for senior citizens also promote Westernised notions of “active ageing” stressing the potential of a proactive life after retirement which is opposing the idea of renouncing worldly ties.

This chapter is designed around the case study of Nivasa, an upper middle-class old-age home in South Delhi. The case study explores place-making processes and “ways of operating” (de Certeau 1984) within the institution. I follow three complementary lines of enquiry. First, I examine processes of place-making within the institution focussing on the proprietor’s struggle to turn the institutional space into a *home*, that is, a meaningful place where people feel genuinely cared for. This was not an easy task as, in the opinion of most of the residents, ageing within the institution was not an adequate substitute for “the proper way” of ageing within the family. The proprietor’s efforts to create a space which fosters a family-like form of cohabitation and feelings of belonging were partly undermined by residents’ reservations about socialising, their resistance to be proactive, their varying expectations, and by economic aspects. While Bhamini Dutta, the proprietor of Nivasa, regarded her establishment as proof of her philanthropic service towards society and the well-being of the elderly, residents were sometimes questioning her intention speculating about her economic benefit. In the second part of the chapter I shift the focus from the proprietor’s perspective to the lived realities of the

¹⁰⁸ An exception to this pattern constitutes the free middle-class *vṛiddh āśram* by the Vishwa Jagriti Mission, see: <http://www.vishwajagritimission.org/vridhashram/> (accessed 15 January 2017).

residents pursuing the question if and how this institution can become a home for the elderly. My analysis is guided by Michael Jackson's notion of *lived experience*. Lived experience "vacillates between a sense of ourselves as subjects *and* as objects; in effect, making us feel sometimes that we are world-makers, sometimes that we are merely made by the world" (Jackson 1996, 21, emphasis in original). Before entering the institution, residents often led an independent life exercising power (e.g. over domestic workers) and making decisions on their own (for instance what to spend money on). The institutional framework frees especially women from housework but at the same time structures time and scope of the residents. I examine the lived realities of different residents to show that it depends on the "subject of the self" (Chaudhury and Rowles 2005, 13) how people adopt to their new environment. Thereby I show that feelings of being agentive or neglected can oscillate and do not only depend on the life history of each individual but also on their personal attitude. While a minority of residents actively shaped their lives, the majority struggled with how to come to terms with this major change in their life course. Crucial for lived experience is the interplay of structural constraints and agency which also shapes the interactions with staff and caretakers. Therefore, I lastly turn to the relationships of care providers (staff and caretakers) and care receivers (residents). Differences in class and caste status, the various options of exercising and resisting power, and the interaction of structural constraints and people's actions are scrutinised. I'm aware that the analysis of the interplay of structure and agency, which is a classic theme in anthropology, bears the risk of either overstating the effect of constraining structures or overestimating forms of resistance (Scheper-Hughes 1992, 533). In my study I strike a balance between the vulnerabilities individuals experience when ageing within an institution and the personal power they exercise. I explore "ways of operating," that is, the practices and "tactics" the elderly but also their caretakers exercise to "reappropriate the space organized by techniques of sociocultural production" (de Certeau 1984, xiv).

The old-age home is a space where cultural notions of ageing are at play, the agencies of different actors collide, and power, class and caste hierarchies are reproduced or subverted. Proprietor, staff, caretakers and residents are a heterogeneous group of people who negotiate notions of home, belonging, family, care and modernity. Through my analysis it becomes clear that there is a complex interplay of personal background, attitudes, expectations, and ways of operating which influences living and caring in an institutional setting.

4.1. Turning Space Into Place

This part of the chapter firstly focusses on the institutionalised space to understand the place-making strategies of its proprietor and the experience of this specific site. I look at class-specific strategies to beautify the surroundings in order to attract middle-class residents. I then turn to the spatial outlook of the institution. MacDougall's (2006) notion of "social aesthetics" guides my analysis and helps explore the sensorial experiences of place. The concept is an valuable tool to overcome the one-sided equation of the institution with a panoptic space (Foucault 1977). The sub-chapter secondly tracks the proprietor's aspirations to turn her institution into a *home* that is a personal meaningful place for her residents. Hereby I focus on the limits as well as contestations of these place-making strategies.

Institutional Space

The old-age home of Nivasa is located at the fringes of the well-off neighbourhoods of South Delhi. Even though the home is an upper middle-class establishment, the surrounding neighbourhood is not. On the contrary, it is a very crowded quarter with narrow lanes and plenty of street vendors. Residents as well as outsiders would describe it as a "filthy" or "dirty" area. This makes it difficult to attract residents. Bhamini Dutta, the proprietor, constantly had to encourage people on the phone to have a look at the site. Some residents, like Setu Kapoor, reported that even though she was attracted by Bhamini's friendly manner she had been repulsed by the area on her first visit.

Setu Kapoor: I called at Nivasa, it was the afternoon time. By chance, Bhamini Dutta picked up the phone. To me the way she has said 'Hello!', I really liked it. Due to that 'Hello', I felt so attracted that I should go there once. [...] So, I came one day with my family. Outside I didn't like the location much. Even though it is better now. At that time, it was like a village. It was like that. It was hot, we came out of the car and I called Bhamini [and asked] 'Where are you?' Then she said: 'Turn into the lane behind the temple.' My grandson was with me. He said: 'No, naani [grandmother] can't walk.' Because my balance gets disturbed while walking. The road was not even, so from there we went back. At this time, when we were talking to Bhamini-jī¹⁰⁹ [on the phone], somebody came and punctured my car. I had this bad experience, how to access [the facility]? Then Bhamini-jī called me: 'I am waiting for you, where are you?' I said 'I am on the way back to my home! So, I will not come.' She said: 'No, come inside and have a look that how nice I built it. You will like it. You love plants and all. You come and see.' After that I got ill, I couldn't walk. I was on the bed for 15 days. Then again my son-in-law said: 'Mama, have you decided something or I should bring you to a home.' Then I said, no, I will go again. When I got cured I came along with my friend. [Beforehand] my daughter came to see how I will like it inside and she approved it and gave me the [advice] that you will enjoy there, you go! Then I went there with a friend to see

¹⁰⁹ *jī* is a word of respect used after names and relationship terms in Hindi.

how much I like it, from an IQ [rational] point of view, I looked at it in every way.
That moment only I decided: Bhamini-jī, ok, I will come. (09 January 2014)

In Setu Kapoor's voice we hear that the way Bhamini managed to relate to her was crucial for her final decision to move into Nivasa. The description of her first encounter with Nivasa makes clear that the location did not meet her middle-class expectations of order and cleanliness. It also reveals anxieties connected with the move to an elder care facility. Setu was eager to present herself as the one who chose this home, while equally stressing the approval of her daughter. In order to overcome the objections regarding the location, Bhamini was trying to push the city government to initiate and implement "improvements." She wrote several letters to the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) as well as to the Lieutenant Governor to request the development of a green belt, to prompt the renewal of sidewalks, and to decongest the area. In one of her letters to the DDA Bhamini suggested the development of a park "with some benches and a pagoda." To charge the "Thela wallas" (handcart street vendors) a small fee would in her view regulate the informal sector and put an end to corruption. Educating measures should secure that the working class participated in these beautification measures. Bhamini wrote: "The fact that they [the Thela wallas] are paying for something will force them to keep the area clean, *or they will not be allowed there*" (my highlighting). Two days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi had launched his "Swatchh Bharat" campaign,¹¹⁰ which envisaged the construction of public restrooms, Bhamini sent a letter to the Lieutenant Governor requesting to build the toilets in a way that there was still enough space for a sidewalk. Sidewalks should be maintained by making them "free of encroachment" thereby creating "accessible, wheelchair friendly roads." Mobility for senior citizens is indeed restricted by non-accessible or non-existent sideways. Yet, Bhamini's endeavour to clear the roads claims senior citizens' "rights to the city" but at the same time denies this right to lower-class people who are not willing to take part in a middle-class project of urban order and cleanliness. These efforts are part of bourgeois concerns "around aesthetics, leisure, safety, and health" which "shape the disposition of urban spaces" in Delhi (Baviskar 2003, 90). Urban middle-class power has been reinforced by "machinations of the local state" which have "privileged property owners' demands for a 'world-class' urban future" (Ghertner 2011a, 504). Bhamini justified her struggles to redevelop the area through the notion of inclusion of older persons in urban life. At the same time her efforts targeted the exclusion of "unruly elements" not willing to partake in the striving to become a "world-class" city. Bhamini's endeavour is part of a middle-class activism, which pressures the state to "improve" the city at the expense of the urban poor (see also Ghertner 2013; Bhan 2009).

¹¹⁰ On October 2, 2014 Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (Clean India Mission) with the aim to clean streets and eradicate open defecation in the country by 2019.

Bhamini used to run a garment business together with her husband and thereafter with her son. The idea of building an old-age home occurred to her in 1993 when her mother was diagnosed with Parkinson's. In 2005 her son got married and this family function gave reason to initiate a middle-class senior living facility including a short-time stay option. Bhamini's brother and his wife were not able to jointly attend the week-long wedding ceremonies as they did not want to leave their parents alone with the caregivers. They split up and separately joined the festivities for three days. Bhamini felt the need for an upmarket institution where people could take their parents for a short period of time during functions or holidays without feeling guilty of neglecting them. Yet, she did not have the time to realise her plans until in 2007, when she started to convert her former garment factory into an old-age home.

Bhamini: In '93 my mother was detected with Parkinson's. And [my parents] used to be on their own in a very beautiful house in Varanasi and I could see that that had to change sometime. Because she [my mother] was not very mobile then, also. So I knew, and I kind of understood that I can't leave them alone. So I've been wanting to do something then. But then you know, when you're thirty-five and you're so busy working, I mean there are so many goals, you know, so much ambition, it's not your focus. Now I think I've reached... you know the Maslow's pyramid? I've reached the top and I can think of other things [laughs]. (09 January 2014)

Bhamini was convinced that she had achieved her career objectives, that she had reached the top of Maslow's hierarchy of needs,¹¹¹ and was thus able to contribute to society by promoting elder care in Delhi. In India, dedication to the needs of the elderly is often perceived as a very charitable act. Bhamini opted to work with her "kind of people" and therefore catered to the upper middle-class. Besides her strong commitment to run the facility Bhamini engaged in politics advising the government how to design new aged-care facilities. The Delhi Development Authority had advertised a public notice in *The Times of India* for a Transaction Advisor who was supposed to render advice for developing old-age homes through public private partnerships. Bhamini wrote a letter to the vice chairman of the DDA offering her services "purely as a consultant," that means working in an honorary capacity. She was invited to participate in the selection of the proposals. She also attended a working group which suggested measures "for the welfare and safety of senior citizens" to the government of Delhi. Bhamini networked and promoted her ideas of a human-based elder care by trying to influence future ageing policies in Delhi. I do not intend to belittle her efforts in striving for the welfare of middle-class senior citizens in Delhi. Yet, her commitment needs to be seen as part of a middle-

¹¹¹ The US American psychologist Abraham Maslow (1943) believed that humans are driven by a motivation to strive for a constant betterment. According to his hierarchy of needs, a basic level of needs (for instance physiological and safety needs) must be met before the individual focusses motivation upon higher level needs (for instance esteem and self-actualisation).

class activism that reproduces a stratification of civil society (Harriss 2006). She acted out of a philanthropic motive, which is valuable in any civilised society. Yet, as Bêteille stresses, “what really counts in the life of civil society are the associations created and nurtured by the impulse of mutual aid” (Bêteille 2001, 302). Using her social, cultural and financial capital (Bourdieu 1983) Bhamini also recreated power and class hierarchies and secured middle-class hegemony. Bhamini finally opened up Nivasa in December 2009 but it was only in mid-2010 that her first guest arrived. The second resident came six months later and it took quite some time until more rooms were occupied. She invested a considerable amount of money and stated that she still did not make profit in 2014. With a monthly rate of minimum 25,000 Rupees (360 €)¹¹² and a refundable deposit of 1 lakh Rupees (1,400 €) for a single occupancy the facility was affordable only for affluent seniors. Out of the 27 residents, who lived in Nivasa in 2014, nine had a personal caretaker who would cost them another 20,000 Rupees (250 €) per month. Unlike other institutions Bhamini did not predefine a minimum age and occasionally rented out rooms to foreign students whom she knew through personal contacts. She neither called it an old-age home nor did she intend to build an exclusive space for the elderly. And yet, because she mainly promoted her home to older people, there was no younger resident living in Nivasa during the time of my research. Bhamini offered me a room during my second field work period, so I came to live in Nivasa September through October 2014. My stay on-site was essential because I witnessed the institutional processes over the whole period of time and experienced occurring events first-hand. It was also crucial for establishing the trust of residents as people were very sensitive concerning private matters. Only after some time people started to disclose personal stories and worries. After I left Nivasa to live in another part of the city, I still regularly visited the home until March 2015 and gained a substantial insight into some of the residents’ lives. The premises consisted of two buildings with a narrow open corridor in between. One of the buildings was constructed around a courtyard and recalled older patterns of architecture in India (see figure 4.2).¹¹³ The cut-out roof allowed for fresh air and natural light in the rooms situated thereabouts. The building was created environmentally friendly with solar panels on the roof top and a water treatment plant. Interiors like doors, windows, and tables were created out of waste material. Ramps and elevators made the premises wheel-chair accessible. There were several common areas: a multi-purpose hall in the basement, a TV- and sitting room and a dining hall on the ground floor, a small garden at the back of the buildings, and a huge terrace with numerous plants on the rooftop (see figure 4.1). On their way to the dining hall residents had to

¹¹² The fees and conversion ratio apply to the year 2014.

¹¹³ Old mansions, so-called *havelīs*, are most prominently marked by their courtyard-structure (Bryden 2004, 27).

pass Bhamini's office which had a huge window so that everybody could see if she was on site. Residents were invited to sit in her office whenever they were bored or anxious or felt like they needed company. The location of the office also allowed Bhamini to supervise people and staff when passing by.



Figure 4.2: Courtyard Structure of Nivasa. Photo: Annika Mayer.

The institution had 36 rooms out of which 27 were occupied during my stay in 2014. In correlation with middle-class ideas of privacy the rooms were not shared. They were equipped with basic furniture and all had a bathroom attached. Bhamini had furnished them individually and stressed the importance to make the rooms as homelike as possible, giving them a “personal touch.” Most of the bathrooms had handles or bars next to the sanitary facilities and there was an elevator in both buildings, which enabled those who needed a wheelchair or had difficulties in walking to stay mobile within the premises. In winter most interactions took place on the terrace where people met in order to sit in the sun or to walk some rounds. Otherwise residents gathered in the sitting room watching TV. The small garden at the back of the building was hardly used at all. The activity hall where people had the possibility to play pool or other games as well as the other meeting places were only frequented when the management organised events. Residents hardly used these spaces on their own for leisure activities.

Anthropological filmmaker David MacDougall (2006, 98) reminds us that it is essential to pay attention to specific institutional environments, as the design of buildings and compounds, the use of colours and apparel, the organisation of time, as well as other elements, constitute the

“social aesthetics” of an environment. According to MacDougall (2006, 98) the “social aesthetic field” consists of objects but also of actions and therefore is to some extent a physical manifestation of habitus¹¹⁴ (MacDougall 2006, 98). Analysing this social aesthetic field means spotting the specificities of an environment. The important point is to which extent “these aesthetic patterns may influence events and decisions in a community” (MacDougall 2006, 98). MacDougall’s concept is helpful for my ethnographical example because it discloses that the social aesthetics of Nivasa (the courtyard structure, the natural lighting, the design of individual and common rooms), which were intended to foster feelings of belonging, did not necessarily foster practices of communality or at-homeness nor did they always lead to disciplined behaviour. The concept of “social aesthetics” helps therefore to overcome the one-sided focus on the institution as a panoptic space of social control and repression (Foucault 1977).¹¹⁵

The following examples show how residents were bound to a certain time frame and compartment in the institution. And yet, there were multiple ways to circumnavigate these regulations. All residents had chosen the full board option which was obligatorily vegetarian. Between 7 and 7:30 a.m. the cook served breakfast tea in the private rooms. Breakfast was available between 8:30 and 9:30 a.m., lunch between 12:30 and 1:30 p.m. and dinner from 7:30 to 9 p.m. These steady meal times enabled the kitchen staff to manage their work load and structured the daily routine of residents. However, residents were not exposed to this fixed schedule and found ways to organise their day individually. Deepana Mitra, for example, liked to sleep late which was quite uncommon among my informants. She managed to have breakfast at 10 a.m. because her caretaker either warmed up items in the microwave or provided her with toast. Other residents did not take dinner but rather prepared themselves some snacks or yogurt, which they kept in their fridge. People often had their own small kitchenette (normally a kettle and a fridge) in their room (see figure 4.3).

Bhamini encouraged people to have meals downstairs in the common dining area but a considerable number of residents ate in their rooms, particularly in the evening. Bhamini had lunch in the common dining room whenever she was in the house¹¹⁶ which encouraged some of the ladies to join in as they enjoyed her company. Deepana, for example, only had lunch at the dining room when Bhamini was present and when she called her to come down. She told me

114 According to Bourdieu habitus is the embodiment of social practices, it is an “*open system of dispositions* that is constantly subjected to experiences” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 133, emphasis in the original). Habitus is an internalised and invisible “socialized subjectivity” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 126).

115 In his study on the panopticum, Michel Foucault (1977) elaborates how power and discipline are entangled. He examines how forms of power are inscribed in the body as the body is disciplined within institutions.

116 Bhamini did not live on the premises but had a house in an affluent South Delhi neighbourhood, a 15-30 minutes’ drive away.

that otherwise there was not much interaction between the residents, so it was no use joining the others.

Deepana: I don't go down always. I only go when Bhamini is there. Otherwise people don't talk, they just sit. Quietly they eat and they leave, so what's the point?
(24 October 2014)

Thus residents developed their own routine which was only partly predefined by the institution. In the following I consider this aspect in another way. I follow Bhamini's effort in making the institution a homely place and the various responses to her specifications. I show how the social aesthetics in the spaces of Nivasa were meant to serve the creation of a sense of belonging, which in daily practices did not evolve.



Figure 4.3: One of Nivasa's Residents in her Personal Room. Photo: Annika Mayer

Transforming the Institution Into a Home

Throughout the life course people make efforts to transform spaces into places. This process includes the transformation of given geographic spaces into *personal meaningful* places. Through this transaction people establish a sense of familiarity and gain control over spaces which provides security and comfort (Rowles and Bernard 2013b, 8f.). Spaces turn into “home” when people establish a relationship with a concrete physical location and claim it “as a part of individual or group identity” (Rowles and Bernard 2013b, 11). Home can refer both to a domestic space and to a (distant) place of belonging. Either way home “is a *process* and, as such,

involves continual practices of home-making to be felt and experienced” (Walsh 2011, 516). In environmental gerontology the concept of *home* predominantly denotes the domestic space of older persons. Rapoport (1995) challenges the suitability of the term as it is not coherently used amongst scholars. He points to the problematic interpretation of home as referring to both a product (an object) and a process (the subject-object relationship) (Rapoport 1995, 29). Nevertheless, I agree with Chaudhury and Rowles who still consider home as a useful term because it is able to capture an emotional “resonance” with place.

[T]he *experiential* foundation of the concept ‘home’ makes it a highly potent concept from both a substantive and methodological perspective. The semantic core of the term immediately captures the popular imagination (it transcends such mundane terms as ‘setting,’ ‘house,’ ‘residence,’ ‘apartment,’ and ‘accommodation’). People relate to ‘home’ because of its close relevance to their own life experiences and everyday usage on a level far transcending merely a physical structure. Precisely because of this emotional resonance, ‘home’ captures the diversity, complexity, and richness of an essential aspect of being in the world. Notwithstanding the ambiguity of its plural meanings, the notion of home provides a rich potential for experiential understanding of human behavior and affect in environmental context. (Chaudhury and Rowles 2005, 10f., emphasis in the original)

New approaches elaborate on the connection between emotions and place (see Manzo and Devine-Wright 2014) and identify neglected aspects of home. Scholars stress that there are diverse places that may provoke feelings of belonging or evoke a sense of home. Furthermore, home may generate various emotional responses which can be ambivalent or negative (Chaudhury and Rowles 2005, 9). Yet, in general, home “provides a sense of identity, a locus of security, and a point of centering and orientation in relation to a chaotic world beyond the threshold” (Chaudhury and Rowles 2005, 3).

By constructing a light-flooded building, furnishing rooms in a cosy manner, inviting residents to sit in her office, eating and chatting with residents during lunch, and encouraging family members to stay in Nivasa Bhamini’s attempted to make the institution into a “real home,” namely into a locus of belonging, a place where residents felt genuinely cared for. Bhamini hoped that her concept of making it homey might change the resentments of the elderly against living in a care institution.

Bhamini: Nobody likes to come here. Because in our country, living in a senior citizens’ home is an insult. It means that your children are not able to look after you and they have thrown you into an old-age home. I have tried to make this home as beautiful and as loving as possible, but the mind-set of Indians is: we don’t put our elderly in old-age homes. My mother used to tell me, in her coherent moments between her Parkinson’s and her Dementia she used to say ‘nobody does want to come’, and we’ll be spending a lot of money. And of course both things are true. Very few people came [in the beginning]. And I did - I am spending a lot of money. But then, I hope this will change the concept, because if you make a home

like a home, like a real home, then people will change [their attitude] towards it.
(09 January 2014)

Her efforts to create a homelike atmosphere included furnishing the space in a cosy manner as well as creating common spaces that invite for joined interactions (a terrace, a living room, a recreational room, and a lounge, see figure 4.4). Moreover she encouraged residents to take on certain responsibilities (like bookkeeping or the organisation of recreational activities) or to come up with own ideas how to organise the home. But even though Bhamini tried to encourage social interaction between residents, for many she stayed the main attachment figure in the home. Some considered her as good friend while others saw her as a mentor. Bhamini's prominent role raised expectations. She was the one who was responsible for looking after people during a crisis, supervising staff, fostering interactions, and managing the daily hiccups in the institution. This dependency made her wonder what might happen if she was no longer able to play her part.



Figure 4.4: Living Room of Nivasa. Photo: Annika Mayer

At the same time, Bhamini's efforts to turn the institution into a home conflicted with the necessity to charge a considerable amount of money for this service. When residents took action against her pricing policy, she felt as if her efforts backfired on her and she was personally offended. Bhamini adjusted her tariff plan every year. Normally she increased the monthly fees by around 1,000 Rupees (14 €) which was less than the average inflation rate in India. Nevertheless, the increase raised concerns with the residents who were worried that they could

not afford the fees in the long run. The rent for the rooms was supposed to be uniform, but financially weaker residents sometimes had special arrangements with Bhamini. This led to distrust and the feeling of being exploited. Older people tended to economise even though they did not have to¹¹⁷ and there were a lot of rumours about money matters. Some people speculated that Bhamini would profit from the revenues. In January 2014 the increase of prices raised quarrels. Some residents had joined forces and aimed at reducing running costs by supervising expenses. Bhamini was hurt assuming that the residents did not value her work but thought that she personally would gain out of this endeavour. Quite upset she presented her view on the matter:

Bhamini: I have empowered them. And I have taught them to think. And I have taught them, that if you like, you can run the home yourself. So, you know, they get involved and participate and they feel empowered. So they said, ok, how can we run [the home] ourselves? I said, each of you take up one of the things that you want to do. I will be the manager, I'll still be here, but you run it. So they were discussing a lot. I said I'm not trying to make money and first of all you must remember that within a trust, you cannot take money out. It has to remain in the trust. So whatever will be done, will be done for benefit of Nivasa, not my personal benefit. At the same time I want the return of my loan which I'm taking. And I want the interest to come out of this because I've taken the loan to create this. So, without telling me, [...] Jyothi told Mr. Malhotra that, 'You write down everything that Sahana [administrational staff] is buying from the market.' Supposing you are purchasing things, Annika, and I start saying: 'Ok, did you buy two kilos or one kilo? Show me. What is the rate you bought at? Show me.' - How will you feel? You'll feel terrible. Sahana also feels that. You know, the first two, three months I taught her how to make the accounts [...]. The first few months I supervised and after that I have not gone into this kind of micro-management, because it is too much micro-management. I can't do it, I don't even want to do it. I mean if anyone is taking something, how much can you take on eatables? So I let that pass. Now they [the residents] are doing all this checking business. And without asking me, I'm not liking it. (03 February 2015)

In Bhamini's account we not only hear her disappointment that residents accused her of personal enrichment but also her frustration over mistrust and daily struggles for power between residents and staff, which I address later in this chapter. In the course of the conflict residents started to attach slips of paper at every corridor which reminded their housemates to switch off the light when not needed and to save on water (see figure 4.5). The incident was extraordinary because it was the only time I witnessed how the residents were forming a group. Claiming their interests and taking action to shape the place can be interpreted as home-making efforts. However, the alliance was only temporary as one of the residents' children defended Bhamini's

¹¹⁷ For example, Priya Kapoor, a very affluent lady, once asked her caretaker to bring tea from the kitchen. She assigned her to tell the staff that the tea was for me and her, as we were both residents and therefore got the tea for free. If the staff had assumed that the tea was for a visitor of hers, she would have been charged an extra fee of 15 Rupees (0,20 €) which she wanted to avoid.

standpoint, whereupon the residents wrote a letter of apology and the group dissolved. The event illustrates that Bhamini's home-making strategies stood in contrast to her aspiration to make the institution profitable.

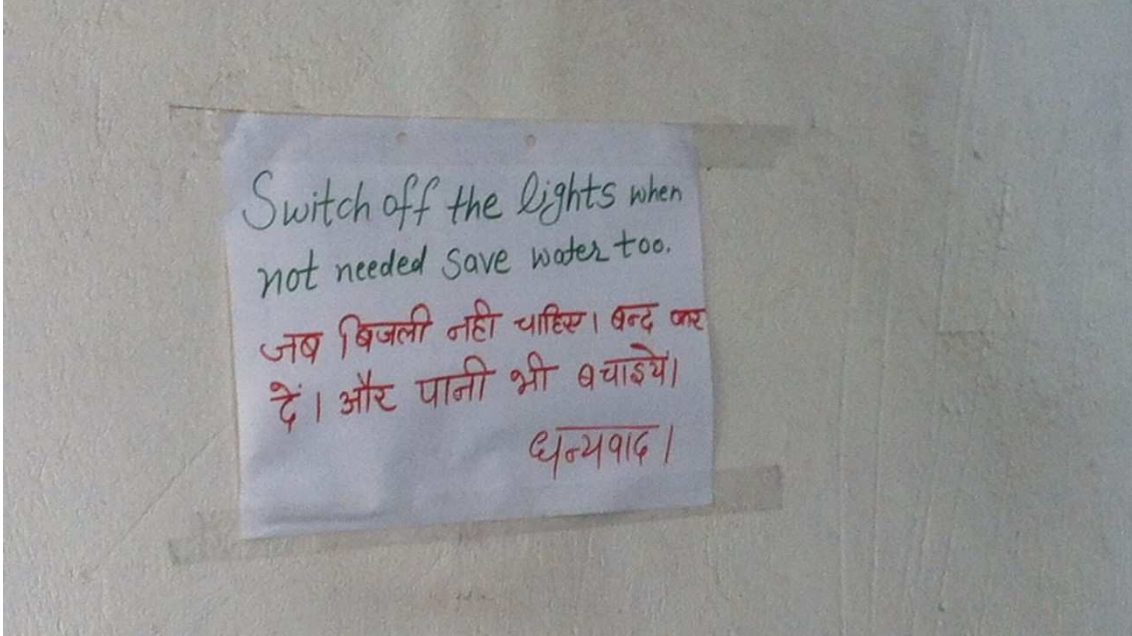


Figure 4.5: Residents Calling on Cohabitors to Save Energy and Water. Photo: Annika Mayer

Another incident makes clear that Bhamini's efforts to create a home-like atmosphere did not always work out the way she intended. To foster intergenerational contact with children Bhamini regularly invited schools to organise an excursion to Nivasa.¹¹⁸ Bhamini was also open to people who wanted to visit the home and to engage with the residents as well as to reporters of newspapers and TV-channels that covered and thereby promoted the home. The problems that arose in this context were the severe limitations of such encounters. In January 2015 apprentices of Globe Bonitas, a geriatric healthcare service provider, were getting trained at Nivasa for ten days. Priya, one of the care home occupants, was quite amused about their presence because she did not think there was anything one could learn in elder care: "When I sit, the girl also sits, when I take a bath, she helps a little, that's it" she told me (field notes, 15 January 2015). Even though these kinds of interactions were a welcome change from the monotonous daily routine, they could also lead to the feeling of being exposed to or at the mercy of strangers. In a conversation between Pavi Chahal, my field assistant Lokesh, and me, Pavi complained about people who came to Nivasa, asked offensive questions and intruded on

¹¹⁸ Scholars as well as policy makers in India often emphasise the importance of intergenerational interactions and often suggest combining old-age homes with nurseries.

their privacy. These encounters were of short duration and did not foster sincere relationships between younger and older persons.

Pavi: There were a group of young kids who showed us a dance program a while ago. They showed us very a nice dance. [...] Many such events happen here. Bhamini also likes to have such events here regularly by inviting different people. People come here regularly to entertain us. But I do not invite anyone to my room. I don't like to be an object on display (*exhibition ki cīz*) that people come to see. [...] I feel bad when someone asks us nonsense questions. Once there was a person who came here and [...] asked, 'Why did you leave your house?,' 'Who pays for your stay?' and many other nonsense questions. I said, 'Listen, this is none of your business. You've come, that's nice.' I also asked [the management] not to send such people to my room. It's like one will come today and next will come tomorrow. I don't like such things. If someone comes outside [to the common rooms] and talks to all of us, then that's okay. But if people come daily to our rooms, then we won't have our privacy. We pay to stay here. If we stayed at our homes then would people come to ask us such questions? [...] I don't like it. [...]

Lokesh: Do journalists come here often for news?

Pavi: Many come here. I strictly do not let them take my photo. I do not want my photo to be published in any newspaper. No one knows that I am here except my close friends. (11 November 2014)

Pavi's comment raises questions about privacy within the institution. She distinguished between private space (the individual rooms) and common space (the "outside" of the rooms). As for her, the residents paid for their rooms and were therefore entitled to have privacy. Privacy meant that one was able to choose when and with whom to interact. Privacy also meant not to be presented – or in Pavi's words, not to be "exhibited" – to a broader public. Even though the media reports on Nivasa portrayed the home in a positive way, some residents felt that these stories exposed them and their family to judgement. Privacy was an essential aspect of *home*. Pavi said that people would not intrude on her privacy if she still lived at home and she felt this also should be true for Nivasa.

The aspects of commodification and privacy are two obstacles in the transformation of institutionalised space into home. As I elaborate in the next section, only few people were proactive and tried to foster a sense of *belonging* to Nivasa. According to Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka "belonging as an emotionally charged social location combines (1) perceptions and performance of *commonality*; (2) a sense of *mutuality* and more or less formalized modalities of collective *allegiance*, and (3) material and immaterial *attachments* that often result in a sense of *entitlement*" (Pfaff-Czarnecka 2011, 201, emphasis in original). In the first part of this chapter I outlined that although the management of the institution believed to have put considerable efforts in making the institution into a home, most residents did not evolve a sense of belonging.

Besides the short rebellion against Bhamini's raise in prices, I witnessed little sense of entitlement or commonality among the residents, which is the "*perception of sharing*" embodied individually and negotiated collectively. Commonality is often "perceived through a social boundary-horizon that helps discern between the insiders and the outsiders" (Pfaff-Czarnecka 2011, 202). The resistance against visiting journalists or strangers can, to a certain extent, be interpreted as demarcation against outsiders, but no feeling of togetherness evolved thereof. My informants rather complained that no other residents were visiting them in their room although they were not proactive themselves. Common activities and meetings were organised by the management but residents often regarded these as time-pass and less as an opportunity for building up a collective allegiance. This was mainly because people could not accept their cohabitants as an alternative to intimate family relationships. The next section looks into the personal strategies and struggles of residents to become at home in an elder care institution.

4.2. Becoming at Home?

In this second part of the chapter I am concerned with three subjects of inquiry. First, I look at different residents' ways of coping with the shift into an elder care institution and their home-making strategies. Secondly, I draw upon the case study of one woman in order to investigate the interplay of reasons that led to the decision to move into Nivasa. And thirdly I investigate the role food and commensality play in the creation of at-homeness. All sub-chapters are guided by the scrutiny of *lived experience*. Anthropologist Michal Jackson (1996) argues that *being-in-the-world* involves a struggle to reconcile shared and singular experiences, of being agentive or acted upon. To avoid conceptualising antinomies of "subjectivity" and "objectivity," he points out the intersubjective dialectics of relationships. He states that human experience oscillates between "a sense of ourselves as subjects *and* as objects," at times generating feelings of "being world-makers," at other times feelings of being "merely made by the world" (Jackson 1996, 21, emphasis in the original).

Moving into a care facility involves changes of power hierarchies (e.g. over domestic workers) and of the ability to make choices (e.g. over money matters). Daily tasks taken over by the institution are often perceived as relief but also evoke feelings of lack and loss. The following case studies illustrate that feelings of being agentive or acted upon oscillate and depend on previous experiences as well as on the personal attitude of individuals. In a way all people developed a coping mechanism even when no sense of at-homeness evolved thereof. At-homeness is "the usually unnoticed, taken-for-granted situation of being comfortable in and familiar with the everyday world" (Seamon 1979, 70).

The Struggle to Become at Home

The process of turning an environment into a personal meaningful place happens through “socialization of the spaces over time. The physical environment is given meaning through personal engagement” (Chaudhury and Rowles 2005, 13). According to Chaudhury and Rowles (2005) a successful transformation of space into home depends on the “evolving nature of the self.” They distinguish between the “object of self, as signified by ‘Me’” and the “subject of self, as signified by ‘I.’” While the object of self “primarily relates to historical experiences associated with home,” the subject of self “relates to creative endeavors of the self” (Chaudhury and Rowles 2005, 13). Moving into a care facility first of all means a loss of home for the elderly. Yet, how an elder person perceives and experiences this transition depends on the “creative power of the ‘I’ that may consider a change in residential environments as catastrophic, manageable, and liberating or somewhere in between” (Chaudhury and Rowles 2005, 14).

When analysing the lived experience in old-age homes it is essential to acknowledge the heterogeneity of the elderly. In the process of ageing, populations become increasingly diverse because over time people “develop a more integrated and particular sense of self,” an understanding of who they want to be. Furthermore, during their life time, individuals are confronted with a greater variety of “cultural pathways” than previous generations. Additionally they are exposed to increasing inequalities that “have been accrued across a lifetime and now accentuate difference in later life” (Biggs and Daatland 2006, 1). Although residents in Nivasa shared a similar economical background and certain aspects in their biographies, their attitudes and characters differed widely.¹¹⁹ With a few exceptions residents did not evaluate the move to the institution as a positive change even if it was their own decision to take this step. In general, accidents, the deterioration of health, the death of their spouse, or family conflicts were reasons for their relocation to the care facility.

In the following I give insights to what extent people did or did not become at home in Nivasa. A successful transformation of space into home depends on the evaluation of the change in circumstances. This evaluation may be ambivalent and may alter during the course of stay. Therefore, it is important to examine the unfolding of interpersonal relationships over an extended period of time. A considerable number of inhabitants kept moaning and were sometimes deeply hurt about their children who would not take them into their homes. Yet, the case studies illustrate that the personal handling of this disappointment took various forms. In some cases residents managed to adapt to the new environment over the course of time – at least

¹¹⁹ Two thirds of the residents were female (18 out of 27). The high amount of women in Nivasa correlates with the higher life-expectancy of women in comparison to men, which is prevalent in India today (Jeffery 2014).

partly. This shows that the experience of home is not static but a process. Home-making needs to be constantly practiced because, as geographer Malcom Cutchin reminds us, all people “exist somewhere on a continuum of being at-home and being homeless (because of moves or potential moves), and one’s state shifts over the life course.” (Cutchin 2013, 110). By means of different examples I now explore how the place and the person are entangled and “co-constitute each other in an ongoing way through constant change” (Cutchin 2013, 111).

Let me start with Kiran Gupta, an 83-year-old woman who struggled with her life in Nivasa. She had two sons, who both lived in Delhi and she longed to stay with one of their families. Before Kiran shifted to Nivasa she had lived independently in her house in Lucknow for 15 years with the help of domestic workers. During her life course she had been mobile and even more autonomous than she had wanted. Kiran held a Master in Economics and had been in government service her whole work life, being posted to different cities. Her husband had also worked for the government but they had not always been posted to the same location so that Kiran lived on her own for short periods of time. I assumed that she was a woman who valued her independence, but she told me that it was actually her husband who had urged her to take up work and earn money that could be spent on the family. Kiran was not very fond of her husband but accepted the male patriarchist dominance, which in her opinion had to be “tolerated” by women. Kiran had enjoyed working for the first ten years but was not keen to continue her work as she was not able to look after her children the way she intended to.

Kiran: In the beginning, for 10 years I enjoyed [working], but after that I found it difficult. My children were not being well looked after and I didn't like it, but I couldn't do anything after that. Once you are in service, you are in service. [...] I sent [my sons] away to schools, in hostels, [the elder] one was sent to Nainital for studying, and the younger one was sent to so many colleges, one after the other. Because I wanted them to be well looked after and they should be able to earn some money after, so I looked after them well. (06 October 2014)

For Kiran, it was very important to stress that she had not neglected her children even though she could not care for them as much as she would have wanted. In Kiran’s view the investment in her children’s education, who attended elite boarding schools, proved her care and she expected its reciprocity at old age. When she had a stroke at the age of 82 and became “forgetful,” her sons were convinced that she was no longer able to support herself in Lucknow and needed full time care. They brought her to Nivasa in Delhi so that they could visit her and look after her regularly. But Kiran was very disappointed and sometimes also heart-broken that her children had “dumped” her into an old-age home. She explained that the neglect by her children had two reasons. First, due to their education in boarding schools, her sons had become independent and did not feel their responsibility to reciprocate care. And second, as she had never lived with her daughters-in-law they did not want her to interfere with their households.

- Kiran: And now [my sons] have become very independent, so they think they are very... that I should admire them because of... for the fact that they are so happy, so happy, and they are looking after their children, their wife and their family well. But I do get very unhappy about it. I'm not very happy.
- AM: So you would prefer staying with them?
- Kiran: Yes. I'd prefer to stay with them.
- AM: But they don't want to?
- Kiran: The wife doesn't want me because I have not stayed with them. Their wives, they are not very fond of me, because they have never worked with me. (06 October 2014)

Daughters-in-law were frequently blamed for the misbehaviour of sons by my informants. The anxiety that educating independent children would lead to a neglect of their parents at old age, which in Kiran's eyes proved true, is also a prevalent fear among middle-class mothers today, who take countermeasures by seeking a close binding to their children (Donner 2008). Especially on public holidays, Kiran Gupta became very emotional about her family. On Dussehra, a pan-Indian festival welcoming the autumn season (Jones 2011b, 616), she told the other ladies at breakfast that she would not do anything that day as she had "nowhere to go to." On Diwali, the most important Hindu festival of the year (Jones 2011a, 252), both her sons called her to come over to celebrate with them but she refused. Bhamini assumed that Kiran was hurt so deeply that she could not create a new way of interaction with her family. Her sons kept visiting her on a regularly basis, they brought her food and medicine, and supported her by taking on bureaucratic tasks, but Kiran did not become at home in Nivasa because for her the old-age home incarnated the proof of neglect by her children. Yet, in a way she accustomed herself to living in the institution. While she first complained that she could not find "good company" in the home, she later made friends with Neeti Dogar and Priya Kapoor. They regularly met on the rooftop mostly complaining about family, food, and care takers but also reminiscing about the past and she enjoyed the social interaction. She was worried that her best friend Neeti would die before her, leaving her "all alone" which eventually happened. Sadly enough, Kiran died shortly afterwards, having spent the last two and a half years of her life in Nivasa.

Rahul Banerjee also had great difficulty in socialising. He came to Nivasa because he did not want to burden his wife with too much care work. He had suffered a stroke and subsequently was neither able to speak nor to walk. After recovering, Rahul decided that it "would be too much" for his wife to take care of two sick people at the same time because his wife also nursed her mother who had acute Alzheimer's. When I first met Rahul he had lived in the home for three months having a hard time adjusting to it.

Rahul Banerjee: In a way it is difficult because you feel – it is not correct, but you feel very abandoned. That is not correct but that is what you feel so it takes time to get over that.

AM: But why is it not correct?

Rahul Banerjee: See my wife is in touch with me on a regular basis, my friends are in touch with me, so I'm not abandoned as such. (10 November 2014)

In contrast to Kiran, Rahul acknowledged the continuing care of his family and friends and emphasised that it was his own decision to move to the old-age home. However, his family situation seemed to be rather complicated because when his mother-in-law died, he did not immediately move back to his wife's place. I asked him about the reasons but he replied evasively, saying that there was "a bit of a process to it." He hoped that he would go back in the near future. His response indexes a desire to represent himself as being agentive and having a well-functioning family. Both aspects make it hard for people to admit the disappointment and pain a dysfunctional family causes. To occupy himself he went to the Safdarjung Development Market every Sunday to buy books and magazines he could read. As he used to live near this place he still knew the shopkeepers and he liked the sociality of this familiar place. In Nivasa, he often sat in his room smoking and did not find it easy to relate and talk to other residents who were very uncommunicative in his view.¹²⁰

In contrast to Kiran and Rahul, Jyothi Chandra, aged 72, was still very active and made efforts to turn Nivasa into her home. Jyothi got divorced in her thirties and her two daughters were raised by her husband who re-married and, in contrast to her, was able to provide "a home" to their children. She equated home with being married, offering the children a secure family space, which she – as a single mother – could not have provided in her view. Being divorced and living single were highly disapproved during that period and she was exposed to social stigma. Yet, she told me that this did not bother her too much because she worked as an English teacher and therefore was independent. 13 years after her divorce she remarried but her second marriage did also not last. She used to feel sad when she saw other people who could rely on their family whereas she had "nowhere to go to" but was glad that this feeling had gone. She now felt at ease being a "loner," as she called herself. She was one of the very few people who actively made Nivasa into her home, fostering relationships with other residents. She would play Scrabble with one of her housemates once a week, go and visit other residents for a chat in their room, and organise birthday parties cooking and baking for all the residents. Jyothi was also busy furnishing and re-furnishing her room, making it homey. She animated people to talk during meal times and did not like the destructive attitude of others who were only complaining about

¹²⁰ In general, men mingled much less than women. Many activities were also gendered even though there were no institutional provisions in that regard. Most men went to the dining hall to take their meals but there was less conversations between them than between women who usually ate later.

“being dumped” in the old-age home by their children. She felt that as long as children rang up their parents telling them what they were doing, older people should be grateful. Furthermore she encouraged others to “accept” this life and regard the other housemates as “family.” This became evident in her interaction with R.G. Seth, a man in his sixties, who came to Nivasa because of a family dispute and who was in a precarious emotional state. One day he complained to Jyothi that he had tried to visit other residents in their room but that he did not feel welcome by them. Moreover, he was disappointed that nobody replied when he greeted the staff with “*namaste bēṭā*” (hello son) at table. He explained that he liked to think of two older residents as *mā* and *bāp* (mother, father). Addressing staff and other residents with kinship terms, and showing respect to older residents by touching their feet was his attempt to establish meaningful relationships, but Jyothi did not approve this. She pointed out that rather than seeing others as mother or father figures one should regard them as individuals and peers. Jyothi advised R.G. Seth to stop weeping (*dard khatm karnā*) and to start living in the present instead of the past. “This is your family now” she exclaimed and went on, “we all have suffered and nobody wants to talk about the pain, so if you only talk about suffering nobody will come into your room.” Furthermore, she told him that his family, who partly ceased contact after the family dispute, would only reach out to him again if he was willing to overcome his pain and change his life. R.G. Seth started crying and when he had left the dining hall Jyothi said to me: “He doesn’t hear you. I try to speak my opinion and if someone is listening, fine, if not, just forget about it.” When I conjectured that he probably did not want to hear what she was telling him, she answered: “That’s the problem; we all don’t want to change” (field notes, 08 October 2014). In her view, the openness to accept change as well as the willingness to be agentive and to engage with one’s environment was crucial for becoming at home in Nivasa. Hence, she recurrently encouraged cohabiters to create a family-like community.

Jyoti was also actively pursuing activities and kept bonds with old friends outside the old-age home. Every Friday she visited a friend whose husband had died two years earlier. She usually stayed overnight and went to her Christian prayer cell on Saturday morning. Jyothi followed a friend’s request to teach English to children from a poor neighbourhood in South Delhi every Friday. The rickshaw rides and the long teaching hours exhausted her but to her the interaction with children made life “worth living.” Jyoti reported about her experiences during lunch and was sometimes very frustrated that other housemates in Nivasa did not seek community and were not willing to share their stories with others. I cite from my field notes:

Jyoti tells me on the phone: ‘I feel sad because these people [the other residents] are alone.’ She had asked people of her church to come and speak to them and last week somebody followed her request. But this interaction would be needed regularly, she says. Especially young people should come to keep the residents

alive, so that they know what goes on in the world. She says: ‘We have two ladies going out from time to time but they don’t share their experiences, they just go back into their rooms. I told them this morning at the breakfast table: if you pass away and God asks what you did with your time in Nivasa, what would you say? We are 30 strangers under one roof - but this is our *family*. We don’t even get to know if someone becomes sick or what they are thinking. What is this for a life? It is a meaningless life.’ She further complains that most of the residents are rich people who don’t know how to do anything on their own, only how to give orders. (Field notes, 05 November 2014)

Jyoti continued to be involved in activities in Nivasa and to foster friendships with other residents. Her case shows that her persistent practices of home-making were sometimes disrupted by the reluctance of others to accept their situation. Still, she developed a sense of at-homeness in Nivasa.

The fostering of relationships with other residents was crucial for turning space into a meaningful place. Generally, friendships evolved either between women or between men. The exception to the rule was Tarvinder Chadha, a 70-year-old man, who managed to establish a new relationship with Preeta. Tarvinder used to live with his wife and with his son’s family at Janakpuri in West Delhi. His son died of a heart attack at the age of 46 and shortly after, his wife also passed away. I learned from his brother that thereafter he could no longer stay in his house because his daughter-in-law did not care for him well. When Tarvinder’s daughter Padma, who lived in Canada, found out about this ill-treatment, her husband looked for a place for her father to stay and found Nivasa on the internet. Padma sold her father’s house and split the sum between her sister-in-law and her father so that he was able to pay the rent out of the interest and his pension. She visited him once a year and Tarvinder’s brother came monthly for visits to check on him. Tarvinder used to go out every morning to the Gurdwara¹²¹ but had stopped this ritual due to health problems. Sometimes he also visited friends in Janakpuri or went out to run errands. He fell down once, so Bhamini told him to always ask someone to accompany him when he intended to walk through the city. First, staff members went with him but after he had made friends with Preetha, she always joined him. They were both happy to have found each other’s company. Preetha moved upstairs in the room next to Tarvinder’s so that she was closer to him.

Tarvinder: It’s a very nice programme. In the morning I wake her up at 7:30a.m. and make her drink tea along with lemon water. Then she feels refreshed and we put on the heater to warm ourselves. After that it’s breakfast time.

Preetha: Yes, everything we do together. That means we go together for breakfast and lunch. If we have time, we watch TV. He has a TV [in his room], sometimes we go downstairs to watch. When he has to go

¹²¹ A Gurdwara is a Sikh place of worship.

to the doctor, I go with him. Earlier, a staff from here used to go with him, but now I accompany him. (10 Januar 2014)

Tarvinder and Preetha were at first reluctant to tell Bhamini. They sent their mate Setu to inquire about how she would react. Bhamini recalled this moment:

Bhamini: I remember Setu-ji asking me: ‘How would you react to something like this?’ Because she told me about it; and she didn't tell me names. I said ‘React? I'd be the happiest person. Because it will be really wonderful.’ So I think it depends on what kind of attitude you have. People may like to [enter a new relationship at old age] but they're scared of what people will think. What their children will think and, you know. That's why they don't. I'm sure they would want to. (08 November 2013)

Bhamini, as well as others informants reported that new relationships at old age were often stigmatised. Older persons not only feared to become subject of conversation and gossip but they also feared the reaction of their children. In Preetha's and Tarvinder's case Bhamini did not inform their offspring about their parents' friendship. Preetha was about to move to her son's place in the United States, where she spent half of the year. Being asked if she would miss Tarvinder's company she replied: “very much so” (*bahut zyādā*). When I came back to Nivasa during my second field work period, Tarvinder reported that he had tried to call Preetha in the US. But her family did apparently not approve of the contact and told him that he had dialed a wrong number. Preetha and Tarvinder's case study exemplifies that old-age homes are elderscapes where new forms of relationships can evolve, which might not be possible within a family context. Of course, this depends on the leeway created by both fellow residents and the management. A proprietor of another old-age home revealed to me in an interview, that he dismissed two residents after they had told him they fell in love with each other. Only later he reflected about his reaction and regretted to have expelled them. Thus, new relationships not only create familiarity with place but can also endanger it.

My examples show that even though residents shared certain commonalities, like class and educational background, there were vast differences in how individuals would cope with the shift to the old-age home. While Kiran, Rahul and R.G. were emotionally hurt because they had to live apart from their families, Tarvinder and Preetha temporarily found happiness in a new relationship within the home. Jyothi constantly tried to contribute to the fostering of a family-like community. Her home-making practices were disrupted by the refusal of other cohabitants to accept their new situation. Communitarity in the sense of an individually embodied and collectively negotiated perception of sharing (Pfaff-Czarnecka 2011, 202) was very limited in Nivasa. Yet, interactions like complaining about food or caretakers as well as reminiscing about a past family life were not only acts that created a dichotomy of a true home in contrast to the institution but also a way of fostering a sense of community with other residents, as Kiran's case

revealed. Mobility was also a factor for residents to feel more agentive. Jyoti and Tarvinder were very mobile and would regularly move around the city for visiting friends or family, running errands, or other activities. In contrast Priya Kapoor, who features in the next section of this chapter, and Neeti Dogar, whom I introduced before (chapter 3), were very limited in their mobility and would mostly move from their rooms to the terrace and back only.

Most elderly did not consider the facility as their own home and brought only few personal items. Priya Kapoor was afraid that her possessions would be stolen by her caregiver and therefore left personal belongings in her house in Jangpura, a South-Delhi colony. Deepana Mitra also kept her things in her former residence in GKII, an affluent South-Delhi neighbourhood, where she went with her caretaker once a week in order to clean the place. The house was vacant but the old lady did not want to sell it. She argued that when her daughter's family came for a visit, she was able to offer them an adequate place to live. Other residents who had sold their property were equally concerned that they no longer had a home to accommodate their family members. Some told me that their children could not visit them for a longer period of time as they did not have "a place to stay" in Delhi. A hotel room was not seen as a valid option. Thus, for my informants it was very important to be able to host their family in their own house. The house meant an intimate family space that was available for kin, even if it was shared only for a short time-span which was no longer possible in the old-age home where people only had one room. Family members were allowed and even encouraged to stay overnight or for a longer period in Nivasa during their visits to Delhi. However, only very few relatives exercised this option, because in Nivasa families were spatially exposed to the gazes of other residents and care takers and therefore lacked privacy. For that reason, new retirement communities offer flats enabling the elderly to invite their family to an intimate space (see chapter 2).

"I Had a Beautiful Life" – Life History and Memories of Priya Kapoor

To illustrate the complexity of reasons which may lead to an institutional care arrangement and to show the ways residents contrast living in an old-age home with their past, I now elaborate on the life story of Priya Kapoor. The detailed description of this case study focusses to the role of the family, as well as on the complex interplay of expectation and constraints, and therefore draws close attention to Priya's lived reality marked by the oscillation between feelings of being agentive and of being acted upon.

When I moved into Nivasa, Priya, a 87-year-old woman, had just shifted into the room next door. Her elder daughter and her son-in-law, who lived in Abu Dhabi, were in Delhi at that time to make sure Priya would acclimatise in Nivasa. We liked each other and I came to see Priya for a chat almost daily. In the course of time she revealed more and more of her personal

background and although I narrate her story in a linear way, I learned about her life in bits and pieces. The way she remembered her past often reminded me of a Bollywood movie narrative. Chaudhury and Rowles (2005, 11) point out that the process of remembering is shaped both by *recollection* and *imagination*. The historical reality, that is the event itself, “serves as the reference frame for ‘recollection.’” The event is also entangled with one’s individual experience which “is laden with subjective valence or ‘imagination.’” Thus remembering is a process of recreating both the event and one’s experiences and is itself “filtered through physical, psychological, and social changes that may have occurred in the person’s life during the intervening time” (Chaudhury and Rowles 2005, 11). In Priya’s narrative she juxtaposed her “beautiful life” in younger years to the more troubling reality she was facing in Nivasa.(Chaudhury and Rowles 2005, 11)

Priya grew up in one of the posh bungalow estates in New Delhi. Her father was a high government official in Delhi and education was of great importance to him. As Waldrop points out, in the Indian colonial context, to be educated was “not only about education *per se*” but it also meant “being modern, middle-class and enlightened“ (Waldrop 2012, 612 emphasis in the original). Priya chose to study English and philosophy at a college in Delhi. Her marriage was arranged with a man posted in Singapore who was sent a photo of hers. They married one year later and she moved to her in-law’s house while her husband was staying in Singapore for some years. He brought her a lot of expensive and exclusive presents (bras, nighties, perfume from Dior “which at that time nobody knew”) and when he was in Delhi, they went cycling or went to the movies without his parents’ knowledge as her husband had become used to this lifestyle in Singapore. After marriage they were posted to many cities because Priya’s husband was in the army. She stressed that they “had a very good life together.” Early on, she enjoyed considerable freedom in moving independently and pursued leisure activities on her own. This is extraordinary as in India, “patriarchy has historically had one of its strongest footholds among the upper castes in the North, and it is here that upper caste married women [...] are known to be most severely restricted in their movements outside the home” (Waldrop 2012, 602). In 1962, Priya’s husband was sent to Great Britain. He took the plane whereas Priya followed one month later taking the ship all by herself.

Priya: It took me 19 days from Bombay to South Hampton, so I enjoyed it. Because after every four days [the ship] touched one port, so [the crew] used to say in the morning that you can go to town, see the place, buy anything you want. So we went to about four ports, Aden and Saudi, and Gibraltar and then South Hampton. [...] I enjoyed those 19 days on the ship. It was very nice. [...] Every day there was some entertainment, either some show, magic show, this that. And we used to sit on the deck the whole day, play games, it was fun.

- AM: But did you travel all alone or did somebody [accompany] you?
Priya: I was all alone. That time I was so young, I was only 32 or 33. Fifty years back. I was all alone and that was my first trip. But I enjoyed it.
(25 October 2014)

In the following years she moved with her husband to Pune, Dheradun, Kashmir, and the Netherlands and Priya became used to lead a quite independent life, exploring cities on her own. She sent her two daughters to a boarding school in Mussoorie, North India, where they finished their school career. After her husband's retirement they lived in a flat in her father-in-law's house in Jangpura, an affluent neighbourhood in South Delhi. She had a driver and several maids and spent her time reading, going to the market, or joining kitty parties.¹²² She was part of two to three kitties whose members met for lunch at posh places like five star hotels. When her husband died she kept living in their flat, now taking over her husband's responsibilities as well like settling banking business. Even though she missed her husband, Priya did not feel lonely after his death. In her view it was good to be autonomous. "You can do things which you could not do before because the husband does not like it," she told me. At the age of 71 she broke her left hip but she recovered soon as she was "still young" at that time. Nevertheless, her mobility was affected and stopped her from attending kitty parties. She was able to walk the staircase to her flat with a stick and to maintain her household with the help of servants. Some day in 2010, she was in poor health and thought that her life would end. She called her younger daughter Rani, who lived in Delhi, and told her about it. Rani came immediately, packed up a few of her clothes and brought her to her house. Priya thought that she would return soon but she kept living with her daughter for the next eight months until she fell down and injured her right hip. From that point on she was in and out of the hospital for four years.

When I met Priya she told everybody that her younger daughter Rani lived in Hong Kong and that this was the primary cause why she had moved to her elder daughter Amala in Abu Dhabi. When children live abroad there are many acceptable reasons for elderly parents not to live with them. However, if children¹²³ live nearby and their parents nevertheless live in an old-age home, this is often interpreted as a sign of a malfunctioning family (see chapter 3). Shame and fear of disapproval were the main reasons for Nivasa's residents not to disclose family conflicts. Only two months later Priya told me confidentially that in truth, her younger daughter still lived in Delhi and that she had left for Abu Dhabi because of a family discord. According to Priya, Rani and her husband had driven her out of the house. She reproduced public narratives of

¹²² For an explanation of kitty parties see footnote 62.

¹²³ Daughters are culturally less expected to care for their parents but recently the importance of daughter in the care for their parents has enhanced. Legally all children are obliged to care for their parents in case they inherit property (see chapter 3).

abandonment which portray adult children as agitators and older parents as victims. As I was not able to speak with Rani I can only refer to Priya's perspective, but her story already reveals that there was more than one party to the dispute.

Priya: When [after] my last operation in March, I came out [of the hospital], I went to [Rani's] house from the hospital. [...] So her husband came to me and said like this: 'You ring up your elder daughter'- he said [it] like this, in this tone, which I didn't like – 'First you ring up [Amala] and tell her to take you. [...] So I felt very bad, it was 9 o'clock at night, I had come from the hospital at night, so if I had been in a good position I would have walked out. But after the operation I had come home, I couldn't even walk. (03 December 2014)

Even though she was insulted by the behaviour of her son-in-law, Priya stayed in Rani's house for one more week. Then she had to go back to the hospital for further treatment. A fortnight later she was discharged but instead of calling Rani she phoned her brother who took her to her sister's place. Her brother and her sister both stayed in their mother's house in South Delhi. When Rani found out about it she was upset.

Priya: I stayed with my sister for one and a half months. Then I rang up my elder daughter [Amala], I said, this is what has happened. And all my bank paper, everything was with [Rani] because I had been living with her for the last 4 years. So [later] my maid told me, that my daughter [was on the line]. I thought it was my elder daughter but actually it was the younger one. So I told her on the phone that I have given everything to [Rani], all my money, everything is with her, and now they have thrown me out. Then [Rani] swore. [...] She didn't like it. Although I said *I* have given her my money not that *they* had taken it, she said: 'You have said that I have taken all your money, I haven't taken anything.' (03 December 2014)

Due to this telephone conversation, Rani brought back Priya's belongings and stopped contacting her mother afterwards. As a sign of re-approachment Priya wanted to return all the bank papers to her daughter but was rejected. Finally Priya rang up her elder daughter Amala and told her what had happened. Amala and her husband Rajeev had lived in Abu Dhabi for over 20 years and did not intend to move back to India in the near future. They decided to take Priya to Abu-Dhabi. However, she could not accustom herself to the new setting so that after three and a half months they accompanied her back to India. I met Amala and Rajeev when they were making sure that Priya adjusted to Nivasa, explaining me why the living arrangement at their home had not worked out.

Rajeev: [Priya] was with us for about three and a half months but she couldn't settle there, it's too cold, the apartments are too cold for her and she was finding it difficult. [...] They live in open houses here [in India], they have constricted apartments there [in Abu Dhabi], because of the heat the AC is on - it's centrally air conditioned, which didn't suit her with her arthritis and all.
[...]

Amala: And there were many factors. You know that was there, the medical thing is uncomfortable for her there, she's got good doctors [in India]

and she knows them, they know her, over there it's a very different system, you know.

[...]

Rajeev: So when we discussed with her she wanted to come back to India, so we felt that this [old-age home] was maybe a viable option. So we are trying to see how she settles in, now she has been here two weeks and let's hope these next couple of months... because she said winter I'd like to stay here and then maybe we'll have to see if we have to change our apartment into a villa and if she'd like to come back. We'll be more than happy to... so it's sort of her own decision, she said: let me stay three, four months here. (27 September 2014)

Priya told me later that she had felt trapped in Abu-Dhabi because she had to stay in the flat all day long as the climate was too hot to move around the city. She could not stand the cold, fully air-conditioned apartment, she was not familiar with the doctors who in her opinion were not competent, and additionally, her stay was very expensive. Because she was over the age of 60 she was only entitled to a three-month tourist visa and for each day she overstayed, the family had to pay a fine of approximately 25 € per day. Furthermore, according to Priya, the health insurance fees were one lakh Rupees (1,300 €) per month. Besides, she was not entitled to receive her pension outside of India and therefore lost 40,000 Rupees (500 €) each month. Even though money did not matter to Amala and her husband Rajeev and they were able and willing to pay the extra costs, Priya was unhappy and wanted to go back to India.

When Priya came to Nivasa she did not contact any of her relatives in Delhi. In her view it "was for them to find out" where she was. She stayed in close contact with her elder daughter Amala who regularly called her on her mobile phone. Priya adjusted to the old-age home by not having too many expectations towards her life in Nivasa. A friend of hers came by regularly and brought her home-made food, like kebabs or chicken, which she enjoyed very much. Her friend's daughter had found another old-age home in Gurgaon on the internet and tried to convince Priya to move there as the place was posher and closer to their home. But Priya did not want to shift, she said: "I have a nice bed and bathroom here and the terrace which they don't have over there, and the rest hardly matters" (field notes, 06 October 2014). Furthermore, she had made friends with Jyothi, who sometimes visited her in her room, and Kiran, whom she met regularly on the terrace.

Most of her time, Priya was occupied with family affairs. Two months after her arrival she finally rang up her sister Kyra. When Kyra heard that Priya was in an old-age home she came for a visit the following Sunday. For Kyra it had become exhausting to move through Delhi as she herself was over 80. Nevertheless, she would come by every other week. Priya was very happy about her sister's company because the two were very close to each other and could talk about personal and intimate things, especially about their family relations. After the dispute the

contact between the younger daughter and mother had ceased but still Priya was very disappointed that Rani did not try to find out where she was. In her view, she could have easily called all the old-age homes in Delhi to enquire if her mother was residing in one of them. On Diwali, she rang her up but did not speak a word. Then she told her caretaker Aditi to ring Rani and enquire about her mother. Aditi followed the request and Rani replied on the phone that she did not know her mother's whereabouts. Priya thought this would make Rani call her elder sister Amala to enquire. On the other hand, she had forbidden Amala to tell the family where she was. This shows that while Priya had stopped the contact to her daughter, she still hoped or also expected her to re-establish the bond.

At the beginning of December it was Rani's birthday which made Priya very emotional. She brought herself to call her younger daughter but just said "Happy birthday" and hung up.

Priya: I rang [Rani] up but I didn't talk to her, I only said 'Happy birthday' and she kept saying 'Hello, hello, hello.' I didn't talk. I'm a little angry with her. Anyway, whatever has happened... but I thought that I wish her at least. I said happy birthday and I just... Then she rang up that number but I didn't want to, I'm really very angry with her. But all the time she's in my mind. She's after all my daughter and I loved her so much and I feel very bad, but anyway. After all, I'm her mother. Maybe she does, but at least I can't forget her. (03 December 2014)

Two months later Priya did not feel very well and could not sleep. She was very upset because she had talked to her sister Kyra. Apparently Rani had called Kyra accusing Priya of the whole dispute. Furthermore Rani blamed her elder sister Amala for having put Priya in an old-age home while she had taken care of her for four years. Priya said: "She doesn't realise that Amala didn't send me here because of this dispute but because the conditions - I've told you - were so bad, I couldn't have stayed in Abu-Dhabi" (field notes, 03 February 2015). Within the six months of my second research period Priya's health deteriorated. In November she fell ill and the staff informed her daughter Amala, which Priya did not approve of at all. Amala was worried and Priya promised her to go to hospital but, because she felt better some days later, she did not. As the trip to the hospital was very tedious, and constant queuing and long waiting hours at the hospital exhausted her, she tried to avoid visits by all means. End of February 2015, Priya had blood in her urine for two days. I tried to convince her to see a doctor but again she told me that this was too much of an effort. Even though Nivasa would have provided a car with a driver, and for somebody to accompany her, she thought that nobody felt responsible. "Who will take me?" she asked. For Priya, as well as for most of her housemates, the physical assistance offered by Nivasa was not at all comparable to the care of family members, especially when being sick or being admitted to the hospital. Priya did not tell Amala about her health status in order not to worry her. End of March, shortly after I had returned to Germany, she finally was taken to hospital where she had a severe cardiac arrest and passed away.

Priya's life story shows that there were several factors which made her stay in Nivasa. First of all, it was her deteriorated health, namely the hip injury, which no longer allowed her to stay in her own house. She was able to rely on the care of her younger daughter Rani, but the friction with her and her husband led to a crisis which required her elder daughter Amala to take on care responsibilities. Yet, the spatial, economical, and cultural conditions in Abu Dhabi were not acceptable to Priya so that she chose to rather live in an old-age home in India than with her daughter abroad. Priya did not want other people to know about her family dispute and therefore claimed that her younger daughter lived in Hong-Kong. Like her housemates she neither wanted her family to be looked at as "bad family" nor did she want to be seen as a victim. Priya found company in Nivasa, but in her mind she was predominantly occupied with her family ties which, to her, were a matter of huge concern and sadness. She felt neglected personally by her younger daughter Rani, who – in her view – had the responsibility to re-establish contact. Despite her wish to live with her daughter, she defended her situation against others emphasising that she herself had chosen the option to live in Nivasa and stating pragmatically, that this was the best option. To stay agentive and to decide for the good of the family was thus important to her.

It's All About Food

In the last part of this sub-chapter I discuss the role of food for home-making processes. Food plays an important role in daily life and daily discourse in India (see chapter 3). Preparing and eating food is intertwined with "narratives of anxiety." That means that parents worry a lot about how much and what is eaten by their children (Srinivas 2006, 205). Similarly, providing food for and serving food to elderly parents is seen as part of care by adult children, something which is both expected and worried about (Brijnath 2014, 130). In the context of an old-age home food becomes a complex and emotional topic as the aspect of intergenerational reciprocity is missing. Commensality, that means cooking, eating, and receiving food, is a central sign of care. I show in the following how the preparation of food by the institution's cook led to complaints but also to reminiscing about former home-cooked food. A dichotomy was drawn between food at home and the food provided by the institution. This also disrupted the feeling of at-homeness of some residents. I reveal how complaints about food led to many frictions in the old-age home but also, to some extent, to more cohesion.

The residents originally came from different regions in North India (Bengal, Gujarat, Panjab, Delhi) and therefore had very different food habits which were impossible to be satisfied by the cook of Nivasa. Furthermore, during their lifespan people developed their own preferences and habits. Rani was a Panjabi, an ethnic group, who usually eat a lot of milk products like curd (yogurt made from coagulated milk) or *ghī* (clarified butter), but she was not very fond of it. She often took the curd upstairs and made cottage cheese (*panīr*) or a yogurt dish (*rāyṭa*) out of

it. The longing for regional food became evident on a joint trip to Dilli Haat, a craft bazaar run by Delhi Tourism and Transportation. Bhamini initiated this trip on the International Day of Older Persons¹²⁴ as the Department of Social Welfare offered free entry and a discount on food for persons over 60 on that day. Only four residents joined the excursion, the others were either not keen on shopping or criticised the inconvenient timing. The highlight of the excursion was clearly the lunch break at the food stalls which offered different regional dishes. Deepana was keen on eating some fish “for a change” and told her caretaker to also have some. Jyothi very much enjoyed Bengali food, as she was originally from Bengal and often reminiscent of the Bengali kitchen. All residents were obviously happy to eat some spicy food which differed from the vegetables they were served at the old-age home.

Like other old age-homes (Liebig 2003, 166) Nivasa offered only vegetarian meals following the religious dietary rules of higher caste Hindus. The food did not please most of the residents in Nivasa and I seemed to be the only one to enjoy it. Because a change in diet is not only part of Hindu philosophy on the ageing body but equally recommended by many health practitioners (Brijnath 2014, 126), the cook Kabir prepared less spicy and less oily food. There were many complaints about the dāl being too watery, or the dishes not being tasty enough. Also, there were numerous complaints that, when being served, the food was not hot anymore. R.G. Seth was very dissatisfied with the cooking and at one point started to make a list of dishes he liked. He also asked others about their favourite food and tried to persuade the cook Kabir to prepare one of these items for lunch or dinner, so that he could at least “eat something.” This led to an argument between him and the cook, who was not willing to give in. Kabir was annoyed arguing that everybody would demand something different. R.G. felt passed over and complained to Bhamini who was angry with him because she shared Kabir’s opinion saying it was not feasible for the staff to cater to all the special requests. During the argument between R.G. and Kabir, Jyoti told R.G. that instead of complaining he should be proactive and “do his own thing.” Rani disliked R.G.’s complaining attitude, too. She was also not fond of the food herself, but she did not blame the cook who in her view was overworked.

Rani: Bhamini doesn't maybe feel it, that fellow gets up at six thirty and starts making bed tea, gives it to everybody, lots of people in their rooms [...] and then he has to prepare breakfast. Naturally he doesn't have enough time to prepare breakfast for thirty people and make something decent. He will do whatever he can do by that time. [...] By the time they finished people's breakfast, residents' breakfast, the staff has to have breakfast. Then they have to give tea to the workers

¹²⁴ On 14 December 1990, the United Nations General Assembly designated October 01 the International Day of Older Persons, see: <http://www.un.org/en/events/olderpersonsday/> (accessed 10 August 2016). In Delhi NGOs like HelpAge or Agewell organise events on that day in order to raise awareness for senior citizens’ rights and to promote new ideas about ageing as well as to highlight shortcomings in the policies on elderly people.

here. [...] Then food has to be prepared for thirty people for lunch. He is making four, five things. One *dāl* [lentils], two vegetables, one *chāval* [rice], one *khichdi* [rice and lentil dish]. [...] How did you expect the man to do all that? [...] And see, and see the girl [kitchen worker] she has to clean up all the breakfast and the bed-tea utensils. I think they're overworked. But they don't protest. Who am I to? With the result that Bhamini would say, 'This *dāl* is not well made today.' That *dāl* takes time to cook. Where does he get the time? At night they finish after ten o'clock. I mean the fellow has to go and rest also. Do something for himself also. And see, I mean maybe he's just soaking it, but soaking will take another half an hour. You will take up the *dāl*, you will clean it, you'll wash it two, three times, then soak it. So. I don't blame him. In fact, he has improved. Because the food at night used to be awful. It's much better than before. So, see... I mean... if one wants to grieve one can grieve for thousand and one things in life. But it doesn't do anybody any good. (02 October 2014)

Rani's comment shows her pragmatic attitude towards the provision of food in Nivasa. In her view the cook was not able to prepare the meals any better due to time constraints. It was not his missing devotion but rather his limited scope which made him prepare the food the way he did. And yet, most people constantly criticised Kabir's cooking. The act of complaining about food was not only a way of expressing one's dissatisfaction but also a binding element. Almost everyone found fault with one or the other dish. Because preparing and serving food is an expression of care and love towards one's children, parents or spouses, food provided by the institution would never be satisfactory. The "bad" food reinforced reminiscing about delicious home-cooked dishes. During meal times women remembered how their mothers prepared *dāl*, (a lentil dish) on the ceasing coal fire, so that it took on a special flavour, and they exchanged tips on how to best prepare certain dishes. People also liked when visitors brought along home-cooked food. Priya went into raptures when she told me about the kebabs or chicken her friend had provided her with on her visits, especially because the vegetarian option was much to her regret. There was a kitchen in the second building, where residents were free to cook their own, non-vegetarian food. Jyoti would sometimes prepare some cooked apples or boiled eggs, but otherwise I did not witness anybody else using the kitchen. As preparing Indian food is very time-consuming and complex, many women were happy to be freed of this chore. Some women like Neeti who suffered from both Parkinson's and depression, were physically not able to perform cooking.

The examples make clear, that food was essential in the daily conversations of residents in Nivasa. Through the acts of common complaining or reminiscing about dishes, food became a means of enhancing cohesion. It was also a matter of quarrel between residents and staff which points to the shift of power hierarchies within the institution. This is the focus of the last part of this chapter.

4.3. Ways of Operating: Caste, Class, Habits, and Power Within an Institution

In India, domestic work responsibilities of higher-class women are facilitated through lower-class women's labour. Looking after children, cooking, cleaning, driving, and other tasks are supported by domestic workers. Even though having "servants"¹²⁵ is not a modern phenomenon, the possibilities but also the pressures of a neoliberal consumer society has enabled a growing number of people to profit from this domestic labour market. Embedded in this "*culture of servitude*," which permeates both domestic and public sphere, is the reproduction of class as "relationships of domination/subordination, dependency and inequality are normalized" (Qayum and Ray 2011, 247 emphasis in the original). Recent publications on paid domestic workers have drawn attention to the reproduction of class and caste inequalities at home (Qayum and Ray 2011; Froystad 2003; Dickey 2000).

This subchapter analyses the interplay of class, caste and power in a care facility, which is both similar to and different from the interaction with domestic workers at home. On the one hand, residents are not in control over the management of staff and therefore have to adjust to the framework of the institution. As mentioned above, R.G. Seth failed in his attempt to instruct the cook which dishes to prepare. On the other hand, older people reproduce class and caste distinctions in their relationships with staff and caretakers. I first turn to the subtle ways of drawing boundaries towards people of "lower" status before pinpointing the ways domestic workers employ their own "tactics"¹²⁶ (de Certeau 1984, xxiii) and thereby undermine dominance to a certain extent.

Drawing Distinctions

Drawing distinction is pivotal for the formation of class. Studies often focus on the public display of class but social scientists Seemin Qayum and Raka Rai argue that the Indian middle classes continue to "constitute themselves through domestic practices in the home" (Qayum and Ray 2011, 247). The growing importance of class does not mean that former social stratification systems like caste have been eliminated. Anthropologist Kathinka Frøystad points out that in the everyday domestic sphere caste is still significant for upper- and middle-class Indians (Froystad

¹²⁵ The word servant is commonly used in India. I only use the term when referring to the opinion of my informants.

¹²⁶ In his study on *The Practice of Everyday Life* Michel de Certeau (1984) examined "ways of operating" which "constitute the innumerable practices by means of which users reappropriate the space organized by techniques of sociocultural production" (de Certeau 1984, xiv). He distinguishes two types of operations of users, namely *strategies* which "are able to produce, tabulate, and impose these spaces, when those operations take place" and *tactics* which "can only use, manipulate, and divert these spaces" (de Certeau 1984, 30).

2003, 74). Caste is a social institution, “whose members acknowledge its moral claims over them, and are prepared to submit to its demands” (Béteille 1992, 18). Caste implies “complex and often contradictory notions that make some people consider themselves superior by birth and that regulate their interaction with others accordingly” (Froystad 2003, 74).

In a long conversation Rani Shastri complained about other residents’ attitudes towards staff and caretakers. She disapproved the way her housemates reproduced class and caste distinctions by not allowing workers to use their chairs. Many caregivers would indeed sit and sleep on the floor which marks a common spatial distinction between the servant body and the employer body in Indian households. Rani emphasised that no matter if we were born rich or poor we all had the same dignity and deserved the same respect.

Rani: I say, look, in this world everybody has his place. You take the example of a car. See, in a car the engine is very important, then there are other things which are very, very important and all that, but supposing that there is one small screw which is missing, and because of that your whole car may be stalled. It's a small screw but it's very important in its own place. If that screw is missing, which you will buy very cheaply, but it will stop a huge big car like a Porsche even. So, we all have our place. Whether it's a small screw or the engine, everybody has his place in this world. He is *meant to be* a screw, okay, but he is equally important. (02 October 2014, my highlighting)

Rani stressed the importance of paying tribute to the work of the domestic workers. Nevertheless, she clearly reproduced caste distinctions, by stating that everybody was born into their predestined place in society. As a means of stratification, caste ascribes collective affiliation by birth whereas class is determined by the individual’s accumulation of different capital and allows for but also demands more flexibility. The underlying “moral orientation” of a caste, based upon social order, stresses “the individual’s duty to the station in life in which he was placed” (Béteille 1992, 16). Following Rani’s allegory, a screw is not meant to be an engine and the engine is not meant to be a screw. More importantly, there is no possibility for a screw to become an engine or vice versa. In India cast and gender distinctions are connected to notions of ritual purity and pollution, which establish a social order in human relationships (Michaels 2006, 194ff.). The prohibition of caste discrimination by the Indian constitution in 1950 has made it socially unacceptable to acknowledge or defend caste inhibitions (Béteille 1996). Yet, caste continues to matter, especially in the context of marriage and networks as well as in politics (Brosius 2010; de Zwart 2000). But in more subtle ways, caste distinctions are also continuously drawn in the domestic sphere (Ray and Qayum 2009). For Rani it was not a problem when the workers sat on her chairs but she did not want them to touch her things without cleaning their hands first. She stated that this was merely out of hygienic reasons.

Rani: But I won't let him [the worker] touch my things because he is cleaning, dirty hands, but whenever I want him to do something I say go wash your hands with

that white soap also, wash your hands properly, now you can touch my things. I don't think there is anything wrong with him as such as a human being. Only thing wrong with him is because he is doing the dirty work, which... look, the West has been using toilet paper for ages, but when there was no paper everybody was washing oneself, or cleaning oneself with something or that. Because when we didn't have toilet paper, and even now I suppose 95% of India, maybe 97% of India washes itself with water. What do you do? You wash your hand and clean it. Don't cut it away or throw it away because you have washed yourself. So if he is doing it, he doesn't become dirty because he is doing it. He is doing dirty work but he will wash and change and he'll become clean. *As clean as I am*. (02 October 2014, my highlighting)

As it is common among the urban Indian intelligentsia, Rani argued against the notion of a religious impurity of lower castes. The worker could become as “clean” as she was if he washed his hands properly. Yet, Rani’s view indicates the iteration of a middle-class “civilizing reform” (Qayum and Ray 2011, 247) which is based upon the idea of development through “modern” science, in this case the knowledge of hygiene. In Bourdieu’s terms:

The nature against which culture is here constructed is nothing other than what is ‘popular’, ‘low’, ‘vulgar’, ‘common’. This means that anyone who wants to ‘succeed in life’ must pay for his accession to everything which defines truly humane humans by a change of nature, a ‘social promotion’ experienced as an ontological promotion, a process of ‘civilization’ [...]. (Bourdieu 1984, 251)

This confirms Froystadt’s observation that, rather than in terms of caste, urban upper-class and middle-class people debate difference today “in terms of class, literacy or hygiene” (Froystad 2003, 76).

Spatial proximity complicated the matter. Half of the female residents employed caregivers¹²⁷ who were responsible for their personal attendance.¹²⁸ The caretakers stayed in the residents’ room day and night, sleeping on mattresses on the floor. In contrast to the spacious houses elderly people often had lived in before, the spatial distance between domestic worker and resident was now constrained by the restricted space of the room. The closeness of resident and care worker, which was not only created by sharing a confined space but also by intimate acts like washing, bathing, and toileting, required the establishment of social demarcations. In Nivasa I did not witness that the elder residents were reluctant to be touched or fed by their caregivers, as these were the tasks they were hired for. But boundaries along the notion of purity were nevertheless drawn. Caretakers were for instance not allowed to use the residents’ bathrooms but had to utilise a separate lavatory on the rooftop. Priya was angry about her

¹²⁷ There were no male residents who employed a caretaker even though two men were thinking about hiring one. This might be due to the fact that women were used to having and monitoring domestic workers in their households while men were not.

¹²⁸ Caretakers had to support residents with toileting and bathing and were responsible for changing their bed sheets, washing clothes, moving residents around the home, bringing them food from the kitchen and giving them medicines.

former caregiver Raka, who had used her toilet against her will. “That’s not nice” Priya told me, “all my things are there and I don’t know what she does inside” (field notes, 06 October 2014). In Priya’s view, Raka intruded her privacy which she could no longer control. Unofficially staff and caretakers were also not allowed to use the elevators. Administrable staff explained that the elevators should be always at the availability of residents and not occupied by staff. But telling care workers to use separate bathrooms as well as banning them from the elevators were ways of creating and manifesting class and caste boundaries in the residence.

Moreover, residents drew distinctions by denominating caregivers as “backward” or “uneducated” but also unreliable and untrustworthy. Deepana, for instance, complained about her former caregiver who had been constantly speaking “nonsense” even though she had told her to be quiet. She used to “get a headache listening to her talks.” Priya accused her new caretaker Aditi of stealing her personal belongings. While Aditi was quite shy in the beginning and Priya described her as “very nice and obedient,” she became more self-confident over the course of her stay in Nivasa. Priya claimed that Aditi ate all her food. When her sister brought along a packet of nuts, she made her take the leftovers with her so that Aditi could not eat them. Yet, according to her story, her sister’s driver stole the package out of the car in the end. Narrations of thievery marked domestic workers as potential threat and distinguished them from more trustworthy upper classes. In March 2015, six months after Aditi had started working in Nivasa, Priya dismissed her. She felt not very optimistic that her new caregiver would behave differently. “They are all the same” she lamented, “but you cannot blame them, they are so poor, come from the village and when they see all this they get greedy” (05 March 2015). Other residents also explained the caregivers’ misbehaviour with their “village background” and their lack of education. Anthropologist Bianca Brijnath likewise noticed in her study on the care of Alzheimer’s patients that caste discrimination based on untouchability was largely absent, but that “caste barriers were reinforced in other ways; traits such as thievery, laziness, ineptitude to learn new things and uncontrolled fertility were associated with attendants and domestic servants” (2014, 110). In the following I scrutinise how power relations between residents and domestic workers are established and subverted within the institutional order.

Establishing and Manipulating the Institutional Order

Running an institution requires staff. Managing the facility, cleaning bathrooms, dusting, washing clothes, cooking, washing the dishes, securing, and maintaining the estate was all done by different personnel. Even though some employees took over considerable responsibilities, none of them was listed on Nivasa’s internet page which demonstrates the low status attributed to this kind of work. In the following I analyse “processes that organize the establishment of socioeconomic order” in Nivasa but also the daily or “miniscule” procedures with which staff

and caretakers manipulate this order (de Certeau 1984, xiv). Before coming to the institution, residents were used to manage domestic workers their own way. The supervision was often seen as stressful by elderly people. They complained that domestic workers were no longer reliable and contrasted the “unruly” behaviour of servants today with the patron-client relationship¹²⁹ in former times. Being freed of monitoring domestic workers was one of the reasons why people opted to live in a care facility. Yet, older people had firm ideas about how household tasks like cooking, cleaning, and washing should be done, which occasionally caused conflicts with the institutional routine. As outlined above, it was not feasible for the cook Kabir to comply with the food requests of residents, especially as individual preferences diverged among the elderly. Kabir felt that if he gave in to demands of residents he would face constant negotiations about which dishes to cook. Furthermore, the staff’s work load did not allow for much flexibility and certainly added to a more market-based relationship between employees and residents. When I spoke with Kabir, he had worked in Nivasa for seven months without interruption not having had one day off. This was not uncommon among workers. Except for the managing employees, the team operated day and night and had no right to leave days. They lived in an extra building on the premises which eased their constant availability. Social historian Nandini Gooptu points to the fact that even though neoliberalisation has led to a rise of employment in the organised corporate sector, it has replicated “the insecurity, low pay, and poor conditions of informal work” based on “pre-existing forms of labour subordination, relating to hierarchies of caste and status” (Gooptu 2013b, 10).

Frustrations among residents were provoked when staff did not pass along information or did not perform their duties on time. Priya, for instance, was disappointed that nobody had told her that the trip to Dilli Haat was free of charge. Rani complained that Dipti, Bhamini’s assistant manager, had not send Sahana, who was responsible for administrative tasks, to tell her that her “maid” ran late.

Rani: See, Dipti should have rung up Sahana. Or Sahana didn't convey the message. I waited till 9:30[a.m.], there was no sign of [the maid]. And then at 9:30 I rang up [...] Sahana, [and] she says [the maid] is coming late, she has gone to the doctor, I'll send your breakfast upstairs. You know, I haven't even had my medicines, I was waiting for her. I didn't have my morning tea and all that and then she sent the breakfast and by that time [the maid] also came. [...] I did feel upset because somebody has to be responsible for all this, nah. [...] If she is not coming, okay, I would have made an effort to get up and do all the things and all that. [...] I could have made some arrangement even at night; kept the thermos close my [bed], kept some cold water in this

¹²⁹ “Patronage refers to stratified relations between persons or groups that expect mutual assistance from each other. Patrons provide material or political resources while clients provide labour power and loyalty” (Froystad 2003, 88).

[vessel] also, but nobody informed me. And if I had mentioned this fact to Dipti in front of Bhamini, [Bhamini] would have got angry with them. And I don't want anybody to be scolded on my behalf. [...]

AM: Is there a lot of scolding?

Rani: People just carry it on. See, Dipti will scold others, others will... I mean there is ... see, hierarchal system of authority. And for me, you know, I mean... see... if I'm ever angry with my own employees and all that, then I used to tell them that well if I get angry with you, it hurts me more then it hurts you probably. Because anger is not a pleasant thing to have. It burns you inside. I much rather avoid it. (02 October 2014)

In Rani's narration we witness her frustration over the disruption of her daily routine, which was connected to the dependency on staff. The provision of food and medicine was handed over to the institution and these tasks were expected to be carried out reliably. And yet, to claim her "rights" would mean the reinforcement of power and dominance which she was not at ease with. Nevertheless, at lunchtime Rani was still complaining about the unreliability of staff. Bhamini was frustrated as well, as she did not like to constantly supervise her staff. She tried to encourage the residents to assume responsibility and help her change the work attitude of employees as this was their "home." However, residents often did not want to play a part in the supervision of workers as in their view this was the institution's task. Jyothi also complained that if she tried to "teach" the staff how to do things, they would take it as an offence. "One has to be so diplomatic all the time" she lamented. Rani's and Jyothi's comments show the complex interplay of hierarchy, expectations, and dependencies in Nivasa.

Care takers 24/7

Except for one woman, all caregivers in Nivasa were recruited through a placement agency. The agency charged around 20,000 Rupees (250 €) per month whereof the caretaker received a monthly salary of 5,000 to 7,000 Rupees (65 to 95 €). The agency's manager, who was referred to as "madam" in Nivasa, recruited the employees in a rural area of Bengal, near Calcutta. Most of them were young girls whose parents were offered money if they sent their daughters off to work in Delhi. The "madam" paid for the travel expenses and took care of their lodging in Delhi. She placed the young women in affluent families as domestic live-in workers or in homes like Nivasa as caregivers. As the caregivers did not have their own bank account, their salary was transferred to the agency which administered the savings. The employees could ask for cash if they needed it, but most of them did not know exactly how much money they had saved. None of the women was trained in caregiving but they often agreed that there was nothing to learn as this kind of work was common-sense practice. Unlike in the past, low-end service workers like security guards or housekeeping staff are nowadays also formally and systematically trained (Gooptu 2013b, 12). Non-Governmental Organisations like HelpAge India started to train

caregivers, and I asked Bhamini why she relied on the agency instead of promoting caretakers from HelpAge India. She said that this would be too expensive as the trained workers would take over 12-hour shifts only so that the elderly would have to pay for two caretakers. Moreover, the employees would be entitled to two leave days per month which would cause a gap in the fulltime care service. Bhamini continued to argue that two 12-hour shifts would not work well for the reason that the relationship between caregivers and residents would become “impersonal.” Yet, these relations were often conflict-laden and not very personal anyway, as I have shown. Bhamini lamented that the agency was charging double of what the caregivers received and exploited both caregivers and the elderly residents but she did not make efforts to change things. In her view there was no real alternative because the agencies “were all the same.” This, however, might have been her bias and was not very plausible. Neeti, another resident, had brought her own caretaker Mohini who came through an agency with better working conditions. Mohini’s agency charged 18,000 Rupees per month and thereof requested a 3,000 Rupees commission fee. Neeti’s son Sajit transferred the money directly to Mohini’s bank account and an agency employee came to collect the money every month. Mohini thus earned 15,000 Rupees, which was a decent salary and allowed her to build up savings, enabling her to rent a room in the South Delhi neighbourhood of Khanpur, where she could live in case of unemployment. This way her agency allowed for a greater independence of their workers. Nevertheless, Mohini did not want to pass on information about her agency to other caretakers in Nivasa as she feared to fall into difficulties because there were numerous rumours that Bhamini profited from the “madam’s” agency. Irrespective of the truthfulness of such claims, rumours and gossip played an important part in how people related to and understood the institutional order. Rumours and myth are often more powerful repositories of meaning than factual data and become “a way of talking that encourages a reassessment of everyday experience to address the workings of power and knowledge” (White 2000, 43 cited in Gardner 2012, 26). By accusing Bhamini of being involved in corruptive practices, caretakers addressed power hierarchies in Nivasa but also subverted them in a way.

Through the involvement of the agency, caretakers were less dependent on the residents. There were many twists between caregivers and residents and often the caregivers were exchanged after a few months. Only some developed a close relationship with their employers and understood their care-giving as a moral obligation to care for older persons. Others, mostly very young girls like Aditi and Mohini, rather considered it rather as a paid job. Class and gender disposed the adolescents to their role as “servants.” Yet, they found various ways of resisting power and class hierarchies. They made long phone calls with their mobile phone or met with other caregivers whenever they had time. Sometimes they went out for shopping even though

they were not allowed to, or did not carry out the residents' requests. There were certainly limitations to the different ways of opposing as resistance could result in losing one's job. However, the young women stated that they did not fear unemployment too much as the placement agency would normally reemploy them somewhere else. They struggled mainly with their dependence on both residents and institutional staff who sometimes had incompatible expectations. Aditi for example was torn between the demands of Priya and the institution when Priya was coughing blood. Priya told Aditi not to notify the staff because she feared they would inform her daughter whom she did not want to worry. However, if Aditi concealed the incident from the staff, they would scold her for negligence. Aditi decided to inform the staff and got scolded for overreacting. Aditi complained that no one wanted "to live together" in Nivasa.

Aditi: I like this place as well. The only thing I don't like is they do not want to live together here. They complain a lot about each other. They gossip a lot.

Lokesh: Who? Those who live here or those who work here?

Aditi: Everyone.
[...]

Aditi: There was an incident today. A lady in the next building fell down. But the lady asked the maid to not tell anyone about it. Other people in the building scolded her [the caretaker] saying that she should have told them about the Madam (*mātā-jī*) falling down. If her Madam asked her to not tell anybody, then how could she tell anyone?
[...]

Aditi: One day my Madam had a cough and there were some blood in her cough. I told this to Sahana [administrational staff], and she asked me: 'Why are you making such a big deal out of such a small thing?' But if something would have happened then others would have blamed me.
(11 November 2014)

My examples reveal that the lived experiences within the institutional apparatus were entangled with manifold social relationships, and therefore continuously open to negotiation. The institutional framework as well as notions of caste and class determined interactions between staff and residents. Residents exercised power but were also constrained by the framework of the institution as well as by their dependency on staff. The higher position of elderly in the social hierarchy was not always accepted by caretakers who resisted their demands. This led to conflicts which sometimes resulted in the dismissal of caretakers. However, the agency delivered these young women to other residents in Nivasa or to a different employer. So the caretaker's strong dependency on the placement agency gave them leeway in dealing with the resident's expectations and demands at the same time.

4.4. Conclusion

In this chapter I provided an ethnographic insight into a middle-class elder care institution in India. The case study of Nivasa exemplified place-making processes and ways of operating within an institution. My analysis was guided by Chaudhury and Rowles' (2005) understanding of "home" and by MacDougall's (2006) concept of "social aesthetics." Social aesthetics and home are useful categories for analysis because they draw our attention to the sensorial aspects of environments and capture the emotional resonance with space. I have revealed that Nivasa's environment aimed at making the institution into a home. Natural lighting, a courtyard structure, green areas, cosy furniture, and recreational rooms intended to foster a family-like environment and to invite for interactions and common pastime activities. Nonetheless, for most of the occupants this atmosphere did not generate feelings of belonging. The materiality of the place was not charged with particular personal meaning. Furniture or pictures on the walls were not imbued with memories and the common rooms did not evoke sociality because for most of the residents the old-age home epitomised the absence of family. The concept of social aesthetics thus enabled me to show that the materiality of place, even though it intended to create a family-like atmosphere, symbolised the lack of intimate relationships rather than the presence of peer-group communality.

The concept of "social aesthetics" not only draws our attention to the material environment of but also to the quotidian practices in the home. In Nivasa diverse people came to live in a confined space, connected by the experiences of dependence. Staff and caregivers depended on income while residents depended on care. Before entering the institution, the elderly often exercised power over servants and took on responsibility. The institutional frame altered power hierarchies. While the relationships of staff and residents were still based on a "culture of servitude" (Ray and Qayum 2009), employees had their own tactics to subvert or resist dominance. The case study has disclosed practices by which both residents and staff were reappropriating the space that was "organized by techniques of sociocultural production" (de Certeau 1984, xiv). Here the concept of "social aesthetics" helped overcome a one-sided equation of the institution with a totalitarian space of surveillance without neglecting the aspect of control. Unlike at home, the institution had to provide privacy, but at the same time as it was bound to secure that people were looked after. This means that privacy and supervision were two aspects that had to be balanced within the institution. While the constant presence of caretakers and staff provided security in case of emergencies, the institutional setting also meant the loss of intimate space. As shown, people were reluctant to invite their families to stay with them because, in their view, Nivasa could not offer private family space. Their privacy was also

disturbed by outsiders who visited the institution and intruded personal space, asking embarrassing questions.

My case study has illustrated that only few home occupants actively pursued home-making strategies, furnishing their rooms with personal objects and fostering friendships. I have argued that it depends on the “creative endeavors of the self” (Chaudhury and Rowles 2005) how people coped with the shift to this new environment. I drew on Jackson’s (1996) notion of lived experience, which discloses the oscillation between feelings of being “subject” and “object” of the world. Emotions of being neglected, the fear of being at the mercy of care takers and staff, as well as disputes about the commercial aspects of the institution disrupted the making of a home. However, my case studies has acknowledged the considerable differences in the ways residents evaluated the move to an elder care facility, mourning, enduring, modifying, accepting, and resisting this major change in their life course. As Michel de Certeau puts it, “there are countless ways of ‘making do’” (1984, 29). To a small extent, communality, that is the perception of sharing, evolved when residents rebelled against the rise of fees or when they complained about the taste of food.

Aged-care institutions have the potential to create meaningful space where physical needs of elderly can be met outside the family context. They can also foster peer-based interactions or friendships. New relationships evolved among residents based on mutual experiences of loss, communal practices of everyday life in the institution, as well as shared reminiscences. Although most residents did not transform the institutional space into their home, a few regarded this way of living as a valuable alternative to family care.

CHAPTER 5

TIME AND THE LIFE COURSE

SPENDING TIME MEANINGFULLY



Figure 5.1: Senior Citizens' Yoga Group in Deer Park, Delhi.
Photo: Annika Mayer

This chapter is structured around time and the life course. The first part starts with a theoretical discussion before turning to the normative Hindu concept of the life course which most Hindus are familiar with. This paradigm focusses on a shift from worldly to spiritual matters at old age. Based on the findings of my research, I show that many urban middle-class elderly renounce renunciation by fostering relationships and staying active. Nevertheless, spirituality is an important part of spending time. I argue that the spirituality of my informants derives less from the notion of withdrawing from the world than from an occupation with the self, which is part of a middle-class religiosity. In the second part of this chapter the case study of a senior citizens' yoga group will illustrate how elderly people spend time by socialising with peers. Based on an internationalist paradigm, being active or productive at old age is currently promoted by NGOs in India. My case study shows, that the yoga group was much more than middle-class senior citizens doing some exercise together. It was a place of sociality, where projects, events, and politics were discussed, one's own writings or some new jokes were presented, or news about family and friends were shared. The life of my informants was structured by daily routines which are in the focus of the third part of this chapter. Routines are determined by time management, which requires discipline. I show that discipline is highly valued among seniors and not only internalised but also expected by others. The fourth part is concerned with further "time-pass" activities of middle-class seniors. I demonstrate that older people keep being actively involved in shaping the world and shaping the self. However, this does not mean that older persons do not experience feelings of loss and loneliness. The last part examines negative experiences of time before I close this chapter with a reflection on the end of life time and certain aspects of death and dying that have emerged during my research.

5.1. Time and the Life Course

In her critical essay on the anthropology of time, Nancy Munn stresses that time is an "inescapable dimension of all aspects of social experience and practice" (Munn 1992, 93). She also emphasises that time is always entangled with space. "In a lived world, spatial and temporal dimensions cannot be disentangled, and the two commingle in various ways" (Munn 1992, 94). Time and space are continually being reproduced in daily practices. Fabian calls the complex praxis of encoding time as temporalisation (Fabian 1983, 74). Temporalisation regards time as a "symbolic process continually being produced in everyday practices" (Munn 1992, 116). That means that actors do not merely exist within a space-time but that they constitute (their own) time "in the particular kinds of relations they form between themselves (and their purposes) and the temporal reference points (which are also spatial forms)" (Munn 1992, 104). A central theme in the analysis of recent trends of globalisation is the reconfiguring of experiences of time and space, often described as time-space compression (Harvey 1989).

Sociocultural research on modernity has focussed on the dimension of time. According to sociologist Hartmut Rosa “the history of modernity seems to be characterized by a wide-ranging speed-up of all kinds of technological, economic, social, and cultural processes and by a picking up of the general pace of life” (2003, 3). Rosa stresses that not every section of society accelerates and that there is a range of societal phenomena which also decelerate. He separates the phenomena of acceleration into three categories. First, *technological acceleration*, which denotes an intentional speeding up of communication, transport, and production. Second, the *acceleration of social change*, that is, the acceleration of society, meaning that the speed of change is increasing. “Thus, attitudes and values as well as fashions and lifestyles, social relations and obligations as well as groups, classes, or milieus, social languages as well as forms of practice and habits are said to change at ever increasing rates” (Rosa 2003, 7). And third, the *acceleration of the pace of (social) life*, referring to the “speed and compression of actions and experiences in everyday life” (Rosa 2003, 8f.). On the subjective side, people feel that time is more and more scarce. On an objective side it means that people do more things in less time and also do things simultaneously and therefore “compress” actions and experiences (Rosa 2003, 9f.). I do not want to claim that India’s society should be conceptualised as an acceleration society¹³⁰ but Rosa’s considerations are nevertheless helpful. My middle-class elderly informants as well as their children often stated that young people had less time nowadays and that the pace in which fashions and lifestyle in urban India changed had considerably increased since the liberalisation of the Indian economy in the early 1990s. Mr. Agrawal, for instance, once commented: “In today’s fast-paced life the youngsters do not have time. It’s not their fault. They just don’t have time.” In one of our conversations, Bhamini, the proprietor of the old-age home of Nivasa (chapter 4), a woman in her late fifties, reflected on time and the life course.

Bhamini: I have been through different stages of life myself and now I'm reaching that old, elderly sector. And I know that I had a little more time when I was 21. By the time I was 35, I was in the middle of my business schedule and I had no time, I used to work 14 hours a day and had no time, not for my parents, not so much for my child [...] I was on the peak of my career and going crazy handling things while my parents were getting old, ok? So I would do my annual trip to my parents, you know, annual trip for a week or ten days but that's it. That's about all. And I would say: you come! You come and visit me. So they would come for three months or something per year. Three months with me, three months with my sister, three months with my brother, like that, but I would say you come, I have no time. And even when they would come I had no time to talk to them. And now I realise that the pace of life is so fast, children have even less time [nowadays]. People who want a career have to go travel long distances, they have to make ends meet, they have to do something with their career. They have even

¹³⁰ According to Rosa, an *acceleration society* is a society where technological acceleration and the growing scarcity of time happen at the same time “i.e., if growth rates outgrow acceleration rates” (Rosa 2003, 10).

less time. So it is not lack of intention or love [that they place their parents in an old-age home], they just don't have time [to care for them]. (08 November 2013)

In this comment Bhamini interweaved at least two different aspects relating to time. First she reflected on changing perceptions of time within the life course. She asserted that during certain life stages – in her case the peak of her career – time (for the family) became scarce. With advanced age, her perception of time had slowed down and she realised in retrospect how fast the pace of her life had been. And second, Bhamini pointed to the aspect of the acceleration of the pace of life in society in general, to the even greater scarcity of time the young faced nowadays. In her view, it was scarcity of time rather than lack of love or intention that caused children to accommodate their parents in her old-age home. As I have outlined throughout this thesis, modernity and the notion of a progressing India are often used as a means to justify and to make sense of changes that are morally objectionable, as for instance the outsourcing of care from the family to the institution.

This acceleration of life is often seen as bandwagon effect of the modernisation of Indian society. My informants were certainly taking part in this change and were fond of new technologies. Although they were proud of the “achievements” India had made, there was also a feeling that the younger generation was changing even faster, thereby “losing human values” (see chapter 3). This echoes Lamb’s observation that there is a common sense among elderly “that a ‘generation gap’ is increasing, partly because the pace and scope of contemporary social change seems [sic] so intense” (2009, 51). Many of Lamb’s informants felt that younger people were “moving culturally forward or away from ‘traditional ways’” (2009, 51) more rapidly than they themselves. Yet, Lamb points out that elderly people should not be conceptualised as mere “spectators” of a change which is allegedly driven by younger generations. The elderly themselves are very much part of this change and are “actively involved in fashioning new modes of life for themselves and their descendants” (Lamb 2009, 17).

According to sociologist Martin Kohli (1990, 15), modernity is characterised by a process of “temporalisation of life.” The course of time has become one of the central structural principles in modern times and therefore, the life course as social institution has gained significant importance. The temporalisation of life is based on chronological age and has led to a standardisation of the life course. Anthropologist Christiane Fry argues that it is the nation-state that leads to an institutionalisation of the life course. Structuring admissions (for instance to education) and abilities (for instance the allowance to vote or drive) by age, the state “uses chronological age as a convenient proxy based on cultural assumptions about what should be happening at those ages” (2010, 52). There are two problematic effects that follow from the recourse to chronology. First, it “masks considerable heterogeneity within and across age

groups” (Fry 2010, 52). And second, it generates a standardised life course “staged into a period of preparation (adolescence), a period of work and marriage (adulthood), and a period of retirement and leisure (old age)” (Fry 2010, 52). Fry stresses that other cultural concepts of the life course are not based on these stages but are structured by abilities, maturation, and kinship (2010, 52).

The life course of my informants was structured by these life stages, as retirement from work was normally predetermined through the state or the company. My male informants in particular were convinced that it should not be “the age factor” that decided on this life course event. While retired women still had to manage their household and almost never complained that they did not know how to spend their time, having nothing to do was of great concern to older men. Mr. Mohan, who had been a passionate pilot during his work life, said that he had offered his employers to work for free, if they had allowed him to continue flying. Mr. Lal would also have liked to work longer, as in his view he was mentally and physically able to do so.

Mr. Lal: Here in India, the government retires at 60. I was also retired at 60. I was working in my college, I was mentally, physically, emotionally, biologically... everything was perfectly ok. But they decided to retire me, so I had to accept [it]. [Yet,] still I teach, still I go to the colleges. Actually, it shouldn't be the age factor. Age is just a number. Even I have seen people of the age group of 27, 28, or 30, they are like this [makes a sleeping gesture]. [...] People at 80 they are more alert, more happy, their genes are more creative. (21 December 2013)

Mr. Lal emphasised the resources older people have, claiming that older persons were more creative and alert than younger generations. He also expressed the wish to stay productive at old age, to continue to contribute to society, aspects, which are discussed later in this chapter. A life course perspective opens up questions of what is culturally regarded as suitable behaviour in a certain phase of life and how this is negotiated by individuals in their daily lives. It also opens up questions of how ideas of “meaningful” pastime (be it active, be it renouncing) are shaped. I now address Hindu religious notions of the life course and discuss how they influence my informants’ understanding of old age.

Renouncing Renunciation

Hindu notions of time embrace two fundamental experiences of time: linear time, experienced in the process of ageing and the life course, and cyclic time, experienced in the regenerative processes of natural phenomena like the seasons or the times of the days (Michaels 2006, 171, 335). According to the normative Hindu model of the life course, the *āśrama* system, an upper-caste man¹³¹ is supposed to traverse four phases in life: *brahmacarya* (studenthood), *gṛhastha*

¹³¹ The life stages in the *Dharmaśāstra* refer to male upper-caste Hindus. “Little explicit attention is given to defining the appropriate stages of a woman’s life, which are determined by her relationships to the men

(householder), *vānaprastha* (forest dweller), and *sannyāsa* (renouncer). With the beginning of the *vānaprastha* phase, which serves as a transition phase between a material and a spiritual life, a person enters old age and is supposed to withdraw from worldly life as described in the law text *Manusmṛiti*:

[1] After he has lived in the householder's stage of life [...], a twice-born Vedic graduate [an upper-caste man] should live in the forest, properly restrained and with his sensory powers conquered. [2] But when a householder sees that he is wrinkled and grey, and (when he sees) the children of his children, then he should take himself to the wilderness. [3] Renouncing all food cultivated in the village and all possessions, he should hand his wife over to his sons and go to the forest – or take her along. [4] [...] He should go out from the village to the wilderness and live (there) with his sensory powers restrained. [...] [8] Constantly devoting himself to the private recitation of the Veda [Hindu scriptures], he should be controlled, friendly, and mentally composed; he should always be a giver and a non-taker, compassionate to all living beings. (Manu 1991; The Laws of Manu VI. 1-8)

In the *vānaprastha* phase the person is preparing himself for the “final life stage of *sannyāsa* – complete renunciation of the world, with a focus solely on God, spiritual realization, and release” (Lamb 2009, 161). Nearly all Hindus are familiar with this model of the *āśramas*. The idea of the life stages is orally transmitted and is often part of schools' curricula. Popular religious literature targeting younger audiences also reinforces these notions (van Willigen, Chadha, and Kedia 1995, 184). Yet, as anthropological research has shown, there are many ways how people negotiate this model in their daily lives. Studying ageing in an urban village in Delhi in the mid-1970s, Vatuk found that, despite the normative ideal of disengaging from worldly matters, middle-class older people maintained “relatively high levels of social participation” (Vatuk 1980, 146).

In spite of the strong influence of the ethos of withdrawal from the world in old age, and the strong desire to rest and be cared for, it is in fact not easy to find persons for whom aging has caused a lapse into inactivity or declining social participation. The aged are in many respects more socially involved than the young in the extrafamilial network and in peer group interaction. For women the difference is quite marked, since in this society young married women are very much restricted to the home and only move outside of it on special occasions. Furthermore, release from the daily responsibilities of housework frees them for outside activities, including participation in religious worship and gatherings, for which previously they had little time, though possibly much inclination. (Vatuk 1980, 144)

According to Vatuk, older people are “sharply ambivalent” about retreating from their families and thereby losing domestic power (1980, 147). They nevertheless refer to the idea of the *sannyāsa* “to describe their own position with relation to the family of which they are a part, to characterize their own attitude toward this family, toward society, and toward life as such”

on whom she depends for support and guidance – her father, her husband, and finally her sons” (Lamb 2009, 289 footnote 40).

(1980, 136). In their study on the network size of elderly middle-class residents in a neighbourhood in Delhi, van Willigen, Chadha, and Kedia observe that the notion of the *āśramas* “seems to have little impact on the size of social networks of persons of different ages” (van Willigen, Chadha, and Kedia 1995, 192). Lamb reports that even though her middle-class urban informants did not believe that they would physically move away from their families at old age, they nevertheless gained inspiration from the *vānaprastha* notion focussing on spirituality and detachment.

The model of the late-life forest-dweller is one with which all Hindus are familiar. Although most do not believe that they will actually physically move away from their households as they grow old, many even while living at home derive meaning and inspiration from the forest-dweller image, finding spirituality and detachment to be an appropriate focus of one’s later years. So, even while remaining at home, many older Indians engage in activities such as prayer, spending time at temples or with a guru, attending spiritual lectures, reading scriptures and spiritual literature, bequeathing material possessions to descendants, abstaining from sexual relations, adopting a vegetarian diet, and passing time alone on the outskirts of the family. (Lamb 2009, 162)

My own research shows that only very few middle-class elderly related their life to the *vānaprastha* or *sannyāsa* stage. My informants often led quite an active life fostering friendships and pursuing pastime activities. They stressed that being retired had the advantage of being able to do something for oneself as well as for society. Confirming Lamb’s observation, many were engaging in spiritual activities, following gurus of religious movements, or reading spiritual literature. Yet, in contrast to Lamb, I argue that the occupation with spirituality is not necessarily inspired by the forest-dweller image but also part of a larger middle-class “shaping of modern selves” (Brosius 2010, 144). As Brosius states, there is a “desire for a flexible, prestigious, easy-to-apply spirituality” among a growing urban middle class (Brosius 2010, 145). Sociologist Adam Possamai points out that with secularisation “the cultural presence of traditional religious institutions has diminished, but the search for a more personal connection to a religion, that is, for spirituality, has increased” (2005, 35). Anthropologist Maya Warrier rightfully notes that scholars who study new religious organisations in India have tended to overlook the focus on the self that marks those movements (2003, 214). She stresses that the popularity of guru organisations in India is not only a “sign of intensified religiosity among urban middle class Indians” but equally a “trend towards the secularization of civil society” (Warrier 2003, 213). In Warrier’s conceptualisation secularisation means that people choose among a range of options and therefore individually create and manage their religious identity. In this process religion itself is no longer “taken for granted as a part of a larger all-pervasive religious culture” (Warrier 2003, 213).

Secularization in this sense refers not so much to an overall ‘decline’ of religion as to the retreat of religion from *public* life. By secularization I mean therefore a decline in the public, community – affirming and socially-binding aspect of religion, and a growing trend towards the internalization of faith such that it is personal choice, inner spiritual striving and self-fulfilment that become central to religious life rather than the affirmation of shared community orientations, affiliations, aspirations and identities. (Warrier 2003, 214 emphasis in original)

Spiritual movements but also secular organisations focussing on the self in terms of self-improvement, self-help or self-actualisation have started to mushroom since the 1980s (Upadhyaya 2013, 100). It is not only the young or middle age groups that are attracted by these movements and their focus on the self. A number of my elderly informants were also following those organisations seeking guidance from one or several gurus. Gurus are spiritual teachers who – being elitist and authoritarian – have been catering to upper and middle classes in India since colonial times (Copley 2000, 6). Sathya Sai Baba was particularly popular¹³² and many of the elderly had one of his pictures in their house. Mr. and Ms. Ahuja continually spent periods of time in his ashram and also sent their son to one of his colleges as, in their view, it had a good reputation. Even though they “had good faith” in Sathya Sai Baba, they were well aware that other people considered him as “fake” and did not believe in his teachings. The Ahujas were not focussing on him alone. Besides visiting Sai Baba’s ashram, they went to see gurdwaras¹³³ and travelled to different mythologically meaningful places like Vrindavan, Mathura, Haridwar or Rameswaram.

Ms. Ahuja: We have been to Vrindavan, we have been to Mathura, we have been to Haridwar, these are all, you can say, pious places. Then there are Rameswaram in South [India]...

Mr. Ahuja: All these places we have been [...]

Ms. Ahuja [to AM]: I told you, [there are] 85,000 gods [laughs].

Mr. Ahuja: Not 85,000, 34 crores, everywhere you’ll find a new god [laughs].

Ms. Ahuja: Sometimes we wonder also and we don’t believe also.

Mr. Ahuja: It’s ok, everybody has his own way, no problem. [...] It is confusing; don’t go too deep in anything. You must know what is right, that’s enough. And anybody says the same, Sai Baba will say the same, Guru Nanak will say the same, there is no change [difference]. (17 December 2013)

For Mr. Ahuja everybody had to find his own way of pursuing religion or spirituality. As the teaching of the gurus was more or less similar, it was up to oneself to find one’s way to learn “what is right.” For him it meant not to go too deeply into things, as it confused matters too

¹³² Warrier notes that Sathya Sai Baba is “undoubtedly the most popular guru in India today” (Warrier 2003, 223).

¹³³ Gurdwaras are Sikh places of worship

much. This conforms to Warrier's analysis that middle-class religious beliefs and practices are characterised by "self authorship, where each individual creates and constructs a personal and individualized religious world in accordance with his or her needs and preferences" (Warrier 2003, 248). Mr. Lal, a former professor for engineering, repeatedly stressed that he was not a religious but a *spiritual* man.

Mr. Lal: Truly speaking I am not a religious man. I don't believe in rituals, I don't go to the temples daily, do some worship of the gods. I don't do. But I admit, I am a spiritual person. I read Gita, Shrimad Bhagavad Gita [Hindu scripture], Lord Krishna, daily. I perceive so many things. Gita has given me a new lease of life. (14 December 2013)

Reading the Bhagavad Gita was very popular among educated middle-class elderly because the text covers issues important to older people "such as the purpose of life, God, death and the cycle of reincarnation" (Bomhoff 2011, 106).¹³⁴ But apart from studying the Hindu scripture, and practicing yoga, Mr. and Ms. Lal were interested in a range of spiritual practices. They had been part of a Buddhist chanting group for three years. These groups were apparently getting more and more popular in South Delhi's neighbourhoods. The older couple had installed a Buddhist shrine in their living room and regularly met with a couple of neighbours in each other's home for chanting verses. Mr. Lal told me that it was a "spiritual" and not a "religious" activity because the practice did not dictate how to lead one's life. She added that this practice of chanting had changed her a lot. She used to be very introverted but had gained more self-confidence through this training and was now able to express her feelings in a more distinctive way.

It is the aspect of *choice* that makes "India's teeming urban spiritual supermarket" compelling to Indian middle classes (Warrier 2003, 231). Spirituality is attractive because people can choose and adopt elements from different religions for the sake of their personal needs.

There are two crucial and closely related elements central to this notion of choice. Firstly, choice means personal freedom to create for oneself a religious life conducive to one's particular individual tastes and dispositions. Secondly, choice also means self-authorship of a highly personalized form of religious faith. Religion in this sense is no longer rooted in past traditions and handed down in a taken-for-granted way from one generation to the next; it is instead personally constructed by the individual concerned to suit his specific inclinations and requirements. (Warrier 2003, 231)

¹³⁴ The resurgence of the Bhagavad Gita started during the colonial period and, ever since, the script has influenced political philosophy worldwide (Kapila and Devji 2010). Yet, in a less political way, the Bhagavad Gita has recently been used by new religious organisations and (self-claimed) gurus. For instance, the Bhagavad Gita is "invoked as an inspirational management text" and is used for management and training purposes in the corporate sector in India (Upadhya 2013, 101).

The extent of spiritual or religious commitment varied largely among my informants. Some, like Mr. and Ms. Lal, Ms. Gupta, or Mr. and Ms. Ahuja spent a sizable amount of time with spiritual activities, reading spiritual magazines, watching spiritual TV channels, attending lectures of Gurus or visiting their ashrams. Some, especially women, met either daily or weekly in groups for singing devotional songs (*bhajan*),¹³⁵ a very popular activity among older persons in India. Other informants of mine were only marginally interested in religion. Mr. Goswami for example told me that he “was not into religion.” Even though he joined neighbours who organised bhajan evenings, he never joined the singing but sat apart with other friends. For Mr. Goswami and his male friends, these neighbourhood gatherings were social events, and they were not particularly interested in their spiritual or religious aspect. To conclude, no matter if my informants were involved in religious matters or not, the majority did not withdraw from worldly life but actively fostered relationships, an aspect I further analyse in the following sections.

5.2. ‘Active Ageing’ with the Yoga Family

Active and Productive Ageing

Over the last two decades, NGOs, policy makers and gerontologists have started to promote positive images of ageing. This shift, which is sometimes subsumed under the term “The New Gerontology,” aims to counteract “familiar notions of old age as a social problem in favour of the idea of aging as an opportunity for the individual and society” (Moody 2009, 68). Positive conceptions of ageing are often described as two ideals: *successful/active ageing*¹³⁶ and *productive ageing*. As these concepts are used vaguely, I follow philosopher Harry Moody’s definition of the terms. I refer to *successful* or *active ageing* as “the expectation that later life can be a time of sustained health and vitality” and *productive ageing* as “the expectation that later life should be a time not for disengagement but for a continued contribution to society, through worklife extension, volunteerism, or other contributive roles” (Moody 2009, 68).

Ideas of how a worldwide ageing population should be tackled have been discussed and promoted globally by international organisations, NGOs, gerontologists and other stakeholders. In 1982 the United Nations organised the first World Assembly on Aging in Vienna. Part of the epistemology underlying the assembly was the assumption that ageing per se was a problem

¹³⁵ *Bhajan* is a “musical event comprising songs of glorification and worship of God or the chanting of names of a deity” (G. L. Beck 2012). The devotional songs are not only performed in local bhajan groups and in temples, but have also become increasingly popular in South Asian media. Indian spiritual TV channels like Sanskar TV daily screen bhajans as part of their programme.

¹³⁶ While the term successful ageing is prevalent in the US, the term active ageing is more established in European policy discourses. In his policy analysis sociologist Alan Walker found out that the European discourse on active aging stresses health, well-being and participation, while the U.S. American discourse on successful ageing focusses on productivity (Walker 2009).

(Cohen 1998, 96).¹³⁷ In the late 1980s and early 1990s it was common ground among international governmental organisations to publish reports which created and perpetuated a global “burden of ageing” discourse and stressed the need to move from public pension schemes to private provisions (Walker 2009, 79).

On international policy level a shift towards “The New Gerontology” took place in the late 1990s.¹³⁸ The idea of active ageing first appeared in 1997, in a background document of a G8 summit, entitled “Active aging: a shift in paradigm” which was prepared by the US Department of Health and Human Services. The report claims that active ageing “reflects the desire and ability of many seniors to remain engaged in economically and socially productive activities” (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 1997, 1). The shift in paradigm was, amongst other reasons, driven by the emergence of senior consumers and a “silver economy.” Owing to long-term employment and pension schemes older people grew more affluent and displayed “higher levels of hedonism concerning consumption and lifestyle” (Walker 2009, 80). On the second United Nations World Assembly on Aging, held in Spain in 2002, the WHO’s Ageing and Life Course Programme developed a Policy Framework Report on Active Ageing which drafted ageing as a “triumph and challenge.” In terms of the WHO the growing elderly population should be worldwide met with “active ageing policies.”

The World Health Organization argues that countries can afford to get old if governments, international organizations and civil society enact “active ageing” policies and programmes that enhance the health, participation and security of older citizens. The time to plan and to act is now.

In all countries, and in developing countries in particular, measures to help older people remain healthy and active are a necessity, not a luxury. (WHO 2002, 6)

The active or successful ageing paradigm has been criticised for its mere focus on independence, productivity, self-care, and self-maintenance. Sarah Lamb points out, that successful ageing is a “particular cultural and biopolitical model” that neglects “conditions of human transience and decline.” She advocates to rethink this concept so that experiences of dependence, weakness and mortality are not assessed as “failures” of ageing well (Lamb 2014, 41). In India, the buzz words “active ageing” and “productive ageing” are often not clearly distinguished but used interchangeably for both an active lifestyle and a contributive role of the elderly in society. The NGO HelpAge India¹³⁹ promotes active ageing centres which they intend to create across the country. The centres aim at providing senior citizens with the physical space to “engage in

¹³⁷ Cohen criticised that the structure of the meeting was “less interactive than didactic, and its message – aging as a global problem – permitted no variant interpretations” (Cohen 1998, 93).

¹³⁸ For a detailed analysis of active ageing on an international policy level see Walker (2009) and Moulaert and Biggs (2013).

¹³⁹ For details on HelpAge India see footnote 79.

social work and pursue their interests.” They are supposed to be based in locations owned or rented by Senior Citizen Associations. On its website HelpAge India states that the self-management of these active ageing centres insures the benefit of both, the society and the elderly themselves.

According to health professionals, elders who are part of a social or work group fare much better in terms of physical and emotional well-being. The solution seems to lie in like-minded elders forming small groups and working together on socially useful projects which not only benefits society but is of immense benefit to the elders themselves as it keeps them socially engaged and imparts a sense of self-worth.¹⁴⁰

The idea of like-minded elders that form informal groups in metropolitan cities is not new. Since the 1950s cultural and spiritual organisations have been formed by older persons providing “a forum for interaction and friendly get-togethers” (Nayar 2003, 200). Senior Citizens Associations (SCAs) have become a popular movement from the 1970s onwards and owe their origin to Rotary International, which in 1977 advised their clubs in India to campaign for senior citizens (Nayar 2003, 200). It is therefore not surprising that until today such associations have been elitist bodies, whose members are mainly educated urban middle- or upper-class elderly (Nayar 2003, 199). SCAs and the number of their members have increased significantly in India over the last decades but their influence and their power to act upon the government are still marginal compared to their American or European counterparts. Furthermore, it is more the personal influence of executives than the “strength of numbers, bargaining strategies, or pressure group techniques” that leads to concessions in the sphere of politics and policies (Nayar 2003, 207). And yet, the upcoming of self-organised middle-class organisations for elderly has gained in significance, because it has become important for older people to socialise outside the family. Children in employment and busy grandchildren have made the elderly find new ways to occupy themselves. In their *Elderly News*, the Senior Citizen Council of Delhi¹⁴¹ regularly reports about organised events and joint outings of members. In the following I elaborate on one of the many groups of senior citizens one can find in Delhi’s parks that started their day with a joint yoga session.

The Yoga Family

The *Delhi Yoga Sangathan* (Delhi Yoga Organisation) was founded in 1977. Since then people have met daily early in the morning in a small pavilion in Deer Park for doing yogic exercises and *bhajan* (religious singing). While over a hundred members were registered in 2014, only

¹⁴⁰ See: <https://www.helpageindia.org/programs/active-ageing-centres.html> (accessed 13 July 2016).

¹⁴¹ See for instance: <http://seniorcitizensdelhi.org/elderlynewsapril2016.pdf> (accessed 14 July 2016).

about 12 to 15 people joined every day, with equal numbers of women and men. The programme consisted of four sets of exercises, and members took turns in giving instructions. Exercises for eyes, neck, back, arms, and legs were followed by breathing exercises (*prāṇāyāma*) and *bhajan* (singing of devotional songs). I was repeatedly told that members had designed these exercises particularly for older people. Some elderly, especially men, did not take part in *bhajan* but left for chats at the benches aside. Others only joined in for some of the exercises so that there was a constant coming and going. The age of the participants ranged from 41 to 86 with the majority being above 60. Most people came from the surrounding neighbourhoods of Safdarjung Enclave and Green Park. Few elderly had moved with their families to other parts of Delhi but still continued to take part. As the neighbourhoods were quite homogeneous in their social strata (see chapter 2), the group consisted of educated middle-class seniors. Group members stressed that it was good to be in the company of educated and like-minded people and foregrounded that this fostered a mutual understanding and the possibility of mutual help.

Mr. Ahuja: Professionals are there, doctors are there, engineers are there, lawyers are there. So if you got any problem you can talk to them and they will give you advice. [...] So it's mutual, a very good understanding – like a family. (12 December 2013)

Although people emphasised the heterogeneity of the peer group and stressed that “all kinds of people” or “different kind of people” came together, class distinction through financial and cultural capital remained a crucial element of being a group member.

The group was frequently referred to as *yoga parivār* (family). Informal relationships in Indian society are often determined by kinship terms implying closeness and respect (Chaudary 2008, 13; Lamb 2009, 151). Considering the yoga group as one's “family” conceptualises the peer group as a surrogate which underlines the longing for close relationships and family-like settings. Yet, people recognised that this extra-familiar space also differed from a family space allowing the elderly to do something for themselves. Ms. Gupta emphasised that the yoga group opened up the opportunity to focus on the self instead of on the family or job.

Ms. Gupta: Once you become old you [might] say: ‘Oh, now we have become old, life is over,’ and all. But once you go to this yoga class, you will say: ‘My life has started *now*.’ It's the *beginning* of my life. Because till now I was doing [work] for my job, I was doing [work] for my children, now I have got the breathing space, I can live myself. Whatever the rest of my life is left, I can do those things which I never did [before], I can do for society, so we feel very happy. (16 December 2013)

The motives to come to this yoga class differed. For some it was the spiritual aspect of the exercises whereas for others it was the health aspect which was predominant. Yoga was considered to be “healthy” in many respects. It was promoted as a spiritual relief of the mind as well as a scientifically proven beneficial way to maintain one's health status. One woman said

she often had to bring herself to get up early in the mornings, but that being afraid of gaining weight made her “run” to the yoga class. Others just considered it a good pastime. All members agreed that they foremost enjoyed companionship. During and after the yoga exercises, people were discussing family and health issues, events, and politics. Sometimes people stayed after class to present (their own) poems or jokes. Reciting poetry or chatting with others was extensively done on Sundays, when birthdays of members were celebrated. The number of participants could increase up to 50 or 60 on such days, as cookies and tea were served after class. The expenses were covered by the person who celebrated his/her birthday. People gathered around the benches next to the pavilion, and many people enjoyed this common interaction, especially Mr. Lal, who liked being in the centre of attention.

Mr. Lal: On Sundays when we are celebrating each other’s birthday, the strength goes up to 60- 70 people, where we not only do the yogic exercises, pranayama etc., but some sweets, tea, etc. is also served after the class. Lot of chatting, lot of jokes, lot of *śerō-śāyarī* [poetry] are also being done here in the class. Lot of laughter is there, we enjoy, we relish and the life really becomes a phenomenon of beauty, joy, rejoicing by just rejuvenating our whole system, of our mind, body and soul. (14 December 2013)

For women, the yoga group offered a well appreciated the chance to leave the house. The release from daily household chores or child-care enabled them to join extra-familial activities for which they did not have time beforehand. Ms. Lal, who lived together with her husband, had joined the yoga group eight years earlier, after her retirement. Prior to that she had only taken part on Sundays, as she did not have the time to prepare breakfast, do yoga and go to work. Mr. and Ms. Lal’s son lived and worked abroad while his wife stayed in Delhi together with their two children. Sometimes Ms. Lal missed the class because she helped her daughter-in-law to take care of the grandchildren, but apart from these days she participated regularly. Ms. Agrawal, in contrast, could only attend the yoga class at weekends. She lived together with her husband and their son’s family. Her daughter-in-law worked as a teacher and Ms. Agrawal took care of her two grandchildren during week-day mornings which prevented her from going to the park. She “thoroughly” enjoyed taking part as she didn’t have many opportunities to interact with neighbours or non-familial people.

Daughter-in-law: She loves talking about it [going to the yoga class] the whole day.
And talking about the group also, they love it.

Mr. Agrawal: It’s a nice group.

Ms. Agrawal: I like it very much.

AM: Why?

Ms. Agrawal: It feels fresh when one walks in the morning. It also feels good when you talk to someone. [...] We don’t have any neighbour here even to talk to. It feels good to meet people. There [in the yoga group] we get

to meet many people. Someone tells jokes, someone tells poems, someone dances. It's quite fun there. (09 December 2013)

The yoga group in Deer Park was one of the many groups in the city of Delhi where middle-class senior citizens met daily. This elderscape was a site where they would share and exchange their world-views. It was a place of sociality beyond their private sphere. Sociality is a term with growing importance within the humanities as it stresses the process of social relations (Long and Moore 2013, 2). But it should not be misunderstood as harmonic coexistence. Recurring to Tim Ingold, sociality can be defined as a relational field where relations are negotiated.

For it is in and through relationships that persons come into being and endure in the course of social life. It might be helpful to think of social relations as forming a continuous topological surface or field, unfolding through time. Persons, then, are nodes in this unfolding, and sociality is the generative potential of the relational field in which they are situated and which is constituted and reconstituted through their activities. Power, trust, domination and exchange are all terms that refer to aspects of sociality. (Ingold 1991, 372)

Power, trust, domination and exchange were aspects that featured the relationships of the group members. For example, when members recited their own poems or verses from religious texts they longed for the appreciation of others to comment on their performance. Some people were more dominant than others and there was a constant fight for recognition. When a group member became too dominant, small arguments evolved. A couple of men, for instance, were complaining that there was too much talking during the yoga sessions which disturbed them. "Discipline should be maintained" one of them exclaimed. When members did not show up, others enquired about the reasons for their absence. This implied that people stayed informed about each other's activities and enquired about each other's health status. Yet, it also signifies a certain peer-pressure, disciplining members to take part in the sessions or to justify themselves if they did not.

5.3. What Will Other People Say? Disciplined 'Senior Citizens'

As pointed out previously, the normatisation of the life course creates social and cultural expectations of what should be happening and how people should behave in certain life stages. French intellectual Simone de Beauvoir (2008, 8) points to the fact that older people are often assumed and expected to be living examples of all virtues. If they evince desires, emotions or legal claims similar to the youth, it will be considered as shocking and be frowned upon by society. In general older people are not necessarily more apt to leading their lives in accordance with cultural expectations than people of other age groups. Nevertheless, in daily conversations,

older persons were ascribed certain virtues, like leading a discipline life, or acting wisely (Bomhoff 2011, 96).

A strong gerontocratic cultural discourse that favoured older persons' social weight gave them some leeway to act as they chose but also gave them great responsibilities. In conversations, domesticity, rituals and decision making older persons' professed dominancy was omnipresent. One of the legitimating bases for this discourse was the explicit assumption that older persons were wiser, less impressionable and more disciplined. (Bomhoff 2011, 96)

Bomhoff illustrates that these expectations were not only prevalent in the judgements of others but also internalised through self-discipline. Self-discipline created a sense of self-control that helped the elderly to deal with the social changes they experienced. Srivastava emphasises that being disciplined is also part of a middle-class identity that establishes boundaries between self-disciplined citizens and the undisciplined masses. "Self-discipline is the characteristic of the 'modern' citizen – 'others' may only function within a concatenation of imposed forces and restraints" (Srivastava 1998, 74). This might be a further explanation as to why the term "senior citizens" is almost exclusively used when referring to upper-class or middle-class elderly but not used for the poorer strata of society. "As the poorer masses did not fulfil their duties as (self-) disciplined subjects they were withheld the 'citizen' title" (Bomhoff 2011, 118).

My research confirms the importance of discipline for older middle-class people. A disciplined life was composed of a strict daily routine. In general, a routine, which is a pattern of ritualised behaviour, makes us familiar with spaces we live in (Rowles and Bernard 2013b, 9) as well as it helps us to structure time. Even though every day is different, sticking to a fixed routine helps attach value to daily activities, making them meaningful. My informants did not have difficulties in describing their day-to-day schedule. Usually older people get up very early because sleeping late is seen as both "a sign of weakness and as unhealthy" (Bomhoff 2011, 97). Besides getting up at a given time, going for a morning walk, having food or tea, taking a nap, watching TV, reading, or praying were also done within a certain timeframe.

My informants did not only demand discipline from themselves but also from others. Nonetheless, some people chose to act in an undisciplined manner every now and then, sleeping late, drinking alcohol, smoking, or partying. Mr. Goswami expressed that life after retirement had "its own charm." Because he had "earned" his life, he felt entitled to "enjoy" it now. To him this meant the freedom of choosing what to do and when to do it. As he lived alone, he was obligated only to himself. "Whenever I want to get up, I get up. Whenever I want to sleep, I sleep. When I want to talk, I talk." He sometimes slept late and missed his morning walk, especially after spending evenings with male friends playing cards and having drinks. The

consumption of alcohol in India has long been an ambivalent matter.¹⁴² It was not unusual among my Hindu middle-class male informants to have a glass of whiskey in the evening or to drink alcohol during functions. On the contrary, drinking alcohol was less accepted for women, and I never witnessed any of my female informants having an alcoholic drink. When Mr. Goswami invited me to one of his parties at home, only men were present, but my status as a European woman excused my behaviour of drinking alcohol. Despite rejections from his friends, Mr. Goswami was refilling the glasses during the evening. These objections were also a manner to show that one was not drinking excessively but within limits. Undisciplined behaviour was often justified as an exception to the rule and remained within discourse of the importance of discipline. Mr. Goswami always stressed that he liked drinking, dancing, and partying but that it had to be “balanced.”

Mentioning or showing sexual desires was also considered as undisciplined behaviour, and I did not expect this topic to come up during my fieldwork. But male informants often talked about female beauty. One man said:

I love beautiful people. I love even beautiful girls, like flowers. I consider every woman a creation of the almighty God. (16 December 2013)

Linking beauty to nature or to God framed one’s personal desires as God-given and not as human failure. “Beauty is there to be admired” some other informant told me. Justifying his behaviour as disciplined frivolity, he immediately added that he had remained faithful to his wife throughout his life and that adoring appearances had nothing to do with love.

The disciplined gaze of others often, but not always, led to self-disciplining. One member of the yoga group for instance, showed a very outgoing, at times narcissistic behaviour. He would hug women other than his wife and often frankly spoke his mind. He hardly drank alcohol at all, but members of the yoga group said he behaved like a drunkard, as in their eyes he had loose manners and no “common sense.”

This was especially interesting as there was a huge discourse among the elderly that one should not mind the judgement of others. Mr. Agrawal thought that “in the world, the biggest problem is that one worries a lot about what others will say.” Ms. Gupta had written a poem about this issue which was very “close to her heart.”

¹⁴² See Benegal (2005) for an historical account of the ambivalence of alcohol. He states that the “relatively relaxed attitude to drink” changed during colonialism, when the use of alcohol “came to be regarded by the power elite as an atavistic trait of the primitive and the poor (tribals and socially backward drinking to transcend their miserable existence) or a licentious affectation of the upper classes” (Benegal 2005, 1051). With globalisation and neoliberalisation alcohol use has currently become normalised among urban young people (including women) “with a noticeable upward shift in rates of drinking among urban middle and upper socio-economic sections”(Benegal 2005, 1052).

The four people¹⁴³

Since childhood I have always listened to the advice of my mother: Don't do this, don't do that – otherwise what will *the four people* say? And for fear of those four ghosts, I kept changing myself. I kept being a good girl. When I passed down this story to my daughter, who grew up in modern times, she started to ask: Mother, who are those four people? I felt, how my sleeping consciousness got stimulated, and I started to think: Yes, who are those four people? Who are those four people, who since ages have been destroying the very existence of women, who are society's mute, deaf, and limp beings, who actually do not exist? For some time, I became quiet and my daughter asked: Mother, what are you thinking? I felt like from some dark path I moved into the light. And so I said: Those four ghosts of fear who were alive till yesterday, died today!

The poem addresses the control mechanisms of society which are especially rigid for women. Female respectability and chastity remain crucial notions in the construction of a middle-class identity.¹⁴⁴ Furthermore, widows have been highly controlled and disciplined by themselves and by the Indian society through various cultural provisions (see Lamb 2000, 213ff.). Ms. Gupta had become a widow at the age of 39. Even though she was economically independent working as a college lecturer, she was fighting social stigma during her widowhood, especially because she was a member of a very conservative family. She often spoke about the importance to reject wrong cultural convictions, namely that women were inferior to men, stressing that women had been given equal rights by the Indian constitution.

The prevalent discourse that one should not care about the judgment of others reveals a self-explanation that conforms to Mines' observations in South India.

As people age, their interpretation of themselves, their relationship with ideals, and how they fit in society changes [sic]. Self-explanations also reveal that a sense of control in life becomes increasingly important, while at the same time the cultural dictates limiting pursuit of personal interests diminishes [sic]. (Mines 1994, 18)

The leeway older people create for themselves in opposing cultural dictates do not stop them from monitoring and judging others. Discourses and practices in regards to discipline are thus ambiguous and contradictory.

¹⁴³ The original poem of Ms. Gupta is in Hindi. The cited poem is an English translation. Primary source in possession of the author.

¹⁴⁴ On the subject of gender and middle class see Fernandes (2006), Oza (2006), Donner (2008), Radhakrishnan (2011), Waldrop (2012).

5.4. Engagement and Timepass: The Shaping of the Self and the World at Old Age

Mr. Kapoor: There are three [important] things in life. One is: keep yourself busy. [The second thing is:] Make a positive approach in life, never negative. Don't think: oh, now we are old, nothing. The third thing is, keep contact with your family people. (12 December 2013)

Mr. Kapoor, a man in his early eighties was convinced that keeping busy, having a positive attitude towards life and keeping contact with one's family were essential for ageing well. Keeping busy was indeed a major concern of elderly people, and pursuing regular daily activities was considered as meaningful "timepass." Timepass is a term that has probably come up in the 1990s (Fuller 2011). In my view, it is no coincidence that the word emerged with economic liberalisation because spending time outside work life gained importance. Fernandes points out that being part of the new middle classes rests not only on the consumption of commodities but also on "the creation of a distinctive lifestyle associated with a broader set of social practices" (2006, 73). Taking part in leisure activities is pivotal as leisure is a "critical space" for generating social distinctions and forming middle-class identities. The leisure economy, from Cineplex and malls to entertainment parks and fancy restaurants or clubs, has recorded significant growth in India since the 1990s (Fernandes 2006, 73). A crucial aspect in this change of lifestyle is the "politics of visibility," that is the public display of these practices (Fernandes 2006, 74; see also Brosius 2010).

Even though leisure activities are foremost pursued by younger or middle-aged people, elderly do also take part in these new forms of consumption. Going to fancy restaurants, visiting malls or multiplex-cinemas were normally done together with family members and hardly pursued in peer-groups or with spouse. My informants' daily routine was rather determined by activities like morning or evening walks, writing poetry, performing yoga or religious singing, gardening, playing cards, chatting and sometimes sharing drinks with friends. People often used the word "timepass" when speaking about those occupations. While leisure has become a "commercial form of entertainment" (Possamai 2005, 42), timepass denotes activities outside of working time in a more value-free way.

A lot of timepass is a preferably enjoyable way of using up relatively short periods of time, so that chatting to friends, playing games, watching television or going to the cinema would all be examples of 'doing timepass.' (Fuller 2011)

Research on timepass often focusses on urban youth and is mostly related to boredom (see Jeffrey 2010). Fuller claims that timepass is connoted with a "neither serious nor productive" activity, "because it is merely intended to kill time and ward off potential boredom, so that, for

instance, ‘timepass’ films or TV programmes are just silly or mindless entertainment” (Fuller 2011). However, my research indicates that even though timepass activities are indeed meant to “kill time,” they are not necessarily “mindless entertainment” but meaningful activities to the elderly and therefore highly valued. I elaborate this argument with the help of gerontologist Andreas Kruse’s notion of *Selbst-* and *Weltgestaltung* at old age. Kruse (2013) emphasises that people, even at very old age, are still guided by the motive to consciously shape their own lives (*Selbstgestaltung*). They also feel a shared responsibility towards family, community and the younger generations (*Weltgestaltung*). Kruse stresses that, for an anthropology of ageing, the relatedness (*Bezogenheit*) of the individual to other humans is key. For a good life special importance is ascribed to a joint responsibility and to the engagement of an individual (Kruse 2013; see also Kruse and Schmitt 2015). In the following I consider both aspects. I first illustrate that older people wish to dedicate themselves to community and society respectively. This social engagement ranges from social work for disadvantaged people to commitment in Resident Welfare Associations, securing middle class interests. I argue that holding honorary offices is not only a philanthropic endeavour but also a way of maintaining authority and influence at old age as it secures one’s “public identity” (Mines 1994, 13). I then shift the focus to the various timepass activities that are considered less socially productive but were still meaningful for my informants.

Shaping of the world: spending time usefully

The history of the “modern” voluntary sector in India reaches back to the late 19th century (Jenkins 2010, 409). Civic engagement has been informed by “Gandhi’s mode of political action – an unattainable ideal in which personal sacrifice gives rise to an organic flowering of mass collective action” (Jenkins 2010, 423). Civic groups in the early post-independent era were often closely linked to the “Nehruvian state” that “was designed to act as a ‘benevolent Leviathan’ chartered to serve the public interest by providing an extensive array of public goods and free basic social services” (Sahoo 2013, 261). This changed with Indira Gandhi’s regime in the 1970s. Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) became highly politicised opposing her authoritarian rule. Yet, already one decade later, NGOs were heavily criticised for having lost their radical stance and having been “subverted by establishment interests” (Jenkins 2010, 413). Critiques claimed that established organisations “became bureaucratized, either directly subverted by establishment interests or undermined by the loss of vigour among activists grown older and more risk-averse” and therefore “were stripped of their ability to mobilize people to take political stands on controversial issues” (Jenkins 2010, 413). The economic reforms in the 1990s led to a rollback of the state in social welfare and an increase in state partnerships with civil society organisations (Sahoo 2013, 262). The NGO sector became largely apolitical, and

NGO work was increasingly penetrated by global neoliberal ideas of “self-help,” “entrepreneurial spirit” and “self-development” of individuals which legitimised the withdrawal of the welfare state. In a neoliberal thinking it “is assumed that inclusion of the poor into the market reduces poverty without the need to change the underlying social and economic structures” (Jakimow 2009, 474). However, the field of civil society organisations in India is broad, and it needs to be considered that strategies, ideologies, and the background of people working in this field are quite heterogeneous (Fadaee 2014, 447).

Many of my informants engaged themselves in civil society organisations. One lady in her late 60s was a member of two NGOs, one of which trained girls below poverty line in nursing while the other engaged in reducing traffic accidents and making roads safer. She said she felt happy that she could “do for society.” One male informant at the age of 80 had been volunteering for a NGO over the last twenty years. He affirmed that all senior citizens should spend their time “usefully” by contributing to society.

Mr. Kapoor: At this age [after retirement] all senior citizens must do something for the society. If he [the senior citizen] has some liabilities, then he should work [...] for money. But with no liabilities [...] without money. Like I do by instance. My children are settled, I have my own house, I get a good pension from the government, I don't need money. So I'm prepared to work without money for this [NGO] and *spend my time usefully, well.* (12 December 2013)

Being actively involved in NGOs was often motivated by philanthropic motives. Time is spent well if one is able to help others. André Béteille stresses that “[w]hile philanthropy is extremely important in any civilised society, what really counts in the life of civil society are the associations created and nurtured by the impulse of mutual aid” (Béteille 2001, 302). While philanthropy is a quite prevalent motive in middle-class activism, mutual aid is not. The engagement of my informants certainly aimed at improving the lives of underprivileged people but it did not aim at overcoming class boundaries or restructuring power hierarchies in general. Apart from engaging themselves in NGOs older men were often holding positions in neighbourhood clubs or Resident Welfare Associations that were distinctly promoting middle-class interests. Harriss (2006, 461) argues that “associational activism” is one of the defining characteristics of the Indian middle classes that secure their interests no longer via politics but via civil society activism.

Evidence shows that participation in associational activities (presumptively, ‘civil society’) in Indian cities is heavily skewed toward those people with higher incomes and higher levels of education. Whereas we found in Delhi that poorer and sometimes also less well educated people are more active in political life, and that poorer people (especially those who have some education) are more active problem solvers, the same is not true of associational activity. If we take associational activism as an indicator of political participation then we find a strong tendency for wealthier and particularly more educated people to be involved, clearly calling into

question the popular notion that poor working people are able to secure effective representation or “empowerment” through participation in associations in civil society. (Harriss 2006, 455)

Promoting and running NGOs and other civic associations made older people feel acknowledged and enabled them to maintain authority and influence in the (neighbourhood) community. Established power hierarchies could be used to “get things done.” The respect that older people owned, the social and political connections they had established during their work life, and the free time they could devote, were some of the reasons why elderly often held positions in NGOs, neighbourhood clubs, or associations. Holding a position of responsibility also meant establishing a “public identity” (Mines 1994, 13) and gaining respect from others. Especially when older people introduced me to their friends, they often detailed the achievements of their counterpart thus tying their identities to the accomplishments or status of the other.

Shaping the world by contributing to society was also done through passing on one’s own knowledge to broader public and younger generations. Life-experiences, religious or spiritual wisdoms, or philosophies of life were eternalised in short stories, books or poems. Writing was not an altruistic endeavour but also aimed at being valued by others. Older people often proudly presented their writings and hoped for a favourable feedback from friends, acquaintances, or publishers. Mr. Lal was especially dedicated to writing which gave him “soul satisfaction,” as he told me. His wife was not appreciating his timepass activity as he spent a considerable amount of money on his poetry. They often quarrelled about this issue but it did not stop Mr. Lal to pursue his “passion.” Even though he had a computer himself, Mr. Lal preferred to write his poems by hand and then give them to a typist. However, as the typist merely was an “executer” who had to be supervised and corrected by the artist, Mr. Lal would proofread the first printed version himself. Having finished the editing process, Mr. Lal printed around 30 copies of his new work which he distributed among friends or sent to magazines. He was extremely proud when his poems were published in the Reader’s Digest or in other magazines. Many elderly did not only feel a strong sense of responsibility towards their family or community, what Kruse calls *Weltgestaltung*, but they also consciously shaped their own lives through meaningful pastime activities, what Kruse describes as *Selbstgestaltung*.

Shaping of the Self: Killing Time Meaningfully

Mr. Mohan: I have flown for 50 years, five zero, 50 years. 25 years in the airforce and 25 years with Air India. [...] I retired about one and a half years back, and now I don’t know what to do. [...] I miss flying. I told [Air India] I am willing to fly for the balance of my life without money. I am in love with flying so much. And the flipside is that after having flown for so many years, I don’t know what else to do.

At home I tell my wife: Give me some work to do. She says, you sit on - you are no good in anything except flying. (16 December 2013)

There was a huge gender difference in how to spend time after retirement. Women, as long as they were physically and mentally able to, stayed in charge of their household chores, particularly when the couple lived alone. But also when living with children, older women often remained responsible for the household as daughters-in-law went to work or were busy with their children's education. All of my informants employed at least one part-time "servant."¹⁴⁵ As older women had precise ideas of how to do things correctly, they felt obligated to supervise their domestic workers. Most of my informants complained about the unreliability of their servants, who would disorganise their daily routine when coming late or not showing up at all. Older men living alone had less firm ideas of their servants' performance but were often unable to cope with the household tasks themselves. When his male domestic workers¹⁴⁶ were not present, Mr. Goswami often did not ask people over for tea or a drink but if, he left the kitchen dirty. Once he invited me for breakfast and, while messing up the kitchen, stressed that Indians were lucky that labour was so cheap and one could afford servants so that one could spend time with more pleasurable activities. I quote from my field notes:

In the kitchen [Mr. Goswami] is quite clumsy, letting the milk boil over, spilling milk on the floor and over his feet. He is not really at ease with filling the food in bowls. Having spilt the milk all over the stove, which is dripping down to the floor, he says: 'Just leave it, the boy will clean it later.' (Field notes, 27 October 2013)

Even though most of the dirty and tiring work was done by domestic workers, older women felt there were always household tasks which remained unsettled.

Ms. Ahuja: When my maid comes, I'm busy with her, I'm busy with all my housework. I have to look after each and everything. [...] Whichever room you go, you find work. (12 December 2013)

While the domestic workers took over chores like cutting vegetables, cleaning or doing the laundry, the older women stayed in charge of shopping and especially cooking. This has to do with notions of purity and pollution which are connected to food (see Ray and Qayum 2009, 153). Moreover, serving and preparing food were tasks of a good housewife indicating the amount of care for one's family (see chapter 3) and therefore were not meant to be performed by servants. Men hardly were involved in housework, and it was only sometimes that the clear

¹⁴⁵ The word servant is commonly used in India. I only use the term when referring to the opinion of my informants.

¹⁴⁶ Older men living alone often employed male servants as it was difficult to find a woman who was willing to work in a single male household.

gendered division of labour became blurred at old age.¹⁴⁷ One of my informants, a widower living together with his adult son and daughter, did not go for a morning walk as he was busy waking up his children, who otherwise would not be in time for work. “I have to act like a mother for them,” he claimed. Apart from these exceptional circumstances, men generally spent more time “outside” the house, not always to their wives’ delight. Ms. Lal, for instance, was not amused that her husband spent most of the time with his poetry or working in his former college whereas she was responsible for all the domestic work. At the end of my fieldwork she did not feel well as her legs severely ached. Nevertheless, she continued to perform her duties, ignoring her pain. She became angry because her husband did not support her but went out of the house from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., spending time and money on the typing and printing of his poetry instead. While he was having copies made, which in her view nobody would read, she had to manage everything on her own, including making doctor’s appointments or looking after the grandchildren. “A couple should do things together”, she lamented, “but he does his own programme.” Mr. Lal kept ignoring the demands of his wife to support her better, preferring to admire her sense of duty and honesty in his poems. Apart from poetry he also spent money on gardening, another pastime activity his wife did not value enough in his view.

Mr. Lal: I do whatever I like, whatever my heartfelt desires are. I don’t bother her [Ms. Lal]. She will never like it. I will give a note of 500 Rupees [7 €] to the gardener without [her] knowing [and tell him] to bring this plant, that plant, that plant. 500 Rupees. For her that 500 Rupees... she would have purchased lot of articles for the household. For me those 500 Rupees spending on the garden are more important than the household work. My priority is different, her priority is different. (21 December 2013)

Although patriarchal dominance did not diminish with older age, several older people stated that the continuing household routine made it easier for women to grow old as they did not get bored. Others regarded housework as tiring and as a burden and stressed that it was easier for men to grow old as they could relax and enjoy time. In any case, women were not exclusively bound to their household work but also spent time outside the house, participating in religious or spiritual activities and gatherings, going for a walk, or meeting female friends. There were equal numbers of women and men taking part in the yoga group in Deer Park in the morning, but while men often lingered on to chat after the exercises, women tended to rush back to their homes to prepare breakfast or tea. Men were little or not at all involved in household work and needed to create a new routine after retirement. Going for a morning or evening walk, writing and reading literature and poetry, gardening, taking care of bank transactions, reading newspapers and magazines, and watching TV were popular “timepass” activities among male

¹⁴⁷ In her study on dementia care, Brijnath (2014) examines how gender roles of the carer and the dementia patient are no longer sustainable as symptoms progress.

seniors which helped them to spend time meaningfully. Unlike Mr. Mohan, who had difficulties killing time, Mr. Ahuja felt that time was “flying” when pursuing his daily routine.

Mr. Ahuja: And you never know how the time flies. Because people ask: How do you spend your time? It's very difficult to answer that question. Because you don't know how the time flies. [...] I spend about two, three hours in the garden, tending the plants, taking out the weeds.

Ms. Ahuja: Afternoon, he's busy with the plants. [...]

Mr. Ahuja: Gardening is a very good pastime, wonderful. You can spend two, three hours a day, cleaning up everything. A good pastime. (17 December 2013)

Time was perceived very differently by the elderly. It could be experienced as both flying by and progressing slowly. If not spent well, time could become an “external and controlling” force (Fuller 2011) leading to boredom. NGOs and gerontologists see isolation and loneliness as major problems of urban middle-class elderly. According to a study of the NGO Agewell Foundation (2012), 83.8 per cent of people over sixty in Delhi felt isolated or experienced loneliness. My informants often stressed that “staying active” was important for leading a healthy life at old age. Keeping busy seems to be the new imperative for older middle-class persons. This goes hand in hand with a modern subjectivity “valuing the active cultivation and concerned care of the Self” (Brosius 2010, 22). A good life at old age not only depends on the individuals' discipline but also on their success spending or killing time.

5.5. Loneliness, Death and Dying

Time and space are shaped by relationships. It makes a difference if one passes time alone or in company. In India, people feel especially uncomfortable when they have to pass time alone in public space. The creation and acknowledgement of proximity among family and friends is important in Indian society. Anthropologist Frank Heidemann details how his South Indian informants pitied him for living and eating alone and how they accompanied him in public so that he would not be commiserated by others (2013, 51f.). Equally some of my informants were reluctant to be filmed during their morning walk, because they did not want to be shown “walking all alone.” With proximity as such a strong cultural ideal, being alone is often equated with being lonely. Similarly, loneliness is often linked to a physical disconnection from family and friends. However, living alone is no precondition for loneliness as it can happen within the family as well. Brijnath reveals how people sometimes seclude themselves or their families to avoid social stigma. Feelings of loneliness also evolve when family members with dementia alter so much that they become foreign persons (Brijnath 2014, 151). However, the recent trend of living alone is predisposed for feelings of loneliness because elderly people are neither used to nor acquainted with it. Mr. Goswami, a widower who lived alone, told me that after his son's

family had moved out of the house he especially missed the proximity of his grandchildren sharing his bed. In the beginning, he faced difficulties falling asleep, so he formed the habit of watching TV until he was tired. Even though he kept himself actively busy and enjoyed his independence, there were times when he felt lonely and depressed. Emotions are linked to certain periods of time as well as the perception of time is linked to emotions. Feelings of loneliness hit Mr. Goswami especially hard in the evening between 7 and 10 p.m. This was the time when he missed his wife the most. He therefore often invited people over to his house or visited his son or friends to avoid negative feelings. He also stressed that time would pass quicker when one was happy while time would become burdensome when one felt sad. Feelings of loneliness are not only linked to time but also to space. Mr. Goswami stopped going to the cinema, for instance, because this reminded him of his deceased wife and made him feel particularly lonely.

How to Arrange Yourself in the Absence of Your Partner?

Severe feelings of loss and loneliness are often experienced after the demise of one's spouse. Most of my informants perceived the death of their spouse as a traumatic break. Manja Bomhoff points out that in times of emotional crisis, it is nevertheless culturally expected to pull oneself together.

Persons would repeatedly explain the importance of staying active and positive in times of difficulties. Dealing with grief through an emotional catharsis, in the form of long talks or discussions were [sic] not advocated. Instead, emotions had to be managed and controlled and emphasis was placed on staying calm and composed: being disciplined in one's emotions. (Bomhoff 2011, 115)

My informants often mentioned that they withdrew themselves after their spouse had died. This may have been due to societal expectations not to show emotional weakness. To cope with bereavement people rather kept to themselves. Yet friends often disapproved this behaviour and encouraged them to take part in public life again.

Mr. Goswami: When I lost my wife – I used to love my wife very much – so I was practically too much depressed [to do anything. I not only stopped working for the neighbourhood club], I left my own company also. I left working also. I ostracised myself. I didn't meet my relatives also, friends no. Nobody. [...] And then, I have a very good friend, then he and his wife - his wife and my wife were very good friends, so she also felt very sad - and one day when she invited me for dinner, then very politely - I am not getting the appropriate word, I would not call it scolded me, and admonishment is also not the word, hard counselling you can call it, a very curt counselling. Then she folded hands, she told me: "No couple dies together, somebody has to go first. It's unfortunate that she went, but if you would have gone first, that would have been equally unfortunate for her. Now it's God's wish that she has gone first. But you have beautiful children, you have [a] beautiful house, you have beautiful... everything, so it is her wish that you should also live happily. And if you are not happy, then your children cannot be happy. Do you

want your children to remain sad?” But the way she presented it was so touching; the same night I took the decision that I restart my life. And it took me two years. And I’m the same man again. (21 December 2013)

Older people often remind their friends or acquaintances of their duty to pursue a “happy life.” As mentioned above, Mr. Goswami’s befriended couple stressed the responsibility Mr. Goswami had for his children and warned him not to bring unhappiness over his family. Even though he finally succeeded in being the “same man again” in public life, meeting friends, engaging in the neighbourhood club, and visiting his son’s family, he still struggled at times alone at home. Once I came down to talk to him in the morning but found him still lying in his bed. It was evident that he was suffering from feelings of loneliness. That day I wrote down in my field diary that “in contrast to his very charming personality ‘on duty,’ he made the impression of suffering from severe depression at home” (field notes, 02.11.2013). Letting oneself go is not something to be done in public and is not accepted by others. Mr. Mehta, who had also lost his wife and lived alone, stated that after the death of his wife he tried “to opt out” of a group of eight to nine couples he used to meet regularly with his wife, but this was unacceptable in their eyes.

Some of the people I got to know were acknowledging feelings of loneliness even though they lived with their children. The death of spouse was a bigger change than children leaving home. They missed the “companionship” of their spouse, the intimate person who used to take care of them and with whom they used to spend most of their time. Mr. Malik for instance lived together with his son and his still unmarried daughter who both worked and spent their days in the office. He had lost his wife six years prior to his retirement owing to illness. During employment, he went to the office during the day and felt tired in the evening so that he did not need “much of other things.” But after retiring, he had to rearrange his daily routine not only because he now had less money but also because he was single.

Mr. Malik: When you are retired the whole day is with you. Then you have to rearrange all your schedules. So of course, in the beginning it was a bit difficult. Because you don’t get that much money also. Pension is about nearly 50 per cent of what you are getting at the time of your salary. So that is also a loss to you. Then the whole time: *How to arrange yourself in the absence of your partner?* If the partner is there then of course you can remain busy. She’ll keep you busy, [telling you:] ‘go there, do that’ [laughs]. (14 November 2013, my emphasis)

The question of how to arrange oneself in the absence of one’s partner is not easily solved. Mr. Malik had always imagined he would travel with his wife after retirement being freed of the responsibility to care for their parents and children. But now that he was alone he was not in the mood for vacation. Travelling alone was especially unattractive because his anxieties over being alone in case of emergency were particularly strong.

Mr. Malik: Being alone, naturally many things come to your mind. Moving alone, loitering alone, you will not enjoy that much. If you are with your family, with your partner, then there is no worry. You are assured that somebody is there to take care of you. I for her, and she for me.

If I go with a group, then it's ok. But such things are not conducted. If such things are conducted that they are arranging some sightseeing programme for elders or senior citizens, then it becomes interesting. Of course there are so many people like me and definitely we will enjoy. (14 November 2013)

Mr. Malik claimed that there were no chances for senior citizens to do sightseeing, although NGOs like HelpAge offered trips for senior citizens. Yet, many people are not informed about such leisure opportunities as NGOs are foremost associated with promoting rights and causes of the poor. It remains to be seen whether private service providers will expand their care services and offer leisure activities especially for affluent elderly people.

Mr. Malik passed his days reading three different newspapers as well as religious books, going to the bank or post office or purchasing groceries. In the evenings, he went for a walk with a friend who lived next door. His friend was not able to walk much, therefore the two men jointly walked up to a bench in the park, and Mr. Malik continued his tour around the lake on his own for half an hour before joining his friend at the bench again and walking back together. They had been doing this for the past 10 years, and Mr. Malik stressed that otherwise his friend would have been lonely. Therefore he joined him for "moral support." Later in our conversation he admitted that he himself felt lonely during the day and went to his sister's place when the feeling became overwhelming. As his sister still lived within a joint family he could keep busy the whole day which made him "feel fresh." He added that he was slowly getting adjusted to staying on his own during the day, but that he worried what would happen if he fell seriously ill. Even though he was sure his children would take care of him, he was anxious about not having anybody to spend time with him thus suffering from severe loneliness.

Many people think that staying alone is easier for women as they continue to pursue their household routine. Nevertheless, this does not prevent feelings of loneliness. Moreover, when coming from a conservative family, women are not supposed to and are also not used to leaving the house without male company. Women are also more often economically dependent on children or other family members, if they do not receive a pension on their own, which makes them more vulnerable at old age.

Keep Your Shroud Always With You, Ready to Die

In my presence, people more often reflected on or worried about the death of others, especially of their spouse, than they mentioned their own death. I did not explicitly ask people about

notions of death and dying, as this was not the focus of my research,¹⁴⁸ but the topic eventually came up in their conversations and writings. My informants were of the opinion that once the time had come one should be “prepared” or ready to leave this world.

Mr. Agrawal to other yoga group members: Keep your shroud always with you, ready to die. Why are we afraid all the time? [People say:] ‘This happened, that happened’ – be ready for it! [...] When death has to come, it comes. (09 December 2013)

Lamb also observed that “expressing an open acceptance of and readiness for death was considered to be appropriate and desirable in the elderly and was a part of their everyday conversations” (2000, 146). As outlined above, I witnessed that only few people related their later phase of life to the *vānaprastha* or *sannyāsa* life stages which both aim at withdrawing from the world. In contrast, they were actively fostering new friendships and shaping elderscapes for themselves. Yet, some felt that too much of detachment was preventing the soul to go in peace.

Ms. Gupta: The more you accumulate, the more you fear death. Because you have got the fear to lose it [all]. If it is lost, then what will happen? Then your soul will never go in peace. This is the truth of life. (09 December 2013)

For many of the older people I got to know there was no contradiction between being prepared for death while simultaneously being in the world, actively cultivating relationships.¹⁴⁹ What was more worrisome for the elderly was the idea that with advancing age they might no longer be able to control their mind. As mentioned earlier, many older people read the Bhagavad Gita, which was not surprising because the script deals with subjects such as the relation of the individual and God, death, the eternity of the soul, and reincarnation. At one point in the text¹⁵⁰ Lord Krishna explains:

Whosoever at the time of death thinks only of Me, and thinking thus leaves the body and goes forth, assuredly he will know Me.

On whatever sphere of being the mind of a man may be intent at the time of death, thither will he go. (Shri Purohit Swami 2001, 65)

Being in full possession of mental capacity and physical strength and the having the ability to focus on what is about to come are perceived as the basis of a “good death” (Vatuk 1996, 123). Older people worry that dementia could have a negative impact on their afterlife, as they would

¹⁴⁸ For notions of death and dying among older people in North India see e.g. Lamb (2000, 144ff.).

¹⁴⁹ In contrast, Lamb reports that her Bengali village informants were often torn between the expectation of loosening bodily and emotional ties at old age and their desire of continuing or fortifying them (Lamb 2000).

¹⁵⁰ For a detailed analysis of the numerous popular translations and interpretations of this text see Robinson (2006).

no longer be able to control their mind and focus on God in the moment of death. Mr. Mehta discussed the verse cited above with other people who encouraged him to train his subconsciousness in order to be prepared to die anytime.

Mr. Mehta: So, in other words, you are living your life - almost - for that one moment of death. If you don't train yourself in this period [at old age] there's no chance you'll see the Lord at that time. There's no chance in hell. You might see something else. So the shocking part of that verse is that you will go there. That's what you will become. I thought that was very far reaching, that had very far reaching repercussions for the men, for the individual. So you got to keep your mind very open, clear, transparent, whatever you want to call it, and you must always have some idea of what the Lord is. Because definitely he is better than what we are now. Whatever it may be. Whatever the Lord is. So you have to train yourself to be able to see the Lord all the time. At any time. Death can come at any time. (12 November 2014)

Central to Hindu notions of death and dying is *samsāra*, the cyclic transformation of all matter. Birth, life and death are part of a cycle, in which death does not mean the end of life but a transformation of one form of existence into another. The soul (*ātman*) persists until it eventually escapes the cycle, attaining release (*mokṣa*) by becoming one with the absolute (*brahman*) (Michaels 2006, 174). To obtain *mokṣa*, people can choose between three arduous journeys: selfless action, religious devotion, or spiritual knowledge. Furthermore one's behaviour (*karma*) in the current life affects one's next life, for the better or for the worse (Vatuk 1996, 122). In concurrence with Vatuk's study (1996, 125), my informants prepared for death by devotional and spiritual striving rather than by the accumulation of merit. Although there is a much greater acceptance of death and a more open acknowledgement of the inevitability of one's own mortality among elderly people in India, Vatuk cautions us not to romanticise this attitude towards dying (1996, 121). Death and dying may be nevertheless fearsome and painful for the individual, an aspect which needs further scholarly attention.

5.6. Conclusion

Mr. Lal: Such a beautiful life, such a nice life. The voyage of the life's journey is really beautiful. I don't know the destination, I'm not aware about the destination, but I'm enjoying the journey. (21 December 2013)

A life's journey is marked by time, and time has to be spent meaningfully to make life "beautiful." My research has revealed that against the Hindu conception of old age as a phase of withdrawal from worldly matters, middle-class elderly often remained very active and also interested in keeping ties and (power) relationships. The shaping of the world as well as the shaping of the self constituted the lives of my informants. Because children were seen to have less time, fostering friendships outside the family became increasingly important. Ms. Gupta once told me that it had become difficult to grow old in Indian society because children were

concerned with their own lives and did not have the time to engage in their parents' life. Therefore, she stressed, it was very important that senior citizens had "an independent life also." The case study of a yoga group of senior citizens meeting daily for a yoga session in Deer park illustrates social bonding and social commitment which exemplifies the urge of elderly to shape places in their own manner. However, sociality cannot be equated with a harmonious living together but must be considered as a field where relationships and class are negotiated.

Daily routines are gendered and permeated by power structures. As primary breadwinners of the family, men gain respect and authority over women. The end of work can signal a loss of power and self-esteem which men sometimes compensate by engaging in honorary offices. Although most of my informants believed that women age more easily because they can stick to their daily household routine, for many women this became a burdensome task, and some hoped for more support from their husbands. The level of mutual support notwithstanding, both men and women stressed the importance of one's spouse at old age. For most of my informants, losing one's partner was traumatic and led to feelings of loneliness, no matter whether the elderly lived alone or with their family. Yet, social expectations mounted in a public behaviour which rather showcased conviviality. Letting oneself go was incompatible with the importance to lead a disciplined life at old age.

Pastime activities like writing poetry, doing gardening, or exercising yoga are individually but also culturally shaped strategies to pass time meaningfully. Furthermore, being active by engaging in political or societal matters is not only a means to keep oneself busy, but also part of a larger middle-class activism which reinforces middle-class interests and establishes boundaries to the undisciplined masses. Leisure activities like visiting malls, attending multiplex cinemas or going to fancy restaurants were mainly done with family. Only slowly service companies advertise leisure activities for elderly, like special yoga classes or recreational clubs. However, the increasing number of affluent upper- and middle-class senior citizens will probably soon be advocated and targeted as a new market for the growing leisure industry in India. Senior Care Provider Samvedna, for instance, opened up a "Great Times Club" in Gurgaon in 2013. According to their website, the club is a space where older persons can "participate in purposeful and recreational activities, interact socially and unwind" and the company plans to expand these recreational centres in NCR Delhi.¹⁵¹ Access to such elderscapes is restricted by economic means. Thus, new forms of socialising do not only reveal the growing importance of peer groups for older persons but equally express the desire for secure spaces, which draw distinctions between belonging to an educated "club class" (Brosius 2010, 96) and the "unruly" masses.

¹⁵¹ See: <http://www.samvednacare.com/about> (accessed 01 February 2017).

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION



Figure 6.1: Eating Out in One of Delhi's Malls.
Photo: Annika Mayer

The Hindustan Times article “Bitter and sweet: Delhi’s elderly find space of their own” (N. Pandey 2015) reported about a large number of senior citizens in Delhi who were unable to afford the expensive homes run by NGOs or private companies, and who therefore applied for admission to one of the few government-run old-age homes. Portraits of three men and one woman living in such a facility comprised close-up photographs and captions revealing their names, ages, and former occupations. What struck me when reading the article was that all three men had been employed in middle-class jobs, namely as a manager of a “posh” club, a government official and a businessman, while the woman worked as a housewife. The article implied that their middle-class occupation had not prevented them from social relegation to a life in an old-age home. The author wrote: “HL Ghai, 85, led a lavish life before age caught up with him and he found himself at one of Delhi government’s old-age homes” (N. Pandey 2015). The message conveyed was that neither a middle-class lifestyle nor having children could necessarily prevent economic and social decline at old age. The article concluded with the life story of Krishna Devi, whose son suffered from a chronic disease. He was not able to take care of himself nor was he capable of caring for his mother. For this reason Ms. Devi shifted into the home spending her life savings on her son’s medical treatment. Another resident, Mr. Banarasi, was reported to have three well-earning sons who would not have a “place” for him in their homes. The article stated that life had been like a roller coaster ride for Mr. Banarsi moving “from a house in east Delhi’s Gandhi Nagar to the streets (almost)” (N. Pandey 2015).

Senior Citizens and the Reproduction of Class

The Hindustan Times article perpetuates the prevalent fear amongst both younger and older middle-class people in India that economic prosperity and class status cannot be taken for granted and are not safeguarded. The economic possibilities that had begun to open up in the 1970s (Mazzarella 2005) and have boosted since the 1990s have created new opportunities to move up the social ladder but have equally shaped new fears of falling down (Brosius 2010). The life courses of many of my informants indeed sounded like rag-to-riches stories, as they had worked their way up to a secured middle-class position. Caste status and education were important social and cultural capital which helped to pave their way. Yet, there was a widespread anxiety among my informants that India’s modernisation had not only enabled greater upward mobility but also resulted in scattered families and a decline of filial piety, increasing the risk of downward mobility in later adulthood. The popular Bollywood movie *Baghban* (2003), discussed in chapter 3, is an iconic illustration of this fear.

I emphasise that it is of scientific interest to look at older middle-class persons because, even though in an economic sense they no longer belong to the “productive” segment of society, they still produce class differences in their daily lives. Environmental gerontological studies have

often drawn attention to the marginalisation of elderly people in urban settings who cannot afford to take part in cultural or recreational activities. Societal exclusion of older persons is expected to rise under the influence of globalisation (Wahl and Oswald 2010, 119). However, my fieldwork has shown that older people are not only subject to social demarcation processes but actively take part in them by distancing themselves from lower classes and by creating exclusive middle-class spaces. Hence, it is essential to keep in mind that the reproduction of class status is necessary at all ages and that segregation not only takes place between generations but also among them.

I tie in with recent anthropological debates emphasising that studies on the middle classes are relevant for anthropological theory because they contribute to our understanding of the condition of class. They therefore lay the ground on which “anthropological studies of *all* class locations rest” (Heiman, Freeman, and Liechty 2012, 8, emphasis in the original). Class is intrinsically tied to economy *and* culture because middle-classness is not acquired but needs to be continuously practised. Therefore everyday lives must be taken as the points of departure from where theories of class can be developed or refined (Heiman, Freeman, and Liechty 2012, 12). India’s liberalisation policies and the country’s striving for international recognition as “world class” created new aspirations, identities and imaginaries. However, the current societal transformations remain embedded in earlier sociocultural forms of inequality (Upadhyaya 2016) and continuous institutional forms, like patrilocality and the ideology of the joint family (Donner 2016). This study has scrutinised the ways in which older middle-class people take part in the fashioning of middle-class practices and subjectivities. Class demands the delineation between classes. My informants’ reproduction of distinctions, which was required to secure their position towards lower classes, was discussed in the context of urban segregation processes (chapter 2) as well as in the context of the formation of peer groups which were based on belonging to class (chapter 5). Among my older informants economic capital, a disciplined life, educational background, and former occupation were important markers of distinction in regards to lower groups of society. Conspicuous consumption, which was important for younger generations (Brosius 2010; Fernandes 2006; Liechty 2003), was less essential. Nevertheless, possessing luxury goods like cars or TVs, having houses modernised, or travelling abroad, were important determining factors in the reproduction of their class position. My informants also had a bodily knowledge, or habitus, of how to move through exclusive middle-class spaces like private clubs or malls. The most visible sign of drawing boundaries was their active participation in the compartmentalisation of middle-class spaces both within semi-gated neighbourhoods and within fully monitored gated communities. These residential spaces are “sites whose boundaries both reflect and actively produce class subjectivities and affects”

(Heiman, Freeman, and Liechty 2012, 26). Through engagement in Resident Welfare Associations or membership in elitist Senior Citizens Associations, middle-class senior citizens demand the attention of governmental authorities claiming their rights towards the state. Their legal legitimacy distinguishes them – as proper “senior citizens” – from “elderly populations.” “Populations,” as anthropologist Partha Chatterjee (2004, 136) asserts, are “produced by the classificatory schemes of governmental knowledge” because they are pertinent for the government administration within the framework of development policies. “Unlike citizenship which carries the moral connotation of sharing in the sovereignty of the state and hence of claiming rights in relation to the state, populations do not bear any inherent moral claim” (Chatterjee 2004, 136). Even if the power of Indian Senior Citizens Associations on the government is still marginal compared to their Euro-American counterparts, it will be of much interest to scrutinise the dominance of middle-class elderly in civil society. The close examination of class-making processes is crucial, especially because media accounts in India still conflate elderly of different classes into a “seamless gerontological object” (Cohen 1992, 124). In the context of population ageing, India’s future policies need to consider these class differences and mechanisms of exclusion. My enquiry indicates that with the privatisation of elder care in India today social inequalities intensify. Private care enhances choices for families who seek support in elder care, but the access to such new opportunities is restricted by class. If the state continues to assign old-age provision primarily to families and if it fails to meet the increasing demand for assistance of those who care for infirm relatives, economic means will play an increasingly important role in the opportunities people have to shape the later part of their lives.

World-Makers Being Made by the World

The four preceding chapters of this thesis present different facets of modern ways of ageing, in which “traditional” values and “modern” lifestyles are re-appropriated and created. Considering recent sociological debates on how to theorise modernity, I follow James’ approach to account for the modern as the constructivist reconstitution of social practices in relation to pre-existing and continuing ontological orientations. While empirically “modernity” and “tradition” are often constructed as opposites, my research has proved that my informants have found various ways to incorporate the one with the other. Lived realities are imbued with apparent contradictions and ambivalences which people reconcile. Mr. Sharma, mentioned in the introduction of this work, complained that his children did no longer take his advice whilst he equally stressed that this was a “change for the good.” In a personal conversation Ms. Gupta told me that senior citizens were “not against this market economy and the Western culture” but that they sometimes felt that younger generations were not adopting “the good things,” which to

her meant hard work and compassion. Elderly people felt that the new economy had created unforeseen opportunities for the country's future generations. At the same time they voiced concerns that increasing consumption might lead to frustration and jealousy and they advised younger generations to carefully consider which ideas to embrace. This study has pointed to the field of tension (not conflict) of coexisting prior and modern ontological orientations in which people negotiate meaning, values, and communality. Ms. Gupta concluded: "I mean we should have the fusion of the East and the West: the best" (16 December 2013). Her comment reflected a significant optimism that India would be capable of mastering the current transformations by balancing multiple systems of values.

My analysis has revealed that ageing is a key site where anxieties of losing morals and "traditions" by an invasion of Western values prevail. National pride in India's rise to an economic power and the associated gains have eased the fears of identity loss in recent years. Public narratives demonstrate a rise of middle-class confidence in the handling of "Westernisation" (Brosius 2010, 335f.). As I have shown, this is less the case in the context of old-age provision in which institutionalised elder care continues to cause considerable uneasiness among middle-class Indians and is highly emotionally charged. Old-age homes remain a trope for the "bad family" and the failure of children to care for their parents. However, my fieldwork has also disclosed that both older and younger middle-class Indians increasingly use modernity as a "discursive strategy" (Brosius 2010, 336) in order to grapple with the intensified challenges which societal transformations, caused for instance by migration or heavy workload, present for caring family members. Modernity, here, is a means to justify unwanted or morally contested decisions like making use of institutionalised care services.

My informants did not only actively create and fashion sociocultural and urban changes but also saw themselves grappling with these transformations. Recurring to Jackson's (1996, 21) existential anthropological approach, I have shown how my informants' lived experiences oscillated between feelings of being agentive – of being "world-makers" – and feelings of being acted upon – of being "made by the world." In many different ways, feelings of loneliness were very real and present for nearly all of my older informants. Emotional distress was especially hard for those who felt neglected by their children. The detailed case study of a middle-class old-age home in South Delhi (chapter 4) has illustrated the various ways individuals coped with these emotions and continued to shape their lives, even if their living conditions were none of their own choice. Acknowledging diversity at old age and the singularity of the ageing experience is an important aim of this thesis in order to push theory to account for the complexities and inconsistencies of everyday lives.

It is a pivotal argument of this ethnography, that Indian families are not disintegrating but find new ways of shaping intergenerational relationships. Drawing upon the concept of *doing family*, elaborated by sociologist Natalia Sakisian (2006), I disclosed how my informants were continuously renegotiating family relationships and how they were adjusting in different ways to new family arrangements (chapter 3 and 4). Older people stressed that adjustment of all generations was necessary to refashion intergenerational relationships. Their own willingness to adapt to changes was seen as crucial in this process and the recreation of family cohesion in “modern” times was highly acclaimed amongst peers. Decisions older people took were influenced by what they thought would be best for their children. Mr. Goswami reiterated that he was happy as long as his children were happy. A woman living in Ashiana’s retirement community made the point that one reason why she had moved into this facility was to relieve her daughter from worrying about her well-being. The sense of responsibility towards younger generations, which gerontologist Andreas Kruse (2015, 446) denotes as shaping of the world (*Weltgestaltung*), also found its expression in social activities of older people. Their commitment in Resident Welfare Associations, NGOs, or neighbourhood organisations did not only express their striving to safeguard their interests but was also a sign that older persons felt responsible for future generations, even though this engagement was class-based (chapters 2 and 5). On the basis of Kruse’s (2013, 29) concept of *Selbstgestaltung* (shaping of the self), I have illustrated that older people increasingly showed the desire to shape their time outside the family context. My informants organised peer group activities because they experienced that younger generations “lacked” time to spend with them. Perceptions of time fluctuated and time could be perceived as a scarce asset or, if not spent well, as an oppressive force. Contrary to anthropological studies which relate the Indian term “timepass” to unproductive activities I have exposed the significance of pastime activities as meaningful occupation for the elderly.

Ageing in Place

The lives of my informants were marked by both their own and their children’s mobility (chapter 3). They were in various ways integrated in a web of transnational relationships, maintained through the use of communication technologies as well as through interim stays abroad. Studies on transnational mobility and diasporic networks have only recently begun to focus on older persons. Taking into account Levitt and Glick Schiller’s (2004, 1010) differentiation between “ways of being” in transnational social fields and “ways of belonging” to transnational social fields, as set out in chapter 3, my informants were rather engaged in the former of these two modalities. Although being highly mobile and shaping transcultural flows as well as a diasporic networks, most of them did not identify with a cosmopolitan lifestyle, but

rather engaged in practices “that signal or enact an identity which demonstrates a conscious connection to a particular group” (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004, 1010).

Building my analysis on theories of environmental gerontology, which emphasise the role of place for older persons, my study has ventured into new directions, looking not only at spatial practices of my informants but also at larger urban transformations and urban imaginaries that inform ageing in the city. As outlined in chapter 2 most of my informants were attached to place and wanted to stay in Delhi albeit the city’s drawbacks for older persons (like its perceived insecurity or the difficulties to commute within the city). “Ageing in-place” debates in Western environmental gerontology often highlight the importance of “home” for older people. My fieldwork has underlined that this assumption has to be reconsidered carefully. Urban middle-class Indians take into account a number of factors that determine their choice of residence. Intergenerational realities are important for the decision-making process as well as the quest for securing one’s family’s class position. The neighbourhood of Safdarjung Enclave, described in chapter 2, was undergoing an urban restructuring process in which low rise housing was turned into multi-storeyed buildings, which acclaimed middle-class status and turned the neighbourhood into an aspirational middle-class space. Older persons often changed their houses into new “homes” with a “modern” outlook. The multi-storeyed apartment buildings allowed for an independent living of both older persons and their children in close proximity. Neighbourhoods were competing with newer spaces, particularly gated residential complexes which were promoted as “world-class” living. A rising number of elderly also moved into such new spaces valuing the company of like-minded people, creating class-based communities. Decisions to move into these enclaves were often guided by the prevalent narrative of urban insecurity. Insecurities were perpetuated by media accounts which reported about crime against senior citizens and created anxieties, even though the real threat was low. It is thus important to consider the multiple reasons and realities that result into residential decision-making.

An important aspect of this work is the increase in what I, in reference to sociologist Steven Katz, denote as *elderscapes*. Katz (2009, 470) uses the term to denominate the networks in which global flows of retirement culture are embedded. He calls for a gerontology of mobility which includes “the transculturality of both people and places as they age and change while adding a dynamic sense of retirement ‘flow’ to the more static tradition of retirement ‘time’” (Katz 2009, 470). According to my understanding *elderscapes* are not necessarily spaces of retirement migration but rather cultural spaces and sites that have emerged for and have been created by older persons. My research has pointed to various *elderscapes*, including residential spaces and market spaces (in forms of gated retirement communities or the evolving “silver market” supplying goods and services geared to seniors) as well as leisure spaces (in forms of

informal, self-generated peer-group gatherings). This conceptualisation enables a new understanding of the entanglements of ageing and space pinpointing the capacities of spaces as locus for identity politics. As discussed in the context of urbanisation and class (chapters 2 and 5) and in the context of changing family relationships (chapters 3 and 4) I have outlined that the access to these spaces is determined by economic, cultural and social capital. Elderscapes are marked by the “companionship” of like-minded peers. I have revealed how real estate companies have developed elderscapes in form of senior living projects and how they have tried to create desires to appeal to middle-class elderly and their (NRI) children (chapters 2 and 3). I have shown how the elderscape of an old-age home is charged with ambivalent feelings and how residents and the proprietor grapple with place-making strategies (chapter 4). And I have acknowledged the informal elderscape of a yoga group as a meaningful space for peer based activities and interactions (chapter 5). The different elderscapes demonstrate the striving for homely places and for a sense of belonging. As places involve constant practices of place-making, they have to be charged with meaning.

Elderscapes are spaces for the construction of a middle-class identity at old age. As geographer Doreen Massey argues, space and place “are never just the physicality of plans and bricks and mortar (or even concrete). They are products of our social interactions and imaginations, and we construct them in a constant negotiation with each other” (Massey 1995, 204). Age is also spatialised, for example, in places like playgrounds, cinemas or bars, or retirement communities. The “very drawing of age lines and the definition of the spaces where particular age groups are allowed, is part of the process of defining an age group in the first place” (Massey 1998, 127). As I have shown, elderscapes in urban India are spaces where the social category of “senior citizen” comes into being, both in relation to age and class.

Future Research Avenues

A research project necessarily needs to focus on certain aspects and omits many questions which are likewise worthwhile to be addressed. I want to draw attention to some important points. First, my fieldwork foremost focussed on the perspectives of the older persons themselves. Even though I included the perspectives of several adult children, their voices and experiences stayed marginal. A more comprehensive study on ageing from the perspectives of different generations would be very valuable as it could point out the different agencies and personal strategies how changing family relationships and power hierarchies during the life course are handled and negotiated.

Secondly, the question of intra-class variations remained untargeted in my research. As I have outlined in the introduction, the growing Indian middle class is very heterogeneous. Class is enabling people to upward mobility but confronting them with the risk of downward mobility.

The middle position of this class leads to “the drawing of more rigid borders to keep socially and economically lower, but upwardly mobile, groups out” (Brosius 2010, 326). I researched upper middle-class elderly whose financial assets secured their position in the class hierarchy in a more stable way than the financial insecurities of lower middle-class families who have recently experienced upward mobility. Scrutinising distinctive circumstances could illustrate for instance if ideas of morality concerning the care for one’s parents differ with varying class status.

Thirdly, anthropological studies which target the lived realities of lower-class and poor elderly are needed. The older persons I have studied are privileged in many ways which allows them to compensate the anxieties coming along with globalisation. Their financial position is in vast contrast to the existential distress of poor elderly without security or family support. My study has only tackled questions which are not related to poverty. India’s enormous growth in elderly population in the coming decades generates its own challenges as the social facts of poverty and deprivation can never be trivialised. Poverty anxieties at old age are serious concerns and call for more research.¹⁵² Yet, we need to distinguish poverty as a problem for all ages (even if reinforced at old age) from ageing which should not be conceptualised as a problem per se. Comparing different economic and social circumstances, along with the agency and coping mechanism that older persons develop, could help inform policy makers as well as service providers of how to develop supporting incentives.

Fourthly, as I have focussed on middle-class elderscapes, only one part of a greater topography of ageing is explored in this thesis. Further enquiries of ageing in the city including different urban milieus are definitely needed. Also, I have argued that studies in environmental gerontology should enlarge their approach. Their focus on person-environment relationships needs to include urban transformations and urban imaginaries. Anthropological research on older people in different cities worldwide could lead to new ways of theorising “global ageing” in times of increasing urbanisation processes, without dismissing local historicity and particularities.

And lastly, a study on transnational mobile elderly and flows of ageing could reveal important insights into travelling concepts across national and cultural spheres. According to predictions, Asia will account for two thirds of the world’s population in 2050. Japan is currently leading in global demographic ageing but its leading role is predicted to be taken over by China in 2050

¹⁵² The meager pension for elderly below poverty line is only a subsidy but not an adequate income securing basic needs. Individuals above the age of 60 who belong to a household below poverty line are eligible for the Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme. Currently, beneficiaries aged 60-70 receive 200 INR (2.75 €) and beneficiaries above 80 receive 500 INR (6.90 €) per month. See: <http://www.nsap.nic.in/Guidelines/aps.pdf> (accessed 15 January 2017).

because of its one child policy (Goodman and Harper 2006). It will be of much interest not only how global flows but also how pan-Asian flows will inform cultural and social discourses on how to age in times of global transformations.

Closing Remarks: Countering Statistical Panic

The current global demographic transition has gained much attention both in the media and in academic discussions. The shift in demographics started in Europe around 1800 and is now taking place worldwide. With declining mortality and reduced fertility, population growth decreases and populations become older (Lee 2003). In India life expectancy has risen from around 21 years in 1921 (Mukherjee 1976, 221) to 68 years in 2014 (UNDP 2015, 210). In comparison with other Asian countries India's fertility rate has declined more slowly (Guilmoto 2016, 128), but it has halved from 5.9 children in the 1950s to 2.48 children in 2010-2015 (UN Population Division 2015). On the long run these changes lead to an increase in the elderly population and a decrease of working-age population, a phase which in India is expected to happen between 2015 and 2060 (Lee 2003, 182). Currently over 100 million people in India are over the retirement age of 60 and this number is expected to more than triple by 2050 (UN Population Division 2015). Studies on ageing usually begin with citing demographics to underline the dimension and importance of their analysis. The numbers are often repeated, but scholars rarely scrutinise underlying parameters¹⁵³ nor do they pinpoint their implications. Demographics "are used not to supplement but to represent the meaning of old age and the condition of old people" (Cohen 1998, 90f.). Furthermore there is a persistent narrative in both scholarly works and the media referring to the increase in older population as a "problem" (see for instance Raju 2014, 180) or depicting it as doomsday scenario (Kazmin 2013). M. Thavami, an Indian sociologist, writes for instance:

The dawn of new millennium [sic] will definitely have many social problems like organised terrorism, AIDS, and problem of aged [sic]. (Thavamani 2002, 33)

Listing the "problem" of the aged together with terrorism and a pandemic is in line with other disaster scenarios which are designed in connection with ageing in different media. Moreover, ageing is often viewed from a perspective of risk. Risks for the fiscal structures and public health systems are proven by statistics, a procedure which increases a widespread uncertainty (Kunow 2005, 29). Sociologist Ulrich Beck states that risk essentially comes with a public consciousness that creates the publicity of risk. A "risk society" means that it is no longer

¹⁵³ Dependency ratios for example are based on the presumption that younger people are working while older people are not, which is not appropriate in many Indian contexts. Furthermore "the idea of 'dependency' as a parameter of a problem rests on a set of culturally and historically located rules in which autonomy defines selfhood and individuals are responsible for the maintenance of their autonomy" (Cohen 1998, 91).

history but the future that determines the present. The future is non-existent and constructed, but it is taken as reason for present experiences and actions (U. Beck 2007, 171). Within the market sphere more predictability means less risk, because uncertainties themselves have their price, yet – as Kathleen Woodward elucidates – within the sphere of our daily lives the evaluation of risk, even if it is small, produces rather panic than security (Woodward 1999, 198). Large-scale concerns like demographical transitions are part of this “[c]atastrophic statistical discourse” which is able to mobilise “statistical panic” making us feel that these numbers constitute our own future (Woodward 1999, 185). Woodward is not challenging the method of statistical probability; she is interested in the circulation and appropriation of these numbers in daily discourses. Catastrophic discourses are very volatile, being sometimes urgent, sometimes boring. Yet statistical panic may hit hard “when our own individual epidemiological, familial, and financial futures are at stake” (Woodward 1999, 185). In this perspective “statistics are probabilities cast into possible and alternative futures that for the most part take on a dark dimension” (Woodward 1999, 179).

In the context of ageing, where mobilising statistical panic is prevalent, we need to keep in mind that scientific facts or facts in general are not undisputable certainties. They are informed by theoretical assumptions and categorisations, for instance the definition of when somebody is considered “being old.” Therefore, we have to take Willemijn de Jong’s call for a review of statistical facts with lived realities seriously (Jong 2012). Anthropological research like this study can contrast statistical panic because they acknowledge the social and cultural context that big data often neglect. Projections that reduce human behaviour to abstract numbers must not be accurate or hold true. Ethnographic description accounts for the diversity statistics necessarily need to simplify. The empirical insights and findings of ethnographical accounts in times of “global ageing” contribute to the recognition of the “uniqueness of the transitions and transformations of aging and intergenerational relationships in the current historical moment, without reverting to zero-sum scenarios or alarmist demography” (Danley and Lynch 2013, 6).

In my view, the task of cultural scientists is to counter alarmist forecasts by contributing to a sincere analysis of lived realities. My study has brought seemingly contradictory narratives and practices to the fore. It has revealed that ageing not only harbours risk or potential but also everything in between. Importantly, ageing must not be regarded as a problem per se. And yet, social scientists have to remain vigilant in order to disclose and critique social imbalances. My research suggests that ageing in India is on its pathway to rising social inequalities. Class distinction becomes a driving force in the making of senior citizens, who can afford private elder care, and of destitute elderly populations, who are at the favour of the state. This development warrants further critical assessment.

APPENDIX

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Notes on Transliteration and Translation

All conversations and statements were collected in conversations or interviews which I either tape-recorded or noted down in my field notebooks during or shortly after the encounters. Taperecorded transcriptions are specified by date, field notes are marked as such in brackets. Most of the interviews were conducted in English. For interviews in Hindi I was assisted by Lokesh, Saurabh Kocher, and Sambhav Sharma. The person asking the question is denoted by her or his name. My name is abbreviated to AM. Translations from Hindi to English were revised by Subin Hachhethu and Prerana Dhakhwa.

Central Hindi terms or important expressions are transliterated by the International Alphabet for Sanskrit Transliteration scheme and are explained in the text. Film or book titles as well as political campaigns are transliterated with their usual phonetic notation in India.

List of Abbreviations

AM – Annika Mayer

DDA – Delhi Development Authority

DFG – Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (German Research Foundation)

DIT – Delhi Improvement Trust

JLL – Jones Lang LaSalle (International Real Estate Consultant Company)

NGO – Non-Governmental Organisation

NCR – National Capital Region of Delhi

NRI – Non-Resident Indian

RWA – Resident Welfare Association

SCA – Senior Citizens Association

TC – Time Code

UN – United Nations

UNFPA – United Nations Population Fund

WHO – World Health Organization