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# Negotiating Spaces of Everyday Politics: An Ethnographic Study of Organizing for Social Transformation for Women in Urban Poverty, Delhi, India

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NEGOTIATING SPACES OF EVERYDAY POLITICS: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF ORGANIZING FOR SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION FOR WOMEN IN URBAN POVERTY, DELHI, INDIA

PhD Series 48-2018

Anne Sofie Fischer

# NEGOTIATING SPACES OF EVERYDAY POLITICS

## - AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF ORGANIZING FOR SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION FOR WOMEN IN URBAN POVERTY, DELHI, INDIA

Doctoral School of Organisation and Management Studies | **PhD Series 48.2018**

CBS COPENHAGEN BUSINESS SCHOOL
HANDELSHØJSKOLEN




# NEGOTIATING *Spaces* OF EVERYDAY POLITICS

An ethnographic study of organizing for social transformation for women in urban poverty, Delhi, India

PhD Dissertation | Anne Sofie Fischer
Supervisor | Timon Beyes | Ester Barinaga
Doctoral School in Organization and Management Studies | Copenhagen Business School
September 2018

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# धन्यवाद

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"Writing or reading ethnography is an adventure that leaves one where one began, but perceiving one's location differently because of the adventure took place," Strathern (2004: 15) eloquently writes, which indeed reflects my experience leading to this dissertation, and the adventure took place due to the people mentioned here, and so many more. Thank you.

Anne Sofie Fischer
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- An ethnographic study of organizing for social transformation
for women in urban poverty, Delhi, India

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# CONTENT


PROLOGUE 7
A montage from the field

1 INTRODUCTION 19
Driving social transformation

2 A SPATIAL APPROACH 63
Researching and theorizing social transformation spatially

3 THE SETTING 119
Politics of everyday life in Delhi's poor communities

4 UNSETTLING SPACE 158
Considering driving: unsettling space through a radical proposition

5 NEGOTIATING SPACE 191
Becoming a driver: embodied negotiations of spatial relations

6 EXPANSION OF SPACE 239
Being a driver: encountering new worlds

7 TRANSFORMING SPATIAL POLITICS 292
Female drivers in Delhi: being the change

8 SPATIAL AMBIGUITIES 319
"Walkouts" and tensions of transforming spatial politics

9 A SPATIAL THEORIZING OF SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION 353
Discussion: implications of a spatial approach

10 CONCLUDING REMARKS 407
Social transformation through female driving in Delhi

EPILOGUE 415
Reminiscences of fieldwork

REFERENCES 416
APPENDIX 429
ABSTRACT 434
DANSK RESUMÉ 436

And the day came when the risk to remain tight in a bud
was more painful than the risk it took to blossom.



Anaïs Nin

# PROLOGUE



# Everyday odysseys, a tapestry of becomings

**Gendered spaces**

The metro is relatively new to the City. The first line opened in 2002, and by 2010 all the major lines were in operation. It is estimated that the metro has an average of 2.4 million daily commuters. In peak hours at the main connection stations, guards stand at the platforms to ensure proper queuing. The majority of the commuters are men; by the far end of each platform a sign says "Ladies Only." The sign is hanging from the ceiling and there is an identical marker on the ground – both are pink. Women flock together here in their brightly colored clothing. One car of the metro train is reserved "for ladies only," which is also repeatedly announced during the commute over a loudspeaker.

**1%**

Oxfam released a report stating that currently 62 people in the world – 9 women and 53 men, to be specific – have the same wealth as 50% of the world's poorest – that is, 3.6 billion – people. "An economy for the 1%," they call this, our current system. In this Country, too, the few have the most: 57 billionaires own the same amount as the bottom 70% of citizens. In this city of roughly 20 million inhabitants, it is estimated that 50% live in poor resettlements and unauthorized communities without any basic amenities; the majority are women and children. In his departing speech before the UN General Assembly in September 2016, US President Barack Obama declared, "A world where 1% of humanity controls as much wealth as the bottom 99% will never be stable."

**Arriving**

I arrive in the City by airplane, a 9-hour journey with a connecting flight from a northern European capital. Amongst the flight connections I can choose from, most land at night in this large capital city, with only a few exceptions. Having landed here about 14 times, I did not use to consider this matter, but now I do; I always opt for a morning arrival. I feel safer alone in a taxi when it is light and the sun is out – unless the driver is a woman, like me, but that option is quite recent and unlikely given the small number of women drivers. I can recall, over the years, lengthy past-midnight negotiations with male taxi drivers at the City airport as they crowd around me staring

and calling, some even poking my shoulder to get my attention. “I only go with one person, or else I find another taxi,” I have heard myself assert, refusing to enter a taxi alone with several men. Usually, many drivers are not wearing uniforms, making it impossible to differentiate between a professional taxi driver and just a random guy with a car. Who to pick? In the back of my mind – no, actually, at the forefront in such moments – is a tapestry of stories relayed by fellow travelers I have met in the country over the years on how an airport taxi driver has led them astray, robbed them of all belongings, and sometimes done worse. Eventually, a choice must always be made. I go with a driver. And then, I hope for the best. Sometimes I have taken a photo of the car’s license plate before entering, just in case, to have some potential leverage for bargaining. Most drives have followed a similar pattern: As the car takes off from the airport, which is at the dodgy outskirts of the City, I make sure to have phone connection, although this is not always possible. Regardless, whether it is day or night, I make almost theatrical gestures to make it evident for the driver that I am following the routes he is taking on a map. I have even faked a few phone calls to signal that I can reach people if the driver has seemed particularly odd or overtly focused on me in the rearview mirror. Many times I have asked a driver to stop staring at me or have shown it with body language, to greater or lesser success. Maintaining a stern look, avoiding eye contact, and signaling that you know your way is my general recipe for airport drives. It is a tiresome negotiation. If, as it happens sometimes, the car suddenly takes an unfamiliar route off the main highways onto smaller roads that are desolate and dusty, as if moving out of the City, my heart starts beating a little faster, my body instantaneously goes into alert mode; meanwhile, my mind begins making exit strategies. Taking a taxi in the daytime, the ride feels way less urgent, perhaps because there is life on the roads and people just about everywhere. So I opt for the sunlit rides now. Today the sun is out as I arrive back in the City.

**Not for women**

Few women can be spotted behind the wheel in the City. Public statistics officially show that in 2013, out of approximately 7.8 million females, a mere 106,453 women were registered as car drivers in this vibrant metropolis. That is just for driving in general. Take professional driving, and the number diminishes to almost nothing; for public transport, it is even less.

**Two-finger test**

In an office – which really is a residential apartment – in the south of the City, a small group of colleagues are having lunch. What has brought them together is a shared mission – working for emancipation and better livelihood options for women in poverty, an issue they find in pressing

need of being addressed. They do so by training women to become professional drivers. Women on Wheels, they call the program. It is considered a highly untraditional undertaking in the city, as it is a common notion that women do not drive. The four colleagues, all women, are chatting. This week's news is that the driving service Uber has been temporarily banned in the wake of a rape incident in one of their registered cars. The government has put some restrictions on all the larger taxi firms to increase the level of safety – something with their app-based applications being insufficient for the necessary level of safety, and not in compliance with the regulations. "There have been several similar rape cases in connection with taxi services," one of the women says. They talk heatedly about the public rape cases, and the phrase "the two-finger test" is mentioned. I ask what this means. "It is a term known to people in our line of work," the same woman says with a tone of disgust. She continues, "It refers to how some police units traditionally have been handling cases of rape. In order to test whether the girl has legitimately been raped or not – which they often doubt – they put two fingers into her to see whether there is still virginity. That is just one more level of abuse." The lunch chat has taken a serious turn, and the atmosphere is more somber. The women explain that the practice has been forbidden by law but as it so often happens, the practice still lingers. "I am not sure how widespread it is," she concludes, "but my guess is that it is still fairly common. You know, there is this sense in many communities that if a girl has already had sexual intercourse with someone, then it is not a big issue if she gets raped – then she is 'loose' and improper, and almost asking for it."

**The use of a phone**

In a bus moving slowly through the noisy, hectic city traffic, a young, slender woman, 18 years of age, can barely find a space to stand, as everyone is packed like sardines on this commute. She is new to the Women on Wheels training program and in the process of learning how to drive. She is also new to commuting alone, without family members or friends, but she has to do it in order to get to the training. Swiftly, and in a sudden surge of courage, she punches her elbow into the side of the man next to her, who is touching her body from behind. "Watch out or I will call the police," she sneers at him, holding an old-fashioned phone before him. It settles the dispute, and the man leaves her alone. In the phone, which she has borrowed from her brother, she has stored two important numbers provided by the Social Organization: one to a direct police line for violence against women, and one to a social shelter for victims of violence. She has never made use of the numbers in the sense of dialing them up, but she has used them several times as a threat. The thing is, she is actually severely hesitant about whether she would ever make the call, but for now it does not matter, for the man next to her does not know. As she gets off the bus, she is proud

of herself and feels stronger somehow. What the man also does not know is that a similar thing happened to her a few days earlier, but she said and did nothing.

**His version**

> When she told me [of female driving] the first time, I was completely shocked, thinking, How this is even possible? She told me, 'You can go and see if you like it, if you find it okay, or else we will let it go.' You face a lot of problems [of harassment] with people initially, making such a decision, but after a while it was okay. People used to say, 'How will she drive? We haven't seen any women doing this.' This is something for men. My family and many of the people here [in the community] had their reservations and objections. A lot of people said to me, 'She cannot do this,' but I said, 'I trust her completely.' I didn't believe that she would not be able to do it.

'She,' his wife, was among the first female taxi drivers in the City, trained by the Social Organization's Women on Wheels program. Today she drives all across the City. At first he thought that a woman could not drive. Then he thought a woman should not drive. But don't hold it against him – he just thought what everyone else was thinking. He didn't know better, until he did.

**Her version**

> My husband said, 'I have never seen a lady driver.' I told him that I am telling the truth. He said, 'Stop with this. Do stitching like you used to at home only.' But I told my husband that just because you have never seen it, it doesn't mean it can never happen. I said I have to do it. He refused at first and everyone in the house said that I should do something else. I told him, 'Let me try, we have four children [to care for], let us take a chance. If I like it, I will do it.' I told him that I am only concerned about what he thinks, no one else. If he is ready to give it a try, I am ready to do it. So he agreed.

'He,' her husband, comes from a family of great poverty, but today he takes loans from his wife to support his own business of making wooden mats and curtains. He lives with her and their four children in a hut of their own, on top of his family's hut, built from her income in an extremely poor community on the outskirts of the City. It is an unusual luxury in their community to have a separate hut, and increased status comes with it.

**What should not have been seen**

He got caught watching porn at a common computer at the Social Organization's office one evening, when he was covering the evening shift until 9 p.m. One staff member is always present in the later hours to respond to phone calls or occasional emergencies. It is the only place he had access to a computer, coming from a poor background himself. He no longer answers the phone, but is looking for a job elsewhere.

**What is up with Eve?**

In the comfort of the backseat of her car, a university professor is being driven across the City by her Driver, one of the few professional female drivers in the City. The Driver, who used to be a maid in the residence of an upper-class family, got trained and employed by the Social Organization. For several years now, she has been earning a living as a private driver. As a reaction to the large percentage of violence against women in the City's public transportation system, City government has pressured the regular taxi firms to increase safety for women. One approach they agree on is having female drivers for female passengers; this is something that the Social Organization was the first to move on in this City, albeit on a small scale. Now the regular taxi firms are following suit, and given the scarcity of qualified female drivers, they are hiring drivers working for the Social Organization. Meru Cabs, one of the major taxi players in the City, just launched a mobile application that includes the option of hiring a female driver under the name "Meru Eve." Eve, as in Adam and Eve; the Eve that led humanity astray, as they say. "What do you think of that name?" I ask the professor of sociology, who happens to be an expert on gendered issues in the Country, sitting in the backseat of the car. She smiles. "Yeah, it seems quite ironic. It is a very interesting question. It is a very loaded word, Adam and Eve, but I don't think they even think about it. They just see it as synonymous with female. There are so many products and services in this country that use the term Eve. Just like the term 'Eve teasing,' the word makes it sound so sweet and innocent, but really it is harassment – it is the preferred word to use for female harassment."

**When that out of reach is reached**

> When I saw it for the first time, I was scared. Like, I mean, how will I go and what will I do? I was scared for some time, the first two times, but then I gained confidence; and after that, I really liked it. I had never thought I would be able to see such a place, ever! Now when I have seen it, I feel really proud and confident that I also can do things.

The "it" the Driver is talking about is the City airport. Like a country with guards and security at its borders, the airport was a place out of reach to her – a common reality for citizens from the poorest communities. Luckily, nothing is truly set in stone. She never thought she would see it in this life, the City airport, but she has just done so. For the third time now, she is picking up tourists in her taxi. Feeling much like an explorer who has achieved the impossible, she is wondering what is now possible.

**She did not know what she now knows**

And then there is the staff member of the Social Organization, who is one of the few in the organization without previous experience from the social sector. She was in business, then became a stay-at-home mom for several years after she had a son and later a daughter. This several-year-long break in her work life is, in fact, something she has in common with most of her female colleagues in the Social Organization. In a moment of honesty and self-reflection, she says that she used to live in another world, and maybe, she confides, even "judged the poor." "Their world" was invisible to her. But don't hold it against her – she did not know what she now knows. It was a little universe she inhabited, she now realizes:

> To me it opened up a different world. It was a huge life-changer for me coming to the Organization. Earlier, I would not even think. It was like an invisible population, even in my head. I have had women who would come and help in my house. I knew their names, but I have never asked them, 'What else would you like to do? Could you imagine that you, one day, maybe could drive a car? Or do something one day that is completely different from what you are doing right now?' I have never given them that much credit. I have just assumed she is good to clean my floors, cut my vegetables, and that is it. In that little universe, I was trying to give their children clothing, food from my house and stuff, thinking that I was actually helping them live better.
>
> Suddenly you come here to the Organization and you are like, 'Okay, why am I even imagining she wants my charity? Why haven't I been able to offer her options, where she can actually do all this on her own?' This whole different world of people out there, it was completely new to me. After I came here, I also realized that I used to feel sorry for them – there was a sense of pity, which is so misplaced, because they don't want my pity, they just want a chance. It is up to me to raise the bar. They are doing the best they can, and they don't need me to feel pity for them or look down on them or go and hand out clothes in the slum. That is not really

helping. That mindset of mine completely changed. It has given me a whole new dimension to my being.

**She is with me**

"I am more concerned and nervous about having a female driver in the sense that I wonder about her safety. In the beginning with my Driver, I would sneak out when she had a break by my apartment compound and see if she was okay. You know, there are a lot of men hanging out here. So I wanted to make sure she was fine and didn't get any harassment. I saw she made friends with an ironing lady who is always around, so she would go and sit with her. Then I could relax. I also went to the security guard at the gate and told him, 'She is with me, so she is also for you to protect – if anything happens to her, I will kill you.' Yeah, I said it like that. You have to," a client of the Social Organization's driving services recounts to me, laughing at her own behavior. We sit in her well-decorated flat. The Driver waits somewhere outside, maybe chatting with the ironing lady as we speak.

**What the tourists don't know**

Meanwhile, in the City airport, two elderly Americans – siblings, it turns out – have just landed and are walking out the large glass doors of the arrival terminal into the thick, hot air of summer, prey for the crowd of male taxi drivers all hungry for a ride. A female taxi driver from the Social Organization is there to make a pickup of two persons, more than that she does not know. She waves her signboard at a young Western couple with backpacks who is stranded in the arrival zone looking slightly confused, but this elicits no reaction. Not her clients, she concludes, shrugging her shoulders. But it distracts her such that she does not notice the elderly siblings, arriving minuets after, who happen to be her clients. They too look disoriented, confused, momentarily overwhelmed, as they pan across the crowd in search of a board with their names on it. They don't find it, because their driver, who happens to be a woman, is talking to someone and has not noticed their arrival. This is unfortunate. The Americans have bought a package tour in the Country with an international travel agency, G-Adventure, who collaborates with the Social Organization by using their drivers for airport pickups. That is how it all fits together on this fine evening, except the newly arrived tourists are not aware that they ought to be looking for a woman. And the woman, who ought to be looking for them, is chatting inattentively to a colleague of the travel agency. In a turquoise-and-pink uniform, and as the only female driver, she stands out in the crowd. Absorbed by a crowd of pushy drivers, the American tourists reluctantly take off with a brisk-walking man, whose head-nodding mannerisms seem to confirm whatever they are asking.

They stop at the far end of the taxi pickup area immersed in a longer discussion with the man, after which they turn around and return to the arrival zone. This time, the Driver waves her board at them: it is a match. Their faces light up and they look utterly relieved. Back in the taxi, which is parked under large signs reading "Reserved for Women," the Americans start chatting away in the backseat. "We almost got tricked, but luckily he caught it and got us out of it," the woman says, smiling proudly at her brother. They had never heard about the Social Organization or the female drivers, even though their travel agent makes a big deal out of supporting local initiatives as means of taking social responsibility. I ask why they had chosen this agency. "We like their different kind of programs, you know, we get to see things that are not normal tourist things, like schools, social projects, and so on. It is a bit more off the track." We stop at a red light and some men in an auto-rickshaw next to us stare intrusively at the Driver, seemingly talking about her. The American woman notices, appalled: "These men really stare at her, she has to take a lot!" The man follows up and says, "She is a very good driver. I am sure she drivers better than the men!" "Thank you, sir," the Driver replies with a grin, as she has learned a bit of English to the delight of the tourists. A minute later, they disappear into their hotel, visibly satisfied.

**Another kind of 1%**

It is not true that there are no women in the City's public transport corporation; there is one. "I got a name, also, as the first woman in the Country driving a bus. But it is hard work. I want to leave if I do not get a permanent contract, but the staff in the Social Organization told me not to leave; being the first woman in the Country to drive a bus is a big deal. They will work to get me a proper contract," she says, exhausted after an 8-hour shift. She is the first ever female bus driver in the City's public transport system. So far, she is the only female bus driver in the capital of millions. She hit the City roads in the large metal public buses in 2015. "The buses are not build to be driven by women," she explains, "so it hurts my back, since I am not tall enough to sit properly." She is dressed in the same uniform as the men – a blue or khaki shirt tucked into dark pants. The company did not have one in her size, so they gave her money to make one for herself. Her hair is cut uncommonly short. She has received awards and been noticed by both the local and international news, including the BBC. By some passengers she is celebrated, and some even take her bus just to experience the novelty of it; by others she is harassed, yelled at. The fact that she is a bus driver provokes them.

> "My parents don't know that I am working without a proper contract; they think it is a permanent job. I don't like the situation. I am suffering from inside. On the one hand, I am happy that I got this extraordinary

> opportunity, but there are so many financial issues and concerns. What will making a name for myself do if there is no money? My parents are getting old, and to take care of them I did not even marry. I also support my younger brother's education, which is important. Each month, I send a large part of my salary to them.

She has been allocated an old, worn-down metal bucket of a bus to drive, which occasionally breaks down on the road. Time when the bus is not rolling is cut from her salary, as is every scratch the bus might take in the close-contact city traffic. "I feel if I leave the corporation now, then my name will not be printed in the papers. There will be zero worth. I will not be able to leave right now. I have to carry on. I will work for at least a year and will see then." "If you could chose any profession, what would you like to do?" I ask, wondering if bus driver would be on that list. She answers, "If money wasn't a concern, I would love to be a police officer."

**Space, negotiation, and encounters in a tapestry of becomings**

Public spaces are gender-segregated in the City. Wealth and resources are far from evenly distributed here, making poverty a pervasive phenomenon. Just like the women in this City, I must also continuously negotiate for my sense of safety in public spaces and means of transport. Bodies, emotions, expressions, phones, and other artifacts are sought and employed in useful ways to this end; many negotiations exceed those performed through words. Everyday odysseys. In this City, only a rare few women can be spotted behind the wheels of the vehicles teeming the busy streets. Many believe that women can't – and definitely shouldn't – learn to drive. This is both a shame and a societal problem the Social Organization has realized, as it is not uncommon for women to be verbally or physically assaulted out in the City, but there are few safe transport options for them. Accommodating an acute issue, the Women on Wheels program trains poor women to become drivers for women. Since safe rides are in shortage, the need for female drivers is evident. The spatial City politics are not favorable to women, especially those of poor backgrounds, who cannot rest assured that the police will take assaults on women seriously. In fact, the police may not believe them altogether or find it to be the women's own fault, since they could just have stayed at home. Traditional practices are hard to transform; they tend to linger on. The Social Organization is therefore also training women to defend themselves, to take matters into their own hands: A young woman defended herself in the bus with the use of her elbow, a phone, and a convincing threat – she negotiated space differently this time. A client defended her driver, saying, "She is with me." They say women can't drive, but one husband did not believe this, and now his wife is an experienced taxi driver in the City; their life circumstances have improved because of

it. His version and her version became a united version, and she is picking up tourists in the City airport.

Negotiating gendered relations lead to complex matters involving women and men alike – and even taxi firms. Eve is becoming popular as a driver, although "Eve teasing" persists. But when Eve breaks gendered confines by conquering new spaces, reaching the unreachable, the borders of inclusion and exclusion unsettle. In breaking spatial limits, new becomings open. Even if some might judge "the poor," imagining their destinies in degrading, limiting, and predefined terms, luckily nothing is truly set in stone. We only know what we know until it unsettles and we might know better. Wanting to live better lives. The thing is, different worlds overlap and interfere with one another: in the spaces where we meet, where trajectories intersect, in spaces of everyday politics. Women of poor backgrounds, social workers, female drivers, clients with female drivers, a man on the bus, tourists in the City, a researcher, a husband and wife, encounters in public spaces, temporary homes, the 99%, mobile moments, mobile phones, corporeal sensations, beating hearts, the gaze of "others," "their world and our world," multiple worlds, a useful elbow, dreams of tomorrow, past and present, women that shouldn't drive but do, a reader of these words, the City's first female bus driver, Adam and Eve, time and space – we all negotiate and become together. That is everyday odysseys of living gender, and living together.

To love. To be loved. To never forget your own insignificance. To never get used to the unspeakable violence and the vulgar disparity of life around you. To seek joy in the saddest places. To pursue beauty to its lair. To never simplify what is complicated or complicate what is simple. To respect strength, never power. Above all, to watch. To try and understand. To never look away. And never, never to forget.



Arundhati Roy

# INTRODUCTION

Chapter One

This chapter sets the stage for the thesis. The first part introduces the research query, the motivations, and the research objectives. The second part positions the thesis within the research discourses on entrepreneurship as social change and processual approaches to social entrepreneurship. Finally, the case is presented in more detail, as is the thesis structure.

# Driving social transformation

In 2008, the first female taxi service in New Delhi, India was founded by a social enterprise. "For women, by women," their slogan goes. Organized in a typical social enterprise hybrid structure[1] consisting of a non-profit division (the Azad Foundation) and a business division (Sakha Consulting Wings Ltd)[2], they offer women living in extreme urban poverty an opportunity to become professional drivers. Their flagship program is called "Women on Wheels." There have been similar initiatives in other parts of India, as safety for women in public transport is a severe societal problem, but the Women on Wheels program is the first such initiative in India's capital, where gendered crime rates are highest.

Azad & Sakha's mission, however, is about far more than safe transport for women in Delhi. The women they train to become professional drivers come from the poorest segment of society, living in jhuggi jhopri clusters[3] or squatter settlements – commonly referred to as slums, or bastis in Hindi – often found at the outskirts of the city or in small pockets of villages squeezed between well-off areas. Azad & Sakha seeks to address several societal challenges simultaneously: the widespread urban poverty affecting many women and children, the fact that women in poverty continue to be amongst the most marginalized and oppressed in urban settings, and the prevalent and visible violence against women, particularly in public spaces and on public transport. Training women of poor backgrounds to become drivers, the organization argues, breaks with stereotypical and gendered practices that reinforce the societal ills Azad & Sakha aims to transform. Generally, women do not drive in Delhi, particularly not women from poor backgrounds and certainly not professionally. Many therefore consider Azad & Sakha's proposition to be remarkably untraditional or even controversial.

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[1] Social entrepreneurial initiatives are often characterized as hybrid organizational forms blurring traditional boundaries between private, public, and non-profit organizing, and are diverse in their modes of organizing in society (e.g., Alvord et al., 2004, Dees et al., 1998; Mair & Marti, 2006; Steyaert & Hjorth, 2006).

[2] Hereafter, I will shorten the organizational names to "Azad" and "Sakha." Although they are established as two distinct legal organizations (an NGO and a business), I choose to refer to the organization in singular form because that is how they largely operate; they are co-located in the same office. Sometimes I refer to Azad or Sakha specifically, but use "Azad & Sakha" to refer to the whole organization. When using terms like "social venture," "social enterprise," or "the organization," I refer to both Azad and Sakha.

[3] *Jhuggi jhopri* clusters, commonly abbreviated as "JJ clusters," are one type of unplanned, temporary settlement in Delhi. Jhuggi means "hut," and the term jhuggi jhopri refers to the specific building style of simple mud-brick huts. They are associated with extreme poverty, synonymous with slum and associated with the poorest segments of the city. As the buildings are illegal or unauthorized, such communities are also called "squatter settlements" or "squatter colonies"; people occupy land without legal papers, for example in proximity to railway tracks, city riverbanks, or construction sites. The illegality and temporality of the settlements make them particularly at risk of sudden demolition (more details in Chapter Three).

Inika, a sturdy and engaging woman in her late 30s, was amongst the first women trained to work as a professional driver in Delhi. Today, she is an experienced taxi driver. When she joined the Women on Wheels program, she had written on her enrolment sheet, "I want to learn driving so that I can support my husband and bring up my children properly." Her motivation was primarily economic at first. The precarities and strains of living in poverty had naturally made Inika concerned for her family's future, and she wished to ensure a better one for her children. Economic concerns are common amongst the women who join the program, but they also have a desire to do "something different" with their lives, *as women* and *as poor*.[4] For a few women, enrolling in the program is also an attempt to seek refuge or a way out of daily experiences of violence.

The Women on Wheels training program is extensive. Unlike many other livelihood initiatives in poor communities of Delhi, which are typically less time-consuming and of shorter duration, it requires a daily full-time commitment over 8 to 10 months. Azad's training therefore does not operate as a project or an afternoon activity, but rather as an all-consuming program that becomes a dominant part of the women's lives; as does working as a fulltime driver for Sakha. Attending the numerous training sessions calls for the women to radically change their daily routines. Using driving as the locus for livelihood training and occupation also sets Azad & Sakha's program apart from many other livelihood initiatives offered to poor women in Delhi, which tend to be within gendered stereotypical professions, e.g., handicrafts, jewelry making, cooking, or working in beauty parlors or as vendors of simple items – all practices aligned with the local patriarchal perceptions and expectations of what women of poor backgrounds "ought to do." According to Azad & Sakha:

> The Women on Wheels programme empowers resource-poor women to become professional drivers to enable them to gain remunerative 'livelihoods with dignity'. The programme also enhances their awareness on rights and enables them to become independent and confident individuals in charge of their lives. By preparing and placing women drivers as professional drivers, the Women on Wheels programme enables socially excluded female members of the society to move from the margins to mainstream economy. Through this process, we alter public perceptions about women's participation in the booming public transportation sector and the role and status of women in society.[5]

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[4] Categorizations of differences that lead to segregation and discrimination within Delhi's spatial political context include gender, sexual orientation, caste, race, skin color, class, and economic status (e.g., Datta, 2012; Rao, 2010). Thus, the women living in poor communities experience exclusion and discrimination economically, socially, geographically, etc., not merely due to patriarchal gendered practices, but also from being categorized by the state and society at large as "the poor" and as belonging to the lowest castes or "casteless." This will be further elaborated in Chapter Three.

[5] Azad Foundation, "Women on Wheels", http://azadfoundation.com/women-on-wheels. Accessed May 23, 2017.

Another aspect that sets Azad & Sakha's approach apart is their combination of economic and socio-political considerations in their social entrepreneurial endeavor. They argue that in order to address the poverty and oppression of women, it is necessary to simultaneously ensure their "economic, social and personal empowerment." They denote this as working with "livelihoods," "women's rights," and "personal development."

"Economic development doesn't necessarily lead to social transformation, Sofie," Azad & Sakha's founder, Meenu Vadera, told me with a certain insistence in one of our first conversations. This is a pivotal point for her, and a statement that attests to the organization's underlying methods of social transformation. She elaborated:

> Take, for example, the occurrence of infanticides in India, where millions of unborn female babies are aborted or killed at birth each year. You would think that the states with most poverty and less education would be the ones with the highest numbers of infanticides, but that is not the case. In fact, many of the most economically prosperous states like Delhi and Punjab are at the top of this list. It is about far more than simply economic development. When I saw these statistics in 2001, I knew I had to start a venture of my own eventually and that we had to work in a different way.

The "different way" she has chosen is to provide women with a non-traditional livelihood option that counters gender-stereotypical expectations. By providing a training program that requires full-time attendance over a long period of time (and that gets the women out of their communities), Azad & Sakha simultaneously introduces "personal, social, and economic" transformations into the women's lives. The proposition of female driving and the methods deployed contest contemporary politics in the *bastis*, the spaces of these women's everyday lives.

That is indeed what happened to Inika. Although she enrolled in the program in order to provide a better future for her family, after several years of working as a driver she expressed that it had transformed far more than that. As we spoke in the comfort of her one-room *jhuggi*, she contemplated in hindsight, "Had I had the thinking I have now back then, I would have gone out [of the house] 15 years ago and done other things," adding, "Our thinking was so wrong."
The program altered her way of thinking, her view of herself and of what she could do as a woman. It changed her practices and relations, including how she dresses and carries herself corporeally. It transformed the politics of her everyday life.

As a social enterprise, Azad & Sakha is driven by a vision to transform the lives of women living in Delhi's *bastis* by contesting certain gendered practices in the poor communities and transportation sector. Women living under extremely poor conditions are typically drawn to the

program by their desire for a better life – the hope of economic and upward social mobility. What happens when the two meet? This site of interaction between a social enterprise and a group of people seeking to alter their life circumstances offers an insightful case for studying processes of social transformation induced by social entrepreneurial organizing. What happens to the women and their lives when they start the program, and what happens later, when they are employed as private drivers for local women of higher social status or drive across the city as taxi drivers for random female passengers? What can this interaction between entrepreneurial organizing and women seeking to transform their life situations elucidate on the dynamics and practices of social transformation? These are questions I will address in the chapters to come.

**Approaching processes of social transformation**

This thesis is about the multifaceted – complex, conflictual, contradictory – processes of social transformation induced by a social enterprise, explored ethnographically through the case of Azad & Sakha. In the opening montage I was deliberately vague about the context, the specific location of the case, the name of the social enterprise, and the people, and I used generic labels such as "the City" and "the Social Organization." The purpose of this was to experiment with the write-up style in order – just for a moment – to draw the reader's attention to my primary interest, namely the processes. In other words, the locus of this study is not the specific life-worlds of the poor women or the social enterprise, but the interaction between them as processes of social entrepreneurial organizing that aims for transformation.

My aim was to spark the reader's imagination and atmospheric attunements toward the text (Stewart, 2011), since a momentary context-vague frame might give way to another manner of engagement – one that is more experiential and could potentially provoke emotions, curiosities, puzzlements, irritation, creative thoughts, an unsettling of some sort, or perhaps just an increased attention to the subtleties of all that which is in between. My aspiration was that this "affective move" might encourage a sensing of the stories while also providing an opening to notice similarities and differences relative to one's own lived experiences. Maybe this is aiming too high, yet my hope is that it allows for a "feeling together with" the women of poor backgrounds we meet in the following pages, rather than "feeling (sorry) for" them. This is important because, as a staff member of the social enterprise observantly noted in the montage, "They don't want my pity, they just want a chance."

The idea of the montage is also inspired by the performative approach to ethnography that informs my work. Experience and embodied knowledge are as important as dialogues or observations (e.g, Hastrup, 1995; Pink, 2009). As Law (2004: 6) writes, the processes we seek to

understand might in fact "exceed our capacity to know them." Yet there are layers of knowing or making sense of empirical material in the experiences within research itself – for example, through ethnographic encounters (Crapanzano, 1980; Hastrup, 1995; Pink, 2009) or the "paradoxical, dialogic encounter between author-text-reader" (Foley, 2002: 479). Performative ethnographic methodologies impart a more embodied and sensing element to the processes of analysis and theorizing, which also grants the reader a more explicit place in the process of creation (Beyes & Steyaert, 2011). Blurring the context in the opening of the thesis was an experiment in writing style, both to bring the processual to the forefront and to provide a space for the reader to get a more experiential feel for the context before the rich nuances of the empirical material start filling out the picture. But it also testifies to the fact that in working and thinking processually, I have deliberated and experimented with methodological concerns and ideas, developing what I present in the following chapter as a spatial approach. Studying social transformation as processes has called for a processual approach to research practices, and since it has formative implications for the research, it has become a subtheme woven throughout this monograph. However, the use of a context-vague montage was not to say that context does not matter – indeed it does.

**A contextualized study of social transformation**

The notions of social transformation or social change are often used interchangeably in connection to social entrepreneurship. The terms are primarily discussed in the social entrepreneurship literature and within critical entrepreneurship studies concerned with *Entrepreneurship as Social Change*, spearheaded by Steyaert and Hjorth's (2006) edited volume with that title. Perspectives on social entrepreneurship, despite different standpoints, univocally characterize it by its potential for facilitating social transformation. Alvord et al. (2004: 262), for instance, depict "social entrepreneurship as a way to catalyze social transformations well beyond solutions to the initial problems. […] social entrepreneurship can produce small changes in the short term that reverberate through existing systems to catalyze large changes in the longer term." Social entrepreneurship and social transformation are thus seen as two sides of the same coin. Yet while social entrepreneurship as a phenomenon has received increasing academic attention over the past two decades, the understanding of social transformation or social change – the social of social entrepreneurship – remains underexplored and conceptually more elusive (e.g., Aygören, 2014; Barinaga, 2012; Steyaert & Hjorth, 2006; Steyaert & Katz, 2004).

It is against this backdrop, introducing their take on thinking entrepreneurship as social change, that Steyaert and Hjorth (2006: 1) pose the question: "How is social change understood, imagined and practiced?" This question permeates recent discourses on entrepreneurship and organization

studies that explore entrepreneurship as a catalyst for transforming societal ills (e.g., Calás et al., 2009; Dey & Steyaert, 2010; Steyaert & Hjorth, 2006; Steyaert & Katz, 2004), and is also central to this thesis. Steyaert and Hjorth (2006: 9) urge organization researchers to pursue that query through contextualized research and advocate a processual lens:

> If we do not assume the model of one dominant discourse to be in place, our task is instead to precisely describe and narrate contextualized concepts for this interaction-in-the-making, this relation, through which it gets socially determined.

In keeping with Steyaert and Hjorth (2006:9), and the call within social entrepreneurship research to explore "the social," this thesis describes, narrates, and analyzes "contextualized concepts for this interaction-in-the-making." Taking seriously the call for exploring social entrepreneurship as a catalyst for transformation in our societies, a central and vexing task remains to further our understanding of social transformation. Despite having become common parlance in both public and private social organizations, there is little common understanding of – or language for – the dynamic phenomenon of social transformation; it appears to be somewhat of a black box. In particular, if we consider transformation as a movement or a process rather than an aggregate and definitive measurable impact or outcome (e.g., Dey, 2006; Dey & Steyaert, 2010; Serje, 2017), how, then, might we understand it? This is the query I pursue in the context of a social enterprise seeking to transform the lives of women living in the poorest communities of Delhi. Understanding the dynamics, complexities[6], contradictions, situatedness, dangers, and potentials of social transformation are means for broadening our understanding of social entrepreneurship and further qualifying the research discourse. One way to explore the notion of social transformation and to assist in developing the research agenda is by adopting a processual approach, and it is here I position my inquiry.

**The research inquiry**

Taking an explorative and processual stance toward social entrepreneurship, the thrust of this thesis is in keeping with Barinaga's (2012: 246) take on social entrepreneurship as "organized, bottom-up efforts aiming at social change," and Alvord et al.'s (2004: 262) perception that it is "a process that creates innovative solutions to immediate social problems and mobilizes the ideas,

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[6] I draw on Mol and Law (2002: 1) in my understanding of complexity: "There is complexity if things relate but don't add up, if events occur but not within the processes of linear time, and if phenomena share a space but cannot be mapped in terms of a single set of three-dimensional coordinates."

capacities, resources, and social arrangement required for sustainable social transformation." I thus consider social entrepreneurship as processes of organizing "on the ground" that aim to address and ameliorate social problems through catalyzing social transformation. In what follows, I therefore often denote the work of Azad & Sakha as "social entrepreneurial organizing." The emphasis on organizing underscores my alignment with the processual stance in organizational and entrepreneurship studies (e.g., Czarniawska, 2014; Gartner, 2012; Hjorth, 2012; Hjorth et al., 2015; Langley & Tsoukas, 2016; Nayak & Chia, 2011; Steyaert, 2007; Steyaert, 2012; Tsoukas & Chia, 2011). Organizing can be understood as embodied and materially embedded relational practices, mundane and of the everyday (Simonsen, 2007; Steyaert & Van Looy, 2010). In this perspective, attention is given to "the social," i.e., the processes of organizing and their impacts on the women in the program; "this interaction-in-the-making," constituting the social (Steyaert & Hjorth, 2006: 9), and "the social entrepreneurial process" (Barinaga, 2012: 248).

I have taken up the wider academic invitation to question, explore, and engage with the social of social entrepreneurship through a processual inquiry of social transformation. In that sense, this research speaks to the research discourses on what makes the social of social entrepreneurship, but does so by questioning and exploring social transformation in a deeply contextualized manner – as it unfolds within the lives of specific women engaged in Azad & Sakha's Women on Wheels program in Delhi. This thesis thus inquires:

> *How does social entrepreneurial organizing facilitate processes of social transformation, and how are these processes experienced and practiced?*

In order to study processes, I turn to everyday lived experiences and relational practices as the sphere where such processes arise and take place, as they are being experienced and practiced. This view is in concurrence with what has been described as the "practice turn" in social and organization studies, including entrepreneurship studies and human geography (e.g., Bruni et al., 2004; Gherardi, 2017; Nicolini et al., 2012; Simonsen, 2007; Schatzki, 2005, 2011; Steyaert, 2007; Steyaert & Van Looy, 2010), which turn to practices in order to study social processes of organizing. Practices are "organized human activities," and "any practice is an organized, open-ended spatial-temporal manifold of actions," Schatzki (2005: 471) writes, which implies that practices are inherently relational. In order to understand the dynamics of social transformation, I contend that it is necessary to pay close attention, over a lengthy period of time, to the people who experience and practice such processes, and to the relational and contextual embeddedness of those processes. I embrace a relational ontological stance that recognizes practices as the building

blocks of everyday life, carried out as temporal ongoing negotiations in and between bodies, places, and things. Negotiations are inherently relational. These unfolding negotiations constitute and produce the spatial politics of everyday life, like the dominant, taken-for-granted perceptions, norms, and practices that have influenced and confined the lives of Inika and other women in the bastis of Delhi. By mobilizing, training, and employing women with such backgrounds to become drivers, Azad & Sakha's social entrepreneurial organizing seeks to facilitate processes that can transform certain aspects of the spatial politics of these women's everyday lives. It is toward these interactional and relational spaces of social entrepreneurship where I situate my inquiry.

This thesis seeks to make three contributions to the research agenda on the social of social entrepreneurship. First, I seek to conceptualize how we may think of and discuss social transformation processually through a situated, empirically driven study of experiences and practices (Steyaert & Dey, 2010; Steyaert & Hjorth, 2006). Second, bringing ethnographic methods into social entrepreneurship studies allows for the complexity and specificity of the dynamics of social transformation to be explored. By zooming in on the spaces of interaction between the organization and the women in the program, my aim has been to capture the multiplicities of social transformation processes. This open exploratory inquiry into "what is going on here" drew my attention to the women's lived experiences and their everyday practices (Czarniawska, 2007; Czarniawska, 2014; Hastrup, 1995; Simonsen, 2007). Using ethnographic methods and acknowledging sensory knowledge contributes methodologically to suggestions and discussions of how to research the social of social entrepreneurship from a spatial perspective (Pink, 2009).

Third, the approach to social entrepreneurship I take in this thesis recognizes the messiness, ambiguities, non-linearity, struggles, dilemmas, and even dangers associated with social entrepreneurship in this context. This is not a critique of Azad & Sakha's organizing, but rather an acknowledgement of the inherent complexities of seeking to transform deep-rooted social and political issues, which necessarily confront politics and power (e.g., Butler, 2015; Dey, 2006; Massey, 2005; Rindova et al., 2009). Perceiving social entrepreneurship as something which "can be achieved as set out in the project plan" (Jacobs, 2006: 251) or as something "programmable and therefore a rather easy undertaking (at least as long as sound business practices are employed)" (Dey, 2006: 130) does not align with my empirical material and practical experiences. Dey (2006), Jacobs (2006), and other researchers voice precisely this concern and criticize the dominant social entrepreneurship discourse for its depoliticization and marketization of the social. On this ground, a growing body of research within entrepreneurship as social change advocates more explorative and critical perspectives to situate social entrepreneurship in the realm of the political and to investigate what that means and entails (e.g., Cho, 2006; Dey, 2006; Dey & Steyaert, 2016, 2018;

Hjorth, 2013; Martin & Osberg, 2007; Steyaert & Dey, 2010; Steyaert & Hjorth, 2006). Through the approach and findings of this thesis, I aim to contribute to these perspectives that adopt a more critical and political stance. It is an important move, in my view, for contemporary social entrepreneurship discourse to be complemented with, and challenged by, more critical perspectives and research. How we conceive and speak of social entrepreneurship in different ways influences the field of practice; as I shall address later in this chapter, the current predominance of a market-based and economistic logic might have some problematic consequences. As researchers in this field, we can and should supply alternatives, for instance through exploring social entrepreneurship as a phenomenon within the spheres of the social and the political. I will do so by proposing a spatial approach to social entrepreneurship.

Having already positioned the inquiry as a processual and contextual practice-based study of social transformation, I will position this in the following section as a spatial take on how to research and think social transformation. I will briefly discuss how the spatial approach came about during my fieldwork in Delhi and introduce the central terms of the thesis: space, negotiation, and everyday politics.[7] Against this backdrop, I will then situate and discuss my research in relation to the literature concerning the social of social entrepreneurship.

**Thinking social transformation spatially: introducing the key terms of the thesis**

Scribbling handwritten notes or drawing sketches in a notebook when participating in activities with people whose lives and lived experiences are essential to the research inquiry is common practice in ethnographic methods (Emerson et al., 2011; Taussig, 2011). These notebooks are central to the processes of making sense of the experiences and encounters in the field. During my fieldwork, I had several notebooks in different sizes depending on where I was going and what activities I was participating in and observing, as this sometimes placed limits on the amount of gear that was practical or appropriate to carry along. What was certain, however, was that some kind of notebook was always a "must" for doing fieldwork.

Attending to practices as embodied and materially situated, and inspired by performative and sensory methodologies in ethnography, the focus of my note-taking was not merely on "what is going on here" in the interactions between people, but also to put into words contextual details

[7] This type of reflection is included to be more explicit about how certain notions in the theorizing emerged from my fieldwork and research, which of course can never be accounted for in a one-to-one manner, as it is an ongoing iterative and embodied process. Pink (2009: 2) encourages ethnographers "to be more explicit about the ways of experiencing and knowing that became so central to their ethnographies, to share the sense of place they felt as they sought to occupy similar places as those of their research participants, and to acknowledge the process through which their sensory knowing has become academic knowledge."

like colors, smells, sounds, atmospheric experiences, food experiences, time, the flow of people, and so on while also capturing the events in photos (Hastrup, 1995; Pink, 2009).

In addition to taking notes and photographs, whenever I participated in Azad's mobilization activities in the poor communities, such as an information campaign for the Women on Wheels program, I drew a simplistic topological "map" of the setup in my notebook. The sketches depicted where the mobilizers placed roll-up posters, an information booth, some smaller posters, and two pink-and-purple branded parasols, as well as where the setup was placed in relation to contextual arrangements of community squares, huts, stores, and trees. (see Figure 1.1 and 1.2).




Figure 1.1 SKETCH AND PHOTO FROM FIELDWORK, SD CAMP, GAUTAMPURI, EAST DELHI




Figure 1.2 SKETCH AND PHOTO FROM FIELDWORK, INDIRA CAMP, EAST DELHI

Motivated to sketch in order to recollect the specific constellations of the different mobilization moments, I experienced how the drawing actually facilitated my thinking and theorizing (Taussig, 2011). Through these rudimentary topological mappings, it struck me how the mobilizers at each event were constructing a sort of temporal "room" – fluid yet recognizable – inside the ordinary spaces of the communities. The mobilizers knew exactly how to construct and disassemble these

temporal fluid "rooms" of interaction, held together and made visible by Azad's many material artifacts. These constellations stood out against the everydayness in the community lanes and squares, and the people passing by these "rooms" were affected by them. Drawing made me think in terms of "rooms," which I quickly substituted with the term "space" to better capture the liveliness, fluidity, "flesh", and interactional dynamics of these constellations of people, places, and things, but also of ideas and perceptions, which I was starting to notice.

I did not pursue, or know much about, a spatial approach prior to my fieldwork, but it developed through my fieldwork practices and the processes of theorizing instigated by my processual gaze on everyday practices and experiences. It occurred to me that these spaces came into being in and through the dynamics of interaction between people, places, things, ideas, and perceptions in the sphere of everyday lives. These interactions, in my view, produce the contemporary politics that influence and attempt to order, regulate, or differentiate amongst the way everyday relations of space are carried out. The interactions of space concern and constitute the politics of space.

In the infinitude of what makes up the flesh of the world and the dynamics of space, six characteristics stood out as particularly relevant for my inquiry into Azad & Sakha's social entrepreneurial organizing through the theorizing of my empirical material – namely, the interplay between the contextual, temporal, material, relational, corporeal (sensory), and emotional, as summarized in Figure 1.3:

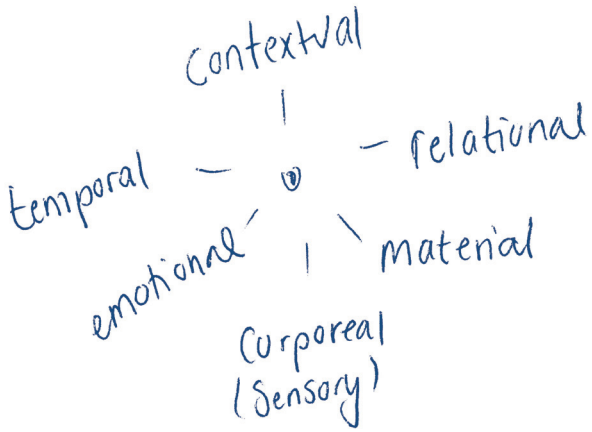



Figure 1.3 SIX KEY ELEMENTS IN MY SPATIAL APPROACH

When Azad's mobilizers meet women in the poor communities, for instance, I consider it to be a constant process of relating – to oneself, to others, and to the surroundings brought together through Azad's orchestrated spatial constellations and embodied encounters. Innately contextual, any such spatial event was also surely temporal, as it was continuously unfolding and no two moments were alike. They took place as relational practices negotiated within and between bodies, with

emotions and identities embedded in and influenced by the materiality of the given setting (Massey, 2005; Pink, 2009). I term these inter-relational, embodied, and materially situated processes of interaction "negotiations," as they were an open-ended relation of simultaneous, "back-and-forth" deliberations with oneself and in relating to others and the surrounding environment, whether in thoughts, feelings, sensory experiences, or spoken words. The notion of negotiation captures the ongoing, processual, and inter-relational nature of the dynamics of change, but also indicates that something is at stake. Due to the multiplicity of elements at play within any moment of negotiation, there is no certainty of what the outcome will be.[8]

Azad & Sakha's social entrepreneurial organizing deliberately seeks to contest and unsettle the politics that dominated the poor women's everyday lives, i.e., the taken-for-granted gendered and caste-stigmatizing practices delimiting the women's opportunities in life and their rights to more free, safe, and liveable lives (Butler, 2015). I posit that it does so through the use of spatial juxtapositions that represent and offer an alternative way to live as women and as poor in Delhi; that instigate new kinds of negotiations in the communities and for the women who take up driving, which in turn facilitate minor and major changes in practices – corporeal, emotional, and relational – within the everyday. This, indeed, is experiencing and practicing social transformation through negotiating spaces of everyday politics, as this thesis is titled. This means that social transformation for the poor women cannot be seen apart from their everyday experiences and practices; rather, it exists within them. Now that I have framed the overall inquiry, objectives, and position of the thesis, the following section situates the research more precisely within the literature to which it seeks to contribute.

## Situating the research: the social of (social) entrepreneurship

By placing the word "social" before entrepreneurship in parentheses in the headline of this section, I seek to highlight what has been a long-standing debate within social entrepreneurship research and critical entrepreneurship studies alike – whether social entrepreneurship ought to be considered a phenomenon in its own right or if entrepreneurship is inherently social, were it to move beyond the tight grasp of economic and managerial thinking. Entrepreneurship researchers critical of the "traditional" entrepreneurship paradigm argue for the latter, and call for research taking a broader, more critical experimental and social approach to the discipline, for instance by

[8] The term "negotiation" was also used occasionally by staff of Azad & Sakha, aligned with feminist discourses on empowerment or emancipation, as a means to describe dynamics they perceived essential to the processes of transformation for the women from poor backgrounds.

recognizing entrepreneurship as social change (Swedberg, 2006; Tedmanson et al., 2012; Steyaert & Katz, 2004; Steyaert & Hjorth, 2006). In social entrepreneurship discourse, social enterprises are predominantly considered distinct from regular businesses in their explicit pursuit of social goals for transforming society ills (Alvord et al., 2004; Dees et al., 1998); but there is still great division regarding their conceptualization, which is also expressed in the lack of a common definition of social entrepreneurship. Some social entrepreneurship researchers, like Mair and Marti (2006), argue that the societal transformative potential of any enterprise evidently depends on how it operates, rather than how it is defined. Whether we place a "social" in front of entrepreneurship or not, the transformative (or not) potentials of entrepreneurial organizing in society are what is relevant. In my reading, these two discourses – critical perspectives in entrepreneurship studies and processual perspectives in social entrepreneurship research – are approaching one another with regard to a deeper engagement with "the social." Within the research providing critical perspectives on entrepreneurship, with the aim to uproot entrepreneurship from the dominance of economic rationales, a distinct discourse has been established to explore social entrepreneurship by opening up the term through the notion of entrepreneurship as social change. Similarly, within social entrepreneurship studies, a smaller stream of research has been more occupied with the transformative potentials of organizing and advocating more processual perspectives to the phenomenon. These two streams come together under what I reference as "the social of social entrepreneurship" (Barinaga, 2012; Steyaert and Hjorth, 2006). It is in this conjunction I situate my work (see Figure 1.4).

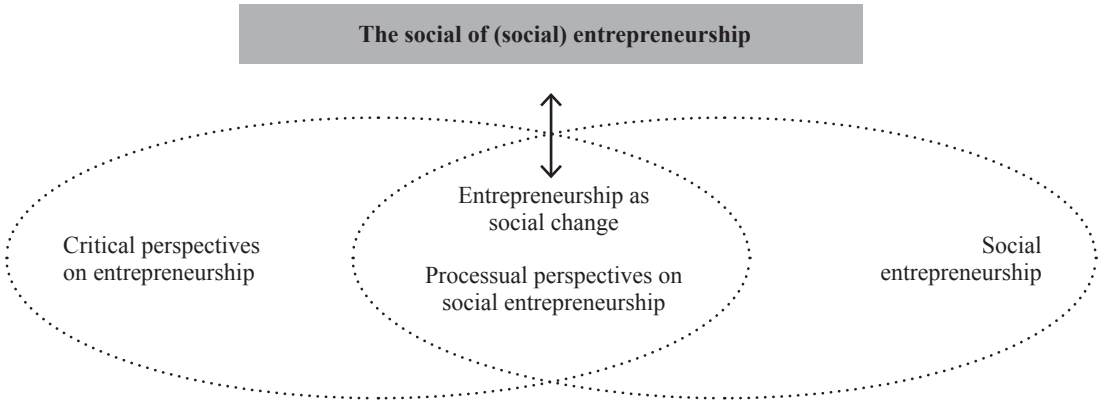



Figure 1.4 SITUATING THE RESEARCH IN THE LITERATURE

In other words, the shared research agenda of "the social of social entrepreneurship" is to understand more about how ways of organizing interact with and transform society as a potential catalyst for social change or transformation. In the following sections, I attend to this literature. I will start out with a brief note on how the notion of social entrepreneurship has emerged and

become a popular – and at times hyped – phenomenon with multifarious definitions in order to provide a context for the discussions and critiques the literature is concerned with.

**The emergences of social entrepreneurship**

As a societal phenomenon, social entrepreneurship has moved from the margins into the mainstream of media attention and academic research over the past two decades. With their social enterprises offering promises of a better future, social entrepreneurs have appeared as heroes, deploying innovative means to handle societal problems which governments have neglected or failed to solve. Social entrepreneurship has become a buzzword for a wider development discourse concerned with the transformation of our societies. Since the 1990s, it has been on the agenda at the World Economic Forum at Davos and in discourses from the UN apparatus, and has become the subject of research centers and classes at leading business schools (e.g., INSEAD; Harvard Business School; the Fuqua School of Business, Duke University; Saïd Business School, the University of Oxford).

Throughout history there have been pioneers working toward bettering lives in their communities or societies. The phenomenon is thus far from new, but its framing is different. The new aspects can be seen in the widely used terms "social entrepreneur," "social entrepreneurship," and "social enterprises"; the increasingly public celebration of their work; and the attention it receives in mainstream media, public debate, policymaking, and academia (e.g., Alvord et al., 2004; Dees et al., 1998; Mair & Marti, 2006). Another novel aspect is the increased emphasis given to thinking business and social responsibility more explicitly together. There has been a turn toward contemplating societal impact and business, or entrepreneurship, simultaneously rather than as two distinct and unrelated domains. These developments have coincided with the rise of neoliberalism in many Western societies, which has pushed toward an increasing marketization of social problem-solving or, from a more critical perspective, an economization of society (Thompson, 2002; Dey, 2006; Doherty el al., 2014; Jacobs, 2006; Ruebottom, 2018; Steyaert & Dey, 2010).

Even though social entrepreneurship is a growing research field, it is often considered a nascent one, characterized by a multiplicity of definitions, the absence of coherent theoretical frameworks, and the lack of rich contextualization of the term across organizations and geographies. According to Doherty et al. (2014), much of the literature was initially concerned with defining the specificity and characteristics of social entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurs. This has more recently been superseded by work focusing on the management and performance of social enterprises (e.g., Sharir & Lerner, 2006; Thompson, 2002; Weerawardena & Mort, 2006).

In a thorough review of the literature, Aygören (2014) identifies around 40 different definitions of social entrepreneurship. One group of scholars advocates for a move toward a more consensual definition, seeking some extent of conceptual unity and clarity and contending that it will provide greater coherence, a more solid common framework, and better direction to strengthen the research field (e.g., Martin & Osberg, 2007). Others argue for the exact opposite. Given that it is a nascent field, an openness of terms and a multiplicity of interpretations are what can further qualify it. A premature closing would rob it of its potential and "engender a closure of meaning" (Steyaert & Dey, 2010: 244). Steyaert and Dey (2010: 244) favor "putting to rest […] the definitional struggles over the term social entrepreneurship":

> Opening boundaries for a broader set of disciplines, theories and paradigms brings along new forms of understanding and intelligibility. It further signifies a deeply politico-ethical gesture that invites new realities in.

Researchers emphasizing an open definition of social entrepreneurship argue that this is necessary for addressing the contextual specificity of the socio-political complexities and ambiguities of "the social" (e.g., Aygören, 2014; Barinaga, 2012; Steyaert & Dey, 2010). Steyaert and Hjorth (2006: 7) propose that the openness of the term and the multiplicity of approaches toward social entrepreneurship in academia could potentially serve as a force of inspiration or surprise for the field of entrepreneurship more broadly:

> By turning to unknown territories and groundings and by embracing the indefiniteness of social entrepreneurship, the field of entrepreneurship can open itself to new and innovative questions and angles – in short to the entrepreneurial.

In this perspective, advocated in their edited volume *Entrepreneurship as Social Change*, Steyaert and Hjorth (2006) bring entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship closer together by considering entrepreneurship as social change. This entails an academic curiosity toward "the becoming social of entrepreneurship and the becoming entrepreneurial of the social" (Steyaert & Hjorth, 2006: 2). Their argument is that the two discourses could benefit from approaching each other in to exploring "the social."

**Entrepreneurship as social change**

In the first line of the introductory chapter to their edited volume *Entrepreneurship as Social Change*, Steyaert and Hjorth note, "This book investigates the social of social entrepreneurship" (2006: 1). Their work departs from a more traditional approach to entrepreneurship and has

been foundational for what is often denoted as the "European school" of entrepreneurship. As mentioned earlier, this stream of literature is concerned with "entrepreneurship when considered as a societal rather than an economic phenomenon" (Steyaert & Katz, 2004: 179). By bringing entrepreneurship into the threshold of the social, their vision is to transform our understanding of entrepreneurship (e.g., Hjorth, 2012; Dey & Steyaert, 2010; Hjorth & Steyaert, 2003; Steyaert & Hjorth, 2006). Proposing a view on entrepreneurship as "connected to social change and social transformation" (Steyaert & Hjorth, 2006:1), entrepreneurship can be emancipated from the stronghold of economics. In considering entrepreneurship as processes of organizing in and for society, entirely new questions can be pursued. If entrepreneurship indeed is "a process based on the course of social change," a central inquiry necessarily becomes how to understand the dynamics of such social processes and how they are practiced across different contexts and ways of organizing (Barinaga, 2012; Steyaert & Hjorth, 2006). Seeking to avoid premature closure and conceptual stasis, Steyaert and Hjorth (2006: 4) suggest a broad "umbrella" approach to social entrepreneurship, acknowledging that it can take many forms:

> 'Social entrepreneurship,' then, forms the 'hybrid' signifier and 'oxymoron' that can cover many diverse initiatives, oriented as an approach that can change welfare and social problems in the interfaces of the non-profit, public, voluntary, philanthropic and private sectors.

I concur with researchers who favor an open and explorative approach to social entrepreneurship. If we seriously aim to unpack the social of social entrepreneurship and move toward a theorizing of social transformation, this will necessitate research across a variety of organizational forms, methods of organizing, and contexts, as well as experimenting with different analytical and theoretical lenses. The common denominator is thus an interest in how entrepreneurial organizing sets off processes that aim at bettering different and contextually specific societal ills, while acknowledging that transformation might also *not* occur (which is interesting for research as well) or that the processes induced foster unpredictable and even unwanted consequences.

Researchers critical of the predominance of economic approaches, business and managerial logics, and neoliberal rationales in traditional entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship literature alike call out for the "missing social." The traditional approaches in both bodies of literature have focused, for instance, on the entrepreneur as hero, emphasizing the entrepreneur's traits, motivations, and skills, and have increasingly attended to the economic or managerial aspects of operating enterprises (Aygören, 2014). "The dominant discourse in social entrepreneurship pushes a business model for social change," Ruebottom (2018: 194) asserts. Through a more critical

approach to social entrepreneurship or entrepreneurship as social change, this research agenda questions the "normative assumptions that entrepreneurship is a 'good thing'" (Tedmanson et al., 2012: 532); a part of this lies in challenging the pervasive market logics, calling out the "missing social" and addressing it. To this end, Cho (2006: 35) writes that the majority of approaches to social entrepreneurship "clarify the components of 'entrepreneurship' but leave 'social' undefined, a surprising lapse given that the social dimension of SE [social entrepreneurship] is, in large parts, responsible for the concept's inherent complexity." In Aygören's (2014: 52) review of literature concerned with social entrepreneurship, she similarly concludes:

> In general, I find that the research on the processes of social entrepreneurship is sparse compared to that on inputs and outputs. Moreover, the range of processes investigated, given the heterogeneity of purpose, organizational forms and social/cultural context are limited.

Barinaga (2012: 253) puts it even more bluntly: "The social dimension, however, has largely been neglected." She argues that "although social enterprises are given a key role in the innovation of our societies and in promoting social change, the social dimension itself remains un-explored" (Barinaga, 2012: 242). Despite a widespread consensus on the centrality of the social mission and the organizing efforts toward catalyzing social transformation or change, the phenomenon itself has not been thoroughly explored:

> Yet we have much to learn about the social dynamics set in motion by social entrepreneurial initiatives, and how these contribute (or not) to ignite social change. More needs to be understood of how the tools, methods and strategies that social entrepreneurs apply do indeed work in practice. (Barinaga, 2012: 248)

Aygören (2014: 21) also concludes, "The purpose or likely impact of social entrepreneurial activity is the most important yet complex side of social entrepreneurship." Note how, within these two citations, Barinaga (2012) and Aygören (2014) allow for the possibility that change might also not happen. Here they add to the growing voice, particularly discernible within the discourse on entrepreneurship as social change, for a more critical stance on social entrepreneurship – one that refrains from a priori assumptions that transformation in all cases and situations is given or something necessarily "good": "By implication, idealized versions of social entrepreneurship tend to veil the complex ethical decisions and dilemmas that lie at the heart of social entrepreneurs' mundane reality" (Dey & Steyaert, 2016: 628). A common argument made by several of the researchers regarding the "missing social" is that research has been sparse concerning the *processes*

of social entrepreneurship, such as the dynamics of social transformation. Central to this research agenda is thus the fostering of a critical and processual understanding of entrepreneurship as organizing for social transformation.

**A more critical perspective on social entrepreneurship**

With its ambition of making the world a better place and its sudden popularity within mainstream media, social entrepreneurship has become an easy target for hype. Yet the tendency to describe social entrepreneurship in predominantly positive terms and presume it necessarily makes lives better has also been addressed in the academic discourse. Several researchers, as mentioned above, have called attention to the importance of approaching social entrepreneurship more critically (e.g., Aygören, 2014; Barinaga, 2012; Cho, 2006; Dey, 2006; Dey & Steyaert, 2010, 2018; Ruebottom, 2018; Steyaert & Dey, 2010; Steyaert & Hjorth, 2006). As Dey and Steyaert (2010: 88) note, "The grand narrative of social entrepreneurship comprises, among other things, a high level of univocity, unambiguousness, one-sidedness as well as a quasi-religious makeover." A more critical approach must pay attention to the difficulties, ambiguities, contradictions, ethical challenges, paradoxical dilemmas, and even dangers of attempting to change social ills. Acknowledging these complexities invites researchers to move beyond heroic representations, a priori assumptions of "doing good," and an overt preoccupation with "the positive." Social entrepreneurial organizing is not simply good or bad; it cannot be simplified as a matter of either/or. Social entrepreneurship, I have found, concerns matters of everyday life – the politics of the spaces that produce and constitute our lives. In this light, a critical perspective actually brings social entrepreneurship *into life*. A spatial approach to social entrepreneurship can contribute in making such a move.

*Problematic marketization of "the social"*

Dey (2006) offers insights into how social entrepreneurship literature manages to escape matters of everyday life and the domain of the political. Scrutinizing the rhetoric of social entrepreneurship in academic research, he demonstrates and argues that the discourse has been widely entrenched with business logics and language, which has formed a certain understanding of the phenomenon. For example, social entrepreneurship is often portrayed as a "rational and technical activity, which can be measured and therefore predicted," and "as a calculable undertaking" (Dey, 2006: 130). He concludes:

> The persuasiveness of this particular view is granted by delineating social entrepreneurship as a programmable and therefore rather easy undertaking (at least as long as sound business practices are employed), while simultaneously

> creating the impression that social entrepreneurship operates smoothly, completely devoid of political struggles. (Dey, 2006: 130)

Hjorth and Bjerke (2006) also argue that entrepreneurial processes must be understood in a wider sphere of life and not simply from a business perspective. They suggest considering (social) entrepreneurship as public entrepreneurship – i.e., processes located in the public domain – because "in order to create sociality that enhances life for people, it produces a public space in which citizens can act" (Hjorth & Bjerke, 2006: 99). The authors are deliberate in terming it "public entrepreneurship" rather than "social entrepreneurship" in order to disassociate it from market, economic, and management logics:

> In order for us to understand entrepreneurship as a force creating social change today, we have found it necessary to disassociate 'the social' from the market. Doing so we move the social away from being 'swallowed' by the market (particularly in neoliberal discourse) towards the public. (Hjorth & Bjerke, 2006: 101)

According to Hjorth and Bjerke (2006), social entrepreneurship research has had a problematic inclination to conceive of disadvantaged or vulnerable groups of people, such as "the poor," as customers or consumers of some kind. With neoliberalism's increasing stronghold, there has been "a silent move from citizen to consumer when discussing the social in the context of entrepreneurship" (Hjorth & Bjerke, 2006: 106). While thinking entrepreneurship, business, and solutions to societal ills together has in many regards catalyzed social innovations and transformative movements, at the same time it has not been unproblematic to economize society in this fashion. Hjorth and Bjerke (2006) therefore denounce the idea of "consumers" and suggest the notion of "citizens" to accentuate that transformation of our societies for the better must be situated in a broader context than rational, economic, and programmable methods and logics. Rather than equating the people involved with customers, social entrepreneurial organizing is considered more complex, relational, and co-constitutive (Cho, 2006; Serje, 2017).

Ruebottom (2018: 198) makes a similar observation concerning "the morality of social entrepreneurship," which she argues can be strongly questioned in cases when the target people of a social enterprise's work (whom she says ought to be considered participants) are not involved in defining the social issues or included in the decision-making processes of the organization – these decisions ultimately influence their lives, but targets are instead treated as "merely recipients and not agents." In her view, the degree of involvement of those concerned in decision-making – the participants – and the use of democratic participatory methods of organizing are what differentiate

between being recipients or agents, which in Hjorth and Bjerke's (2006) terms is the difference between being customers or citizens.

Like other critical researchers, Ruebottom (2018: 195) is also wary of "the moral danger" of the neoliberal agenda, which she condenses into three impending threats. The first danger is if social enterprises undemocratically enforce their own beliefs, means, and objectives of what they consider the "best" social solutions, thus overriding local knowledge, cultural practices, and sensibilities. The second danger is if a social enterprise "promotes the capital values of rationality, universality and process," thereby placing responsibility on the individual and his or her ability to capitalize from market opportunities, and thus neglects – and even destabilizes – community values and ties of kinship (Ruebottom, 2018: 195). Lastly, Ruebottom (2018: 195) posits that "the social impact of the neoliberal structure is ambiguous at best," since despite promises of economic advancements, the global economic systems – that which Oxfam terms "the economy of the 1%"[9] – can in many regards be seen as causing large-scale poverty and unequal distribution of resources, rights, and opportunities in the first place. In this light, Ruebottom (2018: 195) warns that if social enterprises operate within the same neoliberal doctrine, "this further entrenches the neoliberal system responsible for creating the problem."

Evidently the dominant conceptualizations of social entrepreneurship and the underlying logics influence how it is organized and practiced, in turn influencing the social enterprises' scope and impact. It is therefore important to scrutinize and discuss the dominant logics and their moral premises.

*The problem of "projectification" and causal logics*

Another aspect of this discussion concerns the relation between social initiatives and funding agencies and donors. Many social initiatives rely significantly on external funding from institutional funding agencies and wealthy private donors, increasingly from the private and philanthropic sectors, but many also take loans under schemes of impact investment. This pressures the initiatives to continuously secure funding to keep their social programs running, make an income to pay back loans, and document that the money is spent well and that successful social return on investments is achieved. Jacobs (2006: 250) denotes this as "the problem of projects" and explains:

> Some services can be delivered through the framework of tightly defined projects with pre-defined activities, inputs, outputs, and outcomes. But empowerment—the approach most widely recognized as contributing to lasting community-level development—cannot.

[9] Oxfam International, Oxfam briefing paper, "An economy for the 1%", 18 January, 2016.

Following Jacobs, narrowly defined projects and the short-termism of donors lead to thinking about the complex processes of social change in simplistic terms. Consequentially, he writes, it "tends to influence how practitioners think about development, overshadowing the ideas of participation and empowerment with the idea of what can be achieved as set out in the project plan" (Jacobs, 2006: 251). This leads to increasing managerialism and de-politicization of initiatives aiming for social transformation. It is a move away from a processual focus to a project-managerial focus centered on specific deliverables (Dey & Steyaert, 2010; Jacobs, 2006; Serje; 2017). Dey (2006: 131) notes a problematic consequence:

> What follows from equating social entrepreneurship with quantitatively measurable activities (such as number of beneficiaries provided with a job) is that practices and effects of social enterprises which do not materialize in desired numbers are either rendered invisible or are treated as deviant, and thus inferior.

Indeed, this correlates with what I have heard and seen amongst practitioners of social initiatives in India[10], and it was quite pronounced in the case of Azad & Sakha. They describe this challenge as an issue of "depth versus numbers," which I will address later in this chapter when I detail the case. Attempting to reduce messy realities and multifaceted social relations into predefined program objectives and ready-made ideas of social transformation that must be achieved in order to "have impact" can be problematic for organizations like Azad & Sakha. Operating in volatile and unpredictable environments where their organizing relies on flexibility, improvisation, and negotiation or co-creation amongst participants and stakeholders on the go, the transformational processes they are aiming for take time. The challenge in the field of practice is, as Jacob (2006: 254) stresses, that "[d]onors are naturally liable to prefer to fund proposals that claim that they

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[10] In 2008, I conducted my master's thesis research studying eight Ashoka-appointed social entrepreneurial initiatives in Delhi. Bill Drayton founded Ashoka in 1980 to support what they call "the world's leading social entrepreneurs" or "change makers" through a three-year financial stipend, business support, and network. Ashoka has been widely influential in discourses and practices in the field of social entrepreneurship. I received access to Ashoka Delhi's internal impact evaluation of all their initiatives, in which they differentiated between those that had high, medium, and low impacts. Analyzing what made some initiatives "more impactful" than others, I found notable differences in financial strategy and knowhow, organizational structure and methods, and approach to scaling the organizations, which could explain the differences in impact. More surprisingly, I found an additional reason that had a stronger influence than the other three. It was related to the type of social issues and Ashoka's "definition" of impact: all initiatives deemed low or medium in impact were concerned with social issues that were taboo and controversial (e.g., incest, child violence, trauma in jails, sex trafficking), whereas the high-impact initiatives focused on far less controversial issues (e.g., clothing distribution to the poor, legal assistance to the poor, disabled people's rights) more widely accepted by the mainstream. This led me to conclude that these eight different organizations could not be compared and measured on the same terms. Even though they were all situated in Delhi, they were operating in vastly different political contexts. "Impact" thus depended on the issues addressed, because the necessary methods to catalyze change were radically different concerning time, finances, level of involvement and participation, the degree of opposition, etc. However, because they were measured generically, the organizations dealing with more severe, stigmatized, and systemic social issues were seen as inferior because their "numbers" were less and cost per individual was higher, and it was harder for them to scale their work.

can achieve lasting results quickly rather than uncertain results slowly." The critical perspective to social entrepreneurship accentuates how instrumental, causal, and measurable logics can reify a particular form of politics and disguise others. The caution this implies is to be careful of the logics with which social entrepreneurship operates and what kind of "worlds" it helps produce (Dey & Steyaert, 2010; Steyaert, 2012).

At the heart of social transformation – and perhaps the attempts to conceptualize "the social" – there seems to be a discrepancy between a processual, non-linear, political, relational logic and an instrumental, causal, measurement logic. From a typical social impact perspective, the focus is on "inputs and outputs" as Aygören (2014: 52) puts it, rather than the processes in between. Examining practices and logics within the field of social impact assessment, Serje (2017) takes up this discrepancy in relation to the notion of social impact as change. She finds that social impact approaches tend to focus on causal components and variables and not on the contextual social dynamics, neglecting the contingencies and subjectivities within social life:

> To apply this logic to people and societies is even more problematic. In the social world, it cannot be assumed that an intervention X produces a reaction or an outcome of Y. Among human beings, an event or intervention not only produces multiple reactions simultaneously, but it also connects with other events and interventions in sometimes-unexpected ways. This will depend on manifold features of the social groups. (Serje, 2017: 140)

Aligned with the literature on entrepreneurship as social change, (Serje 2017:140) accentuates that the way in which people respond to the organizing of social initiatives must be seen as situated within the "specific social and economic conditions in which people live and the politics that influences them." The emergent, contextual, and complex character of social life cannot be grasped in a causal framework. For instance, adding to the layers of relational complexities, Serje (2017) also points out that not only do social programs transform people, but people also transform the programs in return. Again, this places social transformation within a relational ontology: processes of organizing for change are premised by the co-constitutive or reciprocal production of space. While negotiated in the here and now, such processes are equally contingent on the past and senses of the future:

> Recognizing that projects shape and are shaped by social relations implies that understanding social impacts requires the shifting [of] the focus from the list of variables and indicators of change to the way in which the changes introduced affect social reality. (Serje, 2017: 145)

Serje (2017) points to the importance of focusing on social relations. Having thus far established the relevance for situating social entrepreneurship in the sphere of everyday life and within the relational practices that produce the politics of space, in the following section I will focus on the discourse on entrepreneurship as social change that considers entrepreneurship as a potential catalyst for transformation from an emancipatory and gendered perspective (e.g., Calás et al., 2009; Goss et al., 2011; Rindova et al., 2009; Verduijn et al., 2014).[11] The notions of emancipation or empowerment are often deployed within feminist perspectives across arrays of academic fields, but also within studies of entrepreneurship (Bruni et al., 2004; Butler, 2015). Bruni et al. (2004: 407) consider entrepreneurship and gender as intertwined situated practices in which "identity is the effect of a network of relations." Feminist perspectives and approaches to entrepreneurial organizing as performative of gendered practice – for example, those that conceptualize "entrepreneuring" as emancipation – provide an interesting contribution toward comprehending "the social" in more relational and processual terms, a contribution that includes the politics of power and gender in relations. In her study of gendering and entrepreneuring, Gherardi (2015: 650) writes, "A processual approach to gendering practices assumes the mutually constitutive outcomes of social practices: people produce and reproduce what is then reified as social structure and experienced as resources for or constraints on human actions." How, then, can (social) entrepreneurship be a source of emancipation?

**Emancipation as a relational take on social entrepreneurship**

Rindova et al. (2009: 477) theorize entrepreneurial processes, which they term "entrepreneuring," to accentuate the processual "as an emancipatory process with broad change potential" for bringing about "new economic, social, institutional, and cultural environments through the actions of an individual or group of individuals." They see emancipation as "the act of setting free from the power of another" (2009: 478). In this light, entrepreneurship is seen as an opportunity to disrupt the status quo by negotiating power relations to achieve more favorable – emancipatory – positions. They ascribe this emancipation to the potential derived from processes of being an entrepreneur. Although they analyze emancipation from the entrepreneur's perspective, their approach could be extended to consider not merely how entrepreneurship can serve emancipatory

[11] Rindova et al. (2009) find that entrepreneurship research itself could use some emancipation, and several researchers argue that taking a critical perspective on entrepreneurship necessitates taking gender issues seriously. For example, Ahl and Marlow (2012) argue that there is a "gender bias within the entrepreneurship discourse" and elaborate "Accordingly, women are positioned as lacking and incomplete men" (Ahl & Marlow, 2012: 543). For more on the gender bias and approaches to women's entrepreneurship, see also Ahl (2006) and Lewis (2014). The predominant focus of entrepreneurship and gender research are on female entrepreneurs, gendered practices in entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship research.

purposes for the individual entrepreneur, but also how entrepreneurial organizing can potentially initiate emancipatory processes for others in society, as in my case where women live under societal constraints of poverty and discriminatory practices.

Calás et al. (2009) focuses on gendered issues related to becoming and being entrepreneurs. They emphasize the opportunities and barriers women face in starting enterprises as ways of doing gender, attending to the emancipatory aspects of being a female entrepreneur. Like Rindova et al. (2009), they do not extend their conceptualization beyond entrepreneurs, and therefore do not discuss social transformation catalyzed by entrepreneurial organizing in society as emancipatory processes, regardless of the gender of the people involved. Calás et al. (2009) make a connection between emancipation and disadvantaged social groups in a brief note on "microenterprising," programs such as Grameen's micro-loaning ventures for women in poverty that originated in Bangladesh in the late 1970ties, but spread across the globe. Although critical of potential shortcomings of the neoliberal doctrine and initiatives seeking to make poor entrepreneurs self-reliant and responsible for their own (mis)fortune, Calás et al. (2009) nevertheless maintain that overall, the social and economic promises within the act of becoming an entrepreneur are where significant emancipatory potential rests for people living in poor conditions. Although they are critical of microenterprising as a means to tackle issues of poverty, they do not consider how entrepreneurship can be emancipatory in other ways apart from becoming an entrepreneur. Verduijn et al. (2014), for instance, assert that attempts to transform certain groups of people "into proper entrepreneurs may in fact be far less liberating than what one might assume" (2014: 100). This points to the complexities and ambiguities of addressing societal challenges like poverty and discrimination, and since this concurrently concerns socio-economic development and politics, these dimensions cannot meaningfully be dealt with as separate. Furthermore, this suggests that addressing social ills through different entrepreneurial methods will always be situated within contextual politics, which means that what might be emancipatory in one spatio-temporal situation might not be so in another. The question is therefore not about whether being an entrepreneur is emancipatory or not, Verduijn et al. (2014) argues, because it can be both depending on the circumstances. If so, then the concern, rather, is not to simplify social complexities through economic rationales and instead conduct contextualized inquiries into emancipatory potentials of social entrepreneurial organizing. This is entirely in keeping with Steyaert and Hjorth's (2006: 9) invitation for researchers on entrepreneurship as social change "to precisely describe and narrate contextualized concepts for this interaction-in-the-making."

In its focus on relations and the negotiation of power that takes place within them, the literature on emancipation through entrepreneurship provides a particularly relevant and interesting

perspective that can add to conceptualizing social entrepreneurship processually. For example, it brings notions of power asymmetry and dependencies to the center of entrepreneurship, grounding entrepreneurship as social change within the sphere of politics. What happens if we think social transformation in terms of emancipation?

According to Rindova et al. (2009: 478), an emancipatory perspective makes "the question of pursuit of freedom and autonomy relative to an existing status quo a focal point of inquiry." Hence, altering the status quo is central to transformation. A premise this implies is that power relations are skewed and that this has problematic consequences for individuals and groups. Entrepreneurship, then, becomes a means to contest and reorganize relational politics. In this regard, Goss et al. (2011: 213) add that becoming free from power exerted by others must be considered "a dynamic social process" within the complexities of social relations:

> This is important because if we are to take seriously the notion of emancipation as a 'setting free from the power of another', then that other's power to constrain needs to be conceived in terms of 'doing' just as much as the entrepreneur's power to challenge. [...] Neither is this type of 'setting free' likely to be an all-or-nothing experience; as processes unfold over time, it may be better to think in terms of degrees of freedom and emancipation.

In my reading, Rindova et al. (2009) highlight that transformative processes of emancipation fundamentally concern social relations, which are reciprocally produced and unfold over time in a gradual but not necessarily linear manner. They use the term "degrees of freedom and emancipation," which I take to imply that there is no real beginning, end, or whole against which "full" freedom or emancipation can be judged. In a similar vein, Calás et al. (2009: 564) acknowledge "the value of heterogeneity in studying entrepreneurship not as a common object but as a complex set of social activities and processes unlikely to ever become whole." Besides pointing to the complexities of negotiating relations in social life, the idea that emancipatory processes never become fully whole also speaks of the ambiguities, ethical dilemmas, contradictions, nonlinearity, unpredictability, struggles, and maybe even dangers within processes seeking to alter the status quo.

According to Dey and Steyaert (2016: 628), these aspects have not yet received much scholarly attention in traditional social entrepreneurship research because of the tendency to perceive social entrepreneurship in a manner that "veil[s] the complex ethical decisions and dilemmas":

> Thus, as a result of neutralizing ethics as a property of the individual, ethics is actually not explained, but instead explained away. That is, it is removed from anything which is difficult, contradictory or ambivalent, in short, anything that has to do with the prosaics of the ethical experience.

Given the attention to relational power dynamics and the notion of freedom within emancipatory perspectives, that which is ambiguous, difficult, or "ugly" is acknowledged and granted some importance.

There is another important aspect to the complexities of emancipation and negotiations of power, which is taken up in Leung et al.'s (2014: 424) study of Japanese middle-class housewives participating in the program of a social enterprise; namely, as the authors ask, "How do relatively low-power, role-constrained actors break through their constraints in a highly institutionalized environment?" Leung et al. (2014) provide an intriguing study of power relations with regard to gendered practices within a strong patriarchal political context. The authors question what facilitates "unleashing the power of marginalized groups" through the work of a social enterprise (Leung et al., 2014: 424), and in this sense align with an emancipation perspective on entrepreneurship. Although their case is set in Japan and not India, and the social entrepreneurial organizing is for middle-class wives, not young women in poverty, there are some interesting similarities to the case of Azad & Sakha. In both cases, the participating groups are women situated in subordinated or disadvantaged power positions due to the pressures, norms, and expectations in a highly regulated patriarchal context. The gendered practices of what women could and should do confined the women's opportunities, agency, and freedom, which is what the social enterprises seek to challenge. The authors write that the Japanese women "were not even aware of the need for change" (2014: 424) and that "at least initially, the women were not seeking to challenge the traditional boundaries of their roles" (2014: 436). Yet as they started interacting with and within a social enterprise, this got them out of the house, led to them meeting others, and gave them new skills and experiences – all of which caused them to conceive of themselves and their roles in the household differently.

This is similar to my findings, and it offers a relevant nuance to the notion of emancipation, which is often assumed to be an inherent desire amongst suppressed or low-power individuals and groups. In my view, this discloses a challenge within an emancipatory framework: How free are we to know that we are not free? And who defines freedom or emancipation? What Leung et al. (2014) show is that the women did not consider themselves constrained, even if an outsider might see them as such. They joined the social enterprise to socialize, not revolutionize, and this provided them with new experiences and led them to perceive themselves, the world, and their position within it differently. The authors conclude that the organizing of the social enterprise:

> […] allowed housewives to break away from their isolation at home and connect with similar others to take action in new domains. Progressively, they came to realize the social constraints imposed on them, which confined their

> influence to the private sphere of the family. With that the housewives started to feel discontent towards the social system and, to a certain extent, towards themselves. (Leung et al., 2014: 436)

This is a fascinating distinction to include when considering social entrepreneurship as enabling emancipatory processes, because in highlighting the relevance of "outside" influences, it points to the potentiality of social enterprises in facilitating emancipatory processes for others. Even though the women's motivation for entering a social entrepreneurial program may stem from other concerns than seeking to confront and change status quo, it is through their participation within social entrepreneurial processes that they gradually begin to rethink the politics of their everyday lives. In doing things outside traditional (in this case, gendered) confines, they start explicitly noticing and potentially contesting these confines. This again indicates the emancipatory potential of social entrepreneurial organizing, not just the potential of being an entrepreneur.

Lastly, and linked to the centrality of relations, there is the understanding that emotions are foundational to relational experiences and practices. Goss et al. (2011) invite us to think of the influence of emotions in the production of emancipatory processes. They propose that attending to emotional dynamics enables an understanding of the emancipatory potential of entrepreneurial processes:

> We maintain that social-situational focus on emotional dynamics can encourage processual understanding. Hence, a conception of emancipation as 'setting free from the power of another' requires us to examine the interactions that, over time, give rise to the agentive capacities of both the freedom-seeker and the constrainer: shifting levels of emotional energy can help to explain under what conditions emancipatory actions will arise and how robustly they are likely to be maintained. (Goss et al., 2011: 223)

In my view, taking seriously the significance of relations in their many forms and emotional constitutions is an important contribution to further develop a processual understanding of the social in (social) entrepreneurship. My empirical analyses have demonstrated that emotions are an essential part of the production of spatial politics. These relational and emotionally embedded negotiations are not just the entrepreneur's – or the "freedom-seeker's" or "constrainer's" – but must be seen in conjunction with the web of relations that constitute any given spatio-temporal setting for those seeking to transform aspects of the status quo. This raises another important question regarding the notion of emancipation, which thus cannot be delimited to "freedom-seeker" versus "constrainer": if a "freedom-seeker's emancipation" involves a web of relations and an implied negotiation of power, how does this take place in the plurality of relational and

emotional ties associated with kinship, matrimonial, and familial dependencies? Negotiations of power within relations are emotionally fraught and complex in the sense that relations typically have many "faces" all at once, even contradictory ones. Including emotions in our gaze on social entrepreneurial organizing brings social entrepreneurship into the flesh and sphere of everyday life, offering a means to acknowledge the entangled webs of ongoing negotiations of the politics of space produced in and through practices of relations simultaneously with the self, others, and the surroundings (such as different geographies and materialities).

**Space and social entrepreneurship**

Recapitulating, I have outlined the emergence of the phenomenon that some prefer to term "social entrepreneurship" and others "entrepreneurship as social change," and positioned my inquiry within the literature that is concerned with the social of (social) entrepreneurship from processual perspectives. Despite consensus on the centrality of social change or transformation as desired effects of social entrepreneurial organizing, several scholars have rightfully noted that little is yet known about the dynamics of such processes and that they need to be explored across different contexts, organizational forms, and social purposes. I have argued for the relevance of situating social entrepreneurship within the sphere of everyday life through a focus on materially embedded relational and emotional practices, as well as negotiations of politics.

In this vein, I propose a spatial approach derived from my empirical theorizing. The notion of space has not been a common theoretical stance in social entrepreneurship literature. Nevertheless, it has gained some momentum within the critical entrepreneurship research and research on entrepreneurship as social change. Barinaga (2012: 256), for example, makes a brief commentary concerning a spatial understanding of social entrepreneurial processes when she writes:

> Social entrepreneurial efforts are a call to bring agency back into the spaces carved for us by extant relations of power, and in that doing, reshape those spaces. Taking the study of those efforts seriously demands understanding those spaces, the way in which they are continuously carved, and our own agency in reproducing, or transforming, them.

Aygören (2014: 49) makes a similar suggestion:

> [… A] spatial and temporal focus in studies of social entrepreneurship may prove to be a productive entry point for systematic inquiries on the nature and processes of local and global interactions and the impact on individual, local, organizational, societal and global communities.

In particular, Steyaert and Dey (2010) advocate a spatial approach in researching social entrepreneurship. They encourage a situated research exploration, which "emphasizes the reciprocal relationship between social entrepreneurship and its context" (Steyaert & Dey, 2010: 241); and suggest methodologically and theoretically that a spatial approach could advance and make the research agenda more "dangerous":

> Any change in society cannot be done without changing the spatial relations between different parts of the world and without relating the local and the global. […] On a practical level, social entrepreneurship requires the enactment of new spaces of living, working and collaboration. […] on a theoretical level, research into social entrepreneurship could be increasingly based on spatial theories that are able to theorize socio-spatial processes. (Steyaert & Dey, 2010: 246)

They argue that a spatial framework could assist in analyzing and conceptualizing the processes deriving from different types of social initiatives. Ethnographic exploration of Azad & Sakha in Delhi has led me to a similar conclusion; through this thesis, I propose a spatial lens that encompasses the contextual, temporal, material, relational, emotional, and corporeal. I perceive space or spatiality equally as an ontological stance, an analytical lens, and a concept constitutive for my theorizing of social transformation (see Chapter Two).

Given that social transformation is under-researched and under-theorized from a spatial perspective in the social entrepreneurship literature, I have turned to Doreen Massey's (2005) work For Space in developing my spatial approach. I find that certain ontological, analytical, and conceptual positions of Massey's spatial framework offer potent insights relevant for the literature concerned with social entrepreneurship as process. Although Massey (2005) does not work explicitly with social entrepreneurship or social transformation, throughout the thesis I demonstrate and discuss how to work with and elaborate on her spatial perspective, and how it can advance our understanding of social transformation in a given spatio-temporal empirical context. Taking space seriously, Massey (2005: 11) argues, calls for a "spatialisation of social theory and political thinking," which implies "a fuller recognition of the simultaneous coexistence of others with their own trajectories and their own stories to tell." In this light, the thesis suggests a spatialisation of social entrepreneurship.

**A tapestry of literature**

I wish to end this discussion of literature by explicating how I engage with different bodies of literature to augment and extend social entrepreneurship research. As the critical researchers note, our understanding of the "social" is underdeveloped and not widely elaborated contextually or

theoretically, and it is to this end that I propose a spatial approach. These different bodies of literature serve different purposes, but I have attempted to weave them together as an analytical tapestry, summarized in Figure 1.5:

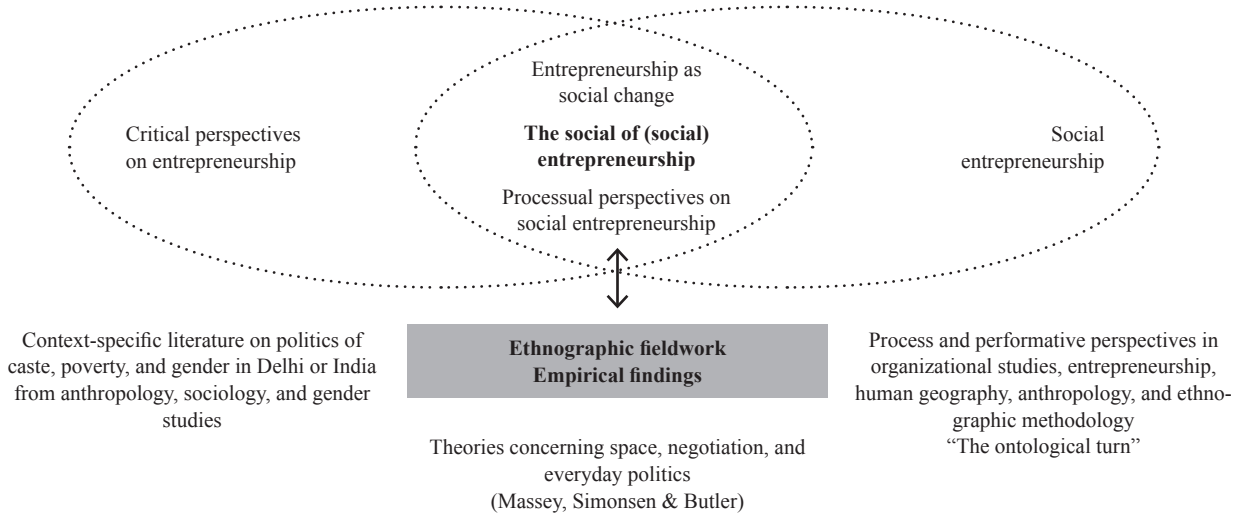



Figure 1.5 TAPESTRY OF LITERATURE IN THE THESIS

In order to develop an understanding of the contextual politics and practices for women living in extreme poverty in Delhi, I attend to a context-specific literature on poverty, politics, and gender issues in Delhi. Together with secondary material from Azad & Sakha and the work of researchers of contemporary Indian socio-political practices, including Datta (2012; 2016), Desai and Andrist (2010), Grover (2009), Ramakrishnan (2014), and Rao (2010; 2013), Chapter Three presents the setting of everyday life in the poor communities and the background profiles of the women in the program. This information is essential for understanding the spatial politics that the women in this study are part of and seek to transform. However, since this is not an anthropological study of life-worlds of women in poverty or a study of gender practices in Delhi, but one that explores the processes of social transformation induced by social entrepreneurial organizing, this literature is not where I aim to contribute. This is important to make clear.

Furthermore, having positioned my inquiry as a processual approach to social entrepreneurship, this has implications for the methodological and ontological aspects of my analytical approach. Here I draw on both performative and processual authors in organizational studies, entrepreneurship, and human geography, as well as within performative and reflexive anthropology and ethnographic methodologies – strands of literature that I will weave together in Chapter Two. This informs my analytical foundation, including the way I use and understand theory. Lastly, although a few researchers have emphasized the importance and relevance of space for understanding social

entrepreneurial processes, there is little work explicating how this can be done. Through conducting fieldwork in Delhi, space and the negotiation of everyday politics emerged as conceptualizations to make sense of the empirical material and ethnographic encounters I experienced. To extend and nuance my spatial approach to social transformation, I have found the work of Doreen Massey (2005), Kirsten Simonsen (2007; 2008; 2010; 2013), and Judith Butler (2015) potent and relevant. This composition and the rationales behind this are expanded upon in the following chapter.

## Staging the research: the case and organization of the thesis

This final part of this introductory chapter is more concrete in setting the stage for my study. It zooms in on the specifics of the case and zooms out in outlining how my exploration of the social transformation of urban poor women in Delhi is structured.

**The emergence of an idea**

In the early 1990s, Meenu Vadera earned a master's degree in social development and public policy from the London School of Economics. It was in London where she first saw a taxi service with and for women. A few years later in the early 2000s, after working as a director for Action Aid in Uganda, she returned to India and settled in Delhi. Already she was contemplating the idea of starting her own social venture; however, it would take a few years before she did so. While working for a local NGO, she started researching the socio-political conditions in the immense capital of many millions. One of the most troubling things she found was that Delhi had the highest incidence of rape in the country. Yet she also came to realize that economic development alone would not solve the deep-rooted gendered violence and discriminatory practices taking place across the city and the country.

In hindsight, Meenu reasons that all these different experiences and threads of insight wove together, gradually bringing the idea for her social venture into being. Almost 15 years after Meenu had seen taxi services with and for women in London, she realized that adapting this idea would enable her to build the kind of program she felt was needed. Delhi had yet to receive such a service, despite the notable lack of safety for women in public transport. "After so many years in the social sector, I started to see myself as an active citizen rather than simply a development worker," she reflected on her entrepreneurial drive, adding, "I wanted to find an active way to contribute to the society I am a part of." In 2008, the Azad Foundation was officially founded as a non-profit organization, and a few months later Sakha was registered as a transport business that employs the trained female drivers. The name Azad is personal to Meenu; it means "freedom"

in Hindi. Her father, who was also a social activist, took it as his last name to make a statement against caste associations related to last names. Sakha means "friend" or "companion" in Hindi. With over 25 years of experience in the development sector, Meenu had a strong network of like-minded professionals with whom she shared and discussed her ideas for social transformation, and before long a small group of experienced colleagues and friends from the field joined her cause and assisted in the founding of the social enterprise. People in the organization refer to them as "the founding team."

**The organization: Azad & Sakha**

The Women on Wheels program was first launched in Delhi; today, the organization has its head office in south Delhi as well as three smaller training facilities in north, east and west Delhi. In 2013, a branch was opened in Jaipur, Rajasthan. Women on Wheels programs have also been started in other parts of India, including Kolkata, West Bengal and Indore, Madhya Pradesh in 2015, and Bangalore, Karnataka and Ahmadabad, Gujarat in 2016.

There are about 30 to 35 employees in Delhi, all Indian citizens, and the majority are women. Although I asked about the number of employees numerous times, it was impossible to get a consistent answer. At the time of my fieldwork, the organization was going through a restructuring process in order to better accommodate its growth. However, this introduced some internal tensions leading to staff changes. Some employees left, while others joined and some positions were redefined. Additionally, Azad had problems retaining mobilizers, and therefore the size of the mobilizing team oscillated during the months I followed them. Providing more flexibility, freelance consultants were often used. Altogether, this made fluidity a feature of the organizational structure. Even though there is a hierarchy with clear positions, in my experience these were somewhat malleable and open to changes.

Azad & Sakha did not have an organizational chart. Figure 1.6 provides an overview of the organization's activities based on the information I have been given. Overall, the organization is divided into four units: 1) The Women on Wheels program, headed by a program director who oversees the training and mobilization activities, each of which are managed by a coordinator; 2) Sakha, the transport-business side of the organization that employs the drivers and is led by a chief operating officer; 3) The Research and Documentation team, headed by a director whose work cuts across the entire organization to gather data and communicate on initiatives; 4) The Administration unit, led by a head of finance, which is comprised of HR, finance, accounting, and other office assistance across the organization. Each unit has a director in charge of the area of work, and together with the executive director they are known as the "core team."

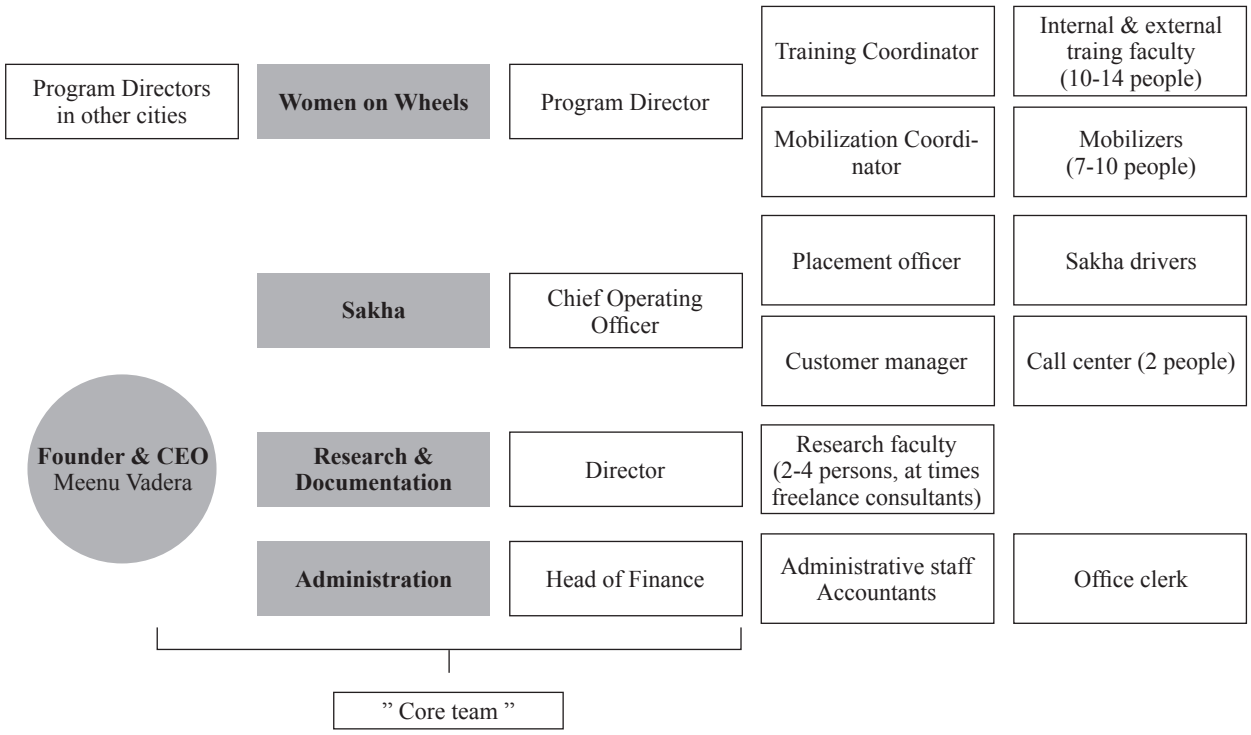



Figure 1.6 AZAD & SAKHA'S ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

**The finances**

Azad & Sakha is run through funding, predominantly from international funding agencies such as the Human Dignity Foundation, the Oak Foundation, American Jewish World Service, and the Planetera Foundation. They also receive some funds from individual donors. The split between funding agencies and individual donors is roughly 95% to 5%.[12] According to their 2014–2015 annual report, their total budget was 29.2 million INR (449,100 USD) of which 1.94 million INR were used on salaries, 1.21 million INR on overheads, and the rest on programs, campaigns, research, and documentation as well as growing the organization and developing new initiatives. Occasionally, when new taxis need to be acquired, they are typically funded through sponsorships from wealthy individuals or corporations who get their brand displayed on a signboard inside the vehicle in exchange.

Sakha operates with a loss. In 2012–13, the loss was approximately 300,000 INR (4,425 USD), and in 2014–15 it had increased to 416,450 INR (6,143 USD). Sakha's income derives from "placement services" (i.e. private chauffeurs) and "taxi services." Sakha claims a small administrative fee for the placement of drivers in private households, but the income Sakha

[12] The distribution between funds (2014–2015) is as follows within the total budget of 29.2 million INR: Human Dignity Foundation (12.39 m. INR), Oak Foundation (8.8 m. INR), American Jewish World Service (3.06 m. INR), Planetera Foundation (2.41 m. INR), individual donors (1.32 m. INR), and Empower (1.22 m. INR).

generates from this is minimal, despite the fact that the majority of their drivers work for private clients. The primary source of income for Sakha is therefore from the taxi and "car hiring services," where a driver can be booked on a day-to-day basis and the rate depends on hours and kilometers driven, as well as the size of the car.[13] Sakha runs with support from Azad; for example, office space is paid by Azad's budget and many of the cars also come from donations made to Azad. Hence, the two units of Azad and Sakha, the NGO and the business, are deeply interwoven organizationally, but also financially.

### The Women on Wheels program

The Women on Wheels training program consists of 14 learning modules divided into three overarching categories: professional driving skills training, women's empowerment, and self-development. These are also referred to as the "three pillars of change – economic, social and personal." Table 1.1 below shows the scheduled duration of each module, but in practice the length of the modules is accommodated to match the women's individual needs.

Table 1.1 THE LEARNING MODULES OF WOMEN ON WHEELS

| Moduls | Hours |
|---|---|
| 1. Induction | 14 |
| **Professional driving skill training** | |
| 2. Learner's module for learner's license | 50 |
| 3. Driving skill training | 22 |
| 4. Driving training for permanent license | 15 |
| 5. Driving practice on road | 50 |
| 6. Map reading & key routes of NCR/ area or the city | 15 |
| 7. Practice for employability (self-driving) | 30 |
| 8. First aid training | 7 |
| **Women empowerment** | |
| 9. Gender & domestic violence legal aspects | 35 |
| 10. Sexual & reproductive health | 20 |
| **Self-development** | |
| 11. Self-defense skills training | 20 |
| 12. Communication skills training/ work readiness | 20 |
| 13. English speaking training | 90 |
| 14. Counseling & personal growth | 20 |

Source: Azad internal document, Module Details, 2015

[13] In 2014–15, Sakha earned about 400.000 INR from placement services (6,150 USD), whereas the car hire generated 4,940,000 INR (76,026 USD). The numbers in this section come from an internal PowerPoint document provided by Sakha staff.

On average, the trainees take 8 to 10 months to complete the program. Participation is free, but the women have to pay an initial commitment fee of 2,000 INR (33 USD) and their own transportation expenses for reaching the training locations. Women unable to meet these requirements are offered small loans from Azad, which they are expected to repay once they have a job. For a small group of the women, there is also an indirect opportunity cost because they are unable to generate income for the household while participating in the training program. In order to reduce travel time and costs, Azad has set up four training offices across Delhi, so the women typically attend training in the facility closest to their home unless the training is conducted by an external institution, e.g., the self-defense module offered by Delhi Police.

Approximately 10 groups of roughly 8 to 15 women begin the training each year. They are referred to as "batches" and given a successive number, e.g., "Batch 39," whose process I was following. The batch number is a reference both staff and women use to situate the group in the program. The women generally follow the program in their batches, but activities can be adapted to an individual's needs and capabilities. Therefore, in any given module there is usually a mix of women from different batches. Scheduling also comes down to filling up the training sessions with enough trainees; thus, combining women across batches is also a practical and economic matter. Typically the training is a full-time daily activity, so the trainees are away from home most weekdays and Saturday, which in India is a working day like any other. Once the women finish the training modules, they must pass the official driver's license test to gain what they call a "permanent license." Table 1.2 shows the number of trainees and women who gained a permanent license between 2008 and 2015.[14] The difference between the two numbers is the number of women who did not complete the program.

Table 1.2 NO. TRAINEES & NO. GETTING DRIVER'S LICENSE

| Year | No. of trainees | Permanent license received |
|---|---|---|
| 2008 | 9 | 8 |
| 2009 | 30 | 22 |
| 2010 | 55 | 27 |
| 2011 | 71 | 41 |
| 2012 | 181 | 88 |
| 2013 | 175 | 80 |
| 2014 | 134 | 81 |
| 2015 | 275 | 136 |

The financial year runs from 1. April - 30 March.
Source: Azad & Sakha annual report 12-13, 14–15, 15-16, internal documents

[14] For some reason Azad & Sakha did not produce an annual report for the year 2013-14, but I have been given different internal documents with information and numbers of their work that year.

According to the 2014–15 annual report, 81 women in Delhi completed their driving tests and received a permanent license that year, but the number of registered trainees was not announced. After women have received a permanent license, they are officially drivers and move on to the Sakha side of the organization.

**Sakha**

Before the women can take work as professional drivers for clients in Delhi, they need to pass a "Sakha test" to ensure that they are ready for that level of responsibility. Typically the drivers train for a while on their own, "self-driving," before taking the Sakha test. Once they have passed, the organization begins the process of finding a client for them. This is the point at which they receive a uniform, a Sakha badge, a Sakha sign for their front door at home, and a bank account – then they are official Sakha drivers. Although they always start out as private drivers for women in Delhi, after a minimum of 24 months they can choose to apply for a commercial driver's license. This includes another test. Upon successful completion, they become registered taxi drivers. Many women remain private drivers because the daily routines are given and the client known. A driver's salary increases with time and experience, but they earn the most as taxi drivers. Table 1.3 lists the salary levels in 2015.[15]

Table 1.3 THE ECONOMICS OF BEING A DRIVER

| Salary level | INR |
|---|---|
| Salary as private driver, 1 year | 7,000 |
| Salary as private driver, 2 year | 8,000 |
| Salary as private driver, 3 year + | 9,500 |
| Salary as taxi driver | 10-14,000 |

The specific salary for a taxi driver depends on the number of shifts and whether they take day or night shifts, hence the interval between 10–14,000 INR. The entry salary of 7,000 INR is typically higher than the total income within a household, and therefore makes the women the primary breadwinners in their families.

Following to the 2014–15 annual report, Sakha estimates that over the years, they have offered employment to approximately 200 women and that 150 are still working as drivers. Roughly one-

[15] The salary levels are adjusted occasionally. As I was leaving fieldwork in September 2015, Sakha introduced a wage increase of 500 INR per month for all positions.

third have left Sakha to work in private households, other institutions, and commercial taxi firms. In 2014–15, 15 women moved from being private drivers to driving taxis. This was a year many women left Sakha quite suddenly to work for other taxi firms. According to Sakha's website, they currently have 16 taxis in Delhi and 20 commercial drivers.[16] In 2014–15, an average of 44 women worked in Sakha's private placements, while 15 were in the process of finding their first job.

**Depth versus scale and nontraditional livelihoods**

I will end this introduction to Azad & Sakha with an assemblage of two excerpts from interviews, a short dialogue that occurred over lunch, and a graphic illustration of how staff "see" and reflect about their work. According to a member of the founding team:

> What Azad offers is provoking and new – it is non-traditional and the women earn enough to take care of their family, unlike most other job options for them. It gives them real independence. I see driving as a means for empowerment, so the work is so much more than driving. We aim to open new avenues for women – driving can be one. It is about changing the attitudes about what women can do – attitudes of both women and men. We can see that it has a big effect. And I like the potential it holds for the future – we might influence traffic policies in the future and influence the situation of women in India.

These visions were endorsed by another staff member when explaining why a non-traditional livelihood such as driving is paramount:

> We see driving as an activity that inherently breaks gender stereotypes in several ways. First is the restricted mobility for women, the idea that women should stay at home and work at home; so by becoming a driver, women are forced to go outside of the home. There is an expectation that women should not venture out into public places alone, but in driving – especially commercial driving – they come to do just that. Traditionally, women are also not supposed to make decisions for themselves, but while driving, they have to. They must decide when they sit behind the wheel, if they are supposed to turn left, right, or use this gear. It is small things, but no one will come and tell them at that point, and ultimately it gives them confidence because they took some decisions on their own.

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[16] Sakha Consulting Wings, "Our Services", http://sakhaconsultingwings.com/sakha-cab-hire-services-delhi/. Accessed September 5, 2018.

The centrality of female driving is evidently a deliberate and strategic choice in Azad & Sakha's organizing, but it is premised on an understanding that social transformation takes time and includes the "whole person," which means encompassing a multitude of aspects within spatial politics of the women's everyday lives. This is why I would often hear staff members speak of the difference between depth and scale, as the following brief dialogue demonstrates. It transpired between the founder, a staff member, and I one day over lunch. Seated around a plastic table with small buckets of homemade Indian food meant for sharing in the middle, as was common practice during lunch, I asked the two women why they considered Azad & Sakhas's work radically different than other livelihood and women's empowerment programs in Delhi:

Staff: See, there is a difference between a little change and then deep transformation. I think what Azad is doing is very deep, which most other organizations aren't doing.

AS: Can you elaborate?

Founder: See, people [funding agencies] want numbers, and we always get pressured on this from so many sides, but you have to make a choice – either you go deep with a few women or else you go wide, but less involved with many women. You can't do both. Going deep is very difficult. There are so many more levels and challenges, but I believe that it is the only way to create a real transformation.

AS: Why is it harder?

Founder: Because we get so involved. We go very deep into the individual cases and issues. The layer and levels of, for example, domestic violence are very complex. We invest a lot of ourselves in this, in these girls. And also, I keep being questioned by outsiders, like funding agencies, peers, and so on, about numbers [of women].[17] I always feel guilty, I always wonder if I do it good enough. It is not easy. Do we give too high or too low salaries, and so on [money that otherwise could be spent on reaching more women]?

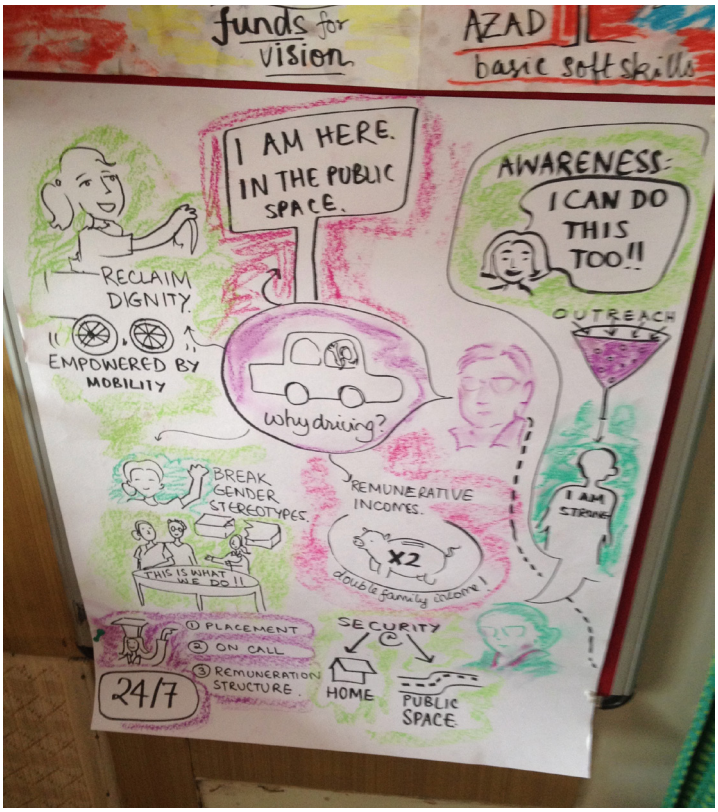
Staff: It is about the depth versus the numbers. Azad works with 10 to 15 girls in one group; another NGO I know has 83 girls in a class.

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[17] This view was also endorsed in an interview with a senior staff member of a founding agency supporting Azad & Sakha's work. The staff member was working in the agency's local office in Delhi but reported to a head office in New York, where each year a board of directors decided on which social initiatives to support worldwide. The staff member stated that making the case for Azad & Sakha was at times challenging because of the high price of the program relative to the number of women. Although the staff member shared in the conviction behind Azad & Sakha's methods, the argument was that the board of directions "preferred to see large numbers."

> Also, Azad is very patient with the girls; they give them many chances and don't give up on them. In the beginning I thought it was too forgiving, but now I see it – it works this way. They need patience because they are not used to any of these things.

I end this section with a drawing, which was made at an internal strategy workshop in 2015 where the staff was asked to draw what they considered the essence and key elements of their methods of organizing. The drawing summarizes many aspects of Azad & Sakha's methods of organizing and highlights issues I will delve further into in the following chapters. This leads me to the outline of the thesis.




*Azad & Sakha's office, south Delhi.*
This sketch depicts key methods and terms used by the organisation: the car and the center.

**Organizing the thesis**

The thesis is divided into three parts: one focused on literature and methodology, one on the empirical material, and one that brings these together in discussions and conclusions.

Chapter Two, *Researching and theorizing social transformation spatially* sets the overall scene for my study and explicates the details of how it has been conducted. It elaborates on

my methodological, ontological, and analytical foundation and discusses the implications of this in terms of theorizing, as advanced by performative and processual researchers across entrepreneurship studies, human geography, and anthropology.

In Chapter Three, *Politics of everyday life in Delhi's poor communities* I present dominant aspects of everyday politics that Azad & Sakha contests and seeks to transform. This situates and details the context of the case. The chapter builds upon the personal life history of Inika, an experienced taxi driver with Sakha, in dialogue with material from Azad & Sakha and scholarly research on the politics of poverty, caste, and gender in Delhi and India. My aim is to provide a basis for understanding the everyday lives of the women in the program. Only against this backdrop, can the processes of social transformation and the struggles they entail be explored and understood.

This more descriptive empirical chapter is followed by five chapters of empirical analyses that explore different aspects of the poor women's lived experiences of participating in Azad & Sakha's social entrepreneurial organizing. The first three analytical chapters attend to the three successive "stages" of the program – considering driving (Azad's mobilizing to get women to enroll), becoming a driver (training with Azad), and being a driver (working for Sakha) – whereas the last two look across the entire program and are more brief as they focus in on what it is that is being transformed and the ambiguities hereof. These five chapters are written close to the empirical material without explicit drawing on literature of others, but instead each chapter is followed by a concise theoretical reflection on the empirical findings in conversations with theory.

Chapter Four, *Considering driving: unsettling space through a radical proposition*, is the first of the empirical analytical chapters and argues that considering to join the Women on Wheels program prompts new kinds of negotiations for the women within webs of familial and communal ties. I show how Azad's mobilizing team enters the poor communities and, through what I term deliberate spatial configurations, sets off processes of negotiations concerning what the women can and should do. I theorize this as the *unsettling of spatial politics* and argue for its centrality to instigating social transformation.

What happens when the poor women start training to become drivers is the focus in Chapter Five, *Becoming a driver: embodied negotiations of spatial relations*. Exploring four particularly affective spatial constellations within the program, this chapter presents an understanding of social transformation as being practiced through corporeal, emotional, and relational practices that are materially embedded and constantly unfolding in the negotiations with one's self, others, and surroundings due to the processes and spatial affects of becoming drivers. I theorize this as *the negotiation of space*.

Behind the wheel, the poor women become drivers for women of middle and upper class households. In Chapter Six, *Being a driver: encountering new worlds*, I theorize on *the expansion of space*, which occurs as the drivers enter and encounter entirely new social and geographical worlds. I discuss the performativity of being a driver – in uniforms and cars through relations to clients and the city – and how, as an alternative mode of living gender, this confronts traditional caste, class, and gender norms. I argue that it does more for the women than provide a job. Encounters at the verge of intersecting worlds between materially embedded bodies and places, involving clashes, tensions, encouragements, inspirations, or new imaginings, not only produce negotiations regarding the women's role as drivers, but also regarding their sense of self and their identities in relation to how others perceive them.

Chapter Seven, *Female drivers: being the change* inquires into what is being transformed in the contextual, temporal, and material setting of the women's everyday lives. It argues that the social transformations are predominantly corporeal, emotional, and relationally produced and focuses on how, and in which ways, the women are transforming the spatial politics of their everyday lives. I show how the poor women with Azad & Sakha do gender differently as a consequence of becoming or being drivers in Delhi, and I theorize on *spaces of transformation* or transforming spatial politics.

I argue that social transformation cannot be presumed, because it is innately uncertain; it might also *not* happen due to the risks, tensions, ambiguities and even dangers of violence that arise from seeking to contest customs and live gender in a radically unconventional way. Chapter Eight, *"Walkouts" and tensions of transforming spatial politics* considers processes of social transformation as fraught with ambiguities in the form of tensions, struggles, risks, dangers and unforeseen occurrences. 60% of women leave the program – "walkouts" they are called in Azad & Sakha's terminology – and this last empirical chapter examines reasons why. When Avani, one of my central research participants, suddenly disappeared from the program, leaving me a note saying she was contemplating suicide, I gained unnerving access to the vulnerabilities of a young woman's struggles of space, which included conflicting emotions, social pressure and severe tensions in the household dynamics. The chapter ends on a more uplifting reason for "walkouts": Sakha drivers were leaving the organization to seek employment elsewhere. In this case the women went beyond the program's initial ambitions for them and formed another trajectory for themselves. It shows how processes of social transformation cannot be tamed, which leads me to end with a discussion on *the ambiguities of space* in relation to social entrepreneurship.

Chapter Nine, *Discussion: implications of a spatial approach*, discusses a spatial theorizing of social transformation in two parts. The first part reflects upon the methodological implication of

pursing a spatial approach and what this means for research on the social of social entrepreneurship. I argue that thinking spatially necessarily influences the processes and methods of research, and discuss how spatial methodologies can assist process perspectives on social transformation. The second part of the chapter offers a conceptual discussion of the findings and moves toward a theorizing of social transformation in conversation with the main literature presented in the first two chapters. It deliberates on a spatial frame to consider social transformation and where it can be "seen"; how social transformation is facilitated through unsettlings and expansions of space; how the processes are experienced and practiced in spaces of transformation as negotiations with one's self, others and the surrounding world; and lastly, I conclude that these aspects suggests that social transformation can be understood as heterogeneous, multiple, temporal, open-ended, unpredictable, in becoming, and as political.

Finally, in Chapter Ten, *Social transformation through female driving in Delhi* I return to answer the research question and conclude on how this ethnographic exploration adds to our understanding of social transformation as process, as well as to our understanding of the social of social entrepreneurship.

Be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves, like locked rooms and like books that are now written in a very foreign tongue. Do not now seek the answers, which cannot be given you because you would not be able to live them. And the point is, to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps you will then gradually, without noticing it, live along some distant day into the answer

Rainer Maria Rilke

# A SPATIAL APPROACH

Chapter Two

This chapter presents the analytical foundation of the thesis, and opens by making a brief note that links a spatial approach to ethnographic methodologies. The first part of the chapter considers space as an ontological and analytical lens, and presents the key theoretical sources of inspiration to conceptualize social transformation. The second part addresses methodologies for doing spatial research, whereas the third part elaborates on the specific methods of my ethnographic fieldwork and the methodological considerations of my approach.

# Researching and theorizing social transformation spatially

"The force of a moment is the billions of happy and unhappy encounters that produce the multiple space of a waiting spot" (Beyes & Steyaert, 2012: 46). This is a vision of space – a spatial moment of someone waiting at a bus stop. Space and process are inherently linked, because space is about processes of everyday life embedded in practices that form and transform our worlds. A spatial perspective is a way to explore, research, and make sense of the social of social entrepreneurship.

Although I did not begin from a spatial perspective, my interest in exploring social transformation processually informed my ontological and methodological orientation right from the outset. The spatial approach I have developed evolved in the course of my thesis work as a recursive conversation between the empirical and theoretical material, and derives from a processual perspective. This has had implications for the methodological choices, as it not only concerns the theorization of empirical findings, but also the research processes and how we understand the process of developing theories. To Steyaert (2012: 152), "the development of process perspectives requires us to re-consider the concept of theory (in its broadest sense) and to contemplate and experiment with the process of theorizing itself." Theorizing captures the ongoing creative movement intertwining ontology, methodology, and analysis, with a strong focus on the empirical. In keeping with this notion of theorizing, the spatial approach presented in this chapter does not treat ontology, methodology, and theory as separate entities. In my view, space is an ontological position, an analytical lens, and a concept for understanding social transformation. In what follows, I make the arguments for why this is the case and lay out the analytical foundation of the thesis.

The chapter begins by briefly explicating the fit between a spatial approach and ethnographic methods, which relates to the entwinement of space and place and which has influenced the choice of theories I engage with. Thereafter, it presents the key theoretical perspectives I draw on to discuss the processes of social transformation set in motion by Azad & Sakha's social entrepreneurial endeavors, and the chapter ends by presenting the methodologies, methods, and fieldwork reflections. As mentioned in Chapter One, space has not been widely used as an analytical lens in social entrepreneurship research, but several researchers suggest it as a way forward in conceptualizing the social of social entrepreneurship from a processual, critical, and political perspective (Aygören, 2014; Barinaga, 2012; Beyes, 2009; Steyaert & Dey, 2010). It is my hope that the tapestry of literature with which I have engaged and the manner it is woven together

can assist in making the field of literature concerned with "the social" "more entrepreneurial," to paraphrase Steyaert and Hjorth (2006).

**The relevance of thinking spatially through ethnography**

In the previous chapter, I presented space – and negotiating everyday politics as the dynamics of space – as key terms in my empirical conceptualization of social transformation, and denoted how Doreen Massey's work *For Space* (2005) offers particularly potent spatial perspectives, capturing many of the dynamic and political aspects of space that I was theorizing empirically.

According to Massey (2005: 9), space is "the product of interrelations; as constituted through interactions," "the sphere of coexisting heterogeneity," and "a product of relations-between, relations which are necessarily embedded material practices which have to be carried out, it is always in the process of being made." This view on space is strongly rooted in a relational and processual orientation. Massey (2005: 9) departs from any notions of space as "surface," abstract, fixed, or closed, because space is "never finished, never closed." Not only does she position space within a process perspective and within the everydayness of life, a central tenet is the *politics* of space: "It is a world being made, through relations, and there lies the politics" (Massey, 2005: 15). Using a spatial lens to think the political and what it means, Massey's work provides perspectives useful to situate social entrepreneurship in the political.

Another reason for taking a spatial approach is because of its emphasis on the sensory and corporeal dimensions of lived experiences, the coexisting multiplicities of trajectories, and the relational constitutions of the political – all of which never stand still. It invites a way of thinking social transformation processually and lends perspectives on how social transformation comes about. Not only is the spatial political, but as Massey (2005: 9) accentuates:

> [..T]hinking the spatial in a particular way can shake up the manner in which certain political questions are formulated, can contribute to political arguments already under way, and – most deeply – can be an essential element in the imaginative structure which enables in the first place an opening up to the very sphere of the political.

Since a spatial perspective is not merely a theoretical conceptualization, but equally an ontological orientation, this approach inevitably has implications for research practices and methods. I have emphasized six central elements characterizing space that have proven significant to understanding processes of social transformation in my case: the contextual, temporal, material, relational, corporeal (sensory), and emotional. A spatial approach therefore encourages methodologies

attentive to these different but entwined characteristics of space.

Interestingly, Pink (2009) makes a similar connection between a spatial approach and the importance of ethnographic methodologies sensitive to sensory experiences and knowledge in our academic pursuits to understand the everyday lives of others and societal processes of organizing. In her discussions on methodologies for doing sensory ethnography, Pink also draws on Massey's (2005) spatial framework, writing, "Massey's work offers an exciting paradigm for understanding the relationship between place and space through a focus on the politics of space" (Pink, 2009: 31). The co-constitutive relation between place and space, Pink (2009) asserts, has importance in terms of how to do ethnography:

> Massey's ideas invite ethnographers to consider how the specificity of place can only be understood through recognition of its actual configurations being mutually contingent with those of space as she defines it. (Pink, 2009: 33)

Of the connection between place and space, Massey (2005: 130, original emphasis) contends:

> If space is rather a simultaneity of stories-so-far, then places are collections of those stories, articulations within the wider power-geometries of space. […] To travel between places is to move between collections of trajectories and reinsert yourself in the ones to which you relate. […] Places not as points or areas on maps, but as integrations of space and time; as spatio-temporal events.

This means that we must look to the specificity of place – the "spatio-temporal events" – to understand space, and we must attend to space to comprehend what is going on in place, or rather, in the practicing of place (Massey, 2005). On this basis, Pink argues "for a rethinking of the ethnographic process through a theory of place and space that can engage with both the phenomenology of place and the politics of space" (Pink, 2009: 23).

Although Massey (2005) discusses her own experiences of traveling through spaces, Pink (2009) observes that the phenomenology of place – the deeply contextual, temporal, materially embedded, corporeal, sensory, and emotional experiential dimensions of participating in the production of the spaces of everyday life – is not widely addressed in Massey's work. In my empirical work from the field, these aspects were central and important to the understanding of how social transformation was facilitated, experienced, and practiced, and thus foundational to comprehending the contextual politics of space and how such politics might become altered.

While Massey (2005) provides potent ideas for grappling with social transformation, attending to the many sensory and contextual aspects of the processes calls for additional perspectives. To

capture the role of emotions and bodies in practice-based spatial analysis, I drawn on Kirsten Simonsen's (2007; 2008; 2010; 2013) work on emotional spatiality and intercorporeality. I also draw on Judith Butler's (2015) theorization of gender performativity, collective performativity, and politics.

In keeping with Pink (2009), I propose a spatial approach that combines the characteristics of experiencing and practicing of place *and* space. I do so by focusing on the contextual, temporal, material, relational, corporeal (sensory), and emotional aspects of spatio-temporal events in the context of women becoming drivers in Delhi and by perceiving social transformation as processes that are situated, embodied, experienced, practiced, and continuously unfolding (Massey, 2005; Pink, 2009).

## Theoretical conceptualization spatializing social transformation

This entails certain ontological propositions, i.e., an understanding of the world as relationally constructed in and through practices that continuously unfold and are thus open-ended – in a movement of becoming (Simonsen, 2007; Steyaert & Van Looy, 2010). This suggests that (processes of) organizing can be understood and explored in relational practices of the mundane and everyday, and that these practices are constitutive of space. I therefore also embrace an ontological stance that favors practices as the building blocks of the spaces of everyday life. Simonsen (2007: 222) elaborates that a social ontology of practice implies:

> […] an account of social life maintaining that human lives hang together through a mesh of interlocked practices. That means that practices constitute our sense of the world, and that subjectivity and meaning are created in and through practices.

An ontology of space is a relational ontology, which implies that social worlds, or spaces of everyday politics, are produced in relations amongst people, things, and their surroundings. Realities are in other words relational, and temporally produced, effects (Butler, 2015; Law, 2004; Massey, 2005). Simonsen (2013: 12) suggests that "a more robust sense of politics, experience and agency" can be found in a "practice-based re-reading of phenomenology." Drawing on Merleau-Ponty, Simonsen (2013: 21) writes, "His ontology of the flesh, connecting the flesh of the body, the flesh of others and the flesh of the world or 'intermundane space,' weaves together subject/object and culture/nature." This ontology privileges bodies, emotions, experiences, and materially embedded practices as constitutive of social worlds, and emphasizes the importance

of considering how life takes shape through everyday routines, shared experiences, sensory encounters, and interactions (Lorimer, 2005).

The work of Massey (2005), Simonsen (2007; 2008; 2010; 2013), and Butler (2015), which I will present in the following sections, all emphasize the process and performativity of everyday practicing of space and turn to encounters, bodies, emotions, identities, and struggles as productive for negotiating spatial politics. Figure 2.1 presents the key theoretical focal points I draw upon in theorizing social transformation.

Figure 2.1. THEORETICAL FOCUS POINTS

| **A spatial understanding of social transformation**<br>Based on Massey's spatial perspective | **The centrality of bodies and emotions in social transformation**<br>Based on Simonsen's work | **Politics and the collective performativity of social transformation**<br>Based on Butler's work |
|---|---|---|
| • Thinking social transformation spatially<br>• The dynamic processes of space<br>• Linking space, negotiations, and embodied encounters<br>• Unsettling of space as necessary for social transformation<br>• Social transformation can be deliberately organized through spatial constellations | • Social transformation is experienced and practiced in and through emotional, corporeal, and relational practices in everyday spatial encounters (between people, places, things)<br>• The affective side of (emotional) spatiality can initiate negotiations that give rise to social transformation<br>• The intercorporeality of encounters is essential to the unsettling of space necessary for social transformation | • Social transformation as addressing the unequal distribution of precarity and rights to live freely by contesting the norms of recognition<br>• Social entrepreneurial organizing can facilitate the field of norms to break open<br>• Offer alternative ways to live gendered lives<br>• Because gender is performed, it can also be transformed in corporeal and collective actions<br>• Connecting the subjective and collective in processes of social transformation |

## Central characteristics of space

In For Space, Doreen Massey (2005: 4) calls for abandoning thinking of space as surface, and suggests considering it instead as a "meeting-up" of histories or "stories-so-far." In her own words, her book is "about ordinary space; the space and places through which, in the negotiation of relations within multiplicities, the social is constructed" (Massey, 2005: 13). She recognizes that spaces and negotiations are intrinsic to each other and constitutive of the transformation of practices – the ongoing construction of "the social." Massey (2005: 9) characterizes space as:

> 1) [...] the product of interrelations; as constituted through interactions, from the immensity of the global to the intimacy of the tiny;
> 2) [...] the sphere of the possibility of the existence of multiplicity in the sense of contemporaneous plurality; as the sphere in which distinct trajectories co-exist; as the sphere therefore of coexisting heterogeneity;
> 3) [...] always under construction. Precisely because space on this reading is a product of relations-between, relations which are necessarily embedded material practices which have to be carried out, it is always in the process of being made. It is never finished, never closed. Perhaps we could imagine space as a simultaneity of stories-so-far.

If space is the product or occurrence of relations *between*, then it denotes that there must be multiplicity, and "the very possibility of any serious recognition of multiplicity and heterogeneity itself depends on a recognition of spatiality" (Massey, 2005: 11). This makes recognizing spatiality important, and political, to Massey. Space is the product of interrelations within contemporaneous plurality, and these are embedded in material practices. When Massey (2005: 9) imagines "space as a simultaneity of stories-so-far," this is another way of emphasizing coexistent trajectories and multiplicity. Because of this multiplicity, space is not a stable or static sphere, but rather always in movement. Encounters are therefore intrinsic to space and bound to happen in places of everyday life. This interaction of space is what I refer to as *negotiations*. Perceiving negotiations spatially implies that they take place "within and between both human and nonhuman" (Massey, 2005: 140). Although negotiation is not a central concept in her work, she writes that "there is only ever, always, a negotiation (and a responsibility to negotiate) between conflicting tendencies" (2005: 95) and that space can be understood as "the sphere of relations, negotiations, practices of engagement, power in all its forms" (2005: 99). Elsewhere, she writes that "the throwntogetherness of place demands negotiation," and here "we confront the challenge of the negotiation of multiplicity" (Massey, 2005: 141). She establishes a connection between space, negotiation, and embodied encounters: Space, as a multitude of embodied and materially embedded encounters, fosters negotiations amongst people, things, and places in coping with, accommodating to, and/or transforming (practices) in the "throwntogetherness." Negotiations produce spatial politics – an important premise in my study.

Central to Massey's work is an emphasis on the political ramifications and relevance of the spatial approach to understanding and engaging with the world. Massey calls for a "spatialisation of social theory and political thinking" (2005: 11). She is critical of the Western-skewed discourses of globalization and modernist politics, which she perceives as a "cosmology of 'only one narrative'" that disregards "the contemporaneous heterogeneities of space" and thereby "reduces simultaneous coexistence to place in the historical queue" (Massey, 2005: 5). This logic turns nations, and groups of people, into "different stages in a single temporal development" (Massey, 2005: 68). Placing great emphasis on multiplicity, Massey often uses the terms "plurality of trajectories" or "simultaneity of stories-so-far," but stresses that the notions of "trajectory" and "stories-so-far" simply seek to emphasize "the process of change in a phenomenon" (Massey, 2005: 12). Her point is to draw attention not to a segmentation of "differences" like categorizations of social class or ethnicity, but rather to a coexisting heterogeneity of the vast simultaneity of stories-so-far as an intrinsic principle of space itself.

*What is being negotiated in spaces of everyday politics?*

This thesis argues that the negotiations of everyday spatial politics are ultimately linked to the women's ongoing construction of their sense of self (subjectivities) and identities[18] as they relate to others and to their surroundings, which are embodied and materially embedded in everyday practices. Massey (2005: 154) makes a similar point regarding the construction of identities when she argues that places:

> […] are formed through a myriad of practices of quotidian negotiation and contestation; practices, moreover, through which the constituent "identities" are also themselves continually molded. Place, in other words, does – as many argue – change us, not through some visceral belonging (some barely changing rootedness, as so many would have it) but through the *practicing* of place, the negotiation of intersecting trajectories; place as an arena where negotiation is forced upon us.

Accordingly, negotiations are a characteristic of space, something that cannot be escaped. They are performative – they create identities and how we experience ourselves in relation to others and the world around us. Like the processual and performative researchers, Massey perceives identities as multiple and open-ended. Thinking otherwise would be to hold identities hostage within a view of space as something closed:

> […] we do not have our beings and then go out and interact, but that to a disputed but nonetheless significant extent our beings, our identities, are constituted in and through those engagements, those practices of interaction. Identities are forged in and through those relations (which include non-relations, absences and hiatuses). In consequence they are not rooted or static, but mutable ongoing production. (Massey, 2005: 1)

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[18] The concept of subjectivity refers to the making of a subject acknowledging multiplicity, differences, fragmentation, hybridity, and embodiment as formative to the individual's lived experiences (Knights & Kerfoot, 2004; Probyn, 2003; Dey & Steyaert, 2016), It considers subject positions and human agency in power relations. The notion of identity often addresses how individuals see themselves (self-identity) in relation to others and others in relation to them, and concerns sameness and difference related social categorizations (e.g., Alvesson et al., 2008; Czarniawska, 2013; García & Welter, 2013; Pullen & Simpson, 2009; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). As Pullen and Simpson (2009: 562) write "identity is understood as being constructed between self and other" and constantly negotiated. It is, therefore, also "fragmented, multiple and emergent." The notions of subjectivity and identity are often used interchangeably. Drawing on Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003: 1168) to make an analytical distinction, I use the notions sense of self and subjectivity to refer to "something 'deeper', more personal and 'non-accessible' than identity." However, I find it useful to also speak of identity; not as something separate from subjectivity, but as a term to capture the processes in which the women in my study relate to their "place" within society in relation to others and the city. Spatial politics discriminating amongst groups of people (e.g., caste, class, gender) greatly influence the women's experiences of identity, which may or may not be aligned with their sense of self. Although subjectivity and identity construction are widely studied within management, leadership and organization studies (e.g., Pullen & Linstead, 2005) and have clear bearing for social entrepreneurship research, engaging further in this discourse is beyond the scope of this thesis.

This is in keeping with organizational and entrepreneurship studies that consider identities not as pre-given, but plural – as constantly being constructed, molded, and performed in relational engagements of space (e.g., Butler, 2015; Law, 2004; Mol, 2002).[19] The important point here is that the practicing of place changes us; the experience of change is related to the negotiation of identities.[20] In the context of this study, becoming drivers with Azad & Sakha in Delhi leads the women to question their practicing of place – negotiating and potentially transforming their sense of self and their sense of identity in relation to others and the surroundings.

Another central argument is that spatial negotiations are temporal. Space and time cannot be seen apart from one another. This means time is evidently foundational to a spatial understanding of social transformation. To Massey, the outcome of time and space together is a multiple becoming. Spatiality is the potentiality of transformation (becoming something different), and time relates to transformative processes unfolding in material embedded practices situated in geographies of place. As Massey explains:

> Then "here" is no more (and no less) than our encounter, and what is made of it. It is, irretrievably, here and now. It won't be the same "here" when it is no longer now. "Here" is where spatial narratives meet up or form configurations, conjunctures of trajectories which have their own temporalities […]. (2005: 139)

While identities and subjectivities are negotiated in the "here and now," the past also influences the negotiations: "something which might have be called there and then is implicated in the here and now. […] The interconnections [between past and present] themselves are part of the construction of identity" (Massey, 2005: 139). Spatiality cuts across time, but is affective in any given place and time, which Massey calls "events of place" or "spatio-temporal events." It implies that identities

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[19] Several of the researchers I draw upon stress the multiplicity of identity (e.g., Czarniawska, 2013; Hastrup, 1995; Law, 2004; Massey, 2005; Steyaert, 2010, 2012). See, for example, Law (2004), who gives an example with reference to anthropologist Marilyn Strathern and her notion of partial connections: "[...] it has to do with partial connections within the same person. We do not, this is the argument, have single identities. Strathern notes, for instance, that Strathern-the-feminist is not the same as Strathern-the-anthropologist. They write in different ways in different circumstances and for different audiences. At the same time, however, neither are they entirely separate from one another. [...] The argument is that 'this' (whatever 'this' may be) is included in 'that', but 'this' cannot be reduced to 'that'" (Law, 2004: 64).

[20] Barbara Czarniawska (2013: 60) also gives the notion of negotiation a central place in her work on organizational identity and gender in workplaces. She proposes the concept of "negotiating selves" as a way to analyze events in a workplace "in terms of social dynamics" related to the construction of selves, and in that, gender. It is a construction that is both from the inside out and from the outside in. I read "negotiating selves" as a conceptualization linking negotiation to the construction of identities (i.e., selves or sense of self). Although some organizational identity researchers are focused on dialogue and narratives, Czarniawska argues that understanding processes of identity construction and transformation must also include the non-verbal: "I believe that selves are shaped by much more than conversations alone; there are body forms and clothes, gestures and physical acts. In case of gender, ethnicity, physical handicap, and age, they all play a significant role" (2013: 61).

and subjectivities are negotiated in the here and now from a spatiality that intertwines the "there and then," and must be seen as in a process of becoming: "It means that the negotiations of place take place on the move, between identities which are on the move" (Massey, 2005: 158).

Acknowledging the heterogeneity of subjectivities and identities, even within the individual, is a central political concern to Massey. It is a precondition for not taking identities hostage in prescribed and simplified narratives with already-written futures, as in grand narratives in history-making, for example. Massey (2005: 10) advocates a turn to spatial thinking as an anti-essentialist approach, which:

> [...] takes the constitution of the identities themselves and the relations through which they are constructed to be one of the central stakes of the political. "Relations" here, then, are understood as embedded practices.

Another important aspect essential to create the potentiality for social transformations is a politics that is premised in an understanding of the future as open:

> [...O]nly if we conceive of the future as open can we seriously accept or engage in any genuine notion of politics. Only if the future is open is there any ground for a politics which can make a difference. (Massey, 2005: 11)

Thus far, I have presented a connection between space, negotiation, and embodied encounters; that the negotiations of multiplicity through materially embedded practices concerns an ongoing construction or performativity of subjectivities and identities; and that they are temporally produced while also influenced by the past. Negotiations are constitutive of the everyday practicing of place, but – importantly – this may or may not cause notable transformations within the spaces of everyday politics. These attributes of space alone cannot explain how people begin to question the givenness of space or attempt to radically change the status quo. Pertaining to social transformation, a central question arises regarding how negotiations that *transform* spatial politics come about and are practiced.[21] For instance, prior to their enrollment in Azad & Sakha's program, the ways in which the poor women could live their lives and their sense of self appeared severely constrained by existing patriarchal norms and practices. How can we explain why women living in such spaces of

[21]According to Massey, a characteristic of space is that no two moments can ever fully be alike. Due to the heterogeneity of space and the encounters within – and affect of – spatial settings, we all change in some regard all the time. In a spatial understanding we cannot be seen as static, even if one lives a life in which every day appears highly similar and restrictions to one's scope of action might be pervasive. There must, however, be a difference between these happenstance, unfolding changes of space and the more pervasive transformations, where taken-for-granted practices of the status quo become challenged and redone. On these grounds, I prefer to use the notion of "transformation. "

strongly institutionalized patriarchal politics suddenly start questioning, and potentially transform, them? How, then, in such contexts, do new social processes suddenly take off?

**Unsettling space: initiating negotiations that transform space**

Massey (2005: 71) argues that "the spatial in its role of bringing distinct temporalities into new configurations sets off new social processes." She repeatedly emphasizes the possibility of change within spatial relations in their constant openness for becoming, and refers to this as "the disruptive character of space" or "the chance of space" (2005: 111). To Massey, that which sets off new social processes are these chance encounters of space:

> […I]ts potential for happenstance juxtaposition of previously unrelated trajectories, that business of walking around the corner and bumping into alterity, of having (somehow, and well or badly) to get on with neighbors who have got "here" […] by different routes than you; your being here together is, in that sense, quite uncoordinated. This is an aspect of the productiveness of spatiality which may enable "something new" to happen. (2005: 94)

There are always connections that can unsettle a given order. Order is not stable, even though it might momentarily appear so. Massey ascribes much promise to the meeting of new trajectories, as this enables new spatial constellations that can potentially catalyze new social processes: "It is a making of space(s), an active reconfiguration and meeting-up through practices and relations of a multitude of trajectories, and it is there that lies the politics" (2005: 83). The serendipity of the spatial means that space can never be tamed. It has a disruptive and productive potential, to which Massey attributes an element of chaos:

> In spatial configurations, otherwise unconnected narratives may be brought into contact, or previously connected ones may be wrenched apart. There is always an element of "chaos." (Massey, 2005: 111)

Yet chaos and coincidence cannot be the sole explanations for novel transformative processes. Massey acknowledges that it is "sometimes happenstance, sometimes not" (2005: 111) and elaborates:

> The chance of space lies within the constant formation of spatial configurations, those complex mixtures of preplanned spatiality and happenstance positionings-in-relation-to-each-other […]. (Massey, 2005: 116)

In other words, there is a complex mixture of the "planned" and the "unplanned." But how can we understand the "planned," then? Although Massey introduces the notion of "preplanned spatiality," she does not conceptualize it further. Nevertheless, the term provides a fitting description for Azad & Sakha's social entrepreneurial organizing. When they stage information campaigns within poor urban communities, for instance, they are creating what I refer to as "deliberate spatial constellations" that enable the women to "bump into alterity." I consider this as preplanned spatiality, and propose considering social entrepreneurship as organizing preplanned spatiality. This will be unfolded and further discussed in the chapters that follow. Space can, of course, never be fully planned or tamed. There is always an element of happenstance, which renders the responses to any social entrepreneurial organizing uncertain and open-ended.

Massey (2005: 151) describes the disruptive character of space as "unsettling the givenness" of space, but does not elaborate on what this entails. I find this notion quite precise in capturing how social entrepreneurial organizing can facilitate transformative processes. Whereas "disruption" elicits connotations of something explosive, destructive, explicitly confrontational, and radically reconfiguring, the term "unsettling" signals more subtle processes, e.g., being thrown off balance, disconcertion, confusion, and disturbance. Unsettling suggests potential reverberations, ranging from minor alterations to major cracks into "the givenness." It implies a broad range of "altering" experiences. Unsettling should not, however, solely be considered as something "negative" or difficult. I argue that unsettling can arise from "positive" experiences as well, e.g., encouragement, inspiration, and support. Unsettling is used in this thesis to depict productive moments where the givenness of space – the taken-for-granted practices and politics of a spatial setting – is challenged. These productive moments are experienced and expressed in specific places and times, which Massey terms "spatio-temporal events." This is why I sometimes also refer to them as nouns like "an unsettling" or "unsettlings." As the following empirical analyses show, such "unsettlings" are not just a matter of happenchance, but of deliberately constructed potentialities through social entrepreneurial organizing.

Massey's (2005) work on space focuses on theorizations of globalization. She does not focus on organizational, community-centered, or individual levels of analysis. I extend insights from her work to develop my own take on working with space methodologically, analytically, and as an empirically grounded theorizing, so as to apprehend the "phenomenology of place" (Pink, 2009: 23) in my study. Although meeting with others and other places implicates emotions and corporeality, and Massey (2005) acknowledges their significance, she does not address this in detail. For this reason, I engage with the work of Simonsen (2007; 2008; 2010; 2013), whose work is centered in phenomenology and a practice-based ontology. Simonsen is concerned with the

production of space through encounters in and between full living bodies. Simonsen's notions of emotional spatiality and corporeality offer a productive way to nuance the notion of negotiation by recognizing the affective character of space that influences bodies and emotions, by considering the body's spatiality, and by attending to the implication of the body as the center of experience.

**The centrality of bodies and emotions in the production of space**

Participating in the Women on Wheels program provided women from poor backgrounds with many new experiences related to their encounters with others, acquiring skills and knowledge, exposure to different belief systems and ways of life, and visiting new places in the city. Training to become a driver or working as one provides an enormous social and geographical expansion of space, which both forces and facilitates the women's negotiations of their identities. My empirical material is full of emotional and corporeal accounts, which leads me to argue that human bodies and emotions must have a central place in the theorizing of social transformation. The body and emotions have not yet received much attention in the social entrepreneurship discourse; they figure more prominently within the processual and performative approaches in entrepreneurship, anthropology, and human geography. For example, Beyes and Steyaert's notion of spacing emphasizes "embodied affects and encounters" embedded within socio-material practices (2012: 53), whilst Stewart (2011) is concerned with sensory knowledge and Hastrup (1995: 83) considers the living body the "locus of experience." Simonsen (2007; 2008; 2010; 2013) offers a way to work with corporeality and emotions from a spatial perspective, based on an understanding of social life as "created in and through practices" (2007: 168). She writes:

> […M]y main concern is with embodied or practical knowledges and their formation in people's everyday lives, with the world of emotions, desire and imagination, and with the infinitude of encounters through which we make the world and are made by it in turn. (Simonsen, 2007: 168)

In her studies of encounters in urban public spaces, Simonsen argues that through everyday practices, subjectivity, identity, and meaning in social life are crafted in spatial encounters, and that this has to do with perception. Perception, in her view, "is an opening-out to and engagement with others, a dialectical relationship of the body and its environment" (Simonsen, 2007: 170). This makes the body spatial. To Simonsen (2007: 174), the spatiality of the body means that it *is* space and *has* space, and "produces itself in space at the same time as it produces that space." Everyday lived experiences of practices are innately corporeal, and one's sensing of the world participates in the production of thoughts and emotions. "Lived experience, then, is located in the

'mid-point' between mind and body, or between subject and object – an intersubjective space of perception and the body" (2007: 171):

> This means that the human body takes up a dual role as both the vehicle of perception and the object perceived, as a body-in-the-world – a lived body – which "knows" itself by virtue of its active relation to this world. (Simonsen, 2007: 171)

With this relationality of the spatial body perceiving and experiencing interactions with self, others, and the world, and as being perceived by others in the world, the dichotomy of subject-object dissolves into a more complex intertwinement, which Simonsen calls "intercorporeality." This can explain how we can think of practices of social transformation as having a corporeal dimension and how changes in bodily practices thus influence spatial politics. This is a central empirical argument I make in the thesis: Social transformation is practiced and experienced corporeally, emotionally, and relationally. Hence, space is not just considered as an interrelational effect, but the relational negotiations this involves are carried out in and through bodies with emotions. It means that bodily practices participate in the *making* of space – in Simonsen's words, "[i]n taking up or inhabiting space, bodies move through it and are affected by the 'where' of that movement" (2007: 173). This I precisely what I saw happening to the women as they became drivers in Delhi. The expansion of space the women experienced as their bodies moved through the city behind the wheel of a car affected them; the space of the car, the spatiality of the city, and the "where," but also the "with whom" (encounters), transformed the women's spatial constitutions. As they were altered by space, they started altering the spaces of their everyday lives – because social transformation is the changes in the relational practices of the everyday.

The bodies of others co-inhabit space, and the "throwntogetherness" of space forces encounters upon us, some more predictable than others. Perceiving other bodies is not like perceiving an object or machine, which too has affect:

> One does not perceive another body as a material object; rather, one is affected by the meaning of its appearance. The other body is animated and its animation communicates and calls for response. (Simonsen, 2013: 17)

Other bodies simultaneously perceive while being perceived, but no one knows with certainty how the "others" are perceiving in any given moment, and this "communicates and calls for response," as Simonsen notes. What this accentuates is that human interrelations are particularly influential in the negotiation of spatial politics and that emotions are an important aspect hereto.

**Emotions as expressive spaces and affective spaces**

In her notion of "emotional spatiality," Simonsen provides an interesting dimension to the processes I regard as negotiations:

> Emotions are neither "purely mental" nor "purely physical," but ways of relating and interacting with the surrounding world. This relational account gives occasion for a double conception of emotional spatiality. (Simonsen, 2013: 17)

In that emotions are spatial Simonsen differentiates between emotions as an "expressive space" and an "affective space" (2013: 17). The expressive space of emotions relates to how emotions are expressed and communicated in response to something, "the performative element of emotions" (Simonsen, 2013: 17), whereas the affective space of emotions denotes the way in which the world affects us: "The other side of emotional spatiality is affective space, which is the space in which we are emotionally in touch – open to the world and its 'affect' on us" (Simonsen, 2013: 17). The expressive space is similar to my notion of negotiation, which I perceive as a unspoken contemplation or outspoken deliberation with one's self, others, or surroundings taking place as an interwoven process of corporeal, emotional, and mental practices.[22] The affective space, however, concerns how the world around us is affecting us, making a mark, regardless of whether we are aware of it.[23] As we move through the world, the materiality of changing spatial geographies cannot help but affect us. Negotiation, in my take, can arise as a response of having been affected.

This distinction is relevant for theorizing social entrepreneurial organizing, because it points to the importance of space in setting processes in motion that touch and form us. This opens the question of whether a deliberate use of affective spaces could set transformative processes in motion. I find that this, indeed, is a part of how Azad & Sakha instigates social transformation. Architects know that the way they design and construct the materiality of places and the artifacts deployed can influence and even change people's behavior, but do social entrepreneurs know? Recognizing the affective and expressive possibilities of space – and the link between them – is a useful conceptualization for how social transformation can be facilitated, experienced, and practiced – a theme I will discuss throughout the thesis. The expressive and affective dimensions of emotional spatiality must be seen as mutually constitutive. We respond to the world and the

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[22] I concur with Simonsen (2013: 17) when she states, "Emotions are neither 'purely mental' nor 'purely physical,'" which implies that emotions, mind, and body cannot be treated as separate entities. I primarily use the term "emotions" throughout the thesis, but it should be understood that I consider the mind or thoughts part of them.

[23] Lilja (2017: 346) offers a useful distinction between affect and emotions: "Affects are created and exist within the encounter, while emotions constitute the subjective reaction arising from affects."

world responds to us in an ongoing negotiation. We negotiate with ourselves, others, and our surroundings; this is practiced corporeally, emotionally, and relationally and is part of "the same" spatiality.

**Unsettling as moments of disorientation**

I will end the introduction of Simonsen's work by tying it to the notion of unsettling. Given her focus on emotionally fraught lived experiences, which "[concern] the whole sensing body" (Simonsen, 2007: 172), she also addresses how emotional "disturbances" can facilitate or force new actions by using the notion of "moments of disorientation." According to Simonsen:

> Moments of disorientation turn our world upside down. Disorientation is a bodily feeling that can shape insecurity and shatter one's sense of confidence in the ground of one's existence. It is a situation which can make bodies react defensively, as they reach out for support or search for a place to reground and re-orientate their relation to the world. (Simonsen, 2013: 20)

She adds an interesting observation, which corresponds well with my understanding of unsettling: "Moments of disorientation, then, can be seen as destabilizing and undermining, but they can also be seen as productive moments leading to new hopes and new directions" (Simonsen, 2013: 20). This nuance is important for understanding social transformation, as it highlights how confusion, struggles, and tensions can also be "productive moments" in the processes of "bettering" lives. An unsettling spatio-temporal event can simultaneously be experienced as destabilizing or dissolving in some aspects and also stabilizing or productive toward something "better." Based on my empirical findings, I take this argument further by adding that what we might consider more "joyful" experiences – for instance, when people praise, encourage, or inspire others – can lead to unsettling or moments of disorientation, too. The quality I ascribe to unsettling is a conscious questioning of the status quo. Even if the moment producing such a move is a "joyful" one, the reaction to the encounter might still subjectively be experienced as a tension or with a degree of fear that stems from tinkering with some fundamentals in an individual's core beliefs.

I engage with Simonsen's work to address the relationship between space, bodies, and emotions in relational practices. Emotions and bodily practices are mutually constitutive, including practices of thought. In the case of the women in Azad & Sakha's program, this can help explain why, when they begin changing how they perceive themselves, they concurrently alter their corporeal practices. Similarly, when they acquire new corporeal and sensory knowledge, like learning self-defense, this influences how they feel and think. This, in turn, translates into

negotiated changes in their relational practices with themselves and others, which, in my terms, can lead to transformations of everyday spatial politics.

In the context of my study, these negotiations were connected to norms, expectations, and conventional practices in relation to gender and "being poor" (caste and class). Contesting and potentially redoing traditional practices makes spatial negotiations of everyday lives innately political. To further the political and gendered aspects of my empirical theorizing, I turn to Butler (2015), whose work extensively engages with politics with regard to equality and living better lives. Extending the ideas of an ongoing construction of identities, Butler's work situates such processes in practices of gender performativity, which concurrently concerns the subjective and the collective. Her conceptualization of collective performativity is, in my view, potent for facilitating reflections of, and theorizing on the relation between, social entrepreneurial organizing, the people involved, and the surrounding society.

**The politics of rights to livable lives and collective performativity**

Judith Butler, known for her theory of gender performativity and work on the politics of gender, is also an important source of inspiration. In what follows, I draw on her most recent book, *Notes Towards a Performative Theory of Assembly* (2015), in which she continues her theorization of gender performativity, but through the exploration of bodily acts in public spaces and situations of assembly such as demonstrations or street gatherings. In this book, she draws together topics of gender, minorities, class, and poverty – politics that segregate and exclude, but also bring people together in their struggle for equal rights, recognition, and what she terms "livable lives":

> A livable life can follow from a demand to live out the corporeal sense of gender, and so to escape from a restriction that does not allow that way of being to live freely in the world. (Butler, 2015: 40)

Like Simonsen, Butler grants the body and the collectivity of bodies a central position in the production of spatial politics, and like Massey, she emphasizes the importance of heterogeneity in the sphere of the everyday for politics to enable more equal possibilities for people to live good lives. Butler's (2015) work focuses explicitly on politics, rights, gender and precarity, and is therefore an important theoretical inspiration to address the empirical accounts of the thesis. I draw on the following aspects of her work in particular: differential distribution of precariousness and the problem of "responsibilization," norms and practices of recognition, the performativity of gender, and collective performativity.

**Differential distribution of precariousness**

There are vast and visible inequalities in societies across the world, which significantly shape the kind of lives people can live, how "livable" their lives are, and how free they can be. This is a foundational concern for Butler:

> Populations that are differentially exposed suffer heightened risk of disease, poverty, starvation, displacement, and vulnerability to violence without adequate protection or redress. (Butler, 2015: 33)

Butler (2015) argues that we have a moral obligation to be concerned with discriminatory practices that stigmatize and segregate groups of people and which lead to a "differential distribution of precariousness":

> "Precarity" designates that politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support more than others, and become differentially exposed to injury, violence and death […] precarity is thus the differential distribution of precariousness. (Butler, 2015: 33)

Butler is describing the kind of politics that produces inequalities and, for example, renders some groups of people less safe than others to walk the streets and more at risk of harassment and violence. The women working with Azad & Sakha who live in Delhi's poorest communities are subject to the "differential distribution of precariousness." Relative to other social groups, these women are "differentially exposed" to a number of things: they are more susceptible to harassment and violence; they are less assured of police and legal protection; and they are completely excluded from many places in the city.

Butler ascribes these inequalities and failures to protect as products of our socioeconomic and political institutions: "[n]o one person suffers lack of shelter without there being a social failure to organize shelter in such a way that it is accessible to each and every person" (2015: 21). What is paramount is where the responsibility is placed. Her argument is similar to those within the literature on entrepreneurship as social change, addressed in the previous chapter, who accentuate critical views of the marketization of the social (e.g., Calás et al., 2009; Cho, 2006; Dey, 2006; Dey & Steyaert, 2010; Hjorth & Bjerke, 2006; Jacobs, 2006; Ruebottom, 2018; Verduijn et al., 2014). Butler greatly opposes the tendencies of "responsibilization," where ideas of the entrepreneurial self and economic rationales are seen as the means and the self-obligation to secure and improve one's own life places responsibility on the individual. To Butler (2015:

15), such forms of responsibilization are in "favor of entrepreneurial modalities supported by fierce ideologies of individual responsibility and the obligation to maximize one's own market value as the ultimate aim in life." She questions the underlying assumptions of this movement of individualization and responsibilization:

> The fantasy of the individual capable of undertaking entrepreneurial self-making under conditions of accelerating precarity, if not destitution, makes the uncanny assumption that people can, and must, act in autonomous ways under conditions where life has become unlivable. (2015: 16)

In other words, the fact that populations are differentially exposed and living precarious lives is a failure of our systems, not a failure of the individual. This point has quite significant political ramifications if taken seriously and is entirely in keeping with Massey's (2005: 5) critique of the neoliberal "cosmology of 'only one narrative'" that places nations and populations in a "historical queue" or in different "stages" on a single ladder of economic development. Both Butler (2015) and Massey (2005) are critical of global societal politics, which they argue affects the social organizing of local everyday life. This critique of – or warning against –responsibilization has clear implications for social entrepreneurship research. One must consider and be critical of the underlying responsibilization premise on which social enterprises build and operate.

Responsibilization cannot be a means to address issues concerning "populations that are differentially exposed," Butler argues, because the underlying problem is one of discrimination amongst people and unequal recognition; these discriminatory rationales and practices have become normalized, influencing how we organize in society. The discriminatory and unequal practices are collectively produced and maintained; social failures are what produce differential distributions of possibilities to live good lives. This becomes expressed in contextual norms of recognition, i.e., the taken-for-granted norms that regulate behavior and with which some social groups are recognized above others. These processes of social organizing produce what Butler sometimes refers to as "the field of appearance" or "the sphere of appearance," which in my reading can be understood similarly to the notion of space. In my view, spatial politics are processes that regulate "spheres of appearance" and become the dominant and taken-for-granted practices and norms favoring some groups of people over others. Being differentially exposed means not receiving equal recognition due to a "highly regulated field of appearance":

> The question of recognition is an important one, for if we say that all human subjects deserve equal recognition, we presume that all human subjects are equally recognizable. But what if the highly regulated field of appearance does

> not admit everyone, requiring zones where many are expected not to appear or are legally proscribed from doing so? (Butler, 2015: 35)

Her point is that dominant practices constituting "the field of appearance" – what I call "space" and "spatial politics" – seek to regulate who can appear as recognizable beings and who cannot, and that the expectations to appear in certain ways rather than others are requirements for appearing at all:

> And this means that embodying the norm or norms by which one gains recognizable status is a way of ratifying and reproducing certain norms of recognition over others, and so constraining the field of the recognizable. (Butler, 2015: 35)

**Questioning the norms for recognition**

"Which humans count as the human? Which humans are eligible for recognition within the sphere of appearance, and which are not?" Butler (2015: 36) asks rhetorically:

> [… W]e can see that norms of the human are formed by modes of power that seek to normalize certain versions of the human over others, either distinguishing among humans, or expanding the field of the nonhuman at will. To ask how these norms are installed and normalized is the beginning of the process of not taking the norm for granted […] For those effaced or demeaned through the norm they are expected to embody, the struggle becomes an embodied one for recognizability, a public insistence on existing and mattering. (Butler, 2015: 37)

Acknowledging that prevailing politics, with its differential recognition of "who counts," disregards the fullness and heterogeneity of its people by valuing some over others is the first step toward seeking greater equality – and more livable lives for everyone. Enabling the questioning of existing norms and practices is therefore key for challenging their taken-for-grantedness and an essential process in facilitating social transformation. In the chapters that follow, I examine how Azad & Sakha seeks to do this through its social entrepreneurial organizing. When the women from the poor communities join the Women on Wheels program and learn driving, it entails that they have broken with the norms and practices they were "expected to embody." Becoming drivers can be seen as an embodied struggle for recognizability – "a public insistence on existing and mattering," in Butler's (2015: 37) terminology.

Constraints upon "the field of the recognizable" concern struggles of power and practices of discrimination through segregation along the lines of caste, race, gender, sexuality, physical appearances, or minorities of different kinds that evaluate some humans as being better, "more

human," or "more recognizable" than others. Typically, categories on which discriminatory practices are based intersect and reinforce one another. The women in this study are differentially exposed as being women, being poor, and being of the lowest castes in the Indian caste system. Each of the "labels" ascribed to them carries with it certain norms and expectations for their behavior, as well as for how others can treat them, i.e., recognize them. Such norms and practices rob space of its heterogeneity, a critique Butler, similar to Massey, repeatedly returns to. Differential and discriminatory practices confine people and their abilities to live freely in the world. These labels are not who they are, but they have a performative effect on the women's identities. Gender is a significant part of this performativity.

**The performativity of gender**

To Butler (2015), gender is not something we have or are, but something we perform relationally. We are born with a sex, but the way our sense of gender is experienced and molded is informed by others' expectations and fantasies in a given spatio-temporal context, and becomes embodied though our practices. One of Butler's arguments is that delimiting and gender-defining norms often creep in on us from the moment we come into the world; they "produce us," yet they are not who we are:

> In the case of gender, those primary inscriptions and interpellations come with the expectations and fantasies of others that affect us in ways that are at first uncontrollable: this is the psychosocial imposition and slow inculcation of norms. They arrive when we can scarcely expect them, and they make their way with us, animating and structuring our own forms of responsiveness. Such norms are not simply imprinted on us, marking and branding us like so many passive recipients of a culture machine. They also 'produce' us, but not in the sense of bringing us into being, nor in the sense of strictly determining who we are. Rather, they inform the lived modes of embodiment we acquire over time, and those very modes of embodiment can prove to be ways of contesting those norms, even breaking with them. (Butler, 2015: 29)

Indeed, as I shall address in the following chapters, gender norms in the poor communities "inform the lived modes of embodiment" the young women "acquire over time." This embodied way of living gender, however, is not set in stone, and the women involved in the program start using these very modes of embodiment to question, contest, and break norms. What is interesting for social entrepreneurial organizing, then, is that gender performativity not only reinforces taken-for-granted norms and practices, but can also be a means to transform them.

Butler ties gender norms and practices to the unequal distribution of precariousness, "since

we know that those who do not live their genders in intelligible ways are at heightened risk of harassment, pathologization, and violence" (Butler, 2015: 34). The women becoming professional drivers in Delhi attested to this. When they performed gender in a radically new way in their context as drivers, they were increasingly exposed to harassment and threats of violence. Poor women performing the function of female drivers were not a commonly accepted way to appear in public or community spaces:

> Gender norms have everything to do with how and in what way we can appear in public spaces, how and in what way the public and private are distinguished, and how that distinction is instrumentalized in the service of sexual politics. (Butler, 2015: 34)

To perceive gender as performative is to conceive of it as an enactment according to the norms, expectations, fantasies, and gazes of others, but as Butler (2015: 32) writes, "the 'appearance' of gender is often mistaken as a sign of its internal or inherent truth." This is an important distinction, relevant for my work as well.

The ways we perceive others from a gender perspective are based on *our* collectively produced ideas, norms, and expectations of gendered practices, not the "other's" subjective experience of their gender. It is thus a perceived appearance of another, which might be different from that other's sense of self. Gender is therefore something we perform and depict in relation to each other. The problem, Butler argues, is that we think that the appearance and "the being" are the same. In this way, gender perceptions can delineate and distance us from understanding and acknowledging the heterogeneity of people's expressions and experiences, just like it can pressure some people to live gender in ways that do not feel right to them. How someone performs, and conforms to, gendered identities might not correspond to how they would behave if they felt a sense of being able to "live freely in the world."

Surely gender can never be reduced to a precise formula in any context, even if norms and expectations of everyday spatial politics are explicitly communicated in what Butler calls "authorities discourses." Hence, the experience of being human, with a gender and other societal categorizations, can never truly be tamed:

> Although there are authorities discourses on gender – the law, medicine, and psychiatry, to name a few – and they seek to launch and sustain human life within discrete gendered terms, they do not always succeed in containing the effects of those discourses of gender they bring into play. Moreover, it turns out that there can be no reproduction of gendered norms without the bodily enactment of those norms, and when that field of norms breaks open, even if

> provisionally, we see that the animating aims of a regulatory discourse, as it is enacted bodily, give rise to consequences that are not always foreseen, making room for ways of living gender that challenge prevailing norms of recognition. (Butler, 2015: 31)

This is an apt depiction for analyzing Azad & Sakha's work from a gendered perspective. When Butler writes, that "there can be no reproduction of gendered norms without the bodily enactment of those norms," she makes a similar argument to Simonsen's emphasis on intercorporeality. What is important regarding what they both bring forth for social entrepreneurship is that if norms must be reproduced corporeally in order to be maintained, then it is also *through* new bodily enactments that they can be transformed. This is a core premise in my spatial approach precisely because the social is perceived as produced in the (always-becoming) relations and negotiations between bodies in materially embedded spatio-temporal settings.

When women from poor backgrounds in Delhi become drivers, it seems, as Butler (2015: 31) notes, to "give rise to consequences that are not always foreseen, making room for ways of living gender that challenge prevailing norms of recognition." The thesis seeks to show and discuss how and why. Because of the multiplicity of space, gender and other labels are impossible to define equivocally. That gender is performed and reinforced through practices, and that these practices are negotiated on an ongoing basis, entail that practices are never truly stable or static and, therefore, neither is gender. It is the multiplicity of identities, the heterogeneity of trajectories, the openness of the future, and the process of becoming that is inherent to space which summon the possibility for transformation, which in surprising ways "risks undoing or redoing the norms," and which in terms opens "the possibility of remaking gendered reality along new lines" (Butler, 2015: 32). A social enterprise, as my case demonstrates, can organize deliberately toward this end, but contesting and potentially altering dominant gender norms is not an easy task. It is a negotiation with – and of – power and necessitates a collective reenactment of an alternative way of living gendered lives.

**Collective performativity when bodies act in concert**

Butler (2015) speaks of a collective or plural performativity or enactments in different ways. There are three aspects of this I wish to draw out: the first concerns the collective performativity when people assemble and together exercise corporeal demands for the right to appear; the second relates to the fact that the subjective and collective are mutually constitutive, in that each "I" brings along a "we"; and the third furthers how freedom can only be exercised with others.

Following Butler, collective or plural performativity or enactments can be seen in situations

when people assemble in the pursuit of more livable lives. People can gather into a "larger becoming," that of a social group, attempting to set a new direction for a specific group of people sharing certain injustices. This is "a plural and performative" way to exercise rights or political claims, which Butler also terms "collective performativity." When people assemble, stand together, march in groups, or gather to protest, it is a form of critique, even if it is silent. They are "exercising a plural and performative right to appear, one that asserts and instates the body in the midst of the political field," which can be seen as delivering "bodily demands" (Butler, 2015: 11). The spatial body is thus political. When bodies are gathering in such ways, they form temporary alliances in claiming their rights to appear, matter, and exist. Professional female drivers in the streets of Delhi can thus be considered as a critique, a claim for another way and right to appear, and a thorn in the eye of a discriminatory system. In an interview, a client of a Sakha driver described the women drivers as "the blue *kurta* [tunic] brigade." In keeping with Butler's arguments, there is an alliance between the bodies wearing Sakha uniforms – they are acting in concert, making novel public demands simply by appearing and rupturing the field of appearance. They are enacting "a public insistence on existing and mattering," as Butler (2015: 37) phrases it.

Butler addresses another interesting and important aspect of understanding "performative politics in its struggle from and against precarity" (2015: 51). She rightly explains that not everyone can take for granted the power to walk down the street and to do so without harassment or violence. "Each 'I' brings the 'we' along as he or she enters or exits that door" (Butler, 2015: 51):

> We might say that there is a group, if not an alliance, walking there, too, whether or not they are anywhere to be seen. It is, of course, a singular person who walks there, who takes the risk of walking there, but it is also the social category that traverses that particular gait and walk, that singular movement in the world; and if there is an attack, it targets the individual and the social category at once. (Butler, 2015: 51)

I find this distinction, which blurs and intertwines the notions of the individual and the collective, the "I" and the "we," particularly relevant for my study. There are two points to accentuate within this citation. The first point concerns the "I" and the "we" of the same social category. For instance, when the poor women were harassed or assaulted due to their living gender differently, the attack was a profoundly subjective experience while also being an "attack on their social categories." Taking the same argument a bit further, it suggests that when the women were redoing specific gender practices of the everyday – like commuting on public transport alone or driving a car – they were not only transforming their own lives, they were also enacting another becoming for

the "social category" of poor young women in Delhi. As role models, the "I's" might just pave the way for the "we."

The second point is that the "we" transcends the boundaries of social groups – the "we" of the larger collectivity of society. When Butler states (2015: 51), "We might say that there is a group, if not an alliance, walking there, too, whether or not they are anywhere to be seen," she is also referencing the silent masses who indirectly support this freedom. When someone can walk safely down the street without the fear of violence, it implies that many people silently support this right, making the act possible. In this sense, many people are thus exercising this right simultaneously. Yet this does not indicate that the collective is a unified field:

> Moreover, freedom is more often than not exercised with others, not necessarily in a unified or conformist way. It does not exactly presume or produce a collective identity, but a set of enabling and dynamic relations that include support, dispute, breakage, joy, and solidarity. (Butler, 2015: 27)

What this means is that people can exercise rights and freedoms together without being in accordance on many aspects. In other words, the heterogeneity of space and freedom are not in opposition. We should thus not delimit our understanding of freedom and struggles for the rights to live freely to specific social groups or communities, but as such rights and opportunities are relationally produced, it concerns our collective ability to be free together across all social categorizations. While this concerns the "whole living body," it simultaneously concerns "the whole living society." In this light, social entrepreneurial organizing could potentially be seen as "a set of enabling and dynamic relations that include support, dispute, breakage, joy, and solidarity." This is a good description of the relations that unfold through Azad & Sakha's endeavors. Through collective performativity, the female drivers in Delhi unsettle the field of appearance: "And only through an insistent form of appearing precisely when and where we are effaced does the sphere of appearance break and open in new ways" (Butler, 2015: 37).

**Recapitulating: the theoretical backdrop for the thesis**

I have brought together the work of Massey (2005), Simonsen (2007; 2008; 2010; 2013), and Butler (2015) to develop what I have called a spatial approach. Although they differ in terms of analytical interest and theoretical grounding, there are nevertheless many similarities between their approaches that I find complementary and useful for a theorizing of social transformation. The key theoretical conceptualizations that I draw from their work, and which I will return to throughout the theorizing of the empirical material, are recapitulated in Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2. KEY THEORETICAL CONCEPTUALIZATIONS

| **A spatial understanding of social transformation**<br>Based on Massey's spatial perspective | **The centrality of bodies and emotions in social transformation**<br>Based on Simonsen's work | **The collective performativity of social transformation**<br>Based on Butler's work |
|---|---|---|
| • Space as the sphere of relations, of multiplicity, always in becoming<br>• Perceiving the social as constructed in negotiations of spatial relations in and through materially embedded practices<br>• The notion of everyday spatial politics<br>• Space brings negotiations necessary for social transformation<br>• Negotiations concern subjectivities and identities<br>• The throwntogetherness of place facilitates new encounters<br>• Social entrepreneurial organizing can be seen as preplanned spatiality or deliberate spatial orchestrations<br>• Chance, unpredictability, and non-linearity are inherent to space that cannot be tamed, which makes social transformation possible but also unpredictable<br>• Unsettling the givenness of space is necessary for social transformation – unsettling implies contesting the status quo | • Moments of disorientation as unsettling of space<br>• Unsettling can lead to disorientation, but also hope and new directions<br>• Unsettling both dissolves "the old" and supports 'the new'<br>• The body is spatial, which means it is produced in space and produces space simultaneously (intercorporeality)<br>• Social transformation is practiced in and through emotional, corporeal, and relational practices in everyday spatial encounters (between people, places, and things)<br>• Emotional spatiality implies that emotion can be seen as an expressive space and an affective space<br>• The expressive space of emotions I see as negotiations with one's self, others, and the surroundings<br>• The affective space of emotions means that space affects us and makes a mark, which as a response can give rise to negotiations | • Spatial politics as discriminatory practices and unequal in the distributi on of precarity and rights to live freely<br>• Social entrepreneurial organizing as means to contest the norms of recognition<br>• Because gender is performed, it can also be transformed<br>• Contesting and transforming spatial politics by breaking the "field of appearance" through embodying another way to live gender (female drivers)<br>• Social entrepreneurial organizing can facilitate the field of norms to break open<br>• Spatial politics transforms through collective performativity when bodies act in concert in claiming their rights<br>• Female drivers in the streets of Delhi can be seen as a form of critique and redoing gender<br>• Freedom (equality, rights) is performed collectively and is of collective concern |

## Doing spatial research: ethnography and theorizing

Purple parasols, the pounding heat of midday sunshine, photos of female drivers glued to large pieces of cardboard hanging on a rope between two trees, a white plastic booth as the locus for the day's mobilization activity; phone numbers are shared, Women on Wheels flyers are changing hands, people are passing by; a tapestry of interactions, gazes from afar, women are called on the phone to come for conversations to be had and to be continued. This is a vision of space, a spatial moment of Azad's mobilization team hosting an information event in a poor community.

Informed by ethnographic methodologies and the processual and practice-oriented outset in my inquiry into processes of social transformation, during fieldwork I started noticing these constant interactions between people, places, things, ideas, and perceptions, which facilitated a spatial thinking (see Chapter One). Space, in my view, is therefore an approach to study process that has methodological implications, which I outline and discuss in the second part of this chapter. The sections are structured as follows: first, I address why a spatial approach necessitates a move toward theorizing and what it implies; second, how such research and theorizing takes place through ethnographic methodologies; third, in continuation of the first two points, the implications

for research in recognizing multiplicity and coexisting ontologies; and lastly, I recapitulate how theorizing in a spatial perspective is consistent with Steyaert's (2012: 157) depiction of research as a process of creating a "living map." This is followed by the final part of the chapter, which presents the methods used and reflects upon the fieldwork.

**A spatial approach calls for a move toward theorizing**

Recognizing space as the sphere of relations and bodily encounters, characterized by multiplicity, subject to constant negotiations, temporal, and embedded in material practices buttresses a processual take on organizing (Massey, 2005). These complex, dynamic, unfolding, and nonlinear interactions in and between living bodies highlight facets of "the social," which have led some processual researchers to call for a move from "a representational logic to a non-representational modus of theorizing" (Beyes & Steyaert, 2012: 46). It is in relation hereto that Steyaert (2012: 152) urges process researchers to question how we understand the notion of theory and "experiment with the process of theorizing itself." Given that the spatial approach I propose is processual, working spatially calls for this move from theory to theorizing. The ontological premises in the spatial perspective challenge the researcher to find ways to study such lively processes of space. In other words, there is a clear link between thinking spatially and a processual perspective in the study of entrepreneurial organizing, which also has implications for research. To Massey (2005: 13), the social is constructed "in the negotiations of relations within multiplicities," which includes bodies, emotions, affects, materiality, movement, sensory experiences, and practices in the production of space. This introduces messiness, complexities, non-linearity, heterogeneity, ambiguities, temporalities, and an vitality of social life that precludes straightforward applications of theory. Moreover, if we acknowledge this, then how do we research and "make theories" of such a constantly unfolding mess (Beyes & Steyaert, 2012; Law, 2004; Law & Urry, 2004; Steyaert, 2012)? The notion of theorizing entails different methodological "moves" to address the messy, complex, and sensory characteristics of space. Pertaining to researching social transformation through a spatial perspective, there are four important interwoven methodological implications of this move: a shift away from a representational logic; the necessity to include the sensory dimensions of social life; the performativity of ethnographic encounters and research; and the relation to and understanding of theory. These implications are foundational to the ontological turn within social sciences away from the ideal of providing more "true" representations of the social worlds of others.

One implication is the move away from the idea of representation and theory as grand narratives toward a notion of research as "non-representational" or "more-than-representational"

theorizing, often associated with an ontological turn in anthropology, human geography, and process organization studies (e.g., Beyes & Steyaert, 2012; Hastrup, 1995; Lorimer, 2005; Steyaert, 2012). This entails moving "from questions of knowledge and epistemology toward those of ontology" (Henare et al., 2007: 8). These more processual and performative approaches to research tend to pay homage to experimentation, openness, movement, and multiplicity, and constitute – perhaps not surprisingly – a range of research approaches (e.g., non-representational theory, more-than-representational theorizing, performative theory of organizing, performative ethnography, reflexive anthropology).[24] This is what leads Lorimer (2005: 83) to note, "During recent years, "non-representational theory" has become as an umbrella term for diverse work that seeks better to cope with our self-evidently more-than-human, more-than-textual, multisensual worlds." The common denominator of these perspectives is "an insistence on expanding our once comfortable understanding of 'the social' and how it can be regarded as something researchable" (Lorimer, 2005: 84):

> Attention to these kinds of expression, it is contended, offers an escape from the established academic habit of striving to uncover meanings and values that apparently await our discovery, interpretation, judgement and ultimate representation. In short, so much ordinary action gives no advance notice of what it will become. Yet, it still makes critical differences to our experiences of space and place.

Nevertheless, Lorimer (2005) is cautious of the "non-title," as he frames it, and suggests the term "more-than-representational" instead, as these approaches question the traditional (more positivist) view of representation and consider research as doing "more than" representing. Indeed, as Massey (2005: 29, original emphasis) puts it, "the issue is complex":

> For if scientific/intellectual activity is indeed to be understood as an active and productive engagement in/of the world it is none the less a *particular kind* of practice, a specific form of engagement/production in which it is hard to deny (to absolve ourselves from the responsibility for?) any element of representation […], even if it is, quite certainly, productive and experimental rather than simply mimetic, and an embodied knowledge rather than a mediation.

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[24] The array of research I draw upon in this chapter, and in this thesis in general, is encompassed by the interpretive and performative turn, yet each work varies by degrees between the weight placed on an interpretive versus a performative approach, and at times it can be difficult to distinguish their exact positions. I read authors like Steyaert (2012) and Law (2004), for example, as more performative in their ontological and epistemological positions than Crapanzano (1980) and Hastrup (1995). Despite their differences, I still find their contributions complementary and informative to my position, which I believe is somewhere "in the middle." These "blurry" lines, I believe, also illustrate that the interpretive and performative perspectives are interwoven in research practices, and that it is therefore not a matter of either/or, but rather a matter of degrees – and experimentation.

In line with Massey's concern and question of responsibility, I find Lorimer's (2005) characterization of the "more-than-representational" useful and fitting for the spatial approach I have pursued. In complex and plural worlds, the analytical gaze to the "more-than" is always in flux. This departs from the view that there is something fixed and stable "out there" to discover and represent as if could be "fully" captured.

A spatial approach is therefore also an ontological stance that involves conceiving everyday life in a particular way, i.e., as "more-than-human, more-than-textual, multisensual worlds" (Lorimer, 2005: 83). The question becomes how to research this "more-than," and one answer lies in pursuing contextualized research that is sensitive to the multiplicity, materiality, and flesh of space, including the coexistence of multiple ontologies or realities (Beyes & Steyaert, 2011; 2012; Law, 2004; Mol, 2002; Simonsen, 2013; Steyaert, 2012).

A second implication concerns the sensory dimension of life. Hastrup (1995: 24) argues that theorizing happens in the "contact zone" within and through the ethnographic encounters in the field. But she addresses "a methodological problem," central to the move toward theorizing, concerning the living body:

> Realizing the impossibility of equating lived experience with dead bodies, anthropologists face a methodological problem acknowledging the living body as a locus of experience. (Hastrup, 1995: 83)

Tackling this challenge is central in processual and spatial perspectives. They therefore grant priority to lived experiences, corporeality, affect, emotions, and sensory knowledge, methodologically experimenting with how to research such complexities (Hastrup, 1995; Pink, 2009; Simonsen, 2013; Steyaert, 2012; Stewart, 2011). Ethnographic methods are often encouraged, as they allow for exploring situated and embedded practices during months of fieldwork, and they offer means to spend time with, share experience with, and get close to the people and the setting under study. Similarly, Crapanzano (1980: ix) denotes that an ethnographic encounter "is always a complex negotiation" of realities.

There is a third implication within Hastrup's (1995) and Crapanzano's (1980) claims: the performativity of encounters and the "creativity" of research practices. The negotiation of reality, as Crapanzano calls it, implies a mutual production of space. In keeping with this perspective, Steyaert (2012: 155) urges for an openness and exploration of the very notion of theory, suggesting "a performative mode of theorizing" (Steyaert, 2012: 152). All the researchers I draw upon here acknowledge that research cannot be seen as describing or representing practices. According to Steyaert (2012: 155), in this "transition from representational to relational theorizing," the reader

also participates through the ways s/he engages with the text. The findings of academic research are thus relationally produced. Theorizing is an ongoing process rather than a final outcome; it is incomplete or becoming rather than complete and done. In this light, theorizing makes theory "a living map":

> Theory is not about knowing what we are (as beings); instead, it focuses on what we want to or can become, on our becomings and how to alternatively 'represent' mutations, changes and transformations. [...] A theory as figuration is a living map, a transformative account of the world, the self or an organization. [...T] heorizing enables us to experimentally examine what it can have us become. (Steyaert, 2012: 157)

If the theories we create are "living maps," this implicates close proximity to people's practices, i.e., a strong empirical grounding.

This leads to the fourth and final implication I wish to emphasize. Theorizing does not imply that there is no place for theory, but questions how theory is used when we theorize from within the field. Henare et al. characterize quite precisely the premises and aspirations of the ontological turn concerned with "how the phenomena in question may themselves offer illumination":

> What is exciting about such an approach is that, instead of just adapting or elaborating theoretical perspectives – often pillaged from other disciplines – to reconfigure the parameters of 'our' knowledge to suit informants' representations of reality, it opens the way for genuinely novel concepts to be produced out of the ethnographic encounter. The question then becomes not just how human phenomena may be illuminated […] but rather how the phenomena in question may themselves offer illumination. How, in other words, the ways in which people go about their lives may unsettle familiar assumptions, not least those that underlie anthropologists' particular repertories of theory. (Henare et al., 2007: 8, original emphasis)

Although the academic work of others is bound to influence one's own work, the aliveness and contextual sensibility of theorizing "living maps" should in a sense "come first" and not be overruled by the application of a theory. Instead, empirical findings should be elaborated in conversation with theories. It is an open-ended relation, not one of application. Crapanzano (1980) offers a description that is illustrative of my use of theory: "I use specific theoretical approaches here rhetorically – to illuminate the space of encounter and what I believe, from my essentially skewed position, transpired within it" (Crapanzano, 1980: xiii). Perceiving the academic work of others as something that "illuminates the space of encounter" is a fine way to put it, as it stays sensitive to the situated empirical findings. Central to the notion of theorizing, and to the analytical

foundation of the thesis, is the idea of "novel concepts to be produced out of the ethnographic encounter," as Henare et al. (2007) emphasize. In the following sections, I will elaborate on the notion of theorizing from an ethnographic perspective and, connected to this, the methods for researching the contextual, temporal, relational, emotional, corporeal, and materiality of social entrepreneurial organizing.

**Theorizing within ethnographic encounters**

Law (2004: 18) says it bluntly: "[E]thnography lets us see the relative messiness of practice." Ethnographic methodologies and methods are potent for the processual and "more-than" approaches that consider research as a creative process of theorizing. Within ethnographic methodologies and reflexive anthropology, a turn toward performative approaches has similarly taken place over the past couple of decades.[25] If ethnography, in simple terms, can be understood as the study of "people as they go about their everyday lives" and "a way to understand and describe social worlds," contemporary ethnographic methodologies pay attention to "interaction and process" (Emerson et al., 2011: 1). Hence, the quest of an ethnographer is to spend time with the people under study, follow them in their mundane and daily activities, and engage and participate with them over time and within the spaces that are of interest for the research inquiry. However, seeking to understand the interactions and processes in the worlds of others can be considered as an act of both interpretation and performance. Ethnography as "a creative process" of theorizing means that research creates or performs, as opposed to merely describing and representing a world discovered "out there" (Hastrup, 1995).

I draw inspiration from the ethnographic methodology of Crapanzano (1980) and Hastrup (1995), which I find compatible with a "more-than-representational" approach. In his ethnographic oeuvre on a Moroccan tilemaker and sage, *Tuhami – Portrait of a Moroccan*, Crapanzano (1980) eloquently reflects upon and problematizes the ethical and political role of anthropological or ethnographic practitioners seeking to understand the life-worlds of the "Other." Like many postmodern anthropologists or ethnographers, he draws attention to "a cultural constituted bias, a scotoma or blind spot within the anthropological gaze" (1980: ix). He warns against the potential danger of producing rigid and biased accounts if the ethnographic researcher attempts to eliminate

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[25] Traditional anthropology and ethnographic methods have been critiqued for the notion of "going native" as a means to discover the "truth" about others' life-worlds. The critiques have pointed toward the potential dangers of a researcher's cultural blind spots and unawareness of the social dynamics and power structures of the encounters, thus potentially producing reductive and rigid accounts of "others," for example from a "colonial gaze." I will address this later in the "Methods" section in relation to fieldwork and access.

him- or herself from the encounter and, thus, neglects the dynamics within the encounter, consequentially producing potentially empty and static pictures of the people and situations that have been the center of the study.[26] Although critical of traditional anthropology that employs strategies to enhance a claimed "objectification of the negotiated reality," Crapanzano does not advocate a subjective anthropology, but merely urges ethnographic researchers to be pragmatic, careful, and attentive to the negotiations taking place in any fieldwork encounter. Crapanzano acknowledges the performativity of the ethnographic encounters in the field and in the production of the ethnographic text, i.e., the "negotiated reality":

> The ethnographic encounter, like any encounter between individuals or, for that matter, with oneself in moments of self-reflection, is always a complex negotiation in which the parties to the encounter acquiesce to a certain reality. (Crapanzano, 1980: ix)

This complexity of negotiations, however, concerns the full living body and the sensory knowledge produced by encounters and shared experiences (Hastrup, 1995; Pink, 2009). In her book *A Passage to Anthropology,* Hastrup makes the argument for "a renewed effort at theorizing in the contact zone, without destroying the autonomous cultural projects that are embedded in the practical lives of the people inhabiting the zone" (Hastrup, 1995: 5). She advocates theorizing as a full sensory experience occurring within the encounters of fieldwork, where shared and embodied social experiences situates the researcher as "her own informant":

> If reflexivity is a part of ethnography, this means that the anthropologist becomes her own informant. Sharing the social experience of others implies the using of all senses and the suspension of judgement, possibly to a still unprecedented degree, but it does not entail the creation of fiction and thus the undermining of any scientific standard. While we cannot, obviously, experience the world from the perspective of others, we can still share their social experience. In fact, there is no social experience that is not shared. Sharing implies that we are a part of the plot, and it is this position that provides us with a unique key to an understanding of worlds, of how they are constituted and transformed, and how positions are assigned to individuals within the plot-space understudy. (Hastrup, 1995: 51)

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[26] Crapanzano's comment, made in 1980, must be seen in relation to a movement within anthropology and ethnography that at the time sought to break with more traditional anthropology grounded in positivistic ideals. Van Maanen (2011) also describes this movement, which he refers to as an "interpretive turn in social thought" (2011: 44). He writes, "Many of these shifts in ethnographic reporting are the result of an increasing interest by fieldworkers in the social philosophies of hermeneutics and phenomenology, philosophies that blur, if they do not demolish, the subject-object distinction so central to traditional ethnography. […] This is a phenomenological war whoop declaring that there is no way of seeing, hearing, or representing the world of others that is absolute, universally valid or correct" (Van Maanen, 2011: 34).

This has a number of implications. First, the notion of the researcher becoming "her own informant" means that in the totality of the embodied, sensuous, and emotional experience of conducting ethnographic fieldwork, the researcher accesses an experienced knowledge, which must be considered as a valid part of the research. Secondly, it is thus through the sharing of social experiences ¬– or the negotiations of reality (Crapanzano, 1980) – that the ethnographer acquires a "unique key" or access to form an understanding. It is a full sensory experience of encounters, but clearly we can never claim to have lived the exact experiences of others; hence a distance is inevitably present. Third, Hastrup (1995) argues that the project of the researcher is therefore not to discover an already given reality "out there," but rather to form an understanding – through shared experiences with informants and contexts ¬– which arises in processes of theorizing: "The radical interpreter, and I would liken the anthropologist to one, provides an understanding that is not already given by the object, but which emerges in the process of theorizing" (Hastrup, 1995: 7). Extending her argument to the social sciences, researchers working ethnographically should not be concerned about distancing themselves from their projects, but should instead realize and embrace the creative potential of shared experiences, because, as Hastrup puts it, "reality is no less real for all our being part of it" (Hastrup, 1995: 51).

**Theorizing by attending to social transformation as multiple**

The notion of multiplicity is foundational to a spatial perspective, to the extent that Massey argues that it has political ramifications regarding the manner in which multiplicity is (or is not) recognized and taken seriously. While her statement concerns perspectives of globalization and identity politics, this view cannot be seen exempt from research practices and discourses. This argument is similar to the one put forward by Dey (2006) and Dey and Steyaert (2010) concerning social entrepreneurship research; they warn against the tendency toward grand narratives, which implies precisely that multiplicity has been overlooked. What, then, are the connotations of this for social entrepreneurship research?

Following Massey (2005), taking a spatial approach implies acknowledging the multiplicity of space, the heterogeneity of trajectories with their own stories to tell, without falling prey to disregarding or reducing the simultaneous coexistence of trajectories – or ontologies – to simplified narratives. Mol and Law (2002: 8) elucidate this proposition further: when we take multiplicity seriously, "we discover that we are living in different worlds. […] we discover that we are living in two or more neighbouring worlds that overlap and coexist. Multiplicity is thus about coexistence at a single moment." In her work *The Body Multiple,* Mol (2002) strongly emphasizes the centrality of ontologies in ethnographic studies of practices:

> If reality doesn't precede practices but is a part of them, it cannot itself be the standard by which practices are assessed. But "mere pragmatism" is no longer a good enough legitimization either, because each event, however pragmatically inspired, turns some "body" (some disease, some patient) into a lived reality – and thereby evacuates the reality of another. This is a plot of my philosophical tale: that *ontology* is not given in the order of things, but that, instead, *ontologies* are brought into being, sustained, or allowed to wither away in common, day-to-day, sociomaterial practices. (Mol, 2002: 6)

Seen in relation to social entrepreneurship research, this implies that the study of social entrepreneurial organizing is more complex than the traditional view on the phenomenon suggests: the experiences of reality are plural and not pre-given, but instead exist in everyday practice. From this perspective, social transformation is multiple and occurs in its ongoing practice. Approaching social transformation from this angle provides a way to include the ambiguities, complexities, ethical dilemmas, and politics of social entrepreneurship that the critical stream in entrepreneurship as social change appeals for (e.g., Cho, 2006; Dey, 2006; Dey & Steyaert, 2010, 2018; Jacobs, 2006; Ruebottom, 2018; Steyaert & Hjorth, 2006).

However, multiplicity does not imply pluralism, which is an important distinction to draw. As Mol (2002: 55) posits concerning an area of study – in her case, research on experiences of the illness atherosclerosis – experiences of reality are "more than one – but less than many." What Mol's study demonstrates is that the experience of atherosclerosis is multiple, and atherosclerosis is thus not "one thing" because it is contingent on the different situations of practice. Nevertheless, these experiences are not random, since they hang together around the practices concerning atherosclerosis. Hence, it follows that when perceiving social transformation as multiple, the experiences and practices of it for the people under study are not infinite, which means that the quest is to explore the "more than one" of them and how they hang together.

The attention to multiplicity raises some further questions for research methodologies and methods. For instance, how can we conduct research in a manner that "the phenomena in question may themselves offer illumination" (Henare et al., 2007: 8)? How do we research and write up multiplicity, and theorize "living maps" rather than grand narratives (Steyaert, 2012)?

Mol and Law (2002: 8) suggest that "to make sense of multiplicity" in research means that "we need to think and write in topological ways, discovering methods for laying out a space, for laying out spaces, and for defining paths to walk through these." In a world imbued with movement and complexities, they argue that research should be careful not to weed out the layers of complexities and produce "clean overviews" or "smooth schemes that are more or less linear" in our academic writing (Mol & Law, 2002: 3). Since we cannot truly walk in the shoes of

"others" or feel exactly what they are feeling, despite intensities of fieldwork and shared spaces of ethnographic encounters, the challenge becomes: How can we come to grasp the multiplicity – i.e., comprehend and theorize upon the dynamic processes of people under study – in social worlds perhaps distinctly different than our own? I find that Crapanzano (1980) makes some valuable points in this regard based on his experiences as an American anthropologist undertaking years of fieldwork in Morocco to craft his portrait of Tuhami, the tilemaker and sage. Referring to his work as "an experiment" (1980: ix) and "a complicated work" (1980: xi), Crapanzano reasons that:

> It is also an attempt to make sense of what Tuhami the tilemaker related to me the anthropologist and to come to some understanding of how he articulated his world and situated himself within it. (1980: xi)

Crapanzano perceives the accounts and tales of "others" in the field, produced within ethnographic encounters, as reflective of underlying ontologies. He points toward the ontology behind the accounts that relates both to the subjectivity of the research participant and the spatial politics of his or her everyday life:

> They are cultural constructs and reflects those most fundamental assumptions about the nature of reality, including the nature of the person and the nature of language, that are considered, if they are considered at all, self-evident by the members of any particular cultural tradition. (1980: 7)

The extent to which social words are ontologically different might render researchers and readers insensitive to these differences, Crapanzano warns:

> Wittingly or unwittingly however, the anthropologist or his reader often causes the differences to disappear in the act of translation. Such translation may render bizarre, exotic, or downright irrational what would have been ordinary in its own context. (Crapanzano, 1980: 8)

This passage of his work struck me because I recognized this tendency, particularly when I informed Westerners not familiar with India about my work. They would find something "bizarre, exotic, irrational" or extreme, but in its own context I knew this was considered ordinary. This, of course, made me cautious of my own tendency to do the same within my fieldwork encounters and thus keep a sensibility toward multiple coexisting ontologies. Crapanzano (1980) rightfully argues that upon recognizing such ontological differences as a researcher or as a reader, the existence of other

ways of composing reality can be threatening. One might be compelled to regard the "other's" perspectives as wrong or primitive, inferior to one's own, and thus reduce the differences or render the ordinary exotic. The point he is making – and that I wish to emphasize too – is that both ontologies and experiences of ethnographic episodes are real and relevant. This is being sensitive to the multiplicity of space, which is essential to a spatial approach.

A final point concerning the implications of multiplicity for research is that it includes the materiality in which experiences and practices are embedded. This relates to what Pink (2009) denotes as the phenomenology of place, as addressed in the opening of the chapter. Space as the sphere of interaction implies that these relational practices are situated in *places* of the everyday, and the materiality that constitutes these spatio-temporal events should thus be included into spatial research. Massey (2005: 141) sometimes refers to place as "the event of place" or the "throwntogetherness of place" to emphasize it as an ongoing process without "pre-given coherence," and she writes that places:

> […] implicate us, perforce, in the lives of human others, and in our relations with nonhumans they ask how we shall respond to our temporary meeting up with these particular rocks and stones and trees. They require that, in one way or another, we confront the challenge of the negotiation of multiplicity.

The negotiation of multiplicity thus embraces the materiality of the world around us. To understand the construction of the social, we must consider how the materiality of place affects us and participates in these processes of construction. In a discussion of what she addresses as a "relational politics of the spatial," Massey (2005: 147) asserts that "what is at issue is the constant and conflictual process of the constitution of the social, both human and nonhuman," which is another way of describing the negotiations within place. Although I prioritize lived experiences and human practices in my spatial approach, I find that such activities cannot be understood as separate from the materiality and artifacts that are part and parcel of practices. The social and the material are intrinsically interwoven, which means that encounters are not merely between people, but as much between people, places, and things. This is why Pink (2009) argues for the importance of methods for doing sensory ethnography. She contends that "place and our relationship to it cannot be understood without attention to precisely how we learn through, know and move in material and sensory environments" (Pink, 2009: 33).

The analytical gaze of my spatial approach is toward what these materially embedded relational engagements *do* to the human practices and processes in regard to social transformation. As it concerns the full living body, it concerns the senses, and how people respond to others and the surroundings.

**Assembling a living map for theorizing social transformation**

I have proposed and argued for a spatial approach to grasp social transformation processually that, in keeping with processual researchers, necessitates the move toward theorizing. Steyaert and Dey (2010: 246) argue that research concerned with social entrepreneurship "could be increasingly based on spatial theories that are able to theorize socio-spatial processes." This chapter thus far has presented my take on a spatial approach and has addressed the methodological implications of researching social transformation through a spatial understanding, which pays attention to the contextual, temporal, relational, emotional, corporeal, and material dimensions of social entrepreneurial organizing. I wish to end this section on a note on how I perceive the "outcome" of research as theorizing, since I find Steyaert (2012) makes an important remark when he suggests considering "theory" as living maps.

As a geographer, Massey also makes analogies to maps or cartography. For instance, she writes that "a map of a geography is no more that geography – or that space – than a painting of a pipe is a pipe" (Massey, 2005: 106), which could be taken as a critical reflection of researching processes. In this analogy, doing research is like creating cartography, an assembly of stories-so-far, while recognizing that those stories keep unfolding. Acknowledging that space is an ongoing construction makes it challenging to pin down in academic writing, because as Massey (2005: 107) rightly notes, "loose ends and ongoing stories are real challenges to cartography." Massey is critical toward discourses, which must include research if it creates an idea of "the stabilization of others, their deprivation of a history. It is a political cosmology which enables us in our mind's eye to rob others of their histories; we hold them still for our own purposes, while we do the moving" (Massey, 2005: 122). Indeed, this is an argument for accepting an idea of theory more like a living map, although it might be a difficult balance to keep.

Crapanzano (1980: xi) makes an interesting reflection on this balance of theorizing and writing up the lives of others through ethnographic accounts and confess an "uneasiness and a certain regret" in doing so in his tales of Moroccan tilemaker Tuhami:

> "Tuhami" both as a text and as a fellow human being enables me to raise the problematic of the life history and the ethnographic encounter. Tuhami becomes, thereby, a figure within an imposed allegory that in a very real sense bypasses him. My own obtrusive presence in his life not only enables Tuhami to tell his story; it also permits me the luxury of entering that allegory in the name of science that is unknown to him. Through that science, through anthropology, my position with respect to Tuhami is rationalized.

I recognize this uneasiness in conceptualizing my encounters with the seven young women and

other research participants – people I have come to care about – into text and abstractions, and in the occasional nagging feeling in reducing and merging their stories on paper. However, I find a certain consolation in having been guided in my fieldwork by the methodological principle of "how the phenomena in question may themselves offer illumination" (Henare et al., 2007: 8), which grants primacy to the knowledge in the field and the voices of the people under study. The intriguing potential of the ontological turn, of which Henare et al. (2007) write, is that being attentive to how people go about their everyday lives might indeed unsettle our academic familiar assumptions and theories, not the other way around. Crapanzano (1980) offers a view on how this comes about through ethnographic encounters:

> My aim is to emphasize the degree to which theory itself is a response to the encounter and to the burden that encounter imposes on the psyche of the investigator. (Crapanzano, 1980: xiii)

In mentioning theory as a response to encounter and the burdens it imposes, Crapanzano argues for a more experiential and embodied perspective on ethnographic research – one that is also concerned with all, which is not spoken in an encounter. Theorizing almost "happens" to us as we exploratively engage in the field. Hastrup (1995), as mentioned earlier, makes a similar observation when arguing that the researcher becomes "her own informant." As encounters happen, affects happen – whether we call them "encounters," "events," or a "spatio-temporal event" – and it is always in the making, and therefore open-ended. Theorizing in the contact zone implies conducting research inquiries into understanding certain phenomena within the everyday lives of the people under study, through shared experiences and negotiations of realities in the field. However, it also entails providing a conceptualization that is not given by the research participants, but rather one that is embedded within the encounters and emergent from the process of theorizing (Crapanzano, 1980; Hastrup, 1995). The complexities and multiplicity of encounters, experiences, and empirical material of fieldwork produce a mosaic, a non-linear tapestry of life fragments or a sort of academic cartography of the research inquiry. Theorizing is the iterative process of encountering others, reading, analyzing, and writing it up into a sort of open-ended order, which might even include minor accounts, contradictions, and "loose ends" (Massey, 2005). Hastrup (1995: 181) offers a fitting way to depict the role of research and theorizing from the field:

> By involving ourselves in the field is to identify connections that are not linear, and which may not be spoken at all. Such connections are real, yet they are also theoretical in that they are constructed in theories that are but sentences, internally linked by logic, proposing particular interpretations of the world.

These non-linear connections are thus abstractions in sentences and linked by certain logics through scholarly work; they are a negotiated reality. In this view, theory is perceived less as an outcome and more as an open-ended, ongoing negotiation (of realities), where the reader also participates in its production; indeed, it is a "living map," not a full no finished picture (Steyaert, 2012).

When Steyaert (2012: 157) writes, "Theory is not about knowing what we are (as beings); instead, it focuses on what we want to or can become, on our becomings and how to alternatively 'represent' mutations, changes and transformations," he touches upon the performativity, and therefore also the politics, of research practices – a view strongly voiced by Law and Urry (2004: 393), who contend that research practices "do not simply describe the world as it is, but also enact it." A part of this enactment is within the fieldwork and data collection processes, whereas another part is within the write-up of the empirical material. What these authors stress is that research ought to reflect upon which "worlds" we are helping into making. If research practices are performative, then research practices are also political. This calls for daring to theorize on potentials, openings, and becomings, which are innately fragile in nature and often in the making. Scholarly, it feels like far less safe ground than sticking to "what we are," but providing "transformative accounts of the world," as Steyaert (2012: 157) puts it, might be an opening in itself. This suggestion is quite relevant for social entrepreneurship research, given that it is a research field concerned with the formation of the new, transformations of our societies, and the strains and struggles for people to live more livable lives. Although the aim in theorizing is to attend to processes of multiple possible realities, it is also to discern among them, displaying their connections and overlaps, their consistencies and inconsistencies, with an outlook toward "transformative accounts" and that which is in becoming.

The key ontological, theoretical, and methodological propositions that have inspired and influenced my analytical foundation and processes of theorizing are summarized in Table 2.1 below. For the sake of providing an overview, I distinguish between three levels of abstractions, moving from the empirical and practical to the increasingly abstract and philosophical, knowing well that these points are innately intertwined and cannot be considered separately. Against this backdrop, the remaining part of this chapter details my fieldwork and the specific methods I have used to research and theorize spatiality.

Table 2.1 KEY TENETS OF A SPATIAL APPROACH

| *Analytical lens* |
|---|
| Everyday lived experiences |
| Practices of the everyday that constitute spatial politics (incl. perceptions) |
| Emotions and affect |
| Corporeality |
| Relations and encounters (embedded in practices) |
| The socio-materiality that participates in negotiating space |
| Ways of living gender that challenge prevailing norms |
| *Theorizing lens* |
| Deliberate spatial constellations (preplanned versus happenstance) |
| Spatio-temporal moments (space is temporal yet connected to the past and ideas of the future) |
| Spatial unsettlings / moments of disorientation / breaking norms |
| Spaces of transformation (where politics of space is contested or altered) |
| The production of space through negotiations |
| Emotional spatiality (expressive and affective space) |
| The ongoing production of subjectivities (sense of self) and identities |
| The performativity of gender (related to power relations) |
| Struggles of rights (and of recognition) |
| The "in-betweenness" / interactions between people, places, and objects |
| Socio-geographical expansion of space |
| *Ontological lens* |
| Coexisting multiplicity / heterogeneity / multiplicity of realities or worlds |
| A relational understanding of the world / space as co-constructed |
| The world as complex social organizing through practices (non-linear/messy/uncertain) |
| Spaces as open and always in becoming |
| Space as inherently situated and political |
| Striving toward a world of equality for all ("livable lives") |

# Methods and fieldwork in Delhi

## Case selection and access

To account for my access to and the setting of my case study, I briefly need to describe my prior involvement with the social entrepreneurial sector in northern India. I have lived, worked, and traveled in India on numerous occasions throughout the past decade, including an internship in a social enterprise in 2009, conducing my master's thesis research on social entrepreneurs in Delhi in 2010, and returning to India in 2012 to conduct a six-month study mapping social entrepreneurial initiatives in northern India. It was then that I heard of Azad & Sakha's work and met with Meenu Vadera, their founder, on a few occasions. During my months of exploring social entrepreneurial initiatives in northern India, I had the clear impression that people in the field considered Azad & Sakha's approach unconventional and based on innovative methods. This was confirmed in my conversations with the founder, from visiting the organization, and from the media coverage the project received over the years. It was evident that "something" indeed was happening to the

women from poor backgrounds who came to the Women in Wheels program to become drivers.

About a year later, having received a PhD scholarship, I decided to explore social transformation in detail; from my previous experiences in India, I had come to learn that an in-depth understanding of such complex and dynamic processes was missing. To this end, I wanted to conduct an in-depth single-case study that would allow me to follow processes over time. Azad & Sakha seemed a perfect case and site for my inquiry. The organization's innovative methods provided an interesting, relevant, and fertile area for exploration and, given our prior meetings, offered a likely opportunity for good access. Their work is embedded within a larger women's rights movement in India that surged tremendously in the wake of the infamous bus gang rape in Delhi in late 2012.[27] Debates about women's rights, safety, equal opportunities, and overall emancipation increased both nationally and internationally. This happened as Sakha drivers started working in Delhi, and the contemporaneity of their work also makes it an interesting case.

In early 2014, I contacted Azad & Sakha and was immediately accepted. I was put in contact with the person in charge of their internal research endeavors and was told that I would be provided with whatever information I needed. They kept this promise. I have never once experienced secrecy or felt that information was withheld from me if I asked.

My prior experiences with working, living, and traveling in India, and in particular my engagement within the social entrepreneurial sector, meant that I was familiar with the social and political context prior to my fieldwork. I knew about many of the social issues concerning poverty and gender inequalities. Nevertheless, engaging with the women and spending time in the poor resettlement colonies where they lived, following their processes and struggles up close as their everyday lives unfolded, were entirely new experiences – much more daunting than what I had previously experienced.

**Fieldwork in Delhi, sites, and research participants**

Given the overall research inquiry, an essential methodological question then became: Which facets of the case to study? I decided to structure my fieldwork in two rounds: an exploratory pilot research of two months to acquaint myself with the case and its complexities, and seven months of more extensive and focused fieldwork.

The pilot research took place from May 7 to July 7, 2014. I entered the field with the ambition of getting to know the people involved, participating in the organization's daily routines so as to

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[27] On December 16, 2012, a 23-year-old woman named Jyoti was brutally gang-raped by five men on a bus while it drove through the city. This case and the topic of gendered violence in Delhi will be addressed further in Chapter Three.

develop ongoing relations with the staff (Emerson et al., 2011). Accordingly, I tried to talk to as many people as possible in and around the organization. I was primarily based at the organization's main office in Greater Kailash in south Delhi, where I was offered a seat at a desk in a common working space. About 30 staff members worked in this office, the majority of whom were female. Many of the women participating in the program, as well as those working as drivers, passed frequently through the office for classes, training, and meetings. The office space was therefore characterized by lively commotion and plenty of encounters; the front door was always open, and people came and went all day long.

I was in the office on average three times a week. On the remaining days I participated in organizational activities outside the office or worked from home. Many observations were made simply by "just being there" in the office space, participating in the daily lunches, and having many informal chats with staff and women in the program. Over the course of the two months, I followed the different teams involved in the Women on Wheels program and assisted when possible. I interviewed staff and a few clients, but got to meet many of the women informally. I also spent one day on the job with a driver, Sunita.

When I returned to conduct the second round of fieldwork, from January 21 to September 1, 2015, I settled back in the same common working space in the office in Greater Kailash.[28] During my second period of fieldwork, I focused increasingly on the women's lived experiences of being part of the Women on Wheels training program and working as drivers. At the time there were approximately 80 full-time drivers working for Sakha in Delhi; most of them worked as private drivers, but some were taxi drivers. Azad was enrolling about 120 trainees each year, divided into roughly 10 batches. They worked with the women in three overall phases: the Women on Wheels training program (6–8 months), private chauffeur placements (1–3+ years), and commercial taxi drivers (as long as they liked). Time constraints precluded a
methodological strategy of following a group of women across all stages, as it would require at minimum 3 to 4 years of fieldwork. Instead, I decided to follow a few women from each of these three stages: three from the most recent batch of trainees, two private drivers (one novice and one more experienced), and two taxi drivers (one novice and one more experienced). Azad & Sakha selected the women based on whom they thought would be okay with being shadowed. With regard to the private drivers, this also entailed asking their clients for permission. I interviewed two clients (separately) and observed the women's encounters with their clients as I shadowed them on

[28] The offices had since been split across two locations – two apartments in buildings on the same street. This caused a certain organizational upheaval and conflict, both because of the division and issues surrounding the politics of "who sits where."

a day of work. I interviewed two additional clients of other Sakha drivers to have more variety in clients' experiences. For the taxi drivers, I shadowed the experienced driver for a day as she picked up tourists at the airport (the other resigned before I could follow her, so our encounters were limited to interviews). I often used the Sakha taxi services myself, which provided the experience of being a client. The women also had diverse backgrounds: one driver was included because she was Muslim, unlike most of the others who were Hindu, and one was included because, unlike most of the others, she was married with four children.

In interviews and conversations with staff members, I deliberately sought the specific insights and views of the seven women in order to get input from as many different angles as possible. Since all staff members knew the seven women I followed closely, many would come on their own initiative and update me on different issues, happenings, and their thoughts. I also made an effort through interviews to follow up on "odd cases" I happened to come upon, e.g., the taxi driver who became the first female public bus driver in Delhi, women who left the organization for other taxi firms, and two staff members who were either fired or left the organization over a dispute.

My research focuses primarily on Azad & Sakha's activities in Delhi, which is where the organization began and where they currently train most women. They have four offices in Delhi: the head office and small offices in the north, east, and west of the city for training facilities. I was primarily situated in the head office, where the majority of staff and activities are located, but I also visited their office in the city of Jaipur on two occasions.

**Methods of research and write-up**

Methodologically, this thesis is based on multiple methods of generating empirical material: ethnographic participant observation, daily fieldnote writing, fieldnote sketches, shadowing central research participants, participating in organizational work and meetings, unstructured and semi-structured interviews, voluntary self-narratives/journaling from research participants,[29] and secondary data collection (e.g., Czarniawska, 2007; Emerson et al., 2011; Taussig, 2011). With the organization's permission, I took photos and short videos as a means to document field experiences (Pink, 2009). In the process of theorizing, photos serves as empirical material because they "help to evoke the sensoriality of the research encounter itself (and concomitant memories and

[29] I gave all seven women a notebook and told them to share reflections about their experiences in the program and everyday life, if they felt like it. Only one woman did so. It was my impression – which was also based on discussions with staff members and my translator – that the women were not comfortable writing. Also, their literacy level was generally quite low. I did not wish them to feel any pressure, so if a woman did not pick up writing after we spoke about it one or two times, I did not push it further.

imaginaries), rather than just suggesting, for instance, textures and smells," as Pink (2009: 100) writes. In keeping with sensory and experimental methods, I attempted to make a photo-journal project with the seven women I followed closely in order for them to show their everyday life and experiences of being in the program through photos. However, it provided some challenges and did not work out. In retrospect, I began the project too late in the fieldwork based on the intention that a relationship should be established first, but I had not anticipated the time it took to get things going when relying on coordination between my translator, staff, and the women. Cultural and situational reasons made the project more complex than expected, and for its proper facilitation I needed more time. I do think it would provide a fruitful method to work spatially, though I acknowledge that the manner to facilitate such project is premised on local cultural practices. I received photos from three women, but did not get a chance to discuss the photos with them, which is why I have chosen not to incorporate those pictures (see Appendix 1 for an example of some of their photos).

The secondary data, provided by Azad & Sakha, consisted primarily of reports, internal work-in-progress documents, grant applications, minutes from important meetings, larger research projects, information documents on each trainee, PowerPoint presentations, annual reports and their website's descriptions of their work.

In regard to theorizing and writing up the monograph, I have deliberated how to bring spatiality into my research practices. It has led to the methodological choices of using poems or literary quotes in between the chapters to convey a sense of each chapter; an "anonymous" and more context-vague montage as a prelude to the thesis; the use of life history or autobiographical narrative and the inclusion of multiple other accounts, e.g., minor stories and contradictions, rather than just emphasizing the dominant narratives (Law, 2004; Steyaert & Dey, 2010); five empirical chapters without explicit theoretical scaffolding (Henare et al., 2007),[30] including fieldnote sketches (Taussig, 2011), and using photos throughout the monograph (Pink, 2009). The use of photos as part of the write-up and presentation of ethnography facilitates that: "The viewer must grasp at her or his own experiences and memories and engage her or his imagination in trying to reach the sensory experiences of others" (Pink, 2009: 100). I will return to these methodological decisions in Chapter Nine, discussing them as implications of pursuing a spatial approach.

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[30] I am not implying that the five analytical chapters (Chapters Four to Eight) have not been influenced by the theories of others, but rather that my take on theorizing is a deliberate choice and style of writing-up, a way of presenting material and arguments where I have refrained from using literature quotes and references to others and let the terminologies from the field stand alone (e.g., Henare et al., 2007). I will discuss this in Chapter Nine.

**Empirical material**

During the pilot study in 2014, I conducted 12 recorded unstructured and semi-structured interviews with staff members (40–120 minutes each). These interviews were conducted in English without a translator. In a few situations where I had the opportunity of engaging with women or staff who did not speak English, another staff member would serve as translator. I participated with the mobilization team's work in the resettlement communities four times (for approximately 20 hours in total). I wrote about 70 pages (single-spaced in Word) of fieldnotes, and documented all activities and relevant places photographically.

During my fieldwork in 2015, I conducted 45 additional interviews with women within the program, organizational members across all hierarchies, two family members of a driver, four clients, and a few external stakeholders (each interview lasted 40–120 minutes). In interviews with women in the program, their family members, and Azad's mobilization staff, I had to use a translator, as they only spoke Hindi. I followed the mobilization team's activities in the poor communities on three separate days. I participated in a large organizational workshop as well as many smaller meetings, and assisted in writing their annual report. I had 140 pages of fieldnotes (single-spaced in Word), and all activities and visits were documented in photos and occasionally video. While the seven selected women were my primary focus, I also interviewed, shadowed, observed, and engaged with other trainees and drivers on a more ad hoc basis.

**The seven women**

My approach in following the seven women more closely was as follows: Initially, I conducted separate interviews with four staff members, each of whom had been closely involved with the women. I asked about their knowledge of – and experiences with – the seven women, one by one. Azad & Sakha maintains a dossier on each woman in the program with relevant documentation (e.g., enrollment form, background information, licenses, awards), which provided various forms of background information. A staff member translated documents in Hindi, a process that I recorded. As I continued to receive information about the seven women and also acquired some from my own interaction with them, I started making my own dossiers for each of them.

Over the seven months, I conducted two or three long semi-structured interviews with each of the seven women, in addition to my many brief encounters with them in the office, sometimes with a staff member translating for us. I observed the three trainees for 1 to 3 hours in six different training modules. It was difficult to schedule and get access to participant observations of the drivers on the job, as this had to be negotiated with their clients, who sometimes were busy and appeared inconvenienced by my request. I followed the novice private driver on the job on three

different occasions (between 2 and 5 hours apiece), and I followed the experienced private driver for a day's work (about 6 hours) and also hired her to drive for me a few times. I was never able to follow the novice taxi driver on the job, as she resigned and was generally fairly absent in the organization. I conducted two interviews with each of the clients of the private drivers, and I did one interview with two clients of a taxi driver while we were all in the car. In this situation, I had to take notes, as it could not be recorded due to the noise and spontaneity of the situation. Additionally, staff members provided me with information about the seven women on an ongoing basis.

I wanted to interview some family members of the women in the program. This proved to be very difficult: I only managed to set up one formal interview with the husband of a driver. The driver herself participated in the interview as well. I visited the homes of a private driver and a taxi driver, which included eating together and spending a few hours as a guest in their place. Here, I was able to spontaneously interview the mother of the private driver and the children of the taxi driver; in both cases, the driver was around. I did one longer house visit with a mobilizer to the home of one trainee who had not shown up for training for a while. We made a spontaneous visit to her household to find her, and the mobilizer had a long discussion with her entire family (the trainee and her mother, father, and several siblings), which I recorded and had translated.

**Positions and negotiating relations in ethnographic encounters**

From my first day in Azad & Sakha's office, I had to consider the kind of positioning and association I wanted to establish, both within the organization and also with the poor women. Due to my background as a well-educated, English-speaking Westerner and my entry into the organization through the founder, I knew that I could easily be associated with the top level of the organizational hierarchy, a group of experienced, well-educated, English-speaking senior staff in leadership positions, often internally referred to as "the core team." Several people of this group were "in charge" of supporting my research, so I was somewhat positioned with them. As I hoped to gain trust across all levels in the organization, I knew I had to maintain some distance to any specific group and tried to position myself as one who moved across them. Although not always easy, some helpful staff enabled me to interact across the organization, thus allowing me to maintain the position of not belonging to any specific group.

In terms of seating, only the founder had her own office, but members of the core team would occasionally sit with her. The rest of the staff was spread across different rooms in the apartment, and I was seated in the largest shared office. Approximately 10 workstations were available in this office for whoever was in on a given day. This supported a mixing of staff. It was very useful to

be seated in this space: because it did not "belong" to a specific group, there were many different staff members using the workstations, although not everyone did. I therefore made an effort to hang out in the other rooms as well. I quickly noticed that in unspoken ways, certain people tended to gather in specific groups for lunch. I got the impression that lunch was in fact a core social activity in the organization and that the practices around it spoke to the organizational hierarchies. I learned a lot about the organization and the women over lunch. In fact, it proved so insightful that in my fieldnotes I started a headline called "Lunch" for the notes I took immediately after lunches in the office.[31] One staff member, a younger woman, confirmed my impression when she said, "Sofie, if you want to get to know Indian people and get close to them, what you need to do is to share food with them – share your lunch or snacks with them. That will work." I was always invited to have lunch with the core team, but I made an effort to have lunch with others as well.

I gradually became a part of the organization and increasingly included in organizational activities. When I noticed staff members across the organization unsolicitedly providing me with information or invitations to participate in activities, I understood that access had been gained. The conversations grew more personal and trusting with time. I felt like I became the "gossip container," as many would confide in me and knew I would keep the information to myself. I came to genuinely like the staff and enjoyed talking with them, not just as a researcher but also as a colleague and friend. However, toward the end of my fieldwork, there were moments where I felt a certain awkwardness in my undefined role at the organization. Due to some internal disputes and tensions, I experienced slight pressure from some staff members to represent their views and worries to others, often those higher in the hierarchy. When engaging in discussions in the organization, I was adamant to avoid compromising those confiding in me. For example, whenever I was asked to reflect on organizational matters, I would be sure to remain generic or indirect so as to never reveal compromising information. My position in the organization was a constant negotiation throughout fieldwork, as was my position in relation to the women from poor backgrounds.

Trust is essential in ethnographic encounters and in particular when conversations often address vulnerable and intimate topics. Therefore, a deliberate intent was made to ensure anonymity. Whenever I conducted an interview, I made it explicitly clear that I was not working for Azad & Sakha and the information I was given would not go back to the founder, but that I

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[31] Depending on the exact constellation of people, the language would most often be a mix of Hindi and English. In some groups, English was most prevalent, in others Hindi dominated – but in the latter case, an English-speaking colleague would typically translate for me. More often than not, I felt welcome and included in the lunchtime conversations, but occasionally, I got the impression that my presence was a hindrance for their free engagement.

was interested in everyone's work and opinions. For this reason, I have changed the names of the research participants throughout the thesis to provide anonymity. The only exceptions are the founder, whose name I have included because as long as the organizational name is used, her identity will be possible to detect, and Sarita, the first female public bus driver in Dehli, who's story has become publicly known.

**A note on gender and social background**

Being a woman was both a challenge and an advantage during my fieldwork. Since the majority of Azad & Sakha's staff are women, and their social entrepreneurial organizing is *for* women, I gather that being a woman myself provided a favorable position – particularly in relation to the women in the program, who were accustomed to practices that deem it improper for them to speak and engage with men outside of their family (see Chapter Three). Instances where being a foreign woman proved challenging primarily arose in public spaces or within the poor communities, where my presence did not go unnoticed. The highly gender-segregated customs in India entail that as a foreign woman entering public spaces (often alone), one becomes an object of the gaze of men. For example, I was regularly stalked, approached, or yelled at by men. Navigating public spaces alone was a constant and demanding negotiation of my sense of privacy – and at times, my safety. As I demonstrated in the opening montage (in the account titled "Arrival"), I too used artifacts like a phone to assist in negotiating my position (for safety) in relation to men in public transport.

I also used my clothing deliberately in negotiations of spatial constitutions. I made an attempt to dress according to local customs, which often included a loose-fitting *shalwar kameez*, a tunic with pants, and a scarf, which I sometimes pulled over my head in an effort to draw less attention. Since the customs and practices of clothing and the use of ornaments, for instance, are often associated with class and caste categorizations in India (see Chapter Three), I was aware that my clothing would signal status and class relative to the women from poor backgrounds. Certainly, I cannot remove from the equation that I am a white, well-educated Westerner in a privileged position, and perceived as such, but I felt that dressing according to customs was a way of showing respect and an attempt to remove a bit of social distance.

My position as a foreigner meant that I was often was treated incredibly respectfully, almost "celebrity-like" at first, by the women from poor backgrounds. They approached me with both curiosity and hesitation, which initially challenged establishing other relationships beyond the hierarchical ones. Yet this wore off as the women became accustomed to my presence and

experienced me engaging in a down-to-earth manner.[32] I also found that standing out as "the foreigner" meant that I was often not considered part of the existing social hierarchies, which I saw as an advantage. Again, just like with relations in the office, I found myself in a position of not truly "belonging" somewhere specific. I tried to use this to establish a more non-hierarchical relationship with my research participants. In the way I dressed, spoke, and otherwise engaged with them, I tried to refrain from enacting the hierarchies that they were accustomed to from women of higher social status in Indian society (and which I have seen enacted numerous times I have been in India). One crucial element in this regard – something to which I gave much thought and provided quite a few logistical and practical challenges – was where to conduct my interviews with the poor women.

**The spatiality of interviewing**

The spatiality of where interviews are conducted must surely influence the social transactions and dynamics between interviewer and interviewee, and thus also the interview itself. Crapanzano (1980: x) perceives this methodological challenge as a negotiation of reality, one which in the social transaction of the encounter is fraught with an "inevitable jockeying for power" that must be acknowledged. Not only does the meeting present unspoken expectations, but the space itself must be seen to influence how the encounter is produced (Crapanzano, 1980). Therefore, I carefully considered where and how to conduct interviews with the women.

If we were to discuss matters of becoming a driver while sitting in their homes or in a community setting, the women might feel intimidated by the surrounding people, inhibiting a setting in which to share openly. Likewise, I worried that conducting interviews in Azad & Sakha's offices – although conducted privately behind closed doors – might make them equate me with the core team, which could influence their willingness to speak openly and critically out of fear, respect, or even gratitude for their "hierarchical superiors" in an organizational setting. Conducting interviews in my home would equally reinforce a spatial asymmetry of privilege and status, and might also be experienced as intimidating. This left indoor and outdoor public spaces. Here, issues of hierarchy, status, and power can also present themselves, because spatial segregations of class and caste are common in the public sphere of Delhi (Datta, 2016; Rao, 2010). The cafés I would normally visit catered to the middle and upper classes and have doormen keeping "the poor" outside. The price of a cup of coffee in such cafés is approximately equal to a

[32] The staff of Azad & Sakha are all Indian citizens, but it is not uncommon for them to occasionally have visitors from abroad – researchers, project partners, journalists, volunteers, and the like. The women in the program thus become accustomed to meeting foreigners, and as they become drivers, some will have foreign clients.

full day's expenditure of an entire household in a poor resettlement colony. Perhaps it was more a matter of my own conscience, but bringing the women to upmarket cafés also seemed like an unfavorable setting for them to have conversations with me.

This dilemma was an ongoing struggle throughout my fieldwork. Initially, I conducted interviews in parks and street-level local cafés (although noise was a problem at times for recording), but with time I felt that using a private meeting room in Azad & Sakha's office served as the best setting. Having met the women outside of the office, I felt they had an understanding that I did not work for the organization. Moreover, the office was more convenient (and safe) for the women, who came by there anyway. Therefore, toward the end of the fieldwork, most of my interviews with the women were held in a meeting room at the office.

Recognizing that conducting interviews in different spatial settings affects and influences the nature of the interview, I attempted to maintain similarity in how I staged and conducted interviews, whether in a park or at the office. I concur with Crapanzano (1980: 9) when he speaks of the potential of "an alienating prise de conscience" (i.e., being self-conscious) of a person who is being interviewed or narrating a life history. In ethnographic encounters there will inherently be implicit expectations between the people involved, and it might feel unnatural for the interviewee to self-reflect in the space of the encounters. The question is thus how the interviewee makes sense of the situation. This is why, at the beginning of all interviews with the women, I stated that I did not work for the organization; I was not going to report to them on what they shared with me; that their voices would be made anonymous; that there were no right or wrong answers; and that their views – regardless of content – were valuable to me.

**Language, interpreters, and translation**

The majority of Azad & Sakha's staff spoke both Hindi and English, albeit to varying degrees. There was therefore not much of a language barrier in the office, and if conversations took place in Hindi, someone nearby would typically translate for me. I felt no need to have a translator present in the office, as it would have created an unnecessary distance. There were a few staff members whom I spoke less to than others on this account, but I made an effort to interview them with a translator present.

My Hindi is limited to a few polite phrases and simple words. Hence, the language barrier was a much larger impediment when communicating with the mobilizers and the women in the program. I therefore sought the assistance of interpreters and a text translator, which was a negotiation in its own right. Over the course of seven months, for different reasons, I ended up working with three interpreters. The first two assisted me on a few occasions, but most of the time I worked with the

last interpreter, Mary. She was a 26-year-old Master of Philosophy student in gender, politics, and feminist studies, and fluent in Hindi, English, and Bengali. Mary had previous experience in conducting ethnographic fieldwork in poor communities and in translating interviews. Like me, she always dressed according to customs. I found her skilled and engaged, meeting the women in an eye-to-eye manner. In fact, I felt that having Mary with me – particularly when I visited women in the poor communities – enabled better access. She could decode cultural customs and knew how to downplay social hierarchies to the fullest extent possible. She immediately accepted hospitality, as did I, and was skilled in creating an intimate and trusting atmosphere for the conversations.

Conducting conversations through an interpreter cannot help but create some distance to the research participants, since we cannot speak directly to one another. The interpreters' expertise in helping to bridge this distance became all the more important. I benefited from their prior experiences, language skills, contextual situated knowledge, and ability to translate both the spoken and the unspoken. Given that I followed the seven women over seven months and saw them in many different situations, they seemed to grow accustomed to my presence. When I shadowed them (without an interpreter), for instance, the silence of the language barrier was awkward the first time, but usually after a few hours together we found other ways of communicating, e.g., with gestures, simple phrases, and in a few situations showing photos from our phones to each other. In a way we developed our own language, and when it came to interviews with an interpreter present, this made the language distance seem smaller because we had an established relation.

Given the speed, details, and nuances of speech, far from every aspect could be translated on the spot, but they translated enough for a conversation to flow. Surely I have missed out on details in the moment of interview. For this reason, I reviewed each interview meticulously once translated into English and thus had the opportunity to clarify answers or ask more precise questions in the following interview with the same research participant. I believe that interviewing the women several times helped to reduce the insights "lost in translation."

Transcribing the recorded interviews into text posed another translation problem. I learned that Mary could not translate on site and transcribe the interviews quickly enough for me to prepare for upcoming interviews. Instead, I found a professional translator who worked full-time translating between Hindi and English for organizations within the social sector. She was therefore also familiar with the topics beforehand. Initially, I worried that not having the same person to interpret during interviews and to translate the audio into text would present a loss from not having participated in the encounter. This may have been the case, but on the other hand, it could also be that a professional translator provided a beneficial distance to the conversation. Translating Hindi words and the meanings of phrases into English can be tricky given the vast difference between

the two languages, but working with a professional with a decade of experience, specifically from the social sector, was a positive experience. Translating for me throughout the duration of my fieldwork, she became increasingly acquainted with the research participants, their stories, and the general topics of the interviews. In any translation from one language to another, there is a risk of misunderstanding certain elements or not understanding a reply in its proper context. Here, I had to rely on the expertise and professionalism of the translator, which in the context of our cooperation would reduce this risk. Doing several interviews with the same participants, asking similar questions across many participants, mixing methods (of which interviews are just one part), and thus producing different kinds of empirical material furthermore triangulates across empirical insights and participates in lessening the impediments of language barriers.

**Asking good questions when studying process and the complexity of space**

The anthropologist Jean Lave provides a telling description of the difficulties in asking good questions:

> One of the reasons for doing field trips is that you are presented with how abstract is the most concrete of your concepts and questions when you are at home in the library. When I first went to Brazil I made my way 2,000 miles into north central Brazil and I arrived in a small town. And I can remember an incredible sense of excitement. I rushed out and walked around town until I found a group of Indians and walked straight up to them – and then I didn't know what to say. I wanted to ask: "Have you got moiety systems?" (a special kind of kinship relations). And it didn't make sense to do that. In fact it took four months to find a way to ask a question with which I could discover from people whether they did have moiety systems. (Lave & Kvale, 1995: 221, in Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009: 108)

Lave describes that months went by before she discovered ways to ask that could enable her to explore, from the people she spoke to, whether the system she was exploring was present. I experienced something similar. I worried that I did not ask the right questions, but given that I did not know what exactly I was looking for, I stuck with my general curiosity in exploring "what is going on here" (Emerson et al., 2011). The quote also speaks to the challenges of studying complexities that are situated and temporal. In relation to my research, I could not just ask the women about social transformation, as I was unsure even of where to "find" such processes. This frustrated me at first. As I did not have any a priori comprehensive way to think through social transformation other than a processual and practice-based ontology, I was unsure how to even study it, let alone ask questions into it. *Where* is social transformation to be seen? Where can we witness

it in its unfolding? These are tricky questions, which attest to the peculiarity of the phenomenon. Of course, it depends on what you look at and how you look at it in a specific time and context, which accentuates the importance of accounting for one's ontological position. Unsure of how to "find" social transformation and interview women about their lived experiences of it, I thus turned to processes and practices of the everyday, where I trusted social transformations would be manifested – after all, they were attempting to transform aspects of their everyday life situations. As a consequence, I spent much of my interviews with the women in the program asking about their days, what modules they were taking, what they were doing in a specific module, if they had used any of what they had learned in the training, how they felt about it, whom they were with, what their family members said about something that happened, who did what at home – basically asking detailed questions into practices of their everyday lives and their experiences in the Women on Wheels program. I also formed questions with a time-specific perspective to get a sense of a more processual view over time, such as probing into if they had always done this or that, how it had been before, how it was many years ago, or how it was now (if they spoke of a practice in their past), and so on.

In my experience, the women were not particularly receptive to overtly self-reflective questions. For instance, I once asked an experienced private driver, who had bought a small lot of land as an investment and who had taken up further education because of the program, whether she felt that something in her life had transformed because of the program. She replied, "No, my life is the same." Given all the other things she had shared with me, I know that statement is not true in the sense that nothing had changed (money, education, family structures, mobility – she had indeed voiced many such changes), but when asked so directly, there were apparently some (other) things that made her think that nothing had changed. Reflections on transformations were most evident when the women came with before-and-after accounts, or realized that they had changed practices. One example of this is when a woman described how she had elbowed a man on a bus one day, when she otherwise would have stayed quiet. After a while of feeling as though I was "seeing nothing," this led my interviewing in another direction. For example, I started noticing that the women's accounts were full of strong emotions – fear, worry, anxiety, joy, excitement, pride, courage, confidence – and that they were often sharing stories of their experiences in relation to someone or something. In other words, the lived experiences of their everyday practices, while being a part of Azad & Sakha, were commonly expressed through emotions and relations. This in turn informed my way of asking questions, which came to include a greater focus on emotions and relations within practices as part of the construction and potential transformation of spatial politics.

**Ethical considerations**

When conducting research on poverty and gendered discrimination, ethical concerns are inevitable – both in relation to the fieldwork and the write-up. I attempted to accommodate ethical concerns by always presenting myself to research participants as a researcher and informing them of my motivations for research. However, providing the necessary transparency was not always possible, e.g., in situations where I followed a group of staff members in mobilization activities. Here I was seen as "part of the group" (Azad & Sakha). People passing by these activities could not be informed about my role.

There are also ethical considerations concerning consent on the usage of photos in this thesis. Azad & Sakha often use photos to document and display their work, and their offices are full of photos of women trainees and drivers. Prior to my photo documentation, I asked permission from the organization and/or from women in the program. I was aware that issues of social hierarchy might have made it difficult for them to resist my request, yet it was my general impression that they were proud to share their accounts and fine with having photos taken. Sometimes they even asked me to take photographs, and they sometimes took photos of me – or together with me – on their phones. I tried to be sensitive to a mutual sense of respect and reciprocity when it came to using a camera.

In Azad & Sakha's line of work, issues of violence and struggles surface aplenty. There have been situations in which, by happenstance, I witnessed a woman's struggles, where I felt like an intruding spectator. This happened, for instance, one day when I was chatting with the founder in her office, and a young woman, who had entered the room with another staff member, completely broke down, crying her heart out. She had been gang-raped on public transport a few days earlier. In many instances where I witnessed the effects of violence or heard stories of them, it was with a certain trepidation that I wrote about it in my fieldnotes. This is a part of the reality that was shared with me in these encounters, and thus it would be equally unethical to neglect it, yet it seems odd to research "others' miseries." I have thus strived to stay sensitive to the struggles while writing "transformative accounts" –not to weed out the horrific or ambiguous, but acknowledge that it exists alongside joy, possibilities, and hope (Steyaert, 2012).

I also had ethical concerns in cases where women had attempted or contemplated suicide. I experienced two such situations. One involved a woman whom I had not met, but several staff members informed me of a recently attempted suicide, and there were several informal discussions about it in the office. I considered interviewing the woman, but decided against it. Having no prior relation to her and not being in a position to know whether such a conversation would harm her, I found it to be unethical. The other instance was when one of my research participants

disappeared and had written a suicidal note (see Chapter Eight). When we managed to reach her weeks later, I wasn't sure whether interviewing her about the incident was ethical. Would my questions make her more distressed, or would it be a good chance for her to talk to someone and get to Azad & Sakha's office, where she could gain support? In this case, I decided to interview the woman because we already had a relationship and staff members wanted her to come to the office so that they could offer her support. In both situations, I consulted staff members, as they knew the women far better than I ever would. Placing safety, concern for the women's privacy and wellbeing, and general empathy for their situations above all was my guiding principle.

Finally, there will always be ethical predicaments in the write-up of interpretations of lived experience of "the poor" and gendered lives in India. I agree with Crapanzano (1980: x): "[W]e have a responsibility to the people we study, if not to our readers, to recognize the ethical and political implication of our discipline." As discussed earlier in the chapter, there are ethical and political implications in whether we recognize the multiplicity of space and take it seriously within research (Law, 2004). The challenge of this kind of work is, for instance, not to overtly reduce urban poor women in accounts of "the poor." Despite the difficulties the women faced, their accounts are about far more than struggles, as the empirical chapters will show. They are accounts of women living their everyday lives regardless of the circumstances: accounts that are also full of hopes, dreams, doubts, fears, excitement, and thoughts on everyday matters like clothing, dating, the city, and family relations. Even when speaking of difficulties, it struck me how the women did not portray themselves as victims. Witnessing their strength and courage, which weave through many accounts, often humbled me. This is why I have mentioned the importance of empathy as opposed to pity. Empathy or compassion is an encouraging act of understanding others and caring for their wellbeing, with attention to hope and potential, whereas feeling sorry or pity for someone is discouraging and drained of hope. In practice, there is a fine line – one I was constantly aware of, and one that I must admit I slipped back and forth across initially, because the severity of many of the women's stories produced that response within me. It is my hope that I have not only succeeded in meeting these women with empathy in the field, but also that my write-up is one of empathy and not pity.

But a bird that stalks, down his narrow cage
can seldom see through, his bars of rage
his wings are clipped and his feet are tied
so he opens his throat to sing

The caged bird sings, with fearful thrill
of the things unknown, but longed for still
and his tune is heard, on the distant hill
for the caged bird sings of freedom

Maya Angelou

# THE SETTING

Chapter Three

The women who train with Azad to become drivers or work for Sakha as drivers are amongst the poorest citizens of Delhi. In pursuing driving as a livelihood, the women are seeking to improve their life circumstances, and this chapter will provide the setting to situate this work. It presents the overall characteristics of the politics of everyday lives for women in urban poverty, pertaining to Azad & Sakha's organizing, and through the life history of a taxi driver, paint a portrait with the flesh, emotions, gendered negotiations, struggles and precarities of life as a woman in poverty.

# Politics of everyday life in Delhi's poor communities

> Ten years ago, I would not talk to anybody outside of my household. If there was someone in the lane [gali], I would have to cover my head. I would not be able to open my mouth and tell people that there was nobody at my home. I could not even ask someone [at a stall] to get me some vegetables if no one was with me. I would sit and wait at home till some seller would come by the house or a family member could get it for me. Only then could I start cooking.
>
> Now there is so much of a difference. I don't care about what others might say. I do my things on my own, whether it is buying vegetables from the market or something else or getting things for my children. Earlier I was dependent on people, but I am not so anymore.

Inika – a woman in her late thirties and a resident of Gharoli Extension, one of Delhi's many poor communities – is reflecting on how becoming a professional taxi driver through Azad's Women on Wheels program has transformed a number of aspects of her life. She is pleased with her accomplishments, which in her community are considered unusual, particularly since she is a woman. Inika is talkative and seems to enjoy sharing her story; despite the hardships it has presented, she is proud of what she has become. As we converse over a cup of chai (tea) inside the one-room jhuggi (mud-brick hut) that her savings have enabled her to construct on top of her in-laws' home, she contemplates in hindsight that she could have done more in life had she gained this greater independence earlier: "Had I had the thinking I have now, back then, I would have gone out [of the house] fifteen years ago and done other things," she says, adding, "Our thinking was so wrong." By using the words "thinking" and "our," Inika touches upon two essential points that will be demonstrated in different ways throughout this thesis, namely: in this context, social transformation is much about changing perceptions – ways of "thinking," as Inika puts it – and such processes are innately relational. When she says "our thinking," it demonstrates how, prior to her engagement with the Women on Wheels program, the perceptions and norms within her household were inextricably interlinked with her own, and in fact produced and controlled the ways she felt she could behave and act.

The central question of this chapter asks: What are the characteristics of this particular patriarchal kind of politics, and what are the conditions of living in poverty, which Inika and Azad & Sakha's target women have been raised within, which have shaped and restricted their lives, and which are challenged by accepting the offer of becoming a driver?



*Gharoli Extension, Phase 3, east Delhi.*
Inika exiting her one-room hut above her in-laws' dwelling, followed by her daughters.

In order to understand the processes of social transformation – and the struggles therein – experienced by the women as they become drivers, and to understand why Azad & Sakha organizes as they do, this chapter offers a contextualization of what I refer to in this thesis as the everyday politics for the young women in urban poverty in Delhi whom the organization targets.

I argue that social transformation for the women is about negotiating – with one's self, others, and surroundings – who they are and who they are allowed to be as poor and as women. This chapter, then, explores the context that forms the ground for such negotiations.

The focus here is on where the women are "coming from" as a necessary precondition to comprehend the movement of where they might be "going" in the aim of transforming aspects of their lives through engagement with Azad & Sakha. Particularly, I address certain perceptions and practices concerning poverty, gender, class, and politics of space in the city of Delhi that are pertinent to the women's everyday lives and significant to the work of Azad & Sakha. This serves to shed light on the rationale behind the social entrepreneurial methods of the organization and the ways the women, their families, their communities, and "society" at large respond to this, and the notion of female drivers, as will be unfolded in the empirical chapters.

Many of the poor communities are located on the periphery of the city or in small pockets of villages squeezed between well-off areas. Despite the social and economic influences of decades of urbanization and the transformations, certain traditional, patriarchal perceptions and practices are still strongly upheld and continuously re-enacted in poor communities. Azad's mobilizers work throughout more than 82 bastis in Delhi (see Appendix 2).[33] Although each community site has its own heterogeneity of histories and specific politics, there are many visible commonalities across the poor communities and the lived experiences shared by women in the program. In particular, politics of caste, class, and gender intersect in the experiences of negotiating everyday lives for women in urban poverty. Rather than attempting to pull them apart in what Davis et al. (2006: 3) call "categories of difference," I will instead allow them to intermingle throughout this thesis, occasionally zooming in from a specific perspective.[34]

Inika, whose words opened this chapter, has been with Azad & Sakha since their early days; she was one of the first female taxi drivers in Delhi. I will use her personal life history as a tale that runs through this chapter, weaving it together with data from Azad & Sakha as well as scholarly literature on social and political circumstances for poor citizens, particularly women, in Delhi. The richness and details of her story provide an opportunity to get a wider sense of the background and

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[33] The number of *bastis* Azad mobilizers work within in Delhi continues to increase, but at the time of review for their annual 2014–15 report, they listed 82 specific *bastis* across the city.

[34] As the women negotiate the spaces of everyday politics and participate in the production of such spaces, one proposition of this thesis is that identities are multiple and their subjectivities are unique and open. The women are never merely categorized as "women," "poor," "low caste," "drivers," "married" or "unmarried," or by racial origin/skin color, sexual orientation, and so forth, but are instead a heterogeneity of coexisting identities in a complex co-constitutive interaction (negotiation) in which the whole cannot be reduced to the parts. This aligns with the intersectional approach in feminist studies, which recognizes "the multiple and intersecting identities" of subjects and that "the fluidity and dynamism of these identities are also taken into consideration" (Govinda, 2013a: 5).

life of one of the women drivers with Azad & Sakha, but I also chose to include such empirical material because it offers insights into her ways of thinking and remembering, which portray – implicitly and explicitly – expressions of values in the Indian culture and the poor communities in which the tale is situated.[35] Inika's tale serves as a bridge to the context of the women's everyday lives, as she made sense of it and placed herself within it. She was the only one of my research participants who spoke so openly, detailed, lengthily, and almost autobiographically about her entire life, and in that she offered me – and the reader – an opportunity to learn about her life and an entry into her context.

**Introducing Inika – and the background of Azad & Sakha's target women**

Inika was around 37 years of age when we met. Her exact age might be difficult to ascertain, as with many women of poor backgrounds, specific birthdates are often not recorded. She has a strong, sturdy figure, about 140 centimetres tall, and long, dark-black hair, reaching just past the middle of her back and most often arranged into a bun or ponytail. Her face is round, with apple-like cheeks and strong brown eyes – sometimes tired, sometimes piercing, sometimes joyful and childlike. A silver ring-stick, shaped in the form of a flower, decorates the left side of her nose, and her ears are pierced in several places; depending on the day, she would wear at least one golden-plated earring. While working, she was always dressed in the Sakha driver uniform: a traditional Indian suit consisting of a churidar salwar (tight or loose pants) and a kameez or kurta (tunic), a long shirt ending a little above the knees. It is an ordinary form of clothing many Indian women wear in their everyday lives. The Sakha suits are bright turquoise with pink collar and cuffs, and they look like a uniform in this context.

Inika is one of the most senior drivers with Sakha, both in terms of age and driving experience. She enrolled in Azad's program in its early days, in February 2011, and became part of Batch 8. Her daughters were at the time 12, 9, and 5 years old, and her son 3 years old. Living in the household of her in-laws, she was expected to do majority of the household chores, despite her training with Women on Wheels. She had negotiated with her husband, primarily, and her brother subsequently, convincing them to support her endeavors of become a professional driver.[36]

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[35] I discuss in Chapter Nine methodological reflections on the use of personal life histories and how it relates to researching and writing spatiality.

[36] We saw a brief reflection of this specific negotiation in the introductory montage (His Version / Her Version).



*Greater Kailash 1, south Delhi.*
Inika in Sakha's uniform and car.

The women drivers from the early batches, like Inika's Batch 8, are perceived as senior drivers and tend to be role models for trainees and less experienced drivers. They were often denoted as organizational success stories, and were generally better known in the organization. When Inika started her driving training, batches were far less frequent and smaller in size than is the case today, which meant that trainees, drivers, and staff all knew each other on a first-name basis. There was more time to interact with each other than compared with 2012 and onward, in which the numbers of women who enrolled have increased considerably each year (see Table 1.2 in Chapter One). Inika is therefore well known in the organization – she has even received awards for her accomplishments as one of the first female taxi drivers in Delhi – and her story is often spoken

of, by staff members or Inika herself, as an exemplary instance of how a woman living in poverty can overcome adversity and achieve significant transformations in her life. As her life story will reveal, Inika has lived through periods of enormous difficulty caused by conditions of extreme poverty and discriminating patriarchal practices.

Table 3.1 AGE PROFILE OF TRAINEES, 2014-15

| Age | Percentage |
|---|---|
| 18-21 years | 36% |
| 22-25 years | 29% |
| 26-30 years | 16% |
| 31-40 years | 19% |

*Trainee background profiles in numbers*

When Inika enrolled in the program in 2011, she was 33 years of age and hence belonged to a smaller group of trainees in their thirties. The majority of new trainees were – and still are – between 18 and 25 years old (see Table 3.1).[37] At the time, she had an education level of 8th grade, was a stay-at-home housewife, and the total income level of her household was 6,000 rupees per month.[38] Her level of education and household income level were aligned with the typical profile of women in the program.

Tables 3.2 and 3.3 below show the distribution of educational levels and income levels for the new trainees in 2014–2015, representative of the general trend over the past couple of years.[39] Inika, like the majority of the women in the program, come from Hindu backgrounds (about 85%), whereas the rest belong primarily to Muslim communities, with a few from Sikh and Christian communities.

Table 3.2 EDUCATIONAL PROFILE OF TRAINEES, 2014-15

| Education | Percentage |
|---|---|
| Below 8th grade | 17% |
| 8th – 10th grade | 42% |
| 11th – 12th grade | 35% |
| Graduate | 6% |
| Post-Graduate | 0% |

Table 3.3 AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD INCOME, 2014-15

| Income in INR | Percentage |
|---|---|
| 5.000 | 45% |
| 6. - 7.000 | 25% |
| 8. - 10.000 | 22% |
| 11. - 15.000 | 7% |
| 16. - 30.000 | 1% |

[37] The information in this section is from Azad & Sakha's annual report 2014-15

[38] 1,000 Indian Rupees equals 16 USD and 98 DKK.

[39] 59% of the new trainees have been educated until 10th grade of primary school or less. The quality of this education varies, since many women are illiterate or have difficulties reading and writing. In a few rare cases, women have education beyond primary school when they join, and a few women pursue further education encouraged through Azad or the clients they meet.

In India, poverty is deeply intertwined with the politics of caste. The stigmatizing and marginalizing categorization distorts the possibility for equal participation in economic, social, and political life (e.g., Datta, 2016). The Indian caste system explicitly divides citizens into labeled categories – that is, castes – ordered in a hierarchy of status and power.[40] The lowest categorization within the caste system is officially called "*scheduled caste*," but phrases such as "backwards castes," "untouchables," and "*dalit*" (meaning oppressed, broken or scattered) are used interchangeably. Two-thirds of the women working with Azad & Sakha belong to the scheduled caste, a very few come from the *scheduled tribe*, and the rest, with a few exceptions, come from *other backwards classes*.[41] The women whose lives the organization seeks to transform thus belong to lowest castes, "the socially deprived communities" as they put it, because these women are socially, politically and economically marginalized and subordinated in the city of Delhi.

70 % of the women joining the Women on Wheels program come from households, often counting between 5 and 10 individuals, with a total monthly income of 5,000–7,000 rupees (80–120 USD). Typically, the males of the family are the sole or primary breadwinners – often working within the informal economy or under uncertain conditions without proper contracts, relying on day-to-day labor and negotiations for opportunities. Women are in charge of running households, and from a very young age girls participate in household chores. The extent of chores and level of responsibility for each girl or woman depend on her marital status, age, and constellations within families. Most of the new Azad trainees primarily work in households, although some have prior employment experience – usually as domestic help, in production work based at home, in patient care, in beauty parlors, or by making and selling handicrafts. Employment opportunities for poor urban women are scarce, gender-biased, and unequal in terms of conditions and payment. This excerpt below from their 2012-13 annual report portrays how Azad & Sakha (2013: 8) perceives and summarizes the issues of gender inequalities and poverty:

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[40] According to Roy (2014), today's caste system in India was described in the founding doctrines of Hinduism (the Rig Veda of 1200–900 BC) as the system of four varnas (social classes/castes). This Hindu organization of society counts around 4,000 endogamous castes and sub-castes, known as jatis, each with its own unique inherited occupation (associated with types of labor). These are categorized under the four overarching varnas: Bhramins (priests), Kshatriyas (soldiers), Vaishyas (traders), and Shudras (servants). The excluded castes outside these categories, the avarna castes, are referred to in common language as casteless, the untouchables, the impure, or the dalits. As Roy (2014: 23) writes, "The origins of castes will continue to be debated by anthropologists for years to come, but its organising principles, based on a hierarchical, sliding scale of entitlements and duties, of purity and pollution, and the ways in which they were, and still are, policed and enforced, are not all that hard to understand. The top of the caste pyramid is considered pure and has plenty of entitlements. The bottom is considered polluted and has no entitlements but plenty of duties."

[41] In Ramakrishnan's (2014) study of the setting and contesting of social boundaries for poor residents subjected to relocation to a resettlement colony on the outskirts of Delhi during the slum clearances in the period between 2004 and 2010, she experienced that interviewees rarely spoke about caste matters directly. "Caste itself was a topic that was carefully avoided in conversations, and people would rarely if ever offer information about their own caste and that of others" (2014: 71). This aligns with my experiences from fieldwork and interviews, in which the women never spoke directly about caste.

> Despite rapid economic growth, gender disparities in women's economic participation have remained deep and persistent in India. The World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2012 ranks India 105 out of 132 countries on gender parity. India is the lowest-ranked of the BRIC economies on wage equality. India ranks low partly because of its skewed sex ratio with only 914 girls for every 1,000 boys. Female feticide is tragically common in a deeply rooted patriarchal society. Today just 25% of Indian women above the age of 15 participate in the workforce compared to 80% of men. More women work, but because livelihood options for resource-poor women are skewed, many end up working in the feminized informal sector with long working hours, low pay, and no social security.

Coming from the lowest castes, with educational backgrounds that seldom lead to employment, confined to a life within a household, the women Azad targets are usually expected to become housewives. Since economic precarities are a part of everyday lived experiences in the communities, the women – and their families – hope for new and more prosperous opportunities to improve their life circumstances. Aspirations to both economic and social upward mobility were surely a focal motivation for the women (and their families) when deciding to join the program. When the women enroll in the Women on Wheels initiative, they are required to fill out a form with their basic background information. At the bottom of the page, they must answer the question "Why do you wish to join?" On her enrollment form in 2011, Inika had written, "I want to learn driving so that I can support my husband and bring up my children properly." Let me now develop the portrait of Inika more fully, starting from when she immigrated to Delhi with her family in early childhood.

**Inika's story: migrating to the city of Delhi**

Inika's family, like thousands of others, left their rural origins in the state of Uttar Pradesh (UP)[42] about 40 years ago in search of economic opportunities and the potential for a better life in the capital city of Delhi. Her parents migrated to the city when Inika was a year old with a total of five children – two girls and three boys. Settling in Delhi was no guarantee of prosperity for the family. For many years they struggled on the verge of severe poverty, particularly due to the uncertain and informal livelihood engagements of Inika's father, who had to take day-to-day manual odd jobs as the sole breadwinner of the family. As is common practice, Inika's mother stayed at home. After a few years in the city, a misfortune hit the family:

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[42] Uttar Pradesh, commonly abbreviated as UP, is the most populated state in India with roughly 200 million inhabitants. Situated in the northern part of India, the state borders Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Uttatakhand, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, and Nepal. There are 29 states and 7 union territories in India.

Inika: When I was about 8 or 9 years old, two of my brothers died, both of them within a few days.

AS: What happened?

I: Well, I think maybe someone got it done [referring to either black magic or deliberate murder], and right after, they also tried to do the same with my [last] younger brother, so that he also would die. I think it was my father's paternal uncle. He was jealous of our shift to Delhi, I think. Or maybe he was angry and wondering why we left UP, why we successfully managed to settle in Delhi. That is why.

Inika's brothers were 7 and 12 years old when they lost their lives. "We thought he was just ill, we did not suspect anything," she said, explaining the family's shock when the first brother passed. Neighbors in the community started talking about the incident. Skeptical that such unexpected misfortunes had happened twice in a few days, some thought the family was cursed by evil forces. Others, including Inika's family, believed it was deliberate murder intended to harm them.[43] It was a difficult time for the family and also took a strain on them financially:

> My parents' health also started to deteriorate. Those who wanted to harm us must have thought that the three brothers and the parents should die, and then the two sisters left would die anyway because of the situation. For a month it was as if my parents had gone mad. After both my brothers died, my father did not go to work for a month, and my mother went mad crying. My father was a daily laborer [no fixed contract], and my mother had always been taking care of the home. The situation at that time was such that we often went to sleep hungry.

Inika's mother asked neighbors for money to buy food, promising to pay it back when her husband would take up work again, but they refused. "The neighbors disregarded her – they saw her as a contagious disease and told her to move away, scared that their sons might also die like my brothers did," Inika stated with scorn in her voice. She felt disappointed that her community, where she grew up, neglected her family in a time of despair. In later interviews on several occasions, Inika returned to how no one used to help her family, forcing them in arduous periods to starve or take unfavorable loans, and how, today, she is someone who helps and lends money to others. In the lives of the women with Azad & Sakha, it is not unusual to see the immediate effect of a sudden

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[43] My aim or concern here is not to speculate if Inika's theory is "correct", or whether the sudden deaths of the children also could have been caused by other reasons including contaminated water, rapidly spreading diseases, dehydration, or malnutrition. What is relevant and interesting for the purpose of my study is to witness how Inika thinks about her life, the values she presents within her accounts, and the gendered family and community relational patterns this reveals (e.g., Crapanzano, 1980).

misfortune – like the primary breadwinner's loss of a job or a serious accident or illness involving a family member – on their standard of living and access to (proper) food. For many families, this is a vulnerable, precarious balance. Knowing this, the organization provides drivers with bank accounts and makes an effort to encourage savings.

What is notable about Inika's exposition for the purpose of this research is that despite the overshadowing dramatics of the family's misfortune and the precarities of living in poverty, her story discloses an underlying patriarchal value system at multiple instances. Inika's father, the male patron of the household, was the sole breadwinner. Harming the family, Inika reasoned, involved killing the sons (the future breadwinners); then, had the parents also passed, "the two sisters left would die anyway," implying that girls or young women have difficulties surviving without their male relatives. Women's dependency on men – whether fathers, husbands, brothers, uncles, or other male relatives – are at the root of the patriarchal system and gendered practices amongst Delhi's urban poor.

However, the webs of dependencies and kinship networks are more complex than this, since dependencies also exist between families and can change – with marriage, for example, as I will address later in this chapter. Research in Delhi's poor communities has shown, for instance, that married women still have strong dependencies and practical ties to their natal home, and this is where help is most often found when life in the conjugal home becomes difficult (e.g., Grover, 2009). Dependencies are also evidently strong between women and their parents, and these dependencies can go both ways. As life circumstances change, such dependencies and relations of power and support are constantly renegotiated, as was the case with many of the women drivers of Sakha. Living in the poor communities means living in close intimacy with – and proximity to – family members and kin; as webs of dependencies structure ways of life, lives become deeply interwoven.[44] That young women traditionally depend significantly on male relatives, in-laws, or parents, hinders their opportunities to make life decisions for themselves or to oppose the family's demands and expectations of them; this may be why, in all my interviews with women in Azad & Sakha they mentioned the aspiration to "be independent," "stand on my own two feet," or " not depend on anyone." As quoted in the beginning of this chapter, Inika also addressed the topic of dependency: "Earlier I was dependent on people, but I am not so anymore." The independence the women were speaking off concerns being economically capable to take care of themselves

[44] Datta (2016: 323) introduces the notion of "the intimate city" in which she argues for a dissolvement of divides such as public/private, city/slum, and tradition/modernity. She perceives "the slum as a space where the violence of an exclusionary city is woven into its intimate material and social conditions, but where this violence is also domesticated and rendered as part of the everyday" (Datta, 2016: 323). Datta (2016) makes an important point here, which is that spatial politics of the city of Delhi and politics of the everyday lives in the poor communities are profoundly co-implicated. I will therefore present both perspectives in this chapter.

(and their families, if they have children); the freedom to make certain choices about everyday activities; and the achieving increasing freedom of mobility.

Despite resettling to Delhi from their rural origins, Inika's parents had not been able to escape the chokehold of poverty, a condition shared by millions of people in Delhi, and across India. In the following section, I attend to the more general context of poverty and poor communities in the city of Delhi to provide a broader scope for the setting. Thereafter I return to Inika's story, then at the time when she was going to school – for a while, that is.

**Poor communities and politics of poverty in Delhi**

With a population of roughly 1.3 billion people, India is the second-largest nation in the world, but holds first place with regard to the absolute number of people living in poverty. In other words, many of the world's poorest inhabitants – the majority of whom are women and children – find themselves scattered across the urban resettlement colonies, villages, and streets of India. As India's vibrant, pulsating capital, Delhi ceaselessly attracts new citizens in search of better employment opportunities – which might partly explain why no one quite seems able to fathom its size, since population estimates oscillate between 16 and 22 million people. The wave of urbanization washes new citizens to the shores of the city year after year, putting pressure on all areas of infrastructure; as demands for employment are not met, many are left stranded in poverty. Densely populated jhuggi jhopri clusters, squatter and resettlement colonies – bastis in Hindi, slums in common parlance – have become cities within the city, where many people initially moved driven by the prospect of new opportunities but instead frequently came to face other less promising realities (Rao, 2010). While many do find employment in Delhi and perhaps better access to basic amenities – and even rights – relative to the circumstances they left behind in their rural areas of origin, somehow, in what has become one of the world's biggest metropolises, the numbers do not add up and poverty has become a widespread and serious problem. There are other realities — and, I may add, lives – at stake when one considers that about 50 % of Delhi's inhabitants live in bastis and different sorts of poor colonies without any basic amenities.[45]

*The making and moving of slums in Delhi*

Dispersed in small pockets across the city in what often has developed into prime real-estate land, poor communities have been targets for what scholars term "urban clearance" or "cleaning-up" policies that have been carried out in light of economic and commercial rationales since the 1960s

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[13] Mahapratal, D. "Half of Delhi's population lives in slum." Times of India, October 4, 2012.

(e.g., Ramakrishnan, 2014; Rao, 2010). With the ambition to "clean up" the city of poverty and polish its image as a first-rate metropolis, a desired "Paris of the East" (Rao, 2010: 409), urban development initiatives have attempted to render poverty "invisible" by demolishing communities and pushing the poor families to the city peripheries instead. Over the last few decades, thousands of people living in impoverished conditions have witnessed their temporary homes demolished before their eyes:

> In 2002, on a late winter morning, a municipal bulldozer rumbled into a squatter settlement in Delhi and randomly demolished a few houses along the main road. The family members were inside but managed to rush out just before the roof collapsed. When challenged by residents, the municipal officers said that they had warrants to demolish the unauthorized construction on the main road and that they would be back to demolish more houses in a few days. (Datta, 2012:1)

With these words, Datta (2012) introduces the issues of squatter settlements (i.e., *bastis*, slums), the demolition of such, and the resettlement of their poor inhabitants in her book *The Illegal City: Space, Law and Gender in a Delhi Squatter Settlement*, which studies the lives of people undergoing relocation of their dwellings in Delhi in the early 2000s. Since the 1960s, countless poor citizens in Delhi have been forcibly resettled from the center of the city to its margins, in waves of urban reconstruction. Large areas of urban slums have been demolished over the decades, and while some families have been relocated to the urban periphery, others have become homeless. Under the banners of urban "beautification," a particularly aggressive spate of demolitions occurred during 1975–1977, and again in the early 2000s (Ramakrishnan, 2014). Most recently, in connection with the 2010 Commonwealth Games hosted in Delhi, renewed attention to the "beautification" project of refining the city's image surged across the large metropolis, "with the urban poor facing extreme consequences from the city's makeover process" (Ramakrishnan, 2014: 70). The official aim of this project was to create a "slum-free Delhi 2010" in order to showcase Delhi as a world-class city in the light of the exposure the Commonwealth Games could provide (Rao, 2010; 2013). Following Rao's (2010) argument, segregation seems to be the underlying motivation in the city's approach to dealing with poverty: "With its assertion of a place among the global cities Delhi partakes in the production of a culture of segregation that questions the right of the poor to participate equally in urban life" (Rao, 2010: 403).

Ramakrishnan (2014) conducted a study of the everyday lives of people who had recently been exposed to an involuntary resettlement process into a large colony on the northern outskirts of Delhi as part of the abovementioned "slum clearance" prior to the Commonwealth Games. Her informants shared how the sudden arrival of bulldozers had caught many by surprise, and

witnessing their homes being demolished was a violent experience linked to strong feelings of uncertainty. As a consequence, many of the people in the poor communities perceived the governmental force as violent, unreliable, and unpredictable.

Evicted from squatter settlements across Delhi, many people have been offered small plots to purchase in new state-funded resettlement colonies established at the boundaries of the city, but far from everyone can pay the price.[46] Others have to seek loans or solutions within the informal economy, making it an economically risky endeavor (e.g., Rao, 2010). Following Rao (2013), who has also studied the resettlement practices "during the massive slum clearance" in relation to the Commonwealth Games, "sixty percent of the displaced families were eligible for resettlement plots and yet less than half of these had the resources to take advantage of the offer to relocate" (Rao, 2013: 760). Those who managed to secure plots were "the resilient and successful among the poor" (Rao, 2013: 760), and according to Ramakrishnan (2014: 70), "large-scale evictions thus rendered close to 200,000 people homeless between 2004 and 2010."

There are several legal categories for settlements in Delhi, all of which have different relationships with informality, legality, and tenure, but those who house the poorest citizens – and the women with Azad & Sakha – are predominantly jhuggi jhopri clusters (JJ), slum designated areas (SDAs), resettlement colonies, and poor unauthorized colonies (Center for Policy Research, 2015; Datta, 2012). While these areas share certain commonalities regarding a lack of basic amenities, according to Datta (2012: 6) "[t]he everyday experiences of law, regulation and urban development for those living in JJ clusters differ sharply from those other types of slums on account of their relationship with law." This is because JJ clusters are illegal constructions located on public land, built outside of any formal processes and planning. Often they are found alongside riverbanks or railway lines, under bridges, or near infrastructure building sites and larger open areas. They are characterized by poor housing quality and are usually without basic amenities, yet it is estimated that such settlements accommodate more than 20 percent of Delhi's population; including many of the women with Azad & Sakha.

The history and politics of the making – and remaking – of poor communities are important for an understanding of the wider economic and social, and political environment in which Azad & Sakha works and which informs the women's relationship to the city.

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[46] The term "colony," or "colonies" in plural, is a common reference to dwelling areas or blocks in Delhi, and is used across the economic spectrum. The term is often understood as synonymous with "community."

*Discrimination and violence embedded within politics of poverty*

In accordance with Azad's accounts from decades of practical experience, research on poverty in Delhi generally emphasizes that discrimination and violence are embedded within the politics of urban infrastructure and considerably influence the lived experiences of being poor in the city. In the ambit of modernity and market oriented development goals, demolition processes of poor communities have been integral to Delhi's city planning and ambitions for urban advancement, which, as Datta (2016: 326) argues, can be perceived as a violence embedded within law-making itself, based on a logic of separation dating back to the country's colonial past:

> The story of Delhi's slum production, demolition and resettlement charts the continuities from colonial to post-colonial governmentalities through discourses of modernity and development; [...] social and spatial exclusion in slums was part of the biopolitics of colonial governance through which British and native populations were kept at a distance from each other. The logic of this separation was maintained through discourses of morality, sanitation and order taken up by Indian social and political elite after independence in 1947. Successive Delhi masterplans over the decades have criminalized slums, leading to mass-scale evictions through similar logics that have been legitimized through planning and urban development masterplans.

This far-reaching structural violence does not merely exclude poor citizens from the planned city and its preferred image, but also robs millions of poor from legitimate urban citizenship (Datta, 2016). In the name of the law, violent actions against people in poverty have become legitimized, including the denial of access to basic urban facilities.

> This material "lack" of permanent home, water, sanitation, electricity and so on in the slum extends this zone of exception from state-inflicted structural violence to the social, cultural and representational violence in their everyday lives. They embellish, within the private realm, the perceptions of precarity of living in an exclusionary city. (Datta, 2016: 327)

Rao (2010) equally stresses that the poor have been left unprotected and subjected to violent relocations due to neoliberal politics and economic rationales that have pushed them to the fringes as the city expands. In turn, Rao (2010: 403) argues, this has led to "disturbing accounts of intensified class wars":

> The spatialisation of class divisions is advanced not only by sky rocketing property prices, but also by middle and upper class fears of crime and the desire to create places of privilege and consumption with class appeal.

The social, political and geographical division of class and caste in Delhi implies that the majority of its poorest inhabitants are excluded from the city and many of its functions. Recall, for example, the entry from the opening montage of this thesis in which, for the first time in her life, a female driver got to visit Indira Gandhi International Airport in Delhi, one area of the city in which the poor are almost completely excluded. Habitual divisions along class and caste, and the enforcement of exclusionary zones, can explain why the women with Azad & Sakha have little exposure to other areas of the city and other ways of life prior to their enrolment in the program. It elucidates how, at times, "the poor" are almost invisible laborers to the middle and upper classes, who might know little about their lives but need their cheap labor to maintain a certain living style.[47] As Rao (2010: 420) puts it: "The urge of the poor to formalise their lives is fuelled by an elite discourse that criminalises the informal sector – while of course continuing to depend on it." Govinda (2013a: 6) makes a similar observation, stating that "the quality of life and daily existence of most middle class households depends on the presence of urban poor within middle class neighbourhoods, providing domestic labour and a number of other services." It appears as though living in Delhi consists of lives in many different worlds.[48] This sentiment was, for instance, expressed by an Azad & Sakha staff member in the opening montage, who confessed that "the poor" had been invisible to her and that she used to conceive of them as incapable of anything else but serving others in traditional stereotypical prescribed occupations.

Another emblem of the exclusionary city – of the spatial exclusion of citizens from poor backgrounds, rooted in politics and practices of caste, class, and gender – is the absence of official, legitimate identification registrations and documents for poor women. Many, it seems, are systematically denied legitimate urban citizenship and participation in city affairs (Sriraman, 2013, Rao, 2013). This observation is in accordance with how Azad & Sakha describes the conditions concerning legal, official identity documentation for the women they meet, which they perceive as a serious challenge. In their 2014–2015 annual report, the organization explicates this point:

> One of the biggest challenges is helping the trainees in procuring documents that establish their identity. The basic documents required for a learner's license[49] are proof of address and proof of age. Many women do not have a birth certificate.

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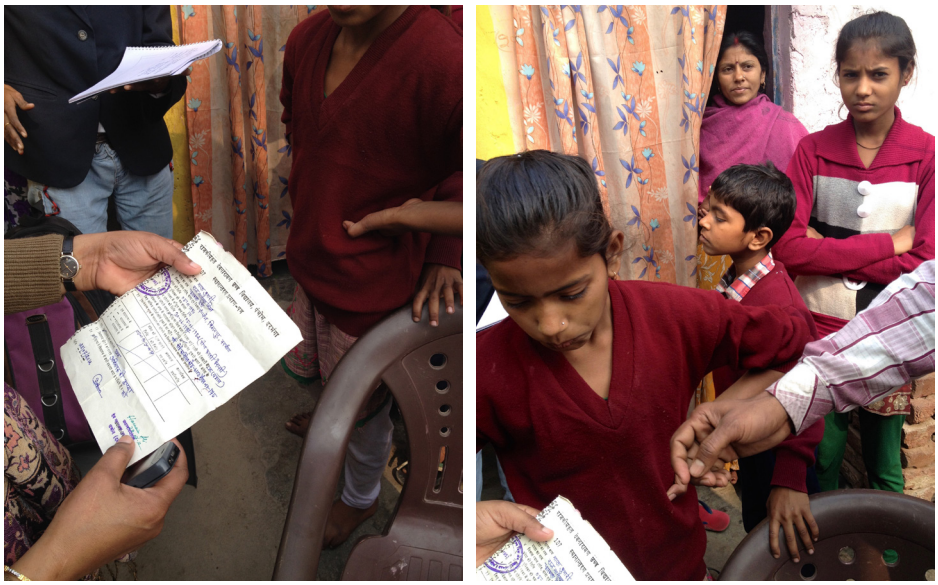
[47] Rao (2010: 408) asks an interesting question in this regard when she says, "How do the poor position themselves in the increasingly hostile environment that depends on their labour, but refuses them the right to dwell in the inner city?"

[48] Hastrup (1995: 17) defines "world" thus: "We have to seriously investigate the lived space, which is the experiential counterpart to the implicational cultural space. I shall term this experiential space a 'world'."

[49] In India, a Learner's License is an initial permit, valid for six months, that is necessary in order for one to be allowed to train in driving skills and obtain a Permanent License. An application must be submitted to a local transport office with a passport photo, proof of age and address. Once the identity documents are verified, the applicant must take the learner's test on driving theory, which, if passed, will grant them a Learner's License.

> Proof of address is not available as all household arrangements are set under names of the men in the households. Young girls who attend schools are rarely encouraged to keep their documents safely, as families do not have professional aspirations for them. […] Azad helps a woman gain a formal identity by helping her establish her citizenship. Some basic documents required for a license are: Proof of address – can be a Ration Card/voter ID, Card/Pass Book of a nationalised bank, Aadhar Card[50], or Passport. (Azad & Sakha, 2015: 8)

In the official systems, many of the women whom they work with do not exist. Birth certificates are rare. These women have no papers or items attesting to their official identity as citizens of India. "Some of the women don't even have last names," the founder, Meenu, told me one day over lunch, "because they were girls, so the parents didn't bother. It didn't matter to them that their daughter had a full name." In fact, the problem of legal identification documents necessary to obtain a driver's license – but also to vote or open bank accounts – is of such magnitude that this in itself has become a mission for Azad "for the poor women to reclaim their citizenship," as they put it, regardless of whether the women continue in the Women on Wheels training program. It is not uncommon, for Azad to be unable to establish any legal documentation for a woman because nothing at all exists to prove her identity.



*Priyanka Camp, east Delhi.*
Azad mobilizers examining the official school document of a young woman.
They scolded the family for not safeguarding it better, encouraging them to get it laminated.

[50] The Aadhar Card is an Indian citizen identity card, based on a unique 12-digit number, which registers Indian residents using biometric data (photo, 10 fingerprints, iris scans) and basic demographic information. Over the past few years, there has been widespread organizing to get as many Indian citizens registered as possible.

What these accounts illustrate, and what scholars like Datta (2012; 2016), Rao (2010; 2013), and Ramakrishnan (2014) are showing, is that segregation, exclusion, and violence are deeply embedded within the economic, juridical, social, political, and spatial environment of Delhi. The conceptualization of lived experiences of poverty, as characterized by precarity enforced through such structures of urban governance, is dominant in the discourse on lives in Indian bastis. Scarcity of resources, insecure employment schemes, the absence of legal identity documents, threats and uncertainty of evictions and home demolitions, and exclusion of poor citizens from large parts of the city influences the realities of everyday life for Delhi's poor inhabitants. Having attended to a more general introduction to conditions of living in poor communities in Delhi – and the overall background profile of the women Azad targets – in this chapter thus far, I shall now return to Inika's story to explore the specific gendered practices in women's lives which Azad & Sakha deliberately organizes to unsettle.

**Inika's story: favoring sons over daughters**

Inika's family slowly recovered from the loss of their two sons, but their economic situation remained fragile. Inika and her brother were sent to school, but when the economic struggles of the family became too severe, their father decided that only one of them could attend:

Inika: A year or two went by [after the death of my two brothers]. Then my brother and I were sent to school. My sister was staying at my grandparents' house and never went to school. We started studying, and slowly our parents also made peace with the loss of our brothers. I studied regularly until 8th grade, when our family suddenly faced economical difficulties and could only afford for one of us – my brother or me – to attend school. Because of this, I left my studies after 8th grade.
When my brother was sent to school, he got into bad company and he started bunking. He used to miss school and play video games with friends instead. He studied until 7th grade, after which he dropped out. I left my studies because of him, and in the end he dropped out on his own.

AS: How did that make you feel?

I: I was not angry, but I just thought that I had my life ruined. I felt so overwhelmed thinking that he did this. He did not even take the exams for 7th grade. I questioned my father that day, saying that I had left school due to the financial condition in the family, and what did he think now? My life was ruined because of my brother. I always wanted to study, I had so much interest [and did very well], and I could have been self-sufficient today. My brother could not do anything on his own, and he did not even let me do it.

AS: What did your father say?

I: My father said, "I had no idea that he would turn out like this. Had I known, I would have stopped his education and continued with yours." I told him, "It is too late now, but it does not even matter." My father felt really bad that day.

That Inika's father chose his son's education over his daughter's is typical. That he is the one who made the decision is also common practice. No longer a student, Inika worked with an NGO in the community and learned stitching for a few years, until at age 17, talk of marriage began in her home. She did not want to get married so young and had negotiated this with her father to postpone it a year, but one day, suddenly, she discovered her marriage had all been arranged without her knowing. The father had to sell a small hut, which had been in the family's possession, in order to pay for Inika's wedding. Unfortunately, an uncle who assisted with the sale ran away with the money. With just a few days until the wedding, and the dowry needing to be paid, Inika's father, restless and worried, mortgaged a plot of land that the family had access to on the outskirts of the city, and the marriage was still on.[51] It was not until the wedding day that Inika saw the man – her husband – for the first time:

> When I saw my husband, I thought, "After going through so much struggle in life, now I also have to be stuck with him in my life." I was suddenly in a situation where I couldn't even leave, nor could I stay at home.[52] My parents had already been through so much, so I went along with it all because I did not want to cause them any more stress and sadness. So looking at their condition and situation, I got married. But my friends kept asking me, "What did your father see in this boy?"

It was Inika's father who had selected her husband and arranged the marriage. Inika was pleased that the boy was only a few years older than her – rather than, say, an older man – but disenchanted by the fact that he had less education than her, and even more so that his family was living on rent. "They did not even have their own house! I had no idea they lived on rent. I had been told that they had their own place," Inika exclaimed, recollecting her past dismay at how her in-laws had

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[51] Dowry is the practice of a bride's family paying a monetary or gift price to the groom's family for the marriage of their daughter. It is an ancient practice that can be traced back throughout many societies across the globe, but in India it is still a widespread contemporary custom. According to Anderson (2007), the practice of dowry in India is almost universal across socio-economic society levels, and the rate of dowry payments has increased significantly over the decades. In 1961, the Dowry Prohibition Act was passed as a political attempt to deflate escalating rates, but the practice continues.

[52] Inika is referring to the Indian custom for the bride to move into her in-laws' household after marriage, which is also referred to as the "conjugal home" as opposed to the "natal home" (Grover, 2009).

tricked her father by lying about their level of poverty. Her wedding day was not a happy day, she recalled. Following custom, she moved into her in-laws' dwelling:

> I saw that my in-laws did not even have utensils to eat their food with. They were in very bad [economic] shape. I was on the verge of breaking down when I realized all of this. There was not even a bed to sleep in and no mattress. I was married into such conditions. I cried so much that I cannot even begin to explain. I used to wonder, why did my father get me married into such a family, and what was the urgency? I saw that no one respected anyone in this family. Whatever you can get a hold of, you will eat – no sharing, and no one cares about each other.

Inika had been married into even greater poverty than what she was coming from. The "material 'lack' of permanent home, water, sanitation, electricity and so on in the slum," which Datta (2016: 327) describes as "social, cultural and representational violence in their [the poor's] everyday lives," is evident in Inika's case.

**Marital practices and gender relations in the poor communities**

In this context, marriage is not merely a matter between two people, like Inika and her husband. Instead, as her story demonstrates, it is situated within relational dynamics between the two families in question, but often also within wider kinship networks (e.g., Desai & Andrist, 2010; Grover, 2009). According to Desai and Andrist (2010: 668) "[i]ndividuals' social nexus are often determined by the ties of kinship, caste, and clan, whose social status is enhanced or diminished by the selection of a marriage partner, age at marriage, and the manner in which marriage take place." Inika's father arranged her marriage following the traditions of caste endogamy, but the fact that her in-laws were of lower economic status still diminished her family's social status. On several occasions Inika mentioned how her in-laws tricked her family into the marriage. That they lived "on rent," and thus did not own their own property, is one way Inika expressed her view on – and disappointment in – her in-laws' lower economic and social status. This illustrates how ownership of property or the terms of living conditions are matters that influence a family's status and perceived potential, and therefore also play into the politics of marriage arrangements. Inika's account also demonstrates that although social status might be a central concern for a family, the choice of a marriage liaison between two families not only influences familial status in the community, it has direct, practical ramifications, especially for the woman's everyday life and wellbeing: from the day of the wedding, the conjugal hut will be her home. In the case of Inika, that meant moving into even greater poverty and everyday life with an alcoholic father-in-law.

Two main terms are used in India, in both common parlance and the literature on marriage practices in general, to denote a marriage depending on how it comes about: arranged marriage and love marriage. Arranged marriages are usually "caste-endogamous unions initiated by parents," whereas love marriages are "self-chosen unions preceded by parental relationships based on love, which may contravene the norms of caste endogamy" (Grover, 2009: 2). In northern India, arranged marriages are most common, but according to Grover (2009), these two terms can be seen as ends of a spectrum, and practices can be anywhere in between to varying degrees. In her study of lived experiences of marital practices in poor communities in Delhi, quite similar to the communities where Azad works, Grover (2009: 8) finds that "the majority of marriages are arranged by parents as they ensure the family's prestige, status and the normative kinship order."

Grover's (2009) study suggests that the daughter's relationship to her natal home remains stronger in arranged marriages, as their natal homes become places of refuge if conditions are difficult in the conjugal home. In love marriages, however, the woman might have cut or weakened ties to her natal home or received less support for the matrimony, making them rely more on the conjugal home with fewer opportunities to manage difficulties with their husband or in-laws. This is a difficult situation for women who have opted for a love marriage, because, as Grover also finds, "spousal conflict is frequently visible" (2009: 9), and "excessive drinking, or crisis such as loss of a job" (2009: 10) are common occurrences in poor households. Grover's (2009) argument is that women in poor communities who have arranged marriages have better bargaining power against abusive husbands or difficulties with in-laws due to parental support – a woman can stay with her parents, receive support, and refuse to return if things do not improve, as opposed to women who have chosen their own husband and are more alone in facing potential challenges. Indeed, several women shared similar reflections in interviews arguing that they preferred an arranged marriage because if the husband turned out abusive, they would not be blamed and could seek support from their parents.

The vast majority of the women with Azad & Sakha are at the exact age where marriage discussions and pressures begin to surface in their homes, while a smaller percentage are already married, like Inika. Aligned with Grover's findings, the norm for these women is an arranged marriage, but as I will address in Chapter Seven, marital practices is one aspect of their everyday lives that they begin to reflect upon and negotiate differently due to their involvement in the program.

*The mobility of women*

Related to a family's reputation – and therefore indirectly also related to marriage – is women's mobility. There is a visible difference in the practices and degrees of mobility for men and women. Men may enter and leave households as they like, but women rarely have such freedom. As illustrated in the opening statement of this chapter, earlier in life Inika could not leave her house alone, for example to buy vegetables for the dinner she was to cook. Women often must ask for permission to leave and will be accompanied outside the home. As Desai and Andrist (2010: 670) put it, "Restrictions on women's physical mobility is yet another marker of gender segregation in which women must seek permission from family elders before venturing outside the home to visit health centres, friends' homes, or the local bazar, and often must be accompanied." Prior to marriage, young women are under the strict surveillance of parents, brothers, or other close relatives, and after marriage, her in-laws are in charge (Govinda, 2013b). That a young woman has not been with boys – her sexual innocence – is a matter of family honor (izzat), so expectations of her behavior and whereabouts are strict. According to Ramakrishnan (2014: 78) "[y]oung women bear the burden of protecting the family's izzat (honor/integrity/self-respect), thus reinforcing restrictions of mobility and behavior." Talking to a man alone is in itself often perceived as improper and suspicious, jeopardizing the family's reputation in the community. The reputation of a family and the young woman in question also influences "how good of a man" they can get for her in marriage. A woman that is perceived to have conducted improper behavior is typically considered of "less value" in marriage negotiations, which is why some of women in the Women on Wheels program expressed concerns that becoming or being a driver might complicate their marriage prospects. As can be seen, many different norms and practices of everyday life interweave and influence young women's living conditions, prospects for marriage, and mobility, produced more as collective and relational negotiations, than as women's individual decision-making.

In an ethnographic study of gender politics within a poor community in Delhi Govinda (2013b: 9) found that middle-aged women in particular were completely excluded from any income-generating activities and confined to the home: "their exclusion was justified under the guise of maintaining high family status, community prestige and purity from the 'impure' 'urban' context." The notion of the city as being impure and a place that corrupts women's purity is persistently mentioned in negotiations between Azad mobilizers and people in the communities. Many of the women with Azad & Sakha shared how community members repeatedly accused them of having sexual relations or affairs or of being prostitutes, or "loose" because they would leave the community unaccompanied and commute to the city alone. This source of tension related to mobility – between the custom of staying at home and the more recent movements

of women participating in economic activities outside the home – exists between young women and their families, as well as between husbands and wives. Grover (2009: 11) makes a similar point when quoting a female informant, Lata, who speaks of discussions with her husband and practices related to work and mobility: "He suspects me all the time of having affairs when I'm at work, which leads to fights. In the early years of marriage, I never left the house because of his suspicion. I would be taunted and beaten if I did." Similarly, the opening statement of this chapter revealed the limited mobility that Inika experienced prior to her work as a driver: "I would not talk to anybody outside of my household," she stated, explaining that if she needed to buy something, she would wait at home until someone could accompany her.

*Gendered bodily practices*

This brings me to another point I briefly wish to make here: Many of these practices are also corporeally enacted or embodied. Gendered practices are performed physically in myriad ways, for example through clothing, veiling, and ornaments,[53] and bodily gestures like avoiding eye contact, not speaking loudly, and postures.[54] Recall again this fraction of Inika's opening statement:

> Ten years ago, I would not talk to anybody outside of my household. If there was someone in the lane, I would have to cover my head. I would not be able to open my mouth and tell people that there was nobody at my home.

This account portrays several bodily practices. First, there is the physical act of speaking "with strangers," which is traditionally inappropriate for the reasons addressed above. Inika could not just speak to any stranger or someone perceived as being of higher status; she would simply stay quiet and not engage. Several times she told me that in earlier days, she would not have been able to speak to me or to clients in the taxi. The second point from Inika's recollection is that she used to cover her head more conservatively than she does now. The practice of veiling is

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[53] There are many traditional rituals, and social and political practices related to the clothing, jewelry, and body ornaments women wear, such as the red dot, *sindur*, on the forehead, which lets the world know that the woman is married and that her husband is alive (there are other rules for widows, etc.). Such practices depend generally on caste, class, gender, and the specific local culture, which varies greatly across the many states of India.

[54] Cultural codes of corporeal practices concern both women and men. For instance, Abraham, based on a study in the state of Rajasthan, writes that "the practice of a man lowering his eyes when speaking to someone (*nazar ka purdah*), not speaking loudly (*awaz ka purdah*) or expressing a particular body language […] when in the company of a man or woman who is hierarchically placed in relation to caste and class status is visible in everyday life in Bikaner. This norm of interaction that serves to reproduce hierarchies is in some ways similar to veiling norms of women in front of caste superiors and in their conjugal home and neighborhood" (2010: 202).

common across India, but differs according to the local cultural customs.[55] Generally, according to Govinda (2013b: 5), the practice of women covering their heads "imposed social distance and regulated their behavior towards those who controlled economic resources, wielded power and made decisions inside and outside the house, especially senior males and some senior females." While practices of veiling might be a reproduction of hierarchies and power relations, researchers, including Abraham (2010), also posit that it is not uncommon to find instances where women test and expand those boundaries. In the community she studied, Govinda (2013b) likewise found that the norms around veiling generally have become slightly more flexible, because "in the past few years, the veil has risen a little higher and some women now only cover their heads and not their faces" (2013b: 10). The way gendered practices are reenacted or contested also depends on generational differences between women: "In the case of younger generations of women, it was evident that they were attempting to resist, subvert and challenge codes on mobility, honour and sexuality" (Govinda, 2013b: 9). She concludes that:

> For the elder generation of women, being 'modern' is synonymous with being 'urban', with women being educated, wearing Western clothes, going out unveiled and without a chaperone, eating out and going to movie theatres, and roaming around with unrelated men, in other words, dating men. (Govinda, 2013b: 11)

Govinda (2013b: 11) further argues that some women of the elder generation reinforce traditional practices and thus participate in women's subordination, as it is their means to derive a sense of status, authority, and power by aligning themselves with the male patriarchs: "The patriarchal bargain is an individual strategy certain women employ to manipulate the oppressive system to their least disadvantage." Young women, however, are increasingly allowed to attend school and thus become more exposed to alternative ways of life, which might entail that "their plans and aspirations do not match those of that their elders have for them" (Govinda, 2013b: 7). Indeed, this type of tensions between the generations in a household was common for the female drivers, who from their engagement with Azad & Sakha had been exposed to radically alternative ways of life and living their gender. As drivers the women's mobility increased significantly and they got to see and experience the city of Delhi in entirely new ways, but it entailed negotiating themselves

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[55] In Hindi, the Hindu forms of veiling are termed gunghat and the Muslim are called purdah (e.g., Abraham, 2010). See, for example, Abraham's (2010) ethnographic study of practices of veiling and the production of gender and space in communities in the city of Bikaner in Rajasthan. The author argues that women practice different veiling regimens in everyday life depending on where and with whom they are relating, and finds that girls and women are taught how to produce respectability "through their use of spaces and clothing, while simultaneously testing the boundaries of this control" (2010: 201).

and their gender in public spaces.[56] Such negotiations are both acute and shared amongst women venturing out in Delhi, as the city is considered the most unsafe city for women in India, and has received the unflattering nickname "the rape capital." In the following section, I address this problematic further, which also explains the demand for female drivers in public means of transportation.

**Delhi: "The Rape Capital," India's daughters, and gendered public spaces**




*Photo by Noah Seelam/AFP/Getty Images, published in The Guardian,*
The photo was taken during the protests following the bus rape and death of Jyoti Singh in 2012.[57]

In India, a common saying goes that the number one reason for injury and death in the country is not traffic, diseases, snakebites, or natural disasters, but gender – that is to say, being a woman.

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[56] When it comes to practices such as marriage, living arrangements, ways of dressing, speaking, and making eye contact, and bodily gestures, it becomes evident that perspectives of gender, sexuality, religion, caste, class, and age/generations, for instance, can all be perceived as constitutive elements of the way such practices are carried out in the specific time-space contexts of my case. The intersectionality approach in feminist studies denotes such perspectives as "categories of difference" and is concerned with "the intersectionality of women's (and men's) multiple identities and the ways they are shaped by other socially constructed categories of difference" (Davis et al., 2006: 3).

[57] Chamberlain, G. & Bhabani, S. "Five years after the gang-rape and murder of Jyoti Singh, what has changed for women in India?", *The Guardian*, December 03, 2017.

The case that really put this problematic on the world's radar occurred one early evening in Delhi, 16 December 2012 to be precise, when Jyoti, a 23-year-old woman, was gang-raped in a public bus on the way home from watching the movie Life of Pi with a male friend. She was then thrown off the bus on the roadside without anyone immediately attending to her. A week later, she passed away in the hospital from the severity of her injuries. The incident incited protesters to take to the streets across India and became a decisive moment – a surge of heated outcries and responses that made the issue of women's rights and safety in India a matter of global – and not simply local – debate and concern. All five men behind the gang rape were caught and put on trial, but their defense lawyers, both male, were outspoken in condoning the rape in public media.



*Photo by Daniel Berehulak published in Public Radio International*
Protest in front of the famous India Gate on December 23, 2012 in Delhi.[58]

The title of this section makes a reference to India's Daughter, the controversial BBC documentary made by filmmaker Leslee Udwin about the infamous bus gang rape. Upon its release in March of 2015 in connection with International Women's Day, while I was doing fieldwork in Delhi, the film attracted instant attention worldwide and was immediately banned in India. The Indian government obtained a court order prohibiting the BBC from broadcasting the documentary

[58] Overdorf, J. "India: Protests resume after Delhi gang rape victim dies", *Public Radio International*, December 29, 2012.

in India, but it leaked on YouTube instead. Like thousands of others, I saw it in India, but the government swiftly succeeded in getting YouTube to block it. This led yet again to protest and local debates on women's rights, and all the commotion just seemed to magnify the film's attention and controversy. In the film, one of the defense lawyers, Sharma, is quoted as saying, "We have the best culture. In our culture, there is no place for a woman." Another lawyer, Singh, stated that had it been his daughter or sister who "engaged in pre-marital activities[59] […] in front of my entire family, I would put petrol on her and set her alight."[60]

In a country where an average of 92 women are raped daily (as a conservative estimate[61]), where women make up just 29% of the official workforce, where the terms "dowry deaths" and "bride burning"[62] is a concept in the cultural vocabulary (e.g. Kumar, 2003), and where it is estimated that many million unborn or newborn girls have been either aborted or killed over the last three decades, concerns for women's rights, safety, and equal opportunities are urgent societal matters. Indian economist Amartya Sen brought, already in the early 1990s, the severity of this issue to the world's attention through what he termed India's, and the worlds, "missing women."[63]

The fact that marital rape, for instance, is not officially considered a criminal offense is another attestation to the ingrained patriarchal perception that in marriage, a man has ownership rights over a woman; she is, in other words, his property. Over the past few years, in the aftermath of the bus rape, there has been increasing public debate over the gender inequalities in India. Women's rights advocates have pleaded for the criminalization of marital rape, which was openly declined at minister level with the following argumentation:

> It is considered that the concept of marital rape, as understood internationally, cannot be suitably applied in the Indian context due to various factors, including level of education, illiteracy, poverty, myriad social customs and values, religious beliefs, mindset of the society to treat marriage as a sacrament.[64]

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[59] I.e., going to the movies with a male friend.

[60] Roberts, Y. "India's Daughter: 'I made a film on rape in India. Men's brutal attitudes truly shocked me'", *The Guardian*, January 3, 2015.

[61] An article published in The Hindu reports that sexual violence is grossly under-reported in India and estimates suggest that only 1% of marital rapes and 6% of rapes by those other than husbands are reported to the police. Rukmini, S. "Marital and other rapes grossly underreported", *The Hindu*, October 22, 2014.

[62] The national Crime Records Bureau (2015) estimates that across India a bride is murdered every hour over dowry disputes.

[63] Sen, A. "More Than 100 Million Women Are Missing", *The New York Review of Books*, December 20, 1990.

[64] The quote is originally associated with the Minister of State for Home, Haribhai Parathibhai Chaudhary, in 2015, but has been restated in a written statement in 2016 by Women and Child Development Minister, Maneka Gandhi. See Roy, V. "The Marital Rape Debate", *The Hindu*, March 18, 2016, and Haidar, S. "Criminalise marital rape, UNDP chief", *The Hindu*, March 14, 2016.

In Delhi, the crime rate is at its worst. Widespread urban poverty and violence against women are two severe societal obstacles for the city, which is why it is referred to as "The Rape Capital" as a consequence of the many instances of rape and violent assaults of local women – and a few foreign tourists – in the city over the last few years alone. The renowned Delhi-based women's rights organization Jagori (2016: 2) puts it bluntly in their report entitled "Safe cities for women and girls, recent developments": "Delhi is one of the most dangerous cities in India for women to live in." In a publication by Jagori and UN Women (2011: xi), based on a 2010 survey conducted in Delhi they report that outside of the home, public transport is indeed where women feel most exposed and are likely to experience sexual harassment:

> Unlike men, women experience the city differently and have to devise their own safety strategies to negotiate public spaces during day and night. […] Roadsides and public transport are the most vulnerable places where women face the highest risk of sexual harassment. Around 70 percent women admitted being harassed on the roadside while 50 percent women reported being harassed in public transport and 42 percent faced harassment waiting for public transport.

When reading such statistics, one must also bear in mind that far from everyone perceives yelling sexual remarks at a woman, touching her on the bus, or even physical violence as harassment; at best, the numbers are probably rather moderate. For instance, a survey by United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, UNICEF (2012), drawing on statistical country specific data for adolescents (aged 15-19), found that in India 53% of the young women and 57 % of the young men surveyed thought it justifiable for a man to beat his wife. What all these different strands of data suggest is that in Delhi, inequality and gendered violence are largely systematic and widely institutionalized to the extent that they are often taken for granted as common and acceptable practices.

*Gendered spaces of transportation in Delhi*

In India, public transportation vehicles are evident gendered spaces. In the trains and metros, for instance, there are carts reserved only for women. The division of sexes is visible in many of the city's geographical spaces and transportation structures. As we saw in the opening montage of this thesis, at the far end of any metro platform in Delhi there are pink signs on the ceiling and the ground reading "Ladies Only." While commuting in the metro, it is repeatedly announced over the loudspeaker that the first cart of the metro is for "ladies only." Signs are also posted inside the carriage, as can be seen in the photos below.




*Delhi metro line*
Visibly gendered spaces in the city's public transport

It is not an unusual sight to find on the walls of the main entrance of some metro stations in Delhi, the reference numbers for the police units for violence against women. In this photo from the Kalkaji Mandir metro station in Delhi, there is a large sign indicating that there is a police station nearby. The small note taped to the wall below reads, "Delhi Police Help Line, Call 1511."




*Delhi metro line*
Contact numbers to Dehli Police Help line in public transport

The majority of commuters on the city's public transportation are men. When it comes to driving cars, the picture is similar, but with even fewer women participating. In a city renowned for its buzzing, chaotic traffic, with new cars entering its streets each day, the number of women seen behind the wheel is incredibly few. Women generally do not drive, and in particular, women do not drive as a profession. The founder of Azad & Sakha, Meenu Vadera (2012: 151), writes in a book chapter, "In a country with more than a billion people, one could easily count the total number of commercial women chauffeurs" at the time when she decided to found the social venture in 2008. According to official statistical records, Delhi officially has approximately 7.8 million recorded females[65], and in 2013 the number of registered female drivers was 106,453.[66] In the introduction of the organization's 2015-16 annual report, Meenu (Azad & Sakha, 2016: 2) writes, "In 2008, when we started, there was only one publicly known professional woman auto driver." However, the environment and the taxi industry have both undergone change over the last few years, due also in part to political pressure for finding solutions to increase women's safety in public transportation. In the annual report, Meenu provides a comparison of how things have changed concerning female driving:

> In 2008, none of the radio cab companies we visited to understand the market were interested in the idea of women drivers. One of them said to us in so many words, 'This won't work, we have done it and written it off...' In 2015, one of the largest radio cab companies introduced a special service for women with women drivers. The new aggregator models on the block are wooing very aggressively to bring women drivers on the roads. (Azad & Sakha, 2016: 2)

While I was doing fieldwork in Delhi in 2015, suddenly several of the established taxi companies began advertising that they had female drivers. Women driving for Sakha started leaving the organization to take jobs in these commercial taxi companies. 26 women left Sakha to work for Meru Cabs, one of Delhi's largest and most well-known taxi providers; "Meru Eve," they called the new offer of female drivers. Jagori's 2016 report also addresses this movement:

> Private companies have begun to fill the gap in this regard [lack of safe options for women]. One such company is the Meru Cab that is launching a "pink taxi fleet" – a pink and white taxi, driven by women for women, equipped with a panic button and even pepper sprays. There are other companies such as ForShe

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[65] This includes females of all ages. Census 2011, http://www.census2011.co.in/census/state/delhi.html. Accessed September 9, 2018.

[66] It has not been possible to retrieve more recent numbers. Female drivers are still scares in numbers, even though it is likely that some drivers in Delhi are not registered, meaning that they drive without a license.

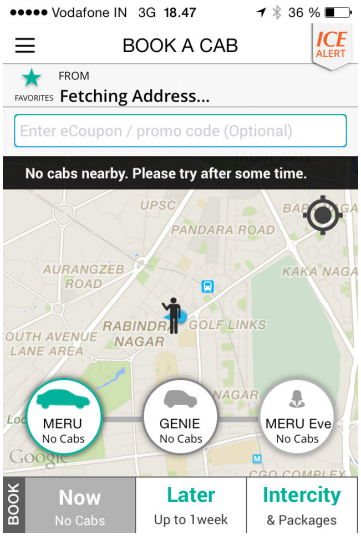
and Women on Wheels taxi services that follow similar models. While these help solve the problem of last mile connectivity, they are largely unavailable to lower-class individuals who cannot afford private taxis and must rely on public transportation. (Jagori, 2016: 7)

On 23 January 2015, a blog post on the Meru Cab website gave the following introduction to their female driver service, accompanied by the photo below:

> "Welcome to Meru Eve
>
> Keeping this in mind, Meru has launched Meru Eve in the National Capital Region (soon to expand to other areas of the country), which promises to play its own part in ensuring women's safety on Delhi roads. With strong support of the Delhi Police, this brand new cab service promises to bring safe, reliable and professional transport to women – driven by women. All women drivers recruited for the service have received training in aspects of safety, self-defense, emergency procedures and consumer etiquette. The cab itself is equipped with a 'Himmat' app,[67] panic buzzer, pepper sprays, speed dial and helpline numbers. The idea is to ensure safety for both the passenger(s) and the driver."[68]




*The Meru blog*
Meru cabs for women




*Screen shot from my phone*
The Meru cab app with the Mery Eve service

[67] The Himmat app is a mobile application developed and offered by Delhi Police for women's safety.
[68] Meru Cabs. "For women, of women, by women: the Meru Eve experience", The Meru Blog, January 23, 2015.

Since the 2009 governmental elections in Delhi, women's safety has become a topic of political debate. Measures have been taken to implement "safety strategies," as the Jagori (2016: 6) report states:

> In 2009, the government set up a requirement of all auto rickshaws to have a GPS tracking systems and a panic button to increase the safety of transportation. Yet after the Delhi transport department released 15,000 new autos with these safety features, it was revealed that they were not actually safer at all. The GPS tracking was not monitored, and the panic buttons did not actually work. [...] In another effort to create safer public transportation, officials vowed to put up CCTV cameras in all buses and trains. Yet almost 18 months later, there are only 60 trains out of 200 that have cameras, and several personnel have admitted that they are unsure about whether or not they even work.

When the 2012 bus gang rape happened, and women's safety surfaced again as a major challenge of the city, many questioned the efficiency of the government's strategies. According to the Jagori reports, Azad & Sakha's staff, and other residents of Delhi I met during fieldwork, women generally did not feel safe in spaces of public transport. Over the past few years, it does not appear to have improved. Jagori (2016: 3) concluded form a survey on women's experiences of safety in Delhi from 2015 to 2016, that: "we find that, in Delhi, women not only feel unsafe in public spaces but single women in the capital feel threatened in almost every context."

In 2015, Delhi had elections for city government positions once again. In the wake of these elections, traditional commercial taxi firms started advertising female taxi drivers. On many occasions during my fieldwork, I was told that one reason for this movement was pressure from the political environment on the taxi companies to take responsibility, but I cannot confirm these statements beyond, and I have not been able to find research documenting or discussing it. What is certain is that the taxi sector changed with regard to female drivers in 2015. Azad & Sakha perceive their work as influential to this movement, as they have been meeting with people in the transportation sector over the years to discuss women's safety and opportunities, as well as to showcase the fact that women drivers can be good for business since the need is there. Many emerging smaller female taxi firms are recruiting the women they have trained.

Having presented central characteristics of spatial politics in the poor communities and the city of Delhi, which pertains to Azad & Sakha's work and the women's everyday lives, I will end the chapter by returning to Inika's life history, ending on a note on how she got to become one of the first female drivers in Delhi.

**Inika's story: "If only I had had a son earlier"**

Not long after her marriage, Inika got pregnant at the age of 19. "I thought of abortion because I was not in a position to take care of a child," she told me with a distant look in her eyes. The extremely poor economic situation where she now lived – her in-laws' household, a total of nine people – meant food was scarce. Inika was not able to eat when she felt hungry and was anxious about carrying a child under such circumstances. For weeks she survived on tea and bread. Following traditional practices, as the new daughter-in-law Inika was expected to take care of the household – and was not allowed to work outside the home. In particular, she had to provide for her father-in-law's demands. The fact that she was pregnant made no difference in this matter:

> I faced so much trouble being pregnant. If I felt sick, my father-in-law never arranged for medicine. I used to be in pain for the entire night. He held a governmental job and left for work at 5 a.m. in the morning, and he used to wake me up at 2:30 a.m. in the night to make me prepare tea and food for him, even in that condition of pregnancy and sickness. He never respected that.

Uncertain about the conditions under which she would bring a child into the world, Inika went to a doctor to have an abortion, but the doctor advised against it, telling her that if she aborted now, she might never become pregnant again. So Inika kept the child. She went to live with her parents, where she could have better access to food, for about 20 days each month.

The day came, and Inika gave birth to her first child, a son, in her parents' hut. When her in-laws realized that the child was a boy, however, they came to claim him: "Since my son was born at my parents' house, they [in-laws] came to claim their right to him. He was a month old and I had to take him to my in-laws' house." Inika was forced to move back into her husband's household. Her father in-law was an alcoholic, and the situation was difficult, living all together in a single-room hut. Inika took measures that even surprised herself:

> There was no one to take care of my baby, while I had to cook for many hours and do household chores. He used to cry continuously for long periods of time, but there was no one to take care of him. I suffered a lot. I do not know from where I got such strength, but one day I decided to tell my husband, "I am going to stay at my parents' place. What I have suffered, my kid shall not." I told him, "I do not want to live here if I have to stay hungry. If I have to work for everyone and no one is even helping me with my kid, if I have to cook for everyone, wash clothes for everyone, do all the household work, then at least someone should be with my kid while I work, but there was no one. You can leave me," I said, "but I will not stay here."

Again Inika moved out, bringing her son along. An unfortunate accident – a fall leading to a back injury – forced Inika to rely on her parents' help to recover and take care of her son. They were the only people who cared for her, she recalled. But misfortune hit the family once again:

> I started feeling better, but my child suddenly fell ill. He was vomiting and had diarrhea. I took him to the hospital and got some medicine, but he was still not well. I went to another doctor the next day; it was a Sunday. I thought that I should take him to yet another place, but I could not locate the doctor, so we ended up at another one. My son had terrible diarrhea. He got diagnosed, and I felt dizzy, thinking that something must have happened to my child. I was all alone with him. After getting the medicine, I got on a rickshaw and went back toward my parents' house. I was cuddling him on the way. He started crying and I gave him a bottle of milk, and while drinking – I do not know when exactly – he died. By the time we reached home, he had died.

Inika cried as she recounted this particular part of her personal story. It was clearly a painful memory for her. She allowed herself to cry, sobbing loudly, without trying to stop it. There was a long moment of silence. The translator and I, both moved by her account and the emotions that surfaced, consoled her, gave her a hug, and we all sat together in silence. Then Inika picked up the story on her own initiative, wiped away a few tears, and continued:

> I just feel so sad thinking that I faced so much trouble and sadness in that period of my life. Only six months after the delivery, my child died. I went mad for a month. I did not touch any food and was completely insane. The biggest problem was that my son had died and my husband had only gotten a small raise in salary from 1,200 rupees to 1,400 rupees in a year and a half [a very low income level].

Inika was not sure what happened to her son, but she thought that it was caused by the lack of access to proper and nutritious food while she was pregnant.

> I realized that this is not the way to live. I was in a very bad phase of my life. I asked my father, "Since you decided whom I should spend my life with, now you tell me how I should do it. You got me married, so now you decide." He was apologetic and said we had been deceived.

Desperate to alter the living conditions of her everyday life, Inika insisted on working to increase their income:

> I did not lose courage, however. Somehow I figured that all the struggles I have been going through in life were going to serve me and help me now. I told my husband, "How long will we live like this?" So I started stitching from home.

> Whatever I was able to do, I started doing that. I could earn about 1,000 rupees in a month.

Inika had learned stitching and *chik*-making[69] through assisting her father earlier in life. Now she taught these skills to her husband so they could make more money together. He was open to the idea, and together with Inika's father and brother, they started a small business. As time passed, Inika gave birth to a second child, this time a daughter. When her third child was born, yet again a girl, her in-laws started harassing Inika and her husband, for not having a son. The family encouraged Inika's husband to leave her and remarry a woman who could give him a son, but he opposed and resisted their pressure:

> I thought that I have two daughters now, so I do not need anything else. But my in-laws started torturing me. They told my husband, "Leave her, since she cannot bear a boy-child. We will get you remarried." My father-in-law used to abuse him a lot [verbally]. Usually in a joint family, I have noticed outsiders do not dare to say anything to the family members' torture. My daughters' lives were hell. My sister-in-law had three sons, so she used to insult us. She was putting me down a lot. It was like we had come out of one mess and entered an even bigger mess.

When her youngest daughter was three years old, Inika found herself pregnant again. This time, she really wanted an ultrasound to know whether it was a boy or a girl. The use of ultrasound or amniocentesis as a means to determine the sex of a fetus has been common practice in India since the 1970s, when the science became widely available and abortion was made legal. The preference for sons became easier to secure, and demand for the technology saw a surge of ultrasound business in the 1990s advertising sex-determination services (Arnold et al., 2002). The effects became evident in the 2001 census (national statistics), where the male–female sex ratio had been increasingly skewing in favor of the male. Women's rights groups raised concerns and advocated against the sex-determining practices, which had gained traction in 1994 when the central government passed legislation making it illegal. Nevertheless, as Inika's account demonstrates, the practices continued, and the law was far from enforced. Instead, it provided even more fertile ground for dubious or illegal entrepreneurial business, as providing ultrasounds was lucrative and in demand (Arnold et al., 2002). Inika was hoping to access one such illegal, local community facility, but they kept postponing her appointment. Impatient, she instead went

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[69] *Chik* work is a traditional Indian craft of handwoven blinds, mats, or interior household products made from thin bamboo strips or other wooden material.

directly to a doctor to have an abortion without knowing the sex of the child, but being too far along in the pregnancy, the doctor refused to perform it. A few months later, she gave birth to a girl.



*Gharoli Extension, phase 3, east Dehli.*
Inika's three daughters in their home

The pressure to have a son was severe, so she gave it a last try:

> I was in a position where my in-laws kept telling me, "If you have a son, you will be allowed to stay here; otherwise, you must leave." I felt that I had suffered enough, but I was more worried that they would not allow my daughters to live properly. I took the last chance [of pregnancy] and finally had a son. Those who used to insult me suddenly acted like they had never said anything at all. When my son was 20 days old, my father-in-law died. Everyone's behavior changed after that. If only I had had a son earlier, I would not have faced all this. But I guess it was written in my fate that I had to suffer all that. I fell and got severely hurt, no one cared; my son died and no one cared. I realized that no one is responsible for anyone here. I felt so lonely and tortured that I used to think I should eat something – or take poison – to die, and give the same to my daughters. If something ever happened to me, no one would let my daughters live.

That Inika considered taking poison and giving it to her daughters attests to the severity of the daily struggles she experienced and the pressure under which she was living. Her account illustrates

an example of patriarchy in practice within the politics of everyday life for women in urban poor communities in India. Not having a son subjected Inika to constant bullying and discrimination; then a few years later having a son significantly transformed her situation within the relational dynamics of the conjugal household. This shows that son preference is not only a patriarchal ideology, but also one which is enforced through everyday practices discriminating between the sexes, and which potentially poses severe ramifications for women without sons.[70] Inika's phrase "If only I had had a son earlier" accentuates this point.

**A new trajectory: Inika became one of Delhi's first female drivers**

While the issue of women's rights and safety was surging in public debates in Delhi, Inika was living her life as a married woman and mother of four, and she has started working a few hours for a local NGO in her neighborhood. She was becoming increasingly interested in issues regarding women in poverty. One day, she was at her sister's house when a friend of theirs joined them. "I am learning driving," the friend told the two sisters, and that is how Inika heard of Azad Foundation and Sakha cab services for the first time. "She showed me her permanent driver's license," Inika reminisced, "and I had loved the idea of driving since childhood, but never realized that this dream could come true." Inika was intrigued – in fact, she wanted to try it out – so she went home and presented the idea to her husband. He did not like the idea at first. Inika said that his initial reaction was "Stop with this talk and do stitching like you used to, in the home only," but he came around. "We have four children, let us take a chance," Inika negotiated with him, expressing that she felt she had to do it. She also consulted her brother. "My brother was a little reluctant because he thought it would not be safe. I told him that I will die whenever my time is up, so in that sense, I am not safe anywhere. It was difficult to convince him, but I managed," she said with a smile, proud of having made it as one of the first professional female drivers in Delhi.

Inika's life history, as she recounted it to me over the course of several interviews and meetings, is fraught with personal struggles, losses, and difficult negotiations but also feelings of pride, joy and courage. She liked to share her pains and struggles, but also her achievements. Inika frequently mentioned that she had been very good in school and enjoyed studying, an opportunity her father robbed her of, but later in life she returned to studying and completed 10th grade of primary school. She also stressed the economic advancements that she had made through working

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[70] UN Women South Asia writes on their website on practices of son preference in India: "female infanticide and son preference based on deeply rooted patriarchal cultural and religious beliefs has been pervasive for centuries. [...] Women experience intense societal and familial pressure to produce a son and failure to do so often carries the threat and consequences of violence or abandonment in their marriage."

as a driver, remarking that she could now help others and give her children a better future. She saw herself as a role model. While Inika's story could have included even more details and accounts, I have stayed attentive to the chronological order of her recounting and the central points she herself chose to share. Here, I have been interested in how closely interwoven her life story is with the politics of poverty and gender in this context; she has offered a personification that illustrates some of these everyday practices, thought patterns, and relational dynamics. I find that a recurring theme across many of her accounts is a story of having suffered and struggled, but also having taken up the "fight," having prevailed and done things, and become someone she is proud of. I will end my portrait of Inika here, with an incident that took place in our first interview: she received a sudden phone call while we were talking on a bench under a large tree in Delhi's central and lush Lodi Garden. She excused herself, picked up the phone, and walked a few meters away on the lawn to take the call. She laughed and spoke in a joyful, almost playful tone; her entire face was lighting up. After a little while, she returned to the bench and with a big smile proudly announced:

> I am really happy today, because my daughter, the one I wanted to abort many years ago, has scored very good marks in school. She has passed with 98% marks. It was a school officer that called me up. Girls are smarter than boys. Everyone tells me with pity that I have three daughters, and I tell them, "Do not repeat that again." I do not feel like I have three daughters; it is just my children. I simply have to do my work, I have to let them study and help them to be independent. This is my aim. My eldest daughter has passed 10th grade. She supports me a lot. If I get home late from work in the evening, she manages the household chores and makes dinner on her own for everyone.



*On the road, Dehli*
Inika, one of Dehli's first female taxi drivers.

Nothing is more powerful than an idea whose time has come

Victor Hugo

# UNSETTLING SPACE

Chapter Four

This chapter explores what happens when the poor women consider becoming drivers. Set within intimate spaces of relations, homes, community lanes and squares, the analytical focus of the chapter is on Azad's mobilization activities in the poor communities. I show that their activities can be seen as deliberate spatial constellations, which unsettle the givenness of spatial politics in the communities and that this provides the potential for processes of social transformation.

# Considering driving: unsettling space through a radical proposition

Whether female driving as a profession in India is an idea whose time has come is an open-ended question – one which I will leave open for now, but return to at the end of this thesis. What I *do* wish to demonstrate in this chapter is that female driving is a proposition that unsettles the givenness of everyday politics in the urban poor communities where Azad mobilisers enter. Making this proposition to the young women in these communities produces novel processes of negotiation for them, their families, and within their immediate community – negotiations that were rooted in patriarchal perceptions, norms, and practices concerning what women can and should do. By advocating driving as a woman's profession, Azad & Sakha contest the traditional patriarchal politics of what are perceived as proper practices for women. The notion of a professional female driver was so unconventional and unheard of that it provoked opinions, reactions, and – for some – engagement.

The chapter addresses how these negotiations can be considered a step toward transforming the spatial politics of these women's everyday lives. The empirical material is analyzed through a spatial lens, and my subsequent theoretical reflection at the end of the chapter is inspired by literature on space and organizing, in particular the work of Massey (2005) and Simonsen (2013). Inquiring into how social transformation is practiced by women from poor backgrounds in Delhi, this chapter aim to answer this question by describing and analyzing the organization's efforts to attract women to the Women on Wheels program. Azad's mobilizers stage encounters in the poor resettlement colonies. This is usually where the organization and potential female drivers meet for the first time.[71] Advocating professional women drivers, is not an easy argument to make in these communities, but it is one that opens the possibility for – or even forces - negotiations. The focus here is on what transpires within these first spurs of negotiations – how they are initiated and transpire. This chapter thus dwells in homes, neighbor lanes, community squares, and the intimate spaces of relations within of some of the *bastis* targeted for Azad & Sakha's work.

I argue that when community residents are considering the proposition of female driving, they are forced to address underlying gendered perceptions and practices regardless of whether their responses are those of support, opposition, or something in between. The tensions of the juxtaposing politics produce negotiations new to community residents. In order to understand how the mobilizer

[71] Not all women enter the program through mobilization efforts in the communities. Some come through 'word of mouth', the inspiration of friends or relatives who have heard of or joined the program, and some reach out to Azad after seeing posters or hearing radio coverage.

enables these processes, I explore the practices and affect of their organizing, which can be considered a deliberate construction of spatial constellations (Massey, 2005). As they are not merely constructing temporal spaces, but altering space in different ways through catalyzing new kinds of gendered negotiations. This chapter consideres the unsettling of space that Azad's mobilization efforts produce when women consider the option of becoming professional drivers.

The chapter is organized as follows. First, I detail the way Azad mobilizes in the poor communities. Second, I discuss how Azad organize to make the proposition of female driving and attact women into the program, and third, demonstrate how the process of considering becoming a driver provokes negotiations. I argue in this chapter that Azad & Sakha's proposition, and how they mobilize to convey their message, induce processes of "unsettlings" by confronting the traditional spatial politics that shape the dominant gendered practices in these communities. I therefore conclude in the end of the chapter with a theoretical reflection on the unsettling of space as important to catalyzing social transformation in this context.

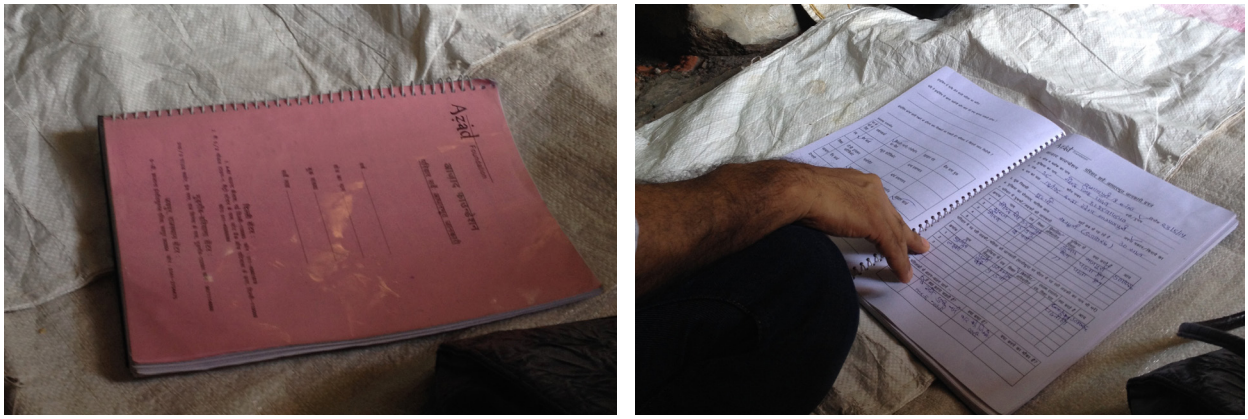
**Mobilizing, mapping and contesting spatial politics**

The first significant negotiation for any woman considering the Women on Wheels program is whether or not to join. Azad seeks to initiate this primary negotiation through their presence and activities within the communities. "Mobilizing," as they call it, is at the heart of the organization's activities. However, encouraging and enlisting women into the program requires significant time and effort. Many staff members related that it was one of the most difficult parts of their work, mainly because convincing women to become drivers is difficult to do – it is a tricky argument. As one staff members explained: "out of 100 women we reach and engage with, only 10 will eventually join." This estimate, often cited in the office, accentuates the challenges the mobilizers experience in attracting women to the program.

Azad's mobilization team is divided into three groups who are in charge of target communities in south, east and north Delhi, respectively. These comprised a total of 82 communities in 2015 (see Appendix 2 for full overview). Before beginning their mobilization efforts[72] in a new community, the group researches the particular area and the households it encompasses. Prior to entering a new community, the mobilizers first gather the data and interact with people in the community, making a unique area profile ("*basti* profile"). In small notebooks, mobilizers write down observations, contacts, and insights about the community's social hierarchies and women potentially eligible

[72] The primary mobilization methods include transit walks (loudspeakers/music in rickshaws), gathering information through questionnaires, community meetings, information camp (kiosk), house visits, and handing out material. Larger outreach and awareness activities include film shows and street-theater plays in collaboration with the Asmita theater group.

for the program. Mobilizers typically recruit a young woman who can assist them with collecting information on all the young women in a given community. The assistant is provided with a thick booklet of blank questionnaire pages, and her task is to visit all households and have the forms filled out. The questionnaire survey inquires into the young women's economic conditions, education level, number of cohabitants, occupations, career aspirations, phone number and address, and asks if they are interested in being contacted by Azad mobilizers.




*Indira Camp, east Delhi*.
A survey booklet used in Azad's mobilizing efforts.

One day in early June 2014, I witnessed one such encounter in the home of a young woman from a poor community in east Delhi. We were all seated on the floor: three mobilizers, six family members, one Sakha driver – who happened to be our chauffeur for the day of mobilizing errands – and myself. A few children and curious neighbors were gathered in the doorway, peeping in on the spectacle. One mobilizer stayed outside the hut and came back with another young woman, who joined our group. The mobilizers turned out to be doing double duty that day, as they were simultaneously engaging the host family on the prospects of their daughter joining the program while also conducting a meeting with the woman collecting data in the community on their behalf. The coordinator browsed the booklet, inspecting and uttering brief remarks.One of the mobilizers explained that the surveys are important for their understanding of the conditions and politics of a given family and community. It serves as a basis for their mobilization efforts and helps them better plan the arguments to be made in each specific context:

> We conduct surveys and therefore have certain benchmarks under which we discover and understand what a woman's needs are, what her requirements would be to join, what kind of issues she might face, and we motivate her accordingly.



*Indira Camp, east Delhi*.
A mobilizer is inspecting a questionnaire booklet. The woman in the background has gathered the data .

Therefore, when the mobilizers enter the communities, they often have some prior knowledge of the specifics of many of the families living there and have already established some relationships. The survey books are brought along, almost like a road map, when they enter the communities. They are particularly useful at the initial meetings, to locate the women and to provide a starting point for the first conversations in their homes. It was not uncommon to see a mobilizer in the middle of a resettlement community lane gazing into the booklet.



*Priyanka camp, south Delhi.*
Mobilizers using a questionnaire booklet to find specific women and conduct the initial house visits.

At times, mobilizers also meet with community leaders,[73] primarily elder males, to get an endorsement of Azad's presence before beginning their mobilizing efforts. I participated in one such meeting, in the tin shack of a worn-down storage room, with an elder leader of a Muslim community in east Delhi. The community leder endorsed Azad's interest to enter the community,

[73] *Panchayat*, which in Hindi means "assembly of five," is a traditional form of rural governance system that has been practiced across communities in India. A group of five elders, often males, form a community governing collective, and the head of the group is the community chief (Datta, 2012). This form of governance has persisted in urban poor communities; thus, it is common that every small area has a leader and team of elders with authority.





*Indira Camp, east Delhi.*
Mobilization team meeting with a community leader.

and together he and the mobilizers inspected the area for prime spots to locate the information camp. Azad enters the poor communities in this way in order to ensure the community's accept their presence and with an aspiration to foster collaboration and participation.

In a central community setting they then set up the camp which includes a variety of material artifacts – like a kiosk, branded umbrellas, posters, flyers, photo books, and the enrolment book to inscribe interested women. These artifacts are deployed and circulated within an actively chosen geographical place, which I conceptualize as deliberately orchestrated spatial constellations. It is through these spatial constellations that Azad begins to unsettle the givenness of traditional spatial politics in the communities, enabling new negotiations of self, gender and livelihoods. This is illustrated in the following write-up of my fieldwork observations of Azad mobilizers setting up an information camp.

**Instigating gender-confronting negotiations**

*Fieldnotes 05.06.14*

> We are in the heart of a large resettlement area in east Delhi, Indira Camp. It is like an enormous village squeezed in between well-off areas of the city. Passing through small, narrow, almost invisible lanes from a main trafficked road, a whole city within the city arises, housing over an estimated several thousand inhabitants. Side by side, lane by lane, we pass small mud-brick houses, most of them painted green, turquoise, or bright blue. Blankets, sheets, and clothing are hanging on many different surfaces. It is a colorful spectacle.
>
> In a central spot Azad's mobilization team, which today consists of four women and one man (the office director, who occasionally participates in field activities along

with the mobilization team), is setting up the *information camp* or *kiosk*. This is the terminology they use for the activity of hosting a stall in the target areas for 5 to 6 hours to meet people, women in particular, and inform them about the program. Prior to a camp, either the day before or earlier the same day, they routinely conduct *transit walks*: journeys across the lanes of the area to announce, via speakerphone, their presence, program, and upcoming camp. They have "fertilized the ground," as they would say.

The kiosk is a plastic booth, the kind seen at fairs and conferences, which the team assembles with ease. The plastic is white but covered with a banner in the Azad & Sakha color of turquoise and white and black text, and a large image of a female driver in a Sakha taxi. Attached to the table are two thin plastic sticks, about 1 meter long, holding a pink banner, with white letters and almost framing whoever occupies the kiosk. Two large parasols in pink, Azad & Sakha's other logo color, mixed with purple provide the necessary shade for a meeting place, because here no one wishes to stand in the sun.





*Indira Camp, East Delhi*
Lanes and houses in the resettlement colony.

The small area they have temporarily occupied and turned into a camp stands out against the mud-brick and sandy colors of the surroundings. The camp is set up to face a large open area, which is more like a small, dusty soccer field. The land is almost bare with only some trash and mud-bricks scattered here and there. Stray dogs occasionally cross the field, a few pigs and goats roam the periphery, and occasionally some children play in the dusty space. Adults cross it quickly. The team has chosen this place because of its centrality; many people pass through. The organization wants to be seen. However, given the bright sun near midday and intense heat of 43 degrees Celsius, few are eager to venture into this space willingly. On the other side of the field, in the distance, the resettlement village in blue shades and narrow lanes continues as far as the eye can see.

The team has put up a rope between two trees and hangs bespoke posters, bearing text and photos, with clothespins to make a long row, as if it were laundry. The pictures












*Indira Camp, east Delhi.*
Posters with text and photos are used to convey their messages visually.

show young women engaged in the training activities and as drivers. The team are placing two roll-up banners with pictures and logo slightly apart from the kiosk. Now they are ready.

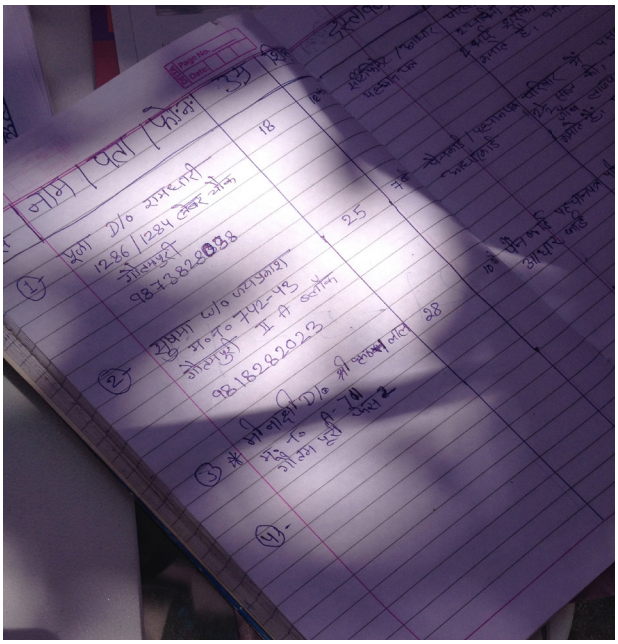
Things are initially quiet around the stall, except for a group of curious children who are watching us closely – some of which, with a mischievous manner, keep poking the equipment. "Go find your mothers and tell them to come here," mobilizers tell them with a hint of agitation after many attempts to get them to stop pulling the equipment. A group of men loiter outside a small wooden stall next to the Azad installation, some more drunk than others, their gazes set mostly on us. Finally, a few women arrive. It is 11:30 a.m., and Pari, one of the mobilizers, who at this moment sits behind the desk, is writing down the names and numbers of a few women in the notebook designed for that very purpose. Phone numbers are essential to the mobilizers' work. In the next days, they will start following up on all the numbers in that book, and if they cannot make contact, they will knock on doors. Addresses are therefore just as important.

They also add a few notes about the women's ages, family members, education level, and whether they have any official identification papers. This book/ledger becomes a condensed register of the day's efforts, and the phone numbers and addresses the links towards the future.

Suddenly the kiosk is very busy. All team members are talking to someone, and most to small groups of women. Young women do not come alone, but tend to come in groups of 2–3 people, consisting of either friends or family members, occasionally a male. The kiosk is near a large tree, behind which the stench of urine is overwhelming. Sweat is running down our faces. Five names are in the book now – women who will shortly be contacted again for more information. As we await visitors at the kiosk, a mobilizer tells me, "The first concerns they have are: Can we do it? Will we be able to do it? Will we get a job?" But the primary question is always: "Will I be able to do it? And then, who will teach?" They also feel scared. Most have never before heard of a professional female driver. Many women say, 'My brother will not listen or my father is not supporting.'" She continues:

> When we meet new women, we ask them, "What do you wish?" and tell them, "If you wish to get this training, then we will go to your family and counsel them." The next step, then, for most women is that we bring them to the office, usually together with some family members, and explain everything here. We make it very clear that it is women who are working for women only. We try to break with their traditional image of a driver being a male, drunkard and abusive. So we tell them we don't produce such drivers. We have a photo album, use real life stories, and motivate them in this way.

Her description illustrates how Azad uses several methods of organizing simultaneously and how they try to assist the women in their negotiations at home about being able to join. In this way, the mobilizers seem to me like midwives, facilitating the birth of the formative processes of negotiating new gender perceptions of, and practices for, the women.





*Indira Camp, east Delhi*
Women considering driving. Their information is taken down..

Most conversations at the kiosk between curious women and mobilizers are between 5 and 10 minutes, but occasionally they turn into lengthy dialogues. "7 or 8 women who have approached us cannot join because of their lack of education," the office director shares. I ask why the organization keeps entering new communities, like today's area, instead of concentrating on the same ones. "We exhaust the areas rather quickly because there are only so many women who fit the profile and have sufficient education, so we need to expand into new areas all the time. In some areas, for example, there might be 10 women at the given time that are ready and have the necessary profile, and we have talked to them all," he reveals. For about 30 minutes there are no visitors, just heat and curious children.

A group appears in the distance: 4 to 5 women walking with such determination toward us that it is clear they are coming for the kiosk. The mobilizers greet them in a way that reveals they have met before. More names are entered in the book. After 5 hours behind the kiosk, at 3:30 p.m., the team starts packing up the equipment as promptly as they set it up. The book has 18 new names, which they tell me is average yet a success. While assisting, I ask the office director – who speaks English fluently – whether the kiosk is really effective, since door-to-door meetings seem more engaging and many women stay home in the peak summer heat. "Well, we also do this to display ourselves broadly in the community, to show ourselves at large, and to show that we are professional and real, that we have equipment and stuff. We need to show our presence in the communities so they can trust us," he answers. Knocking on doors alone cannot establish Azad & Sakha's legitimacy; the organizational material needs to be staged – hence the kiosk and banners – so the people in the communities can see and begin to believe that this is a professional organization. Words are not sufficient, is what I am being told.

**Constructing spatial constellations to instigate negotiations**

The fieldnote entry above highlights the centrality of material artifacts for creating the spatial constellation of Azad's mobilization activities in the communities. With all of these materials they seek to gain trust and legitimacy while at the same time showing that female professional driving can be an attractive and feasible livelihood; that the Women on Wheels program provides a reliable opportunity for a better life for poor women. To many women and community members the information camp enabled encounters that unsettled traditional perceptions of "proper womanhood" – of what women can and should be allowed to do. This deliberate putting-togetherness of, and relations-between, methods, people, place, and equipment challenged existing patriarchical community politics.

The equipment – and how the mobilizers introduce and work with it – was central to initiating the women's negotiations regarding whether or not to try an alternative path and way of living gender. Azad's mobilization efforts involve two almost opposing movements: One attempts to build trust. Without the trust of community members, their work cannot take hold. The other, using the very same artifacts and discursive strategies, is to directly confront taken for granted gender perceptions by proposing a radically different view. The rationale seems to be that if trust can be won, then access can be gained and a proper dialogue can develop, so attitudes regarding what women can and should do can be changed.

This begs the question: how does an organization gain trust when their central message is radically different from local perceptions and practices and, thus, likely to destabilize existing spatial politics? Most community members had never seen or heard of a female driver, and they regarded the proposition as improper, if not impossible, for women. Many of the women had seldom been outside their community, and even fewer have been inside a car. Marginalized in the city, the poorest communities are like pockets of distinct and confined worlds with their own spatial politics that re-enact, and thereby reinforce, traditional gender roles for women. Navigating the need to secure trust while contesting the spatial politics of poor communities was therefore challenging and a matter of recurring tensions.

**Why establishing trust matters: are you a fraud?**

*Fieldnotes 05.06.14*

> Back at the mobilization effort at Indira Camp on this warm day in early June 2014, around noon exactly, two mobilizers leave the *information camp* to go knock on doors. The mission of house visits is to get women to come visit the kiosk and visit specific women that already have shown an interest at prior meetings. I follow along. The two mobilizers, one in her 20s and the other in her 50s, walk briskly and with

> such certainty that it is obvious they have been here before. They know the streets, the people, and many of the stories behind the walls. The mobilizers, coming from similar communities, are strong networkers.
>
> After having visited a few select families, we make our way down an extremely narrow lane. The walls of the huts on both sides can be reached with arms outstretched. It looks to be a blind alley, with many women seated on steps in the shade out front of their blue-painted, mud-brick, two-room huts. A woman who appears middle-aged looks up from the household chores over which she is bent and responds to something Pari, the young mobilizer, says. The woman seems quite agitated: her facial expression is stern and eyebrows are drawn together, yet intercut with a smug smile. Also, her voice is rough and loud with a trace of aggression. She seems to have a strong opinion about something they are discussing. As we walk away, I ask Pari, "Is the woman angry about something?" She replies, "Yes, she is a bit angry. She is saying that so many come here and try to get them to do things, participate in things or promise some kind of social programs, but they are frauds. So she is mad."

Azad workers confirmed that initial mistrust is not uncommon. This is precisely why the camps's elaborate setup is imperative. It provides Azad with a distinct physical presence that signals professionalism, which is important for their reputation in the communities. Fraudulent NGOs with scams to extract money from poor people or to tie them up in shady deals are commonplace in India. Accordingly, many poor residents mistrust organizations or people offering them novel products or programs. When I asked a mobilizer what she thought was the most difficult part of mobilization efforts, she replied:

> A lot of times they don't trust us. The moment we enter into the communities they question us. These days they are deceived by a lot of people, so they think the same about us as well. Even today when I went, they asked for proof from me. They said, "If we are sending our girls to your place, what is the proof that our girls should be okay?" I showed them my identity card and explained about the organization.
>
> People trust in famous people – "names." That is why we show pictures of drivers with Amir Khan [Bollywood actor], who is endorsing our organization. He is also hosting a TV show, *Satyamev Jayate*, with two episodes featuring two cab drivers of Azad & Sakha. Sometimes we show them these films in the community using our laptops. The women feel really surprised when watching the shows with Amir Khan and when we tell them that the Delhi Chief Minister honored the Azad women at their graduation ceremony. We show pictures. All these details are very impactful. We tell them our office is in a good neighborhood. We use some of these techniques. We also show pictures of Hemlata, a female auto driver, and Sarita, the Sakha driver who became the first female bus driver in Delhi. We show them pictures of learning licenses, girls driving, and we tell them, "If you don't trust us, come regularly [to the office] with your daughters, wife, or any other relative. Come regularly, have a look and then decide."

*The performativity of images for negotiations*

The descriptions by the mobilizer emphasizes the performative force of pictures, making photobooks particularly important artifacts for convincing the women, their families and community members of Azad's credentials and that women can, indeed, be professional drivers. The photobooks include pictures of women doing typical traditional gendered tasks (e.g. household chores, jobs in handicrafts and beauty parlors), women in different non-traditional jobs, women trainees in the Azad program, women drivers from Sakha, and women drivers with celebrities and public figures of high status.

Along with the photo book, mobilizers had an illustrated booklet with cartoon drawings that depicted the details of the program just like the real life photos. In addition to strengthening their appearance as a professional organization with brand material, these two types of image-based booklets helped the moblizers illustrate the concept of the Women on Wheels program in communities where literacy was low and sceptism hight.[74] This material was paramount to establish their program as serious and legitimate and therefore central to facilitating conversations on female driving in the communities. Mobilizers brought the photobooks to community meetings and house visits to show an alternative future; one that challenged common perceptions of women not being able technically to learn how to drive – a gendered perception devaluing the cognitive and practical capacity of women.

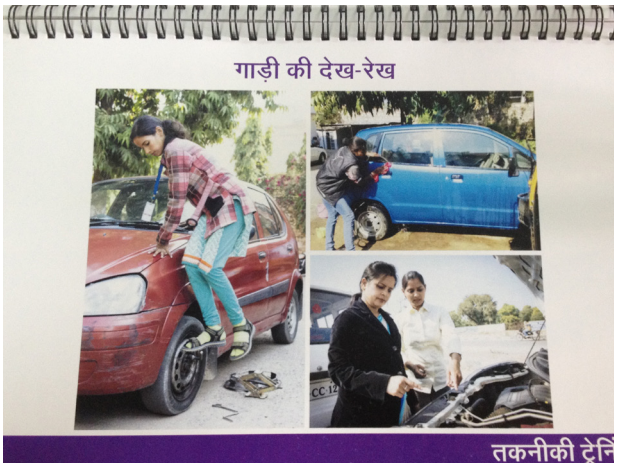



Women in traditional functions

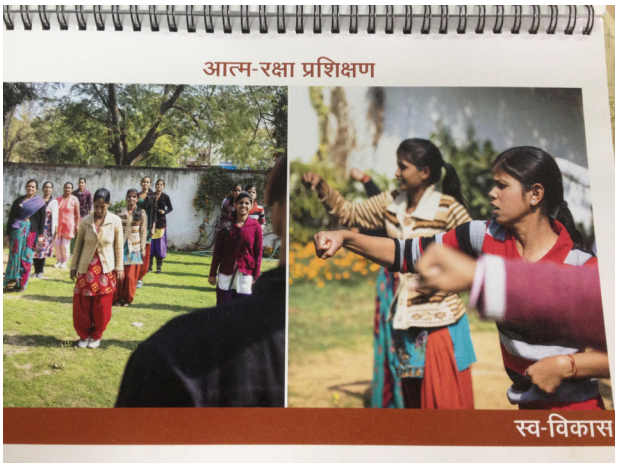



Women in non-traditional jobs

[74] In communities affected by extreme poverty, residents were not accustomed to the presence of organizations with elaborate and professionally branded material. Fraudulent organizations, for instance, would not splurge on branded material. Such organizations would also not have proper offices in well-off areas, which explains why an invitation and potential visit to Azad & Sakha's office would have such an impact and work so well to establish and foster legitimacy.




Women in technical driving training




Women in self-defense training




Sakha drivers with Bollywood actors




Sakha drivers with David Cameron, former British prime minister

The material is actively used to inform about the program and as a tool around which to build the gendered negotiations. The photobooks show that two different "impossibles" are, indeed, possible for poor women: becoming a successful female driver and meeting famous high status individuals. Prior to Azad's visits these two possibilities would have been beyond reach, non-existent. The photobooks do several things: one, they juxtapose traditional and non-traditional perspectives of women's livelihoods, through a visualization of the familiar against the unfamiliar. They speak to the traditional, while at the same time offering an alternative proposition. This allowed the mobilizer to situate the dialogues within the familiar and meet people "where they were." The photobooks enabled Azad to present role models and success stories that could instill trust in the organization and their proposition. The pictures of famous, high-status people (e.g., celebrities, royalties, senior governmental officials), endorsing Azad's work in different ways, impressed people in the communities, conferring legitimacy to the organization and increasing their credibility. In this way it opened doors. Had the Azad mobilizers not been able to convey a sense

of trustworthiness, they would have been dismissed immediately. While trust in the organization generally increased over time, as individual women and their families not only witnessed Azad behaving in a trustworthy manner, but also experienced it firsthand, it was never a given: the Azad team had to work determinedly for maintaining it. Moreover, this sense of trust did not remove the core difficulties of introducing the notion of a female professional driver. This was not a one-off negotiation but rather a continuous one, a process, which frequently had ups and downs and no predictable curve of development.



*Masdu Camp, Okla, south Delhi.*
Mobilizers using a cartoon booklet and flyers at a community meeting.

When mobilizers entered the communities were catalyzing negotiations amongst the residents about what to make of the organization and the proposition mobilizers were making on female driving. Together with family members, eligible women contemplated "*can* they do it?" and "*should* they do it?" Premised in highly institutionalized gendered perception the former question is hinged on doubt of women's capabilities, the latter concerns social norms and expectations about what are considered appropriate practices and professions for women. People reacted to Azad's proposition with concern, curiosity, consideration, excitement, reservation, doubt, and/or disapproval. The women who considered becoming a driver were thrown into negotiations with themselves on whether they believed they could and wanted to do it, but as much with their immediate family and community members, and in relation to their "place" in society as low-caste women of poor brakcgorunds. The spatial consteallations orchestrated by Azad's mobilizers in this sense facilitated a new kind of negotiations for the interested women with themselves, others,

and surroundings.[75]

Had negotiations been productive and well established with a woman and her kin, the next step was then to invite the interested woman and an accompanying family member to the office, which was another affective means to instill trust. In this way, the community residents could see for themselves that the organization did, in fact, exist. Experiencing a nice, professional office in an affluent area of the city often made an impression on the visitors, while they additionally could get a sense of how the training took place.

*"If you don't trust us, come to the office"*

These words were often used by mobilizers who invited community residents to the office because the organization knows that getting women and sceptial family members to their facility is likely to have an affect of instilling trust in their work. That Azad & Sakha's office is an affective space is something they use deliberately to enable more women to enroll and streer negotiations in a desired direction.

Apart from instilling trust in the organization, another relevant aspect of the early visits to the office was the inevitable encounters within the space. In Azad & Sakha's main office, the front door was literally always open during working hours. People came and went all day long. On a regular basis, trainees had training sessions there; drivers came to register work hours, receive their salaries, and wait around between shifts; and women in general came to consult staff members. Consequently, there was always a mix of current trainees, private drivers, taxi drivers, and staff in the office. Therefore, when mobilizers brought potential new trainees to the office these women encountered staff, trainees, and drivers, of which the majority are women. In different ways, the women they saw and met in the office are role models and living examples of alternative ways of being women as opposed to the custom in the poor communities. When I asked Bhavani, a 19-year-old trainee new to the program, how she and her family knew they could trust Azad & Sakha, her answer illustrated how influential the initial office visits were in her negotiations on becoming a driver:

> My father felt that since it is all girls, then it must be all right. So he asked me to check it out first. Neha [a mobilizer] took Adya [another new trainee] and I to see the office. When Devshre [staff] would tell us about the program [at the office], I liked it a lot. She explained things to us. We also saw other trainees

[75] When I use the term "surroundings," it can denote both the material and geographical aspects of space, but can also refer to an abstract sense of the spatial politics which might not be associated with any specific person, but rather a collective sense of social norms and common practices for instance related to social categorizations (Butler, 2015).

> going ahead and moving forward [in life]. Only by seeing them did we realize that the program was not fake and everything was all right with it, so we were also ready to try.

Bhavani's account demonstrates how the experience of visiting the office, witnessing how activities were run, speaking to staff, and seeing trainees in the program assisted in dismantling an initial sense of mistrust. Her account also attests to the potent affect of perceiving others as role models. In this example, the role models were young women from poor backgrounds, just like her, that in training to become drivers are "moving forward" in life, as Bhavani put it, which provided her with a sense of being able to do the same. "If they can do it, I can do it too," was a statement often recounted in interviews when women shared how they reasoned to enroll in the program.

As mentioned, key questions for women were: *Can* and *should* they become drivers? Whilst the latter negotiation for most women never truly ended, not even when they worked as drivers, the former negotiation subsided when they saw other women drivers and disappeared once they learned. Given the commonplace perception that women do not have the cognitive capacity to learn difficult technical tasks like driving, most of the women potentially interested in joining the program or who had just begun doubted whether they could actually do it. Therefore, as the following reflections from Inika, an experienced driver, illustrate the importance of seeing and meeting women drivers:

> There are a lot of times that new trainees talk to me, and they ask me things [in the office]. […] A few days back, I had a word with the group of new trainees. They were asking me to tell them about how I had done it, so that they could find some courage. I told them that there was nothing to be scared about. Look at me – I had small children when I started! I know that nobody had suffered more problems than I had. […] It is true that if one is working hard, then God makes you successful, but only if one is courageous. So they [trainees] also get a lot of courage when they see us [drivers] do it [work as drivers].

The encounters in the office can not be seen as limited to conversations, since the experience and feeling of being in that particual office and perceiving others – the relational experiencing of the space – affected the new visiors. Inhabiting the officespace together with the staff, trainees and drivers – even if only momentarily – provided physical, embodied, and lived examples of another way of living gender, caste, and class. The proposition Azad's mobilizers were conveying in the communities was exemplified and personified within the office. The women could see for themselves that "the impossible" was an option for them. Therefore, for women who considered joining or were new to the program, the opportunity to see and meet trainees, drivers and staff

was an important continuation of the negotiation instigatede in their communities. When these women from poor backgrounds witnessed women from similar backgrounds make professional careers out of commercial driving, it unsettled their previous sense of self, grounded in traditional gendered perceptions. The embodied encounters, seeing photos, experiencing the office, and meeting female drivers altogether provided significant leverage in the women's negotiations. In particular, they stimulated the negotiations they had with themselves and close family members.

**Negotiating becoming a driver with self and others**

Considering whether to enroll in the Women on Wheels program is a relational effect. This is highlighted in three women's descriptions of their considerations about becoming a driver:

> Sita, trainee: When I was considering joining, I was thinking of whether I would be able to drive around or not. I didn't have enough confidence that I would be able to drive. My mother then encouraged me to do it and give it a try. She supported me and said that I could do it. And this made me believe that I could do it and I should give it a try.
>
> Anika, private driver: I was a bit scared after I had signed up about whether I would be able to do it after all, and I decided that I would drop the idea. But then Sunita [former employer] motivated me to go there once and give it a try. If it didn't work out, I could always come back to work as a maid.
>
> Geeta, private driver: Initially I was hesitant [it took two years to decide]. I wanted to learn to drive, but was hesitant of the job. […] Because at that time, it was not a popular thing; I had never heard about a female driver. It is not like I thought the work was bad […] I just thought that in our society, with this job [as a driver], I would have to hear a lot of comments and insults, so what was the point? My family was supportive of me joining from the beginning […] but I felt weird internally. I was wondering what should I tell people, and so I was reluctant. But after a while, I was determined that I had to do it. I thought that it was just a job, so what was wrong with that?

Several points stand out from these three accounts. A primary concern, as mentioned earlier, was women's capabilities to acquire skills such as driving. In connection with this, the women often expressed fear, worry, and a lack of confidence in their abilities, indicating that Azad's

proposition of professional female drivers evoked strong emotional responses, even amongst women who had not yet enrolled in the program. In other words, committing to *the thought* of becoming a driver and doing something radically different had affect for the women. Geeta's account addresses another of the women's concerns: What would others think and say about them? A central component of the everyday politics in the poor communities where Azad & Sakha operate was the family's reputation and honor, *izzat*, which was closely linked to social norms and expectations regarding the conduct of the women in a household (see Chapter Three). Geeta's judgment of what some of her neighbors might say if she took up driving must be seen in the light of the taken for granted gender perception of what was considered appropriate behavior for women. Her doubts and worries echo the experiences of most of the women with Azad & Sakha whom I talked to. Even when women were negotiating with themselves, there is still a relational component to the negotiations. As a mobilizer puts it, "if a woman thinks about what society will say, what neighbors will say, and so on, then she feels scared and will not be able to come alone [to Azad & Sakha's office]." Yet, as Geeta noted, there is an element of definance in her decision to enroll:

> I used to tell my friends that I was thinking of becoming a driver and they would discourage me, saying, "Why don't you learn stitching or embroidery? Do what it suits girls to do. What will you do if you learn to drive?" But suddenly I made up my mind and was determined to do it. No one said anything to me; I realized it myself. I had only one thing in my mind: everyone used to discourage me, saying, "She will not be able to do it," and I used to think, "Why will I not be able to do it? I will definitely try and prove that I can do it and show that it is not as bad as they think." It is only the thinking regarding this [being a female driver] that is wrong.

*Making the case for female driving*

Azad's mobilizers, like the women in the program, live in poor resettlement colonies in Delhi. They therefore intimately know and understand community politics and gendered practices, but being embedded within them also made it hard for the mobilizers to argue against them and present Azad & Sakha's contesting viewpoints. All of the mobilizers are women, but none of them are drivers. Pusha, an experienced mobilizer, who was proud of her work, told me about the arguments she met: "Driving is a man's job, so could you not find anything else?! You are snatching the jobs out right from us!" she exclaimed, impersonating the men in the communities who had also declared that women could not learn to drive and should do household work instead. "Sweeping is better for women," Pusha said she was often told, while her facial expression revealed she was

exhausted by, and disagreed with, such views. The men she encountered also argued that women should never leave the household unaccompanied. The mobilizers were always met with the same arguments, but I got the impression that Pusha found it equally challenging each time: "There are cases where mobilizers have argued with the community people over this, and they challenge us [mobilizers] to drive and show it [that it is possible]." This, however, the mobilizers cannot do. Throughout my fieldwork, I got the sense that several mobilizers occasionally felt exhausted and overly challenged from having to make the argument for female driving in the face of community opposition.[76] One day in Azad & Sakha's office, I witnessed a meeting confirming that suspicion. Seated in a circle of chairs, occupying the floor of the main co-working room, seven mobilizers were having a meeting with their immediate leader in the organization, airing their frustrations of making the case for female driving in the communities. As they spoke, a colleague next to me translated:

> The mobilizers are the ones who meet the women and the families out there in the slum communities, and they are saying that they face many challenges with the encounters. A main issue seems to be which arguments to use to persuade families that cab driving is not a bad thing, since husbands, fathers, and mothers-in-law often are very skeptical and difficult to convince, even if the women themselves are ready. The mobilizers are voicing their concerns and asking how to deal with these situations. They are looking for arguments to handle these discussions better.

Unsurprisingly, the mobilizers' distress aligns with the experiences of many of the women in the program. This meeting – and the encounters in the communities it addresses – speaks both to the high degree of institutionalized gender perceptions and practices, and to the extent that female driving is considered provocative and radical. The mobilizers, wedged in the middle, were seeking convincing ready-made arguments to ease their work. Their material artifacts, as we saw earlier, provide support in communicating and facilitating their arguments. But in the face of the most skeptical people in the communities, the mobilizers struggled with not being able to prove that driving for women is possible and acceptable. Despite the photos, to skeptics it was word against word. The majority of people in the communities remain skeptical, and this is why many

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[76] I presented in Chapter Three how a family's honor and reputation are connected to the belief that the women of the household must be acting "properly" according to patriarchal customs and that women typically are not allowed to go anywhere unaccompanied. Desai & Andrist (2010), Govinda (2013), and Ramakrishnan (2014) directly link a family's perceived honor to the behavior and mobility of the household's women. Restrictions on women's mobility are therefore practiced as a means to secure and protect a family's honor. Conversing with men is equally considered inappropriate behavior for women, detrimental to the family reputation, and therefore restricted mobility is also concerned with ensuring that women do not speak to men outside of the household. This is why increasing mobility for women is associated with promiscuity or inappropriate sexual behavior.

women will not join. Azad & Sakha's proposition, verbalized and visualized by the mobilizers, questions how families are conducting their everyday lives, because it contest contemporary gendered practices within the households. When mobilizers make house visits, they enter the family space inducing negotiations of traditional gender roles, perceptions, and practices. Their activities touch upon intimate family matters and tinker with a family's relations, imbued with emotion. It suddenly becomes personal.

The spatial politics in the poor communities provided a somewhat hostile and unpredictable terrain for the mobilizers, who constantly needed to improvise in each situation of negotiation, despite their attempts to anticipate the community residents' counter arguments. The spatial constellations were unique to every encounter, even if the arguments were largely similar. This suggests that there cannot be any one-size-fits-all solutions when social entrepreneurial organizing confronts and is in radical opposition to the perceptions, norms, and practices it seeks to transform. The resistance the proposition meets makes the moment-to-moment impact of the organizing unpredictable.

*A collective decision*

The decision to enroll into the Women on Wheels program was collectively produced. As the three accounts above illustrate, the women received support from at least one close relation, typically immediate family members, but it could also be from other relations such as a friend or an employer. According to Azad, many wormen did not sign up because of resistance from their close relations.[77] Evidently, in negotiations there is a fine line between being met with support and resistance simultaneously. In an interview, Sita, who had just started in the program, shared how a male neighbor suddenly influenced her father's thinking of whether she should join, but then her mother intervened and Sita enrolled:

> There was this uncle [male family friend] in my neighborhood; he is also my neighbor. He asked me if I would be able to drive around. There was also a lot of news going around at that time about women being raped and it being unsafe. So he scared us, and my parents also felt that it was finally up to me to decide

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[77] Given that the women I followed made it into the program, my data is concerned with the negotiations for those few who enroll, and not the large majority whom Azad engages with in the communities that decides not to join. Given that becoming a driver is an ongoing negotiation and some of my research participants ended up leaving the program, their deliberations, worries, and accounts do speak to some of the general concerns and reasons behind why women do not enroll. In Chapter Eight, I will examine in greater detail why many women leave the program.
[8] This account was also portrayed in the opening montage.

on what I wanted to do. […] My father agreed to a certain extent with what that uncle had said. And he asked me to leave it, saying that I would not be able to do it. But my mother then explained to my father and said that I would be able to and I should be allowed to. Also, the office was close to my home, and had it been far away, I would not have been allowed to come.

I was often struck by how inter-relational the negotiations were concerning a woman's decision to drive. Not only did the women have figure out where they stood on the matter and defend their position, community members questioned their family members if the news spread, as it eventually did, that a woman was seriously considering becoming a driver. In this way, supportive family members participated in a renegotiation of local spatial politics. This is further illustrated in the testimonies from the mother of a private driver, Diti, and the husband of a taxi driver, Rohan, whom I interviewed:

Diti, mother: People always think in the opposite direction [of Azad & Sakha], so if I keep listening to them, I will choke my kids. People say to me, "She is a grown-up, get her married off." Then they say that my girl is naughty, that I should send her out of my house quickly, and that I cannot marry her off now, since nobody would want her. They say to her and me that she is like a boy, she will stay a boy, and she will never be able to become a girl.

Rohan, husband:[78] When she told me [of female driving] the first time, I was completely shocked, thinking, How this is even possible? She told me, "You can go and see if you like it, if you find it okay, or else we will let it go." You face a lot of problems [of harassment] with people initially, making such a decision, but after a while it was okay. People used to say, "How will she drive? We haven't seen any women doing this." This is something for men. My family and many of the people here [in the community] had their reservations and objections. A lot of people said to me, "She cannot do this," but I said, "I trust her completely." I didn't believe that she would not be able to do it.

Both disclosed that they were met with significant pressure from within the community, but in Rohan's case, like in so many of the households of the women Azad & Sakha engage with, opposition also came from within the family. In these two cases, an intimate family member – a

[78] This account was also portrayed in the opening montage.

mother and a husband, respectively – supported the women in practices that diverged from the customary behaviors and expectations of women. Unlike most community members, Diti and Rohan showed that they believed in the women's capabilities to learn driving. However, because female driving is considered an inappropriate activity, supporting a woman who wants to become a driver exposed them to community harassment. In addition to questioning the woman's capacity to learn, neighbors and others in the community told Diti and Rohan that driving was purely a man's profession. Some implied that it would corrupt the woman, that she would be "like a boy" and that it would ruin her marriage prospects. It is a common reaction to associate becoming a driver with an impurity, almost like a "gender corruption", making women "less a woman" – and thus less worthy. But Diti and Rohan disagreed. For Rohan the harassment subsided with time. Even though this was not always the case, in many cases it was, particularly when the women worked as drivers the pressure decreased. This is because wearing a uniform helps legitimize their actions, and the profound increase in their economic resources gives status in the household and community (e.g., see Chapter Six and Seven).

Diti and Rohan's reflections highlight the ways in which some family members participated in negotiating spatial politics together with the women considering becoming drivers. The proposition of female driving was woven into the women and their families' everyday concerns regarding their capabilities, safety, reputation, livelihood, and futures, but were also entwined with the reactions of community residents. Those engaged in the negotiations had to relate to – and take a stance on – the proposition of female driving. That interested women and supportive family members where harassed can be viewed as a confirmation that Azad & Sakha's proposition unsettled spatial politics.

The decision of whether or not to become a driver was an ongoing negotiation that was fraught with uncertainty – would it really be possible to become a driver, what would happen to her, would it corrupt her? What would "outside influence" do to her? Would she be safe? Is it really as bad as they think, or could it be a positive opportunity after all? According to Azad, in communities with women who were already employed as drivers answering these questions and making the argument for women drivers was slightly easier because, as the staff said "the ground is already fertilized." This suggests that the lived experiences and examples of women working as drivers could influence everyday spatial politics, making a community more accepting of alternative practices of gender. As a response to Azad & Sakha's organizing, residents in the poor resettlement colonies were negotiating what it means to be a woman in the spatio-temporal setting of their communities. I posit that this can be considered the beginning of transforming everyday spatial politics.

**Concluding note**

This chapter has captured important aspects of how social transformative processes become possible. Drawing attention to the spatiality of Azad's mobilization efforts and organizing in the poor communities, I have discussed the affect of its materiality, geography, and symbolic associations. With an overarching inquiry into how social transformation is practiced through the everyday lived experiences of the poor women, this chapter investigated what sets off such new social processes. I have shown that even prior to women beginning the program, the process of considering becoming a driver in itself produced negotiations that contested and potentially transformed spatial politics. Given the gender confronting content of the negotiations, the processes unsettled, opened and altered space. The affects of the spatial encounters between residents and Azad's mobilizers, and the tensions of juxtaposing politics, produced negotiations new to community residents. The question of what women can and should do was suddenly open for negotiation, induced by the deliberately orchestrated spatial constellations enacted and unfolded by Azad's mobilizers' practices of engagement. However, this only became possible because the organization was perceived as trustworthy and legitimate and its proposition of livelihood as economically attractive.

Furthermore, the chapter demonstrated that the decision of whether to become a driver was a relationally embedded process of negotiation, not isolated to the choice of the individual. Rather, it must be understood as a processual phenomenon: an ongoing negotiation of space interwoven between people, places, and things. The chapter illustrated that gendered perceptions and practices were intertwined with experiences of poverty and family relations as well as social and economic aspirations for better lives. In the lives of women considering becoming drivers, family relations were inseparably linked to negotiations of community relations. These negotiations seemed to create a fragile balance between customs, traditional politics of space embedded in community relations, and the dream of a better life – a new becoming – for a woman and her intimate family members. Although everyday lives in the communities were imbued with patriarchal politics, the accounts related within this chapter demonstrated that when prospective drivers and supportive family members were considering driving as a profession for women, they enabled and enforced an increasing multiplicity of gender perceptions and practices, and the related subjectivities and identities thereof. That they were met with mounting harassment attests to an unsettling of the givenness of space. In other words, spatial juxtapositions in the form of opposing gendered perspectives rendered their everyday lives more vulnerable, but also opened them up for greater multiplicity and potentiality; the act of considering a radical alternative path for women – the idea of it – instigated the dim beginning of processes toward social transformation as it unsettled space.

# Theorizing the unsettling of space

Theoretical reflection part One

I have suggested perceiving social transformation as processes of negotiating spatial politics – in relation to the self, others, and the surrounding world. In order to understand how social transformation is experienced and practiced by poor women in Delhi, this chapter has focused on how this process begins through what I have called an unsettling of space. This section theorizes further on this notion by drawing on Massey's (2005: 116) notion of "preplanned spatiality and happenstance positionings-in-relation-to-each-other" and what Simonsen (2013: 20) terms "moments of disorientation." Massey's concept refers to one of the "most disruptive characteristics" of space – "its enablement of new relations-to-each-other of previous disparate trajectories" (2005: 41) whether preplanned or by chance. Simonsen's concept offers a potent perspective to nuance the notion of unsettling by perceiving it as "productive moments" that at the same time can be experienced as destabilizing and enabling toward something "better"; encompassing both experiences of difficulties and exitements. By combining these two concepts, I argue we can understand an unsettling the givenness of spatial politics as a necessary condition to initiate potential processes toward social transformation for the women in urban poverty in Delhi.

**Encounters forcing negotiations**

While negotiation is not a central term in her work, Massey mentions it several times in relation to space. In my reading of her work, it is clear that the concept is innate to her notion of space. For example, she writes, "There is only ever, always, a negotiation (and a responsibility to negotiate) between conflicting tendencies" (2005: 95). Space can be understood as "the sphere of relations, negotiations, practices of engagement, power in all its forms" (Massey, 2005: 99). Massey is here implying that negotiations occur in conditions of conflicting positions embedded within power relations of the everyday production of space. Space is constructed relationally, as trajectories intersect, through negotiations and practices of engagement. She speaks of a "practicing of place" as a continuous molding of identities in daily negotiations:

> They [i.e. places] are formed through a myriad of practices of quotidian negotiation and contestation; practices, moreover, through which the constituent 'identities' are also themselves continually moulded. Place, in other words does – as many argue – change us, not through some visceral belonging (some barely changing rootedness, as so many would have it) but through the *practicing*

> of place, the negotiation of intersecting trajectories; place as an arena where negotiation is forced upon us. (2005: 154)

Massey frequently emphasizes the possibility of change within spatial relations in their constant openness for new becoming. She refers to this as the "disruptive character" (2005: 41) of space or "the chance of space" (2005: 111), and contends "the spatial in its role of bringing distinct temporalities into new configurations sets off new social processes" (2005: 71). Massey attributes transformative qualities to encounters because "the throwntogetherness of place demands negotiation" (Massey, 2005: 141). She thus considers negotiations as something "forced upon us" since the multiplicity of space makes it inevitable.

In relation to social entrepreneurial organizing it is interesting to consider the idea that negotiations can be forced upon us, because it points to the potentially that social enterprises can organizing to initiate new and specific types of negotiations that can challenges and at best alter spatial politics. This is precisely what this chapter has demonstrated: Azad's mobilizing efforts in the poor communities not only allowed for novel negotiations to happen, oftentimes their very presence forced negotiations upon community residents, thus, unsettling the givenness of spatial politics. The intersecting trajectories of Azad's mobilizing efforts and the existing ways of practicing place in the communities provoked (different) responses amongst community residents when considering the proposition of female driving, and this I regard as the beginning of emergent processes of social transformation. Due to the affective spaces Azad's mobilizers construct and including that of their office – the deliberate spatial constellations – community members passing by cannot but respond to their radical proposition. How is it then that Azad's mobilizing catalyzes these new processes of negotiation?

**A social enterprise as the "the accidental neighbour"**

Although she stresses the potentialities for encounters of space to induce change, Massey does not elaborate extensively on how this can be so. For example, how can we come to understand why suppressed women in poor communities, typically conforming to patriarchal expectations, suddenly decide to break with existing norms and practices? Massey attributes change – the introduction of the new – to what was previously distinct or unconnected as the chaotic coming together into new configurations:

> In spatial configurations, otherwise unconnected narratives may be brought into contact, or previously connected ones may be wrenched apart. There is always

> an element of 'chaos'. This is the chance of space; the accidental neighbour is one figure for it. (2005: 111)

The point Massey is making is that space can never be considered inherently stable because there are always connections yet to be made. The occurrence of unplanned, unexpected, as-never-before encounters is an element of life, which makes space open and unpredictable. It is such "yet-to-become" connections that change status quo. In the poor communities, however, the spatial constitutions of everyday politics might appear fairly static for the women of the households due to strongly enforced restrictions. Massey uses the character of "the accidental neighbour" as an illustration to stress that space is not a controllable sphere, as happenstance encounters are eventually bound to occur:

> […] one of the truly productive characteristics of material spatiality – [is] its potential for happenstance juxtaposition of previously unrelated trajectories, that business of walking around the corner and bumping into alterity, of having (somehow, and well or badly) to get on with neighbours who have got 'here' [...] by different routes than you; your being here together is, in that sense, quite uncoordinated. This is an aspect of the productiveness of spatiality which may enable 'something new' to happen. (2005: 94)

Massey (2005) likens the "accidental neighbour" to an encounter with the unforeseen in order to accentuate the point of new "positionings-in-relation-to-each-other," i.e. a consequence of what she refers to as the "throwntogetherness" of space. These are events we cannot plan ourselves, and they may be encounters of joy, contempt, or anything in between – the point is that they produce a *novel* response. The analogy of the neighbour should of course not be taken literarily, but just like it is out of the individual's control who moves in next door and when, it is meant to imply the potential and inevitability of encountering and becoming with others.

I find that Azad can be seen as the "accidental neighbour" insofar as women or men in poor communities who walk around a corner may stumble onto mobilizers, kiosks, or roll-ups, or perhaps receive a surprising knock at their door. Going with this metaphor, Azad's presence in the communities is like a fairly 'noisy' neighbour, as their proposition is confrontational toward community politics and the materiality of their organizing makes them stand out. Seen from the perspective of women in the poor communities encountering an Azad mobilizer in the lane in front of their house, by the kiosk at a community square, or from the sound emanating from a loudspeaker announcing the mobilizers' presence, such an occurrence might be seen as uncoordinated and happenstance. In this light, when Azad undertake activities in the communities they are much

like an "accidental neighbour" that community residents did not expect but suddenly was there. Seen from Azad's perspective, however, these efforts are thoroughly preplanned, coordinated, and deliberately orchestrated to make those encounters possible. What some have preplanned can seem like happenstance for others.

The potential of encounters between previously unrelated trajectories to "set off the new," as Massey describes, is an apt way to understand what happens when Azad's mobilizers enters the poor communities. Yet there seems to be more to it. Happenstance is only a part of the productive character or transformative potential of spatiality. Furthermore, our understanding of how "something new" comes about can be strengthened through considering social entrepreneurial organizing as a preplanned spatiality. Space is therefore a product of both planning and happenstance – as is social transformation, as it is produced within and through space.

**Organizing deliberate spatial constellations**

What, then, can a spatial analysis contribute to our understanding of the nature of social transformation or entrepreneurship as social change? That people's lives transform and how they transform cannot of course be ascribed completely to coincidence. As Massey (2005: 111) states, this is "sometimes happenstance, sometimes not":

> The chance of space lies within the constant formation of spatial configurations, those complex mixtures of preplanned spatiality and happenstance positionings-in-relation-to-each-other […]. (2005: 116)

The "sometimes not" is the "preplanned spatiality" that Massey unfortunately does not elaborate upon further, but which I find intriguing as a notion to conceptualize social entrepreneurship. I posit that the organizing of Azad's mobilizers can be considered as orchestrating deliberate or preplanned spatiality, because they actively arrange their encounters with the women in the communities. They deploy specific and affective materiality to construct these spatio-temporal moments of mobilization activities in the poor communities. "Preplanned" does not imply controllability or certainty in processual outcomes, but merely that social enterprises can attempt to instigate "new social processes" through a premeditated use of space. While the empirical findings suggest that such processes cannot be tamed or controlled, nor are they predictable, they do suggest that emergent processes of social transformation can be set off in a certain direction through deliberate use of spatial constellations. Then, how is it that Azad's mobilizing activities and arrangements in the communities were able to unsettle the givennes of spatial politics and initiate new kinds of negotiations for the women and their families when they were considering

the proposition of female driving?

To attend to that question, I wish to draw on another term central in Massey's writing: spatial juxtapositions. As cited above, Massey (2005: 94) attributes the unsettling of the givenness of space which sets off the new to the "potential for happenstance juxtaposition of previously unrelated trajectories" like, the example she gives, "that business of walking around the corner and bumping into alterity" or having to deal with the "accidental neighbour." Her point is that juxtapositions are inevitable to space and these spatial juxtapositions are important, because as she contends, "[i] t is the fact of spatial juxtaposition which produces the openness" (Massey, 2005: 113). Spatial juxtapositions unsettle space and thereby produce its necessary openness. How, then, can a social enterprise produce spatial juxtapositions deliberately to provoke the negotiations they seek to surface?

My empirical analysis demonstrated that part of the unsettling of spatial politics stems from the radical nature of Azad's proposition of offering an alternative perception of gender. The proposition of professional female driving is juxtaposed the communities' traditional gendered politics. These two materially and relationally embedded opposing modes of living gender were confronted in the mobilization encounters. The materiality the mobilizers could draw on to present and argue for female driving as a livelihood option was paramount to their proposition becoming convincing – and thereby unsettling – to some community residents. When the mobilizers for example hosted a kiosk in a central community site, for a moment they unsettled – through a temporal spatial constellation – politics by juxtaposition. Their presence thus altered space, be it in minor or major ways. Central to this was the trust and legitimacy derived from the affect of their presence in the communities and visits made by interested women to their office.

**The unsettling of space as moments of disorientation**

Azad's methods rest on the premise of unsettling the givenness of spatial politics in the communities, which I argue was necessary to facilitate processes of social transformation for the women in urban poverty whose everyday lives were entrenched by patriarchal politics. There was need for an 'outside' organization to enter the communities and present an alternative way of living gendered lives in order for the women to consider a profession that radically breaks with common practices. Given that the common belief is that women cannot and should not drive, this idea is highly unlikely to have occurred to the women without Azad's presence. In this light a social enterprise can play a significant role in unsettling common perceptions and practices in settings with politics discriminating amongst groups of people through demonstrating an alternative (more favorable to the target people) and which facilitates processes of questioning status quo.

Everyday politics in the poor communities were rarely questioned in this manner prior to Azad's involvement in the communities. Since female driving is such a radical proposition and fundamentally re-crafts gender in this setting, even just relating to the idea or considering it as an option touched upon deep feelings and many underlying beliefs, norms, and expectations of gendered practices for community residents. It therefore provoked discussions and thoughts about what women are capable of and should be allowed to do with their lives, in a way, which for example a handicraft project would not have. Because of this, encountering Azad's mobilizers can be experienced as quite unsettling, similar to what Simonsen (2013: 20) calls "moments of disorientation":

> Moments of disorientation turn our world upside down. Disorientation is a bodily feeling that can shape insecurity and shatter one's sense of confidence in the ground of one's existence. It is a situation which can make bodies react defensively, as they reach out for support or search for a place to reground and re-orientate their relation to the world.

I argue that these types of "moments" occurred through Azad's spatial constellations deliberately crafted to initiate re-negotiations of existing and taken for granted gender perceptions and practices. They are transformative in that they question status quo and open space, and while they "can be seen as destabilizing and undermining, […] they can also be seen as productive moments leading to new hopes and new directions" (Simonsen, 2013: 20). The moments of disorientation that Azad's mobilization efforts produced were both destabilizing and productive, i.e. they challenged current practices and was experienced as provocative, while simultaneously showing that lives for women, low caste and of poor backgrounds, could be different, providing new hope. What makes such moments "productive" as Simonsen (2013) calls it, in terms of social transformation, I would argue, is precisely the simultaneity of the destabilizing and becoming. The traditional or taken for granted needs to be uprooted from the givenness and opened for scrutiny for something new to emerge, meanwhile a take on "the new" must be provided and build concurrently to seize the momentum of the disorientation. The combination makes it productive toward instigating social transformation. When Azad's mobilizers were making the case for female driving in family and communal settings, they were in a way bridging worlds through proposing the unthinkable and displaying that the impossible is possible. While this was more often than not experienced as a provocation, the mobilizers simultaneously offered interested women and their families encouragement and hope for upward social and economic mobility. In that sense, they pointed in a new direction and fostered hope that poverty will become a thing of the past.

This chapter has illustrated that gendered perceptions and practices were entwined with lived experiences of poverty, family relations, and the dynamics of social organizing in their intimate neighborhoods. There was an inherent tension between the compulsion to comply with customs and expected social practices and the desire to escape the precarities of poverty and, as the trainee Bhavani said, "go ahead and move forward in life." The analysis showed that women considering becoming drivers were affected by their experiences of spatial encounters and that mobilizers proactively participated in negotiating household politics. That being said, making the argument for female drivers and getting their point across in the communities remained a challenge for the mobilizers, which buttress the vast contrast between the novelty of the idea and the dominant patriarchal politics. Some residents in the communities were open to Azad's proposition and supported the women in making the decision, yet in doing so they were also harassed by others in the neighborhood. The occurrence of tensions attests to the fact that different worlds were intersecting, reconfiguring space temporarily into a "world of betweenness." The women, their family members, and community residents responding to the proposition – as well as the mobilizers attempting to make the case for it – were engaged in constant negotiations between different worlds. This creation of a world of betweenness enables, in my view, the negotiation of relations within juxtaposing politics.

In other words, there were tensions between the familiar and the unfamiliar, which points to the inevitability of - and potential in - negotiating conflicting tendencies in social entrepreneurial organizing. The Women on Wheels program taps into already existing, but perhaps not yet voiced, tensions in the distinct contrast between the old and the new, between the now and the potential becoming, between current realities and future dreams for residents of the poor resettlement colonies in Delhi. Negotiations within and between people arise from the unsettling produced by the spatial constellations Azad's mobilizers created, but as I have shown in this chapter, these movements were only made possible on the premises of trust. Had the proposition of female driving not been perceived as trustworthy, legitimate, and attractive, interested community residents would not take it seriously; consequently, it would not be "disorienting." The feasibility and power of their promise makes the proposition unsettling, even as a thought.

Regardless of whether female driving in India is an idea whose time has come, it is surely a proposition that is far from trivial. More often than not, in the communities amongst the urban poor where Azad operate, female driving seems incomprehensible. What is certain is that the proposition unsettles the givenness of spatial politics, which instigates negotiations of their everyday enactment. Imagine, then, what happens when women from these backgrounds actually start training to become drivers. This is this journey the next chapter explores.

We do not grow absolutely, chronologically.
We grow sometimes in one dimension, and not in another, unevenly. We grow partially. We are relative. We are mature in one realm, childish in another. The past, present, and future mingle and pull us backward, forward, or fix us in the present. We are made of layers, cells, constellations.



Anaïs Nin

# NEGOTIATING SPACE

Chapter Five

The women we meet in this chapter are embarking on a radically new path in their lives: they are training to become professional drivers in Delhi. What happens to them and their everyday lives as they participate in the Women on Wheels program? Focusing on four particular productive spatial constellations of Azad's program I analyze how negotiations are instigated, experienced, and carried out. As we will see, it is a ride fraught with emotions and embodied negotiations situated within social, material and relational practices.

# Becoming a driver: embodied negotiations of spatial relations

It is the end of January 2015. It is still cold in Delhi, a kind of chill that cuts through to the bones. The 20-some-million city is busy, the streets noisy as ever with the aggressive cacophony of honking horns, mainly men behind the wheel. It takes quite a while to spot a woman in the driver's seat; understandably, because in the Indian capital, with an official estimate of 7.8 million females, a mere 106,453 women were registered in 2013 as drivers. Far more men than women are visible in the cityscape. Sita is out on the streets this cold day – a day like any other for many, but not for her.

A few weeks ago, Sita enrolled in the Women on Wheels program with Azad. At just 18 years of age, she is one of the youngest in her batch. She lives with her father, mother, and two younger brothers in the poor resettlement colony of Sanjay Colony, Okhla Phase 2, in the eastern part of Delhi. Her driving lessons are starting today, and she receives a phone call from the trainer telling her to come to a specific location in the city. "I have never taken an auto-rickshaw alone," she says nervously, putting words to her fear:

> I mean, I never used to go anywhere alone, not even in an auto. So I told my friend [another trainee] and Sir [driving teacher] on the phone that I won't be able to come alone. But they told me to come directly. They told me to take an auto. I don't know which auto or bus will go there. My mother has always told me that traveling by auto alone is not safe; instead take a bus.

Sita is afraid of going out alone; she has never tried it before. She is hesitant, but is convinced to go. Her parents encourage it too. They are poor, with a household income of 5,000 rupees[79] per month from her father's work making woven *chatai* curtains, which is the Hindi name for a traditional Indian mat with a characteristic weaving style, often made of plastic or jute. Her mother works in their home. Sita heads toward Azad & Sakha's office, where her driving lesson will begin today. In a later interview she recalls the experience of her first public commute by auto-rickshaw alone:

[79] Given 5,000 INR equals 526 DKK / 75 USD (October 2017).

> It is the first time, and I don't know what to tell the auto driver. But I stop the auto and I am telling him to drop me at Kalkaji [Azad & Sakha's office]. I am getting inside and we take off. I am feeling scared whenever the auto driver is looking in the rearview mirror. I am feeling scared and keep telling him to look ahead and drive. He is not saying anything. I thought, the moment he stops at a red light I will definitely confront him, because it is not like I don't know anything. I have learned so much now that I can even beat him up. The moment the auto reached [the office], I got out and the auto driver went away. From that moment onward, all my worries were gone.

Sita was, from the backseat of the rickshaw, negotiating her right to a safe relational space with the driver; meanwhile, she was negotiating with herself how to respond in what she experienced as an anxious situation, as she traveled across the city alone for the first time. In reminding herself that she knew self-defense, she gathered some strength; she had learned those skills the previous week during a 10-day self-defense training by the Delhi police.

It seems, as she concluded on the experience in our interview, that it made her reflect differently about herself, particularly her sensation of fear in relation to commuting alone, but also that it facilitated a subsequent change in her practices in order to conquer the fear:

> After this experience, I told myself, "For how long will you feel scared?" You will have to face it one day. Now, sometimes I walk to the office from my place. I don't take an auto, bus, or cycle-rickshaw. I walk because I want to get rid of this worry from my heart. I want to face it.

This anecdote is in several ways emblematic of the type of negotiation processes – with themselves, others, and surroundings – in which the Azad trainees find themselves as a consequence of their involvement in the Women on Wheels program. Whereas the previous chapter explored initial encounters between Azad & Sakha and their target women within the communities, arguing that novel processes of negotiation arose just from relating to and considering the idea of becoming a female driver, this chapter explores the embodied practices of actually doing so. I shall develop and nuance the notion of negotiation further as the empirical findings suggest that the processes of negotiation become increasingly intense, personal, emotional, and corporeal as the women train to become drivers. A central argument I make is that processes of social transformation are practiced relationally, and this argument will be empirically demonstrated and elaborated in this chapter in connection to novel experiences the training program facilitates for the women. The social and material politics of the program, and the women's lived experiences of it, together produce spaces

where transformation becomes possible. The body and its emotional spatiality are therefore central notions here to comprehend how social transformation is facilitated, experienced and practiced (Simonsen, 2013). Moving from a consideration of an alternative becoming to an actual practice was a significant shift in these women's everyday lives. What before was an idea had become a way of life, one which is perceived as radical amongst residents of the poor communities. In a sense, embodying and practicing a radically different becoming made the unsettling even more unsettling and far more personal.

Azad's Women on Wheel program consists of the 14 training modules,[80] which are central to their social entrepreneurial organizing, and as I argued in the previous chapter, from an organizational perspective, can be seen as deliberately orchestrated spatial constellations. This chapter focuses on how some of the deliberate spatial configurations of training to become a driver enabled the women to sense and practice how they could change themselves – or, put differently, how the interaction between Azad's program and the poor women catalyzed new social processes (Massey, 2005; Steyaert, 2012).

In late January 2015, a new group of young women began their training in the Women on Wheels program. This group was referenced as Batch 39, indicating the successive number of batches that had gone before them. Everyone knows which batch they are in; "I am in Batch 9" or "Sita from Batch 18" were common phrases to overhear. As I began my second round of fieldwork with Azad & Sakha, the newest batch, number 39, bean their journey in the program. As a means to study processes of the training period, I followed more carefully this batch consisting of eight young women. Amongst them were childhood friends, Adya and Bhavani, and Sita, the youngest woman in the group at just 18. It is their journeys that I attended to most closely.

**Analytical focus: four productive spatial constellations**

Over the course of my fieldwork, four specific spatial constellations stood out as especially impactful and productive in catalyzing new processes of negotiation and transformation in practices of the women's everyday lives.[81] These empirically rich aspects drew my analytical attention and proved particularly thick and illustrative regarding the dynamics of the processes I describe as negotiations with one's self, others, and surroundings.

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[80] See Table 1.1 in Chapter One.

[81] Surely, each of the 14 different modules and other aspects of the program influence the women in different ways and intersect. In order to delimit my focus and due to the limits of space in this thesis, I have chosen to focus on the four spatial constellations and aspects of the program that came up most often across most interviewees, which I perceive to be of the highest relevance for my research inquiry. Given that in this chapter I will explore these "rich" points, which indicate similarities across these women's trajectories, there will be fewer nuances and smaller stories in this chapter.

Table 5.1 below shows an overview and brief description of the four spatial constellations, which structure this chapter. I analyze each spatial constellation with an emphasis on what it is, how it unsettled and opened the prior givenness of space, how negotiations arose and were carried out in practices, and how these processes turned into changes in practices, and potentially – but not certainly – transformed the politics of everyday life for these women.

Table 5.1 FOUR CENTRAL SPATIAL CONSTELLATIONS OF WOMEN ON WHEELS

| *Key practices of the spatial constellation* | *Brief description* |
|---|---|
| Commuting to training alone | The act of going to training in Azad & Sakha's offices and at locations across New Delhi |
| Learning self-defense | Participating in a 10-day self-defense workshop conducted by the Delhi police at their facilities |
| Learning rights and alternative gender perspectives, including counseling and support | Participating in the "Women's Rights" and "Reproductive Sexual Health" modules, where they are given phone numbers for the police and a helpline. Trainers encourage the women to share their stories; they have access to counseling, family meetings, and a safe place to hang out and talk to others. |
| Learning driving | Taking driving lessons and becoming a driver – first with Maruti Driving School, later with Azad's own driving instructors. |

The empirical material in this chapter therefore concerns the part of the organizational process of training to become a driver and the lived experiences of being a trainee with Azad in the Women on Wheels program.[82] I use the term "constellation" to denote bundles of spaces that hang together in relation to a specific content and transformative purpose. A multitude of spaces partake in a larger constellation bundled around a given content or a practice, for instance learning one's rights or commuting alone. Instead of talking about space as one moment – a lesson of learning driving, for example – I consider all aspects related to the practices of learning to drive a part of a larger spatial constellation; as different spaces that interfere with each other. When exploring a woman's lived experiences of being a trainee, one moment thus cannot be attributed to "where social transformation happened," but rather bundles and constellations of spaces can indicate a direction or pattern of unfolding processes of transformation.

Three of the four spatial constellations that I have chosen to focus on are related to specific modules: learning self-defense, learning rights and alternative gender perspectives, and learning

[82] This means that at the time of my fieldwork, some research participants were in the actual training program and new to the organization, and I interviewed and observed them as they went along in the program. Others were already drivers, but reflected on their experiences during the time of training. I find both sorts of data relevant and informative to nuance the processes in focus.

to drive. They are therefore centered on the learning of particular skills and access to certain knowledge. The last spatial constellation, which I refer to as "commuting to training alone," is not related to a module, but is rather an outcome of participating in the program generally. I will begin with the latter, as the radical difference in mobility was central to the experience of being a trainee and cuts across all modules. From the first day of training, this was a significant and immediately experienced change for all the new trainees; therefore. Through describing the context and content of each spatial constellation, I will then explore what it did to the women in terms of unsettling and instigating negotiations, and finally examine its potential effects on the transformation of the trainees' everyday lives.

**Spatial constellation 1: commuting to training alone**

> Their mobility is limited, so initially the new trainees come with some relative or friend. They feel scared coming alone. Even if the woman might accept that it is easy [the actual travel], if she thinks about what society will say, what neighbors will say, and so on, then she still feels scared and is not able to come alone. If she breaks free from this, eventually mobility increases. It is good after about 10 to 15 days.

As Pusha, a middle-aged experienced mobilizer with Azad, relayed above, the mobility of the women in the poor communities is extremely restricted (this is also described in Chapter Three). Compliant with dominant gendered practices, most of the women had never left their community area on their own. Consequently, they were afraid of going out alone and tended to hold the belief that they could not figure out how to do so. It was commonly believed in the communities that women cannot practically do such activities, nor would it be appropriate for them to attempt to do so. These gendered perceptions and practices were highly institutionalized and restricted the women's lives; they delimited what these women, and others, thought they could and should do. Geographically, this confined them to their homes and community lanes. Additionally, commuting alone as a woman in Delhi is commonly considered risky due to the amount of documented violence against women in the city's transportation and public spaces. Sita gave voice to exactly that collective fear of violence and how it affected her:

> We [other trainees and I] had always heard about girls being raped or molested, that girls are kidnapped and tricked into all sort of things, so we used to feel scared because of that. But when we started going out alone, slowly it became okay. People told us to keep chili sprays on us. But I thought, how long will we

> continue to feel scared of such people? This worry has to go, and we should be strong enough to handle it. My parents let me go and I started going alone for my computer class [first test at Azad]. Initially, the first 2 or 3 days I went with my cousin brother [male cousin] and since then, I started going alone.

This is an important contextual background of spatial politics against which to understand why commuting alone was experienced as such a radical practice for the women, and why it produced strong emotional responses of both fear and excitement. Azad's organizing deliberately seeks to break these confining gendered perceptions and practices, particularly through the act of training the women to be drivers and through the substantial increase in their mobility. In fact, the program foremost trains the women's capabilities of mobility. Becoming a driver is in essence mobility in practice.

*Unsettlings opening space and instigating negotiations*

Since venturing out alone was considered improper, difficult, and dangerous, Azad mobilizers usually had to pick up the women in their communities and bring them to the office the first few times. Alternatively, some women came with relatives, often males, who escorted them to the office. Since the training program takes several months, inevitably the day came when a trainee was forced to commute alone. In my view, this is a spatial constellation provoked by Azad's methods with a deliberate intent to produce a radical and sudden shift in mobility. Participating in Women on Wheels training confronted and transformed the women's mobility patterns and experiences of mobility. Whenever I asked a trainee about her experiences of being in the Women on Wheels program, or a more experienced driver retrospectively discussed her time at the beginning of the program, mobility was consistently mentioned as one of the most clearly and profoundly experienced differences. The women explicitly spoke about the topic of mobility and used statements in the form of "before and after" or "earlier and now" reflections.

In the opening account of this chapter, we met Sita, a trainee new to the program who was thrown into the experience of traveling in an auto-rickshaw – alone, for the first time in her life – in order to reach the training. She was smack-bang in the middle of an unfamiliar and deeply emotional experience of moving across the city; she was thrown into processes of negotiation. This particular spatio-temporal moment – between Sita and a driver, inside a moving vehicle – is about more than the two people involved. For instance, it equally involves negotiations between Sita and her sense of self; which also relates to Sita's mother, who had told Sita that riding in a rickshaw alone might be dangerous for her – part of a larger collective fear of commuting in Delhi as a woman. In the backseat of the auto-rickshaw, Sita was experiencing strong emotions of fear

and negotiated with herself how to cope and get safely through it. A large part of what occurred in this commute was not verbally expressed, except on one occasion where she told the driver to look at the road and not at her. It is likely that her body language in some form also participated in how she expressed her stance and negotiated her desire for safe travel.

Sita felt unsure if the driver was trustworthy. Thus, she experienced herself in relation to him and to the collective fear of such situations, while also considering how he might perceive her. Simultaneously, she was experiencing herself as both subject and object, and as subject that perceived an object (the driver) perceiving her as an object. Moreover, this inter-relational space was negotiated within Sita in relation to a more abstract perception of a collective fear – that it is dangerous for women to commute alone – and likely also in relation to the gendered politics of her community that dictate such activity as inappropriate.

Different relationally constructed components thus influenced the negotiations within this moment of commute for Sita, which she experienced as fearful and perceived as potentially risky. This is what leads me to conceive of potential processes of social transformation as iterative and concurrent negotiations of everyday politics with one's self, others, and surroundings. Consider another account of new mobile practices from Sita. This time, she had to take the bus alone in order to attend self-defense training at a Delhi police unit. In particular, it illustrates the aspect of trainees questioning their actual capabilities to commute, as well as the fear that this initially brings about. With an address written on a piece of paper, Sita was expected to find her own way to the training:

> Earlier I would not go out on my own. The first time I had to go for the self-defense class, "ma'am" [staff] had given me the address for it. I had gone out on my own and felt quite scared about it, of how I would be able to look for the address. I had no idea where I had to go. They had just given us the address and asked us to come to Nanakpura in Moti Bagh. [...] I am not so scared anymore; it was only that first incident that scared me so much. I was by myself and would keep thinking about where I had come. I had never traveled by myself before that. So on that day, when I had to, I felt quite scared. I had initially thought that I would not be able to go to the training alone. […] I came back home and told my mother about it, and she said that I was worrying too much for no reason.

In these excerpts from Sita's experiences with new mobility, several things can be noted. First, she expressed a genuine doubt of her capabilities to manage the commutes. Sita – and many other trainees – believed at first that women cannot figure out how to do such things; this is a specific gendered perception, common in the communities, of women's capabilities related to practices of mobility and spatial autonomy.

Second, as Sita and other trainees commuted alone, they experienced strong emotions of fear, worry, or anxiety initially, influenced by an awareness of the public space as unsafe for women. The influences of past stories, general perceptions of safety for women, others' opinions, imagining what might happen, a sense of not knowing the city, the unfamiliarity of the situation – in this case, all of these aspects participated in the negotiation of spatial politics within moments of mobility. These types of relational perceptions informed how trainees related to themselves in moments of mobility, but also how they perceived others and the general experience of the city.

Third, the women doubted their capabilities and were afraid to commute alone, but participating in the program forced them to do so. Insofar as their family members supported their enrollment, they too were forced to accept the women's increased mobility. As I interpret this empirical material, Sita and the other trainees were thus forced into a radical increase in mobility and an utterly new way to experience and engage with the world. This unsettled the givenness of spatial politics. Commuting alone as a spatial constellation, as we have seen, broke down several different gendered perceptions and practices. The unsettlings produced in practices of commuting alone were experienced and performed by the women both corporeally and emotionally. This further demonstrates that emotions are produced relationally, situated both in body and mind, and that negotiations with one's self, others, and surroundings also are emotionally driven.

*Negotiations transforming practices*

Several interesting things seem to happen to the women as a response to the unsettling of the lived experiences of commuting alone. They experienced strong emotions of fear, but usually, connected to the same mobile moment, they experienced equally strong emotions of excitement, joy, confidence, or pride from overcoming that fear and meeting the world differently. Having successfully carried out a commute alone not only produced positive feelings; it also seemed to change the women's perceptions of their own capabilities and provided a sense of being able to "do more." Experientially, it had a potential to break barriers in their perceptions of themselves – and with time, potentially others' perceptions of them as well.

This was visible in Sita's account above, when she said, after having managed to commute to and from self-defense training: "When I came back home in the evening, I felt that I could go anywhere on my own, since I managed to go out on my own so far away for self-defense classes." Another trainee, Bhavani, likewise shared how she overcame her initial fear:

> I used to be scared initially to go anywhere. I never used to go out. I used to stay at home and go to school. Now that fear is not there anymore. And if I am called anywhere for any training, I can go within a minute now.

> Earlier, I would only go out to go to school along with my friends. I would not be able to get out of the house otherwise. But now, I can go wherever I want to. [...] I would not even know the bus routes, but now I do. I know that a particular number would go to such-and-such place.

Notice how Sita expressed that she felt that she could go "anywhere on her own" and Bhavani felt that she could "go anywhere she wants." This is not entirely true – their families still monitored their whereabouts and restricted their scope of conduct as young women in the households. Yet the trainees *felt like* they could go anywhere, and they suddenly knew that they had the capabilities to do so. Hence, their accounts are demonstrating a growing capability for mobility and a vast increase in a sense of greater autonomy; an expression of growing confidence and a newfound experience of freedom through increased mobility.

According to Azad & Sakha, mobility for women of the poor communities is an essential component of enabling them to transform their lives. Independence was a central notion often mentioned by staff – trainees and drivers alike – as an aspiration in terms of economics, but also in terms of mobility and self-confidence. Knowing how to travel alone, to move across the city and participate in city life, gave the women a greater sense of autonomy and independence; it changed how they related to themselves. What this implies, is that a change of perception is a change of practices, because mental, emotional, and corporeal doings are also practices. If moments of commuting alone, as a spatial constellation of Azad's organizing, enable women to experience and perceive themselves differently in terms of increasing their confidence or sense of autonomy, freedom, pride, or the like, I consider those to be spaces of transformation: spaces where everyday spatial politics become transformed.

Changes in mobility practices also appeared to facilitate negotiations within the women's households and potentially transformed certain relational dynamics. Both Sita and Bhavani shared such accounts:

> Sita, trainee: I really feel good about joining the program. I got to learn a lot of things. I got a lot of confidence from being able to drive around. [...] If my father now asks me to go to the bank and deposit money, I am able to do it. Earlier when I had to go to the bank, I would take my father or mother along, but now I can go on my own.

> Bhavani, trainee: Earlier, we would not go shopping on our own. But now I can go by myself to shop. I would have to go with my parents before. But now, I just call my mother up and tell her that I am going to

> buy clothes from somewhere. [...] Earlier, I would have to wear what my mother got for me. But now, I am able to buy whatever I please.
>
> [...] I used to be scared of everything. I would get scared if my father got angry with me and would sometimes even cry over it. Now, I ignore it, do the work, and move away. Earlier, he would not let me go to friends' houses, but now I am able to. My father has so much faith in me, [knowing] that I would not do anything bad [harm the family's reputation]. He asks me to stay happy and do the work.

These accounts show that only a few months into the program, the two trainees have negotiated changes in the roles they have at home in relation to their parents. They gained new responsibilities or liberties related to mobility, which must be seen as changes in the relational dynamics of the household and an expansion of the boundaries of their scope of action. They were suddenly receiving more autonomy in for instance being allowed to run errands alone. This illustrates that the women negotiated themselves into new positions, relationally, in the wake of a radical shift in their practice of mobility. It also insinuates that breaking the barriers of restricted mobility in this context not only produced transformations in their sense of self, but also contributed in transforming the relational constitutions of their family dynamics in general. In turn, being granted more autonomy and responsibility at home might reinforce the women's growing confidence and increasing sense of independence (this will be addressed further in Chapter Seven). Gaining mobile capabilities changed the women's perceptions of themselves and their own sense of their capabilities, while also influencing a shift in relational dynamics within the household, contesting traditional gendered practices of mobility and transforming everyday spatial politics.

**Spatial constellation 2: learning self-defense**

> Sita, trainee: We used to fight with each other during self-defense classes. There are always such crowds on the buses, but now, we use the stunts we were taught in the class. We know everything, like how to beat a guy using our chin, elbow, and so on.



*Nanakpura, south Delhi.*
Azad trainees at self-defense training run by the Delhi police.

Early in the program, trainees attend a 10-day module, 20 hours in total, of self-defense training that is run by a particular Delhi police department, "Special Police Unit for Women and Children," at a training compound in a southern part of Delhi. This unit deals primarily with domestic violence and issues related to crime against women and children. One of their initiatives in proactively addressing crime against women is to train young women in self-defense; they estimate that 18,000 women receive training each year. At the time of my fieldwork 42 female police officers were conducting the training, mostly in schools across Delhi, but in some cases, like this collaboration with Azad & Sakha, it took place at their own facilities. For Women on Wheels trainees, this was the first time they visited a police station for a reason unrelated to a committed crime. The following fieldnote descriptions give an impression of typical training sessions, observed at two different occasions.

**Training with Delhi police**

*Fieldnotes 11.03.15*

> A red-and-blue sign with white capital letters reads "SPECIAL POLICE UNIT FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN." I am at a Delhi police facility in Nanakpura, the southern part of the city. There is an open area in front of the gray buildings, where a few police cars are parked under a large tree, and at the end of the open area there is a

smaller, light-yellow, square building with a dark-blue sign above the door that says, "Self-Defense Training Hall."

I enter into what is one large training hall with a small adjacent administrations office right at the entrance. The spacious room seems dark inside at first, giving the impression of having entered a basement. There are a few small, narrow windows that are covered with thick brown curtains. The room is lit up by neon lights in the ceiling. Large, gray tiles make up the floor. About 50 drawings with motifs related to peace, safety for women, and self-defense are on the walls; they have written statements like, "The hand that rocks the cradle can rule the nation," "Stop violence against women," "We can if given a chance – give the girl child a chance," "Women power," "The thing women have to learn is that nobody gives you power, you just take it," "Women have always been the strong ones of the world," and "Keep up your confidence."
"Hur!" the women yell aloud, punching their hands in the air in front of them. There are about 40 young women in four rows. They are in the middle of a training session. They are all with Azad, but from different batches. Some women look at me; some wave at me and smile. The training for this group takes place from 11 a.m.–1 p.m. each day for 10 days. "Hur!" they yell again. There is something powerful about this sight and sound. Two female police officers in purple training suits attend to the group.




*Nanakpura, south Delhi*
Drawings on the wall of the training hall at the Delhi Police.

Some women are completely into it, giving all they have, yelling at the top of their lungs, strong expressions on their faces, full force in their kicks; other women seem less committed. One woman, who is impractically dressed for training and wearing a lot of bangles, makes very loose and weak punches into the air. She is looking around. Her bracelets are making sounds when she moves. She doesn't appear to be concentrating. She doesn't yell along with the others. Most of the women are wearing traditional Indian suits, a few are in jeans and T-shirts, and one is wearing a sari; all are in bright colors. Some women are playing around loudly in the hall, playing with the new moves and discussing amongst themselves, practicing how to do them. They laugh. Others sit more quietly on chairs or the floor and talk in small groups; one takes a nap. Then the training starts again. The trainer speaks often and loudly during the exercises, sometimes asking questions aloud and awaiting their responses. They are practicing, two and two, on what to do if someone grabs them around the neck; how to guard and make a counter defense by moving the perpetrator's arms away and kick the culprit in the stomach.

*Fieldnotes 02.06.14*

On this day, it is the ninth day of a 10-day program; the women are performing for the trainers and each other as a form of examination in what they have learned. Today there is a fighting arena in the center of the room, a large, blue square made of many small mattresses, on which a few women are showing specific defense techniques to the crowd. The women who are not in action sit in rows around the mattress. There is a stage in the far end of the room where the facilitators – five women and two men – are sitting at the edge. A woman stands on the stage and directs the groups through a microphone, and two female trainers walk around the room. Lots of fans are spinning on the ceiling. Different groups of women come up, showcasing different exercises. In some of the exercises the women use a prop like a stick, which seems to symbolize a knife. They are in pairs of two, where one is a perpetrator and the other shows how to defend herself in a given situation of a specific attack style. Sometimes they stand in lines, jumping and yelling as if they were in the army or at karate. They know exactly what to do and they get little correction at this point. It is impressive. The women generally seem joyful and energetic; during small breaks, they chat and fight each other. There are lots of smiles and lots of yelling. "They often want more – more training days, because they really like it," the principal says, as I thank her for letting me witness the training.



*Nanakpura, south Delhi.*
Self-defense examination at Delhi police unit.

Training the women in techniques of self-defense is central to Azad's methods. This is based on the knowledge that violence is common in women's everyday lives, but also because eventually trainees will be driving cars across the city alone. Although the organization considered this training a matter of safety for their female drivers, according to their methodology it was equally about building confidence. In an internal document, Azad categorize the 14 modules under the three categories of "professional driving skills and training course," "women's empowerment," and "self-development."[83] Interestingly, the self-defense module is labeled as "self-development" in the document, which read, "This module has been very effective for women trainees to get confidence and charged up."

[83] Module details, Azad Foundation, 2015. See Table 1.1 in Chapter One

*Unsettlings opening space and instigating negotiations*

All interviews with women where the topic of self-defense came up have univocally contained accounts of excitement. The women genuinely seemed to enjoy the experience, and many said that they would like more training. This was the case with Bhavani, who had recently finished the module when we spoke:

> So the officer was teaching us, and it felt good. We could do anything, travel in buses. I liked the classes a lot. They would teach us new things and I didn't want the classes to end. I asked the trainer when these classes would start again. She told me that it would start again in three months. So I told her that I would join them again.

Besides the obvious learning of how to defend themselves several aspects of this spatial constellation presented entirely new experiences for the trainees, like being encouraged to stand up for their rights to safety, undergoing physical training (and in a group), and meeting female police officers. Prior to their involvement with Azad & Sakha, in many cases the women were accustomed to staying quiet and unresponsive in moments of violence or harassment against them – a stark contrast to suddenly having female police officers telling them to stand up for themselves and showing them physically how to do so. Within the spatio-temporal setting of the Delhi police training hall the message that women should be treated as equal to men and must claim equal rights were conveyed in multiple ways. The posters on the wall shared such statements; the female police officers, as role models, embodied that message; and the training techniques themselves corporeally communicated it. The module were building and storing bodily knowledge of another way of being a woman, producing emotions of strength, confidence, and excitement while training. Consider this statement from Sita:

> I got the confidence that I could now react to someone who pulled my ponytail. I was scared earlier, because I would not have known what to do. [...] The classes were action-oriented on how I should react if somebody touches me wrongly on the bus, like how I should face somebody who pulls my ponytail, grabs me by the hand or the shoulder… which action to use when. On the last day, we had to take an exam, and then I felt that I could do it. I gained the confidence to do it. It made me feel that I could do anything. [...] If anybody touched me or did anything, I could now hit him.

What at first glance appeared to be a physical training session in fact forced the women to relate to themselves and reflect upon the violence they encountered in their everyday lives. It thus unsettled through questioning the way they had been treated and how they had previously responded, but

also by instilling an increasing sense of power and the opportunity to act differently in the face of harassment and violence. For the Azad trainees, the emotional spatiality and embodiment of feeling more powerful and capable, even if only for 10 days of intense training with police officers, seemed to facilitate a certain level of negotiation with themselves. Having *felt* and experienced this sense of increasing power and confidence, it could not be made "unfelt" again. This is another demonstration of unsettlings by confronting traditional practices through practicing and encouraging new ones.

*Negotiations transforming practices*

10 days of self-defense training might not ensure that a woman can defend herself in a situation of severe assault. Yet the experience of knowing off some level of self-defense provided the women with a sense of security they did not feel beforehand. The experienced increase in confidence seemed to "spill over" to other areas of their lives: as with increasing mobility, in learning self-defense the women expressed a general feeling of being able to "do more". In Sita's words, "It made me feel that I could do anything"; Bhavani said, "It felt good, we could do anything." The spatial constellation of learning self-defense also quite visibly instigated novel processes of negotiations for the women with others and their surroundings, especially in moments of public transport when, due to the extensive threat of harassment and violence against women, trainees often felt scared and vulnerable. The following exposition by Bhavani illustrates how the self-defense training facilitated subsequent changes in practices:

> Bhavani: There was this guy on a bus who tried to stand very close up against us. We [a friend and I] gave him a warning initially. [...] I told him to move back and stay away. I had to ask him two or three times to shift back, but he wasn't ready to budge. I then elbowed him quite hard and thought to myself that this was the advantage of going for self-defense classes.
>
> AS: So you feel that this course has changed something for you?
>
> Bhavani: Yes. I was not able to tell people off before. If somebody would touch me, I couldn't ask them to move back; I would just stay quiet. But now, even if I see somebody coming close, I warn him to stay away, otherwise he would get it from me.

Bhavani's account portrays a visible transformation in practices; again, there is a before-and-after narrative recounted by many women in the program. Before, if men touched them on public transport, for instance, they would typically stay quiet, look down, and at best try to get away.

They usually would not speak up against a man, and were even less likely to use physical force. The changes they express since having become trainees with Azad, like Bhavani's account, are related to speaking up more, voicing their oppositions, warning people off, making verbal threats, and using simple physical force to push men away. These women were starting to verbally and physically push against the gendered sexual harassment they experienced. That Bhavani "elbowed" the man "quite hard" is rather unusual in this context; it is as a clear testimony to the transformation of practices caused by learning self-defense. In the space of the bus, she renegotiated everyday spatial politics; she was performing gender differently. Anika, now working as a private driver, shared a similar reflection:

> The self-defense module made us strong enough to face situations that could arise while out on the road. We still have to face it [harassment by men] while we are traveling on buses. Earlier, when men would come and stand next to us on a bus, I was scared and couldn't ask them to move away even if they pushed me about, but now I clearly ask them to move away and say that I do not like it.

These and many other examples that I encountered in my fieldwork testify to a shift in power dynamics; the space of a public bus becomes a space of transformation. In the initial narrative in this chapter, Sita also drew on her knowledge of self-defense as a tool for negotiating with herself through what she experienced as a fearful rickshaw ride:

> I thought the moment he [auto-rickshaw driver] stops at a red light I will definitely confront him. It is not like I don't know anything. I have learned so much now that I can even beat him up.

This demonstrates that the spatial constellation of learning self-defense produced transformation in emotional practices. Albeit being a practical module of learning a physical skill, even more so it influenced the women's negotiations with themselves, primarily experienced as confidence, and with others practiced as verbal threats or simple physical demarcations. The *knowledge* of self-defense became leverage in these negotiations, a specific and embodied knowledge that compelled many of the women apply it for similar kinds of negotiations. In this sense, the Women on Wheels program did seem to steer the new type of negotiations the women were having.

This module made a quite visible difference related to the numerous everyday acts of harassment the women experienced – in common parlance referred to as "Eve teasing" – such as men yelling sexual or discriminatory remarks after the women, touching them on public transport, consistently staring at them, or stalking them. A staff member explained:

> The women's ability to be able to give it back to those who might harass them while on the road, to terrorize them so that the perpetrator does not get the better of them – all the politics of driving gets inbuilt in them after they receive training from here. This is not merely a result of the gender sensitization classes, but also the self-defense training that they receive.

In this context the stakes can be high: safety or survival can suddenly become jeopardized and the danger of a situation might be impossible to predict. In some cases, staying quiet or passive might be the best means to remain safe. Sita made such a deliberation in a sudden situation where she felt threatened and staying quiet felt most safe to her:

> Today, I was walking to the office and there were a few boys sitting around at some point. I checked the time on my mobile and the boys started teasing, "Madam, tell us the time." I did not say anything. But I was scared; there were 3 or 4 boys and I was alone. I did not say anything. They kept repeating it, and I ignored then and came to the office. I thought if I said something they would tease me more, and I was alone, so considering that, I did not say anything.

The transformations of practices – in thoughts, emotions, and actions – can therefore not be seen as a linear, progressing curve. What is at stake in such situations of negotiation comprises a complex web of entangled, relational dynamics. In a given situation, a trainee might speak up against a bullying remark or elbow a man who touches her on the bus; another day a similar situation might arise where she stays quiet and does nothing. This is because they are never the same situations – spatial constitutions always will be different. Have the women's practices changed or not? It is not either/or. With time, having accumulated experiences of successfully managing fearful situations by defending themselves and performing spatial relations differently, the women generally seemed to grow more confident and more likely to stand up for themselves, which might also explain why the experienced drivers came across as more assertive and confident.

**Spatial constellation 3: learning rights and alternative gender perspectives**

The Women on Wheels program has two different modules, which they categorize under the label "women's empowerment." The "sexual and reproductive health" module is scheduled for 20 hours over three days, and the other "gender, domestic violence and legal aspects" is for 35 hours over seven days. Additionally, the women are offered personal one-to-one counseling on these matters. The modules address issues in relation to the women's bodies, relationships, and rights. As they are similar in topic and in their attempt to present an alternative perspective of gender for the trainees, here I treat them as one spatial constellation, which I call: learning rights

and alternative gender perspectives. The trainers of the modules are two women, hired as external consultants for Azad, and they have decades of experience on women's issues in Delhi across different NGOs and governmental institutions. One trainer works at the renowned Delhi-based women's rights organization Jagori, an organization that collaborates with Azad & Sakha; the other is an independent expert on sexual and reproductive health. Interaction, performativity, and participation are nodal pedagogical principles of the modules, as the trainers want the women to share their stories and voice their questions amongst each other. "The girls have never spoken about these things, so at first there is a lot of silence; they giggle and are very shy," one trainer explained, adding, "but they all know about sexual issues, because in the communities where they live, there is no privacy and they live very close, so sex is in your face." The module on sexual and reproductive health covers the overall topics of body, sex/sexuality, relationships, and choices, and the women's rights module, the trainer elaborated:

> The first day we discuss gender, the second is on patriarchy and social systems, the third day is on violence, and on the fourth day, we concentrate completely on law. What the law says about women's rights, about legal rights of women and weaker groups in society, and what are the procedures. We look at what action they can take if the system doesn't listen to them – what strategies that they can adopt.

In relation to rights and the law, the trainer makes the women write a few phone numbers on a piece of paper: those to Delhi police women's helplines (there are a few) and one to a women's shelter helpline. The women are instructed specifically whom to call, where to go, and which papers to fill out if they wish to file a report of violence to the police. The module addresses written and unwritten laws and what women can practically do in different situations of discrimination and abuse.

Since, according to Azad & Sakha, experiences of violence and harassment amongst the women are widespread, addressing the topic within the Women on Wheels program is granted high priority. Over my months of fieldwork, I was repeatedly told about gendered violence as something highly institutionalized and undisputed. An experienced mobilizer in an interview elaborated on the alleged customary belief that it is expected, justified and even for the best for a man to be violent toward women in the household:

> Girls think this way, yes [that it is okay for their husbands to be violent with them]. We try and change that in our training. The girl who came in the pink suit right now [in Azad & Sakha's office], she is from Khadar [a *basti*]. Her husband is an alcoholic and beats her a lot. [...] She used to accept everything [he did].

> Recently he did the same [beat her], but then she filed a police complaint. He was in the police station the entire night. He came back home and had a relationship with her [like before], and she was okay with it. She told me this, and I asked her, "What are you doing? If you keep your relationship with him after so much [violence/abuse], he will feel that it justifies everything he has been doing." Since the day she really started revolting; she picked up a stick to retaliate and filed a complaint again. Since that day, he is a changed man. Cops come daily to her house to check on her. He got her a suit [tunic and pants] as a gift last week. She is supposed to sign on some papers to take the complaint back [with the man's pressure]. I tell her, "Don't do it or he will be the same [violent again]."

*Unsettlings opening space and instigating negotiations*

The training is aimed at challenging the women's way of perceiving themselves as women and encourages them to transform their practices accordingly. Both modules break with some of the most prevailing discriminatory gendered practices the women were accustomed to in the communities. Therefore, to many of the trainees, the modules were making a radical proposition. One example of a corporeal gendered practice the training addresses concerns menstruation. The traditional perception is that while women have their periods, they are dirty and thus restricted from many activities, as the trainer explained:

> Sex is all about power. If you can control a woman's sexuality, be it through traditions, gods, rituals, or religion, they [authoritarian members of the household] will. They enforce rules like: when a woman has her period, she cannot step out of the house, she must make sure her brother doesn't see her, she cannot enter the kitchen or visit a temple.

The time of month where the women menstruate were often connected with additional restrictions and challenges in their experience of daily life. As strongly institutionalized practices, the women typically had never questioned them or the legitimacy of such restrictive rules. The trainers found it challenging to alter the women's mindsets:

> They are very excited to know all this related to having their period. The next day, after that session, I ask questions to check whether they got it right. But when I ask the class whether a girl should not enter the kitchen during menstruation because she is dirty, I will still get a 60 percent yes from them. Then other girls will say, "No, no, we discussed it yesterday." But they have been taught this way of thinking and behaving their whole life, so definitely one session – one day – is not going to change it all.

I consider this an unsettling of givenness, forcing trainees to at least contemplate a variety of discriminatory gendered practices they had been accustomed to. The same is the case with topics concerning women's rights and the law:

> The part where I discuss the law with them is surprising for them, because they are not very aware of it. They don't know much about their rights. This is a bit of a surprise to them. But more than that, they feel that this is a platform where they can say what they want to; [it is a sense of] "If I say what I want to, I won't be in any danger."

The women were presented with a new perspective of womanhood – one based on equality, practical information, and knowledge about rights, laws, and ways to exercise those rights – that forced negotiations upon them. It disturbed what they thought they knew. The experience of having a safe place to voice their opinions, share stories of violence and difficulties, listen to similar accounts from other women, and receive support were also unsettling in that it tinkered with the 'status quo'. "It is through talking that the tension comes out and dissipates. And to sort this out, I try and talk to the members of their family – either after training or during training," one trainer recounted, revealing the engaging, participatory and performative methods to which they ascribed to. "I usually encourage participation", she continued, "I try and get things out of them – of how the situation is within their families, and what are the difficulties that they face every day." One method deployed to enable the trainees to share their stories is through performing sketches of scenes from their everyday lives, as the following account from Bhavani depict:

> Bhavani, trainee: We were taught about boys and girls, the law and things associated with it. I was not aware earlier of what gender meant. I was with "Mam" [the trainer] for several days, and it felt nice to be working with her. She would ask us to perform a skit on something or to share our views on things. I enjoyed performing skits a lot. She would ask us to enact anything. So sometimes they would make me a child or someone's mother.

These skits depicted scenes of gendered violence and harassment from the women's own lives. As Bhavani relayed, they participated in performing each other's stories. In this manner Azad use corporeal and performative methods aiming to alter the women's gendered perspectives and practices; again through demonstrating how gender can be performed differently in this particular context. In the trainer's experience, the women often welcomed an opportunity to share their stories: "They have a lot of anger within. They are tired of their families [the struggles] and

therefore open up and put their experiences forward." How these modules impacted the women and how it translated into subsequent changes in practices – or not - varied greatly:

> Some of the women take up the strategies learned during the training here with their husbands. So if things are happening with their husband, they will try and use the strategies. But sometimes it works the other way around, and then they are not allowed to come for the training. Their husbands start questioning what they are being taught here. But some of them fight with their husbands and come here. Sometimes the girls come here crying, and we try and talk to them about it during the training. Sometimes, it [the crying or reaction] is also a protest against the resistance put up by the mothers, because the mother has to hear from other people [community gossip].

The spatial constellations of rights and alternative gender perceptions provoked negotiations for the women with themselves in order to instigate novel negotiations of their relation to others, since the discriminatory gendered practices were produced relationally. The changes in how the women perceived themselves relative to their rights, whether in daily household life or by law, thus occasionally translated into negotiations of them in relation to the people who enforce these oppressive practices. Trainers and other Azad & Sakha staff members often participated directly in women's negotiations with family members. If a trainee had a difficult situation in her household and asked for assistance, the organization often assisted in the negotiation hoping to alter the situation. In such cases, the trainers typically engaged with the relevant family members on the phone or invited them to the office.

The organization also arranges official meetings between staff, trainees, and family members on a regular basis in order to strengthen the support the trainees receive from home and instill trust in the program. The trainees are also offered private counseling sessions with one of the gender experts to discuss more urgent, intimate, and personal matters. This offer was not widely used by many trainees, but primarily in circumstances when a woman was in serious difficulties, like cases of pregnancy outside of marriage, considering divorce, severe domestic violence, occurrences of rape or other severe violence in public space, or attempted suicide.

Through different methods and in different ways of relating there was an underlying culture of support in the organization and the spaces of their offices, which I analytically consider a part of the overall aim to foster women's rights and provide alternative perspectives on gender roles. For example, I often witnessed unofficial encounters between women and staff on a daily basis in the office. It became clear ever so often that many women generally felt they could come to staff members for support. In these conditions, the boundaries between "professional and personal" or "work and life" seemed blurred at times. The nature of the social entrepreneurial work and the

methods of organizing produced a greater sense of closeness or intimacy between staff and the women relative to traditional employer– employee relations. Many staff members also expressed how they cared emotionally for the women and for instance were available for them on the phone at all times. It was not uncommon to hear staff members speak of the women in familial terms like "my girls", "my teenage daughters," or "the Azad & Sakha family." These practices of support in alignment with two gendered modules were spatial constellations that provided unsettlings. It enabled some women to contemplate the difficulties in their lives in a new perspective and to take new measures in order to cope with them, while the support system strengthened their confidence and courage; altogether fuelling the negotiations with one's self, others and surroundings.

*Negotiations transforming practices*

"After the training girls are able to think differently; they think about their bodies differently," one trainer concluded, while acknowledging that breaking patterns and changing practices takes time. "They become aware that the law can provide for certain things, and they mold their actions accordingly," the other trainer reviewed as an outcome of her training, but adds that largely, "they learn it on their own." By this, she meant that although many women sought support and assistance within the organization, many women did not and instead tried to manage on their own. Since situations of gendered discrimination occurred on a daily basis, women typically only sought out organizational help in severe and serious situations. I witnessed one such situation in the office one day, when a woman came in to speak to staff members about getting help to have a divorce:

**Wanting divorce**

*Fieldnotes 27.05.14*

> It is a Tuesday and a young woman enters the common co-working office, which is a little crowded this day. She is not wearing a uniform, so I cannot tell if she is a trainee or a driver. In her hands she carries a lot of paper documents – clearly official papers, some with passport photos. She talks to one staff member, but another quickly gets involved too, as usually happens in the shared workspace. I can only understand the word "divorce." They talk for a while, perhaps 7 to 10 minutes, and now and then a gender expert, who is also in the office on this day, is included in the conversation. After the young woman leaves, I ask about it. I am told that she is in the process of divorce, but doesn't have the right papers. A staff member explains to me:
>
> > What she has is not a real divorce paper, but more like a declaration of wanting one. So in theory, she is not yet divorced. However, she has already met another man and has gotten married to him. She has managed to buy

> herself a little house. So we were telling her to get this sorted out quickly, or else her first husband can make things very difficult for her because she is not legally free of him.

I am quite surprised to hear this – not only is she getting divorced, which is highly uncommon and greatly taboo in the communities, but she has also already remarried – so I ask about it further:

> Oh yeah, it actually happens a lot that our girls become divorced. After a while of training and so on, they learn their rights and get tired of abusive or alcoholic men. We actually see it a lot.

The spatial constellations of rights and alternative gender perceptions challenged the women's sense of self through concretizing an alternative perspective of how they could live their lives. For instance, women started perceiving the violence of certain practices to which they have been accustomed, as Bhavani shared: "I was not aware of things earlier, like if something happens at home [violence] or the fact that women are harassed. The gender classes made me realize that it has happened." Several women have expressed how the modules on gender issues made them aware of things they had not known or considered, that it made them question things and reflect differently. The account from Inika illustrates this shift in perception or sense of self:

> We had training on gender at Azad by Jagori. I got to know things that I had not known of before. It got me thinking about how wrong our ways of thinking are, or how wrong people around us have been. I used to think that if someone older than me was saying something that I thought to be wrong, I would still listen to it. But in the module on gender, the trainer said that we are human beings as much as the other person, so we have the right to speak up if we don't agree on something. This idea struck me a lot. And since then, I have been protesting against the tendency to stay quiet, so some members of my family would get angry with me. I tell them that I will say what I think, even if people feel bad about it.

Being presented with an alternative gender perspective enabled Inika to shift her thinking. It contested her prior perceptions and provoked negotiations with self and others. I find her phrase "We are human beings as much as the other person" quite striking and telling: it reveals the lack of gender equality both in thought and practice, attesting to a spatial politics where women are considered as less than men. I consider this to be a statement of a negotiation with self in which Inika went from perceiving herself as inferior to men to considering herself increasingly more equal. Subsequently, perceiving herself differently, she starts perceiving herself in relation to others differently as well, experimenting with what it means to her to be "an equal human being."

Now, she speaks her opinion and continues to do so, even if her "unusual" behavior upsets others. Here Inika was negotiating spatial politics with others within the household and close community, and enacted an alternative version of gender due to her changed self-perception. I have heard many women share similar stories after participating in the gender-related modules.

There is a final aspect of this spatial constellation that stood out as particularly impactful for facilitating negotiations: the phone numbers the women were made to write down. Consider the following two accounts:

> Bhavani, trainee: The trainer told us about the various laws and also gave us a small booklet. If someone misbehaves or talks rudely to me, I am able to warn him that I have the contact numbers and have learned self-defense. And if he does anything, then I can defend myself quite well. So it is not that scary for us anymore and we can go out on our own.
>
> Sita, trainee: I shared these things with my family. I told them that if you are not aware of these laws, go through the notes that I was made to write down. I also asked my friends to read it, and if they ever faced any problem or if anyone misbehaved with them, then they could use these laws – and I gave them the phone number as well.

Sita shared with me that she had saved the phone numbers on her phone, which was actually her brother's phone she had borrowed during the training period. This means she had the numbers "on her" when she commuted alone. She used the numbers as a means to make threats; for instance, one day, a man on the bus was touching her. She tried to push his hand away, but he persisted. "He was rude while talking and I replied rudely as well," she stated, explaining that an elderly couple interfered in the negotiation, asking the man to behave, but he was still aggressive toward her. Sita then used another way of negotiating: "I was able to warn him that I have the contact numbers [for the police] and have learned self-defense." The dispute ended there, as the man left the bus, but the way Sita shared the story, it came across that she felt proud of having defended herself and spoken up rather than staying quiet. The tools that gave her leverage in the negotiation were having the phone numbers for the police on her phone and knowing self-defense. Sita concluded that it made her feel less scared of commuting alone.

As can be seen from both statements, the trainees considered the police numbers in two different ways: as a means by which they could threaten people who harassed them, or as a means to potentially get direct help, like filing a report against harassers to the police. The numbers were

in this manner powerful tools participating in the negotiations of relational spaces, even if they were merely used as a threat.[84]

The spatial constellation of rights and alternative gender perspectives was unsettling and opened the potential for social transformation in that the women were systematically presented with practices that confronted the customs. The knowledge they were given to that end on their rights, the relevant laws and how practically to claim those rights – including having a direct phone number to the police unit for crime against women – altogether provided them with new leverage in gendered negotiations of spatial politics

**Spatial constellation 4: learning to drive**

> Ishanvi, staff: Women are traditionally not supposed to make decisions for themselves – for example, they cannot even decide whom they will marry – but while driving you are forced to make decisions. No one will come and tell you that you are supposed to turn left, right, or use this gear. It is more like cognitive decisions that you are making, but ultimately it gives you confidence because it shows that you made some decisions on your own. That is why they [Azad founders] thought that driving as an activity will definitely break gender stereotypes, because the women are coming from such a restricted environment; so even something like learning how to drive, which seems like a small barrier to be broken compared to other obstacles that they face in the process of social change, provides a kickstart. When they go home, they want to make more decisions, their confidence increases, and they participate more actively in their communities. So driving is like one small step, which is kickstarting all other things.

Learning to drive is the core activity around which Azad's Women on Wheels program is built. As mentioned before, as a profession, driving is not considered an option for women in India, but even as an everyday practice, it is not common amongst women. The majority of women from poor backgrounds have never traveled by car; being inside one is therefore an entirely new experience for the trainees. When they begin the program, the trainees first take the "learner's module for learner's license," a computer-based theoretical class about driving. It is scheduled for 50 hours over nine days and takes place in Azad & Sakha's offices. The computer-based test

[84] In some situations, women do file reports of crime against their husbands or other perpetrators. I will address this in Chapter Seven as part of exploring what is being negotiated and transformed in their lives more specifically

qualifies the trainees for the "driving skill training," hosted by a professional driving school, Maruti Driving School, for 22 hours spread over approximately 40 days. The driving instructors have cars with a second set of brakes and clutch for the purpose of teaching, and the program covers basic knowledge and skills for driving. This is where the women sit behind the wheel of a car for the first time. The training primarily takes place within the driving school's private compound, but toward the end of the training, women drive on smaller neighboring streets and a few of the larger roads and flyover points. Sita described how it took place:

AS: Can you tell us about the first time you sat in the car?

Sita: I was very scared. I had no idea of what was the clutch, the brakes, the steering wheel, the accelerator, or the indicator. I was very nervous the first time I sat in the car. I was scared that I would cause an accident. Then "Sir" [trainer] told me to not be scared. He had a set of clutch and brakes too. So even if I was not able to apply them, he would. This was at Maruti Driving School.

Here we train for the learner's license. Once that is achieved, we can attend classes with the Azad trainer. He sits next to us while we drive, but doesn't have a brake. We are taken to drive out on the road on the weekends, or when we have time off from the English class.



*Greater Kailash 1, South Delhi.*
Trainees waiting in and around the training vehicle.

As Sita explained, once the women have trained with Maruti they get a "learner's license," which grants them permission to train with Azad on the roads of Delhi in a normal car equipped with a large "L" – for Learner – constructed with tape. At Azad, the driving trainers are all males,[85] and the training took place on roads across the entire city of Delhi. The following fieldnote observation from the backseat of a driver training session for three new trainees gives an impression of how the training was carried out:

**A bumpy start**

*Fieldnotes, Monday, 27.04.15*

> It is 8:12 a.m. when I arrive at the small parking lot outside Azad & Sakha's office building, which is a residential apartment block compound. The driving trainer, a man I guess to be in his late fifties, and two of the trainees, Adya and Bhavani, are already there; "Hello, Mam," the women greet me. The trainer makes a nod, suggesting that we get going. We get into the car. It is a small regular passenger car, light-gray or silver-colored, full of bumps and scratches, bearing witness of endless smaller accidents. The fenders have particularly taken a beating. The only (other) clue that driving lessons are taking place in this car is a black, L-shaped structure of thick tape glued on the front and rear window frames of the car; "L" for "learner." There is no passenger-side brake for the driving trainer, so he can only use the handbrake and reach for the wheel if a situation becomes critical.
>
> Bhavani, in a bright pink suit, begins behind the wheel with the trainer in the seat next to her, and Adya, in a black-and-white suit with a flower pattern, takes the backseat with me. There are no seatbelts in the back. Adya pulls out a sheet for registration; it has Bhavani's name on it. She notes the date, the time, and then asks Bhavani about how many kilometres the monitor shows, and notes that down too. A third woman, Sita, joins us in the last minuet.
>
> Bhavani presses down on the accelerator and takes off. Carefully, hesitantly, the car slowly increases in speed and she drives very close to the sidewalk. The trainer guides her and talks more or less constantly to her, giving directions, telling her to slow down. "Brake, brake!" he suddenly exclaims; he will repeat this several times later. She has some difficulties with the clutch and getting into the right gears, making it a bumpy experience. Staying within the lane of the road also seems to challenge her. Occasionally she drives in the middle between two lanes, so he guides her to pay attention and stay within the one lane. She has a stern yet relaxed look on her face, which I take as a sign of concentration. Every so often, the trainer holds on to the steering wheel to help her with staying in the right lane or curve around a corner.

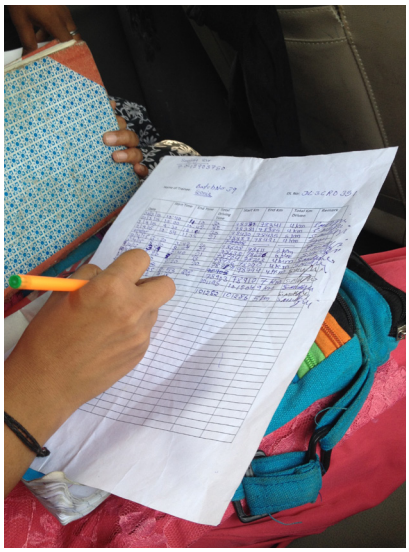
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[85] While I was doing fieldwork with Azad & Sakha in 2014 and 2015, all driving trainers were males, but there were discussions about making some of the experienced female drivers into trainers. This occurred recently, in July 2017, when four Sakha drivers were trained to conduct driving training for new trainees – one of the four is my research participant Inika.

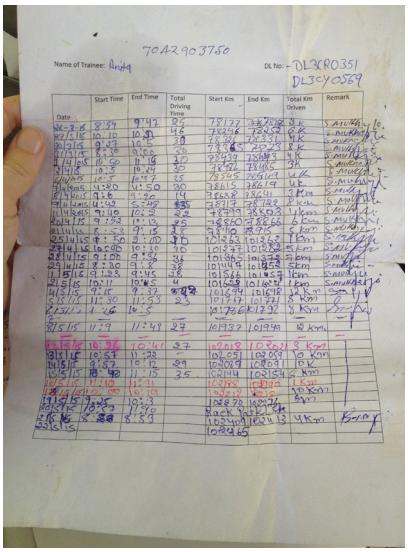
At 9:02 a.m. she stops, and it is Adya's turn. Bhavani seems quite content; overall it went well. The setup is the same for Adya, but she has much more trouble with the clutch and keeping the right speed. Her eyebrows are slightly pulled inward, a worrisome, concentrated expression on her face. She speeds up too fast and brakes too slow, so he often has to use the handbrake to stop her from getting too close to the cars in front. The trainer has a hand on the wheel most of the time. Several times the engine stops, bringing the car to a sudden standstill. The Indian traffic seems somehow geared to this – to unexpected behavior – so while people honk a lot and some give her odd looks, they just drive around her. Bhavani is now filling out the papers for Adya. It is hot in the car and everyone is quiet. Every so often, the two trainees in the backseat talk briefly in low voices. The trainer hands a small notebook to Bhavani along with a pen, and she notes down the date and writes a few lines. They call it a "diary" and as I understand, she is writing a few comments for today's lesson. At 9:47 a.m. we suddenly stop on the side of a road and the two trainees who have already driven jump out. "Back to the office," they say and wave. In comes a new woman, who had been waiting right there. And so the training continues.



*Greater Kailash 1, south Delhi.*
Trainee waiting to begin a driving lesson.



Azad trainee filling out the training sheet.



The training sheet of a trainee used to keep count of the hours of training.



Learning to drive.



Trainee getting a helping hand from the trainer in a driving lesson.

In organizational terms, driving training with Azad is divided into what they call "driving training for permanent license" of 15 hours over 40 days, and "driving practice on roads" for 50 hours over 70 days – a total of 65 hours of driving training with Azad's trainers. However, this number of hours is not fixed; rather, it is an estimated average, since the organization ascribes to a concept of "self-paced learning" which, acknowledging that each woman learns at a different pace, tailors training according to individual needs. Once the trainees pass the official driving test and get a permanent license, they are additionally scheduled to train in "self-driving," where they practice in cars without trainers for 30 hours over 21 days simply to improve their skills and so they are ready to take on clients. Ordinarily the Women on Wheels program takes a woman roughly 8 to 10 months, yet a rare few manage to become ready at 6 months and some take up to 12 months or more. The ability to learn driving is what determines each woman's timeframe.

*Unsettlings opening space and instigating negotiations*

Anika is an experienced private driver with Sakha, and one day I followed her on the job as she drove a client to the campus of Delhi University. Even though it has been a few years since she sat behind the wheel for the first time, her memory of it has remained clear. As we sat on the parking lot of the campus, waiting in the shade of a large tree, I asked her if she remembers her first time driving and how it was. "Very scary," she promptly replied, and explained, "At Maruti [Driving School], we drove inside a parking lot first. Then one day, it was on the street alone in the car with the trainer. He made me drive on the highway and large flyovers in GK [Greater Kailash, South Delhi]. I felt very scared, nervous," she recalled.

"Did the car turn off many times?" I asked.

"Yes!" she exclaimed with a grin.

"And how did you feel after you completed the first drive?" I probed.

"Very well, great, confident," she returned with a wide, contagious smile.

Sitting behind the wheel of a car was a completely new experience for all of the women. Across all interviews with trainees and drivers alike, they univocally expressed that the first experiences of driving bring forth strong emotions, mainly of both fear and excitement:

> Sita, trainee: The best thing about driving is that I am able to drive on the road. I get a bit scared when the car stops abruptly and people honk from behind. They expect us to take the car forward. The fear of having an accident increases even more if the car stops all of a sudden.

Kanishka,
taxi driver: I have seen girls scared and shivering when they are asked to drive, but I was never like that. I always felt excited about the idea of driving. I used to look forward to the training, and used to think "I will drive the car for an hour today." I never felt scared; in fact I felt excited.

The spatial constellation centered on the content and act of learning to drive had a strong corporeal and emotional influence on the trainees. Emotions derived both from practices of driving and the lived experiences of being mobile bodies in a car moving across the city. The spatiality of the car affected the women: they were swept into the grasp of strong affects as they sat behind the wheel of a moving car. They used words like "fear," "nervousness," "scared," or "worried" to describe this bodily sensation and response. The following fieldnote observation depicts a moment in Azad & Sakha's office between a trainee, a driving trainer, and a staff member discussing what to do with the trainee's overwhelming experience of fear:

**Learning driving: she is very scared**

*Fieldnotes, Thursday, 26.02.15*

The office is busy. Staff, women, and external trainers are in and out; even three pigeons partake in the commotion inside the office. An elder man, who is a driving trainer, suddenly enters the room and walks directly over to us with a young woman, a new trainee, tagging behind. They engage in a long conversation. The trainee stands besides them looking a little embarrassed and mostly quiet. I hear phrases like "yoga, meditation, and concentration". After they finish, the staff member turns to me and explains:

> Actually, the new trainee here is not able to concentrate. If the driving trainer suddenly asks her to brake – suppose suddenly a motorcycle comes in front of the car and he says, 'Brake, brake, brake' – she loses all her confidence and presses the accelerator, or she will not be able to do anything and she will become numb. He is saying to her, 'Calm your mind, you need to calm your mind,' and he is telling me that actually she is very scared. Personality-wise, if you look at her, you won't be able to tell, but inside she feels scared [...]. I am telling her to calm her mind and to tell herself, 'I am able to do it' and 'Don't speed.

The experience of fear was very real or pronounced for trainees. As can be seen from the description above, this fear could be experienced as a full-fledged corporeal sensation that emotions almost overtook the body and inhibited the trainee's ability to drive. Dealing with fear, and the corporeality of driving when experienced as fearful, was this common within the space of the car.

Emotions were however not just a subjective or personal experience and expression of space; they were also collectively and relationally produced. This means that the women also experienced emotions in relation to their social or "spatial identities"; namely, the segregating categorization of them as women, poor, and low-caste in Delhi, and the fact that learning to drive was radical and uncommon for this social group in society. When the trainees sat behind the wheel of a car, they not only negotiated with themselves but concurrently with others and surroundings related to this larger sphere of spatial politics.

As productive moments, the acts of driving thus unsettled the givenness of spatial politics within the women's everyday lives – and potentially for the people perceiving the poor women becoming drivers – but at the same time encouraged and established a foundation for another becoming. This was experienced and expressed through emotions like excitement, joy, or "it feels good," which attest to a growing confidence and a response of living through, and overcoming, great initial fear. Again we see how unsettlings opened up their sense of self and identity in relation to others based on experiencing and sensing opportunities to be and become "more and other than" what they have been accustomed to believing they can be.

*Negotiations transforming practices*

With time, trainees needed less assistance from a trainer as they drove, which made them feel increasingly confident and independent. In the space of the car, negotiations occurred, and practices were contested and slowly transformed:

Sita, trainee: The first day I sat in the car, I asked "Sir" if I would be able to drive the car or not. I was very nervous, but I was able to drive well and I felt relaxed afterwards. Now there is no problem at all. We can drive really fast. We have confidence to drive alone; we were dependent on "Sir" first. Now we do it on our own. We feel really good. We can take the car anywhere.

Bhavani, trainee: We feel like we are not dependent on anyone. Whatever our task is, we focus on that. How long we will be dependent on others? We will have to be on our own. Like when "Sir" sits beside us while driving, I tell him not to say anything. I will handle it on my own. If there is some mistake, I rectify and learn from it immediately. I was scared the first day and told "Sir" to tell me the moment I make a mistake. He said, "Fine." First we practiced on closed grounds; then we were taken to the roads. We were excited that we had become able to drive.

These two accounts demonstrate that in the space of the car, the trainees negotiated their independence, autonomy, and levels of responsibility in relation to the trainer. The women were usually not granted autonomy or responsibility for any kind of task outside the households. Being a driver was thus an act of autonomy and necessitated the women to take responsibility for one's self, passengers in the car, and others in traffic. While the negotiation in the space of the car concerned the practices of driving, it simultaneously related to the experience of autonomy and taking responsibility. In learning new capabilities of driving, the trainees experienced the practice of acquiring what they perceived to be an immensely difficult skill – a skill most people in their communities do not have, and a skill the majority of Indian women certainly do not have. Learning a difficult skill and overcoming fear over time appeared to make the trainees feel proud and more confident. Sitting with the trainees for many hours per week, driving trainers witnessed the negotiations that took place within the car. In the following testimony, a driving trainer at Azad's office in Jaipur explained the logic behind the way he trains the women to overcome the initial fear:

> We give them ground practice and get them on the road. Slowly we take them to the areas where there is traffic. If you take them immediately, then they get scared. It is a slow and gradual process. When they drive well, they say it themselves: "I drove well today," "I will drive again on the same road tomorrow and better than today." They also start saying stuff like "I will do the job." They watch traffic and feel scared. While driving in traffic, when they hit the car against something during practice, their worry and fears are taken care of then and there.
>
> They feel happy that they have learned how to drive. They say, "Sir, I made mistakes earlier, but now I am getting better. I am doing well; I can get a job now." Or when I give them a certain route, at first they ask for the way, but the second day she is able to go on her own. That gives confidence. In a practice session of half an hour, if the engine stops with a jerk, I scold them for that. They feel happy on days that doesn't happen anymore and they tell me, "Sir I did not stop the engine today with a jerk."

Indeed, for most trainees it was a slow and gradual process of learning to drive and gaining more confidence in the function of being a driver. When the women – in the space of the car and through the practice of driving – negotiated with themselves and others to manage fear and take responsibility, I consider these instances to be spaces of transformation. In a multitude of different moments and situations, they were required to practice their agency differently in the face of fear or challenges on the road; they were forced into positions of autonomy and responsibility and had to make decisions for themselves on the spot. They were learning to drive, but they were

practicing confidence, as a founding member detailed:

> We see this movement in the women from "I cannot" to "I can do it." That journey starts here, and the women begin to think in terms of "I can do, I can go, I can manage." We as staff also gain confidence when we see them doing all this. It happens automatically, I think. When we take girls who have never driven anywhere to highways after training, on a 120-kilometer drive, we get impressed.

The trainees practiced the challenging road encounters with the driving trainers at first, but had to gradually handle them alone, as they gain more confidence the same staff member elaborated:

> Many times when the trainees are going for practice [alone], it happens that they hit another car. Then the police come and a crowd of people gathers around them, and the women get afraid and sometimes start crying. We had an incident like that and the young woman cried so much she was howling. The driving trainer had to go and handle everything and get her back to our office. We kept calm and explained things to her. Now she is confident and can easily speak to the policemen. The women generally think that police are bad, and if you talk to them, then it is because you have done something wrong. But now there is nothing like that; they are confident that they can talk to the policemen and other crowds easily.

Being on the road as a driver placed the women in a function necessitating them to make responsible decisions. Inevitably, they had to handle challenges alone, be it changing a flat tire, getting lost, driving with difficult clients, having a small accident or negotiating with the police Process of negotiation therefore occurred whenever the women were behind the wheel. Albeit the women are alone on the roads eventually, they could always call on the organization. One particular staff member, riding a motorbike, was sent out to assist women on the road when necessary. This provided the trainees with some sense of security and confidence in knowing that they had backup for difficult negotiations.

The spatial constellation of driving was particularly transformative for the women's growing sense of autonomy and confidence, also in their relations to others, as Bhavani's account demonstrates:

> One day I had handed in a paper at school and I was very happy. I called the driving trainer up and told him that he should come and pick me up. He agreed. Two of my friends were with me and they wanted to see me drive. I asked "Sir" [trainer] if they could be allowed in the car with us, because I wanted to show them how I drive. They were sitting behind us and I was able to drive properly. "Sir" was saying that I wanted to show off my driving skills to my friends and

> that is why I was able to drive so well. I told him that it was not like that, but that I was thinking of them as my clients and I was being careful to drive around. Afterward my friends kept asking me if I could teach them as well.

The feeling of pride from what was experienced as an extraordinary achievement is evident from Bhavani's story. The trainees underwent quite a radical training within the Women on Wheels program. The different accounts have demonstrated how the experienced practices of driving were fraught with strong emotions for the trainees and how they began to relate differently – to themselves, to their families, to their friends, to community members, to staff, to "others" they encounter from being outside the house, to the city and even to the abstract ideas of their life and future. Yet, a predominant cause of frustration and difficulty for many trainees was the lingering mistrusts or opposition to their driving by people in their everyday lives.[86] Processes of social transformation at this stage in the program appeared to often occur in tensions between the women's increasing sense of pride, autonomy, and confidence versus the opposing disbelief (including their own), questioning, and accusation by some close to them.

**Concluding note**

This second empirical chapter explored what happens to the women when they trained to become drivers through the Women on Wheels program. Corporeally, emotionally, and relationally, the trainees were altering practices through becoming drivers, which placed them within a comprehensive process of radically doing gender differently. What these women were doing was far more invasive, unsettling and transformative than merely considering the idea or than participating in for example a handicraft training project typical for women in the communities. Becoming drivers fueled intense and personal life experiences that contested and opened the very foundation of their sense of self, their identities in relation to others, and their relations with others. In this chapter I have examined how four spatial constellations of Azad's organizing - commuting to training alone, learning self-defense, learning rights and alternative gender perspectives, and learning driving – catalyzed social transformation for the trainees. The Women on Wheels program can be understood as deliberate or preplanned spatial constellations because they are constructed with specific aims in mind.

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[86] That family, friends, and community members did often not believe the women when they claimed to be training to become drivers was widely expressed throughout all my formal and informal interviews. So much so that I even suggested Azad & Sakha to consider allowing the trainees to drive to their home or bring along someone from home on a ride; or alternatively, to provide them with some organizational artifact giving legitimacy to their role as trainees. Once the women are licensed, they receive a uniform and info badge, which helped them significantly in this type of negotiation and for increasing the legitimacy of what they were doing. I will address this further in Chapter Six.

The chapter has demonstrated how Azad as a social enterprise constructed spaces deliberately seeking to initiate processes of social transformation of a specific kind. This shows that spaces can be produced toward particular purposes. Nonetheless the impact and affect of each spatial constellation could neither be controlled, nor was it certain. Social entrepreneurial organizing in this view is therefore an attempt to construct spaces that sets off processes of social transformation in a specific desired direction – processes of new kinds of negotiations. Conceiving social entrepreneurship as organizing spatial constellations places emphasis on the spatiality of social worlds that encompasses the materiality, corporeality and emotionality of everyday practices.
In different ways, the four spatial constellations of Azad's Women on Wheels program provided an unsettling of the previous givenness of personal perceptions and spatial politics, which fuelled novel processes of negotiation. Table 5.2 summarizes the key unsettlings.

Table 5.2 KEY ELEMENTS OF AZAD'S ORGANIZING THAT UNSETTLE

| *Unsettlings* |
|---|
| • Experiencing increasing and autonomous mobility |
| • Corporeally, mentally, and emotionally experiencing and gaining knowledge of defending themselves |
| • Being consistently presented with an alternative gender perspective that contests traditional practices |
| • Participatory methods of sharing, performing, and self-reflecting on discriminatory gendered practices |
| • Receiving encouragement and support from staff |
| • Gaining new skills and capabilities through practical experiences |
| • Being forced to make many decisions while driving |
| • Affected by the embodied experience of the spatial constellations |
| • Managing to do activities that are perceived as radical, difficult, and frightening |

Despite the vast difference between the four spatial constellations, there were interesting similarities across the type of negotiations and potential transformations that they initiated. One pronounced character of the unsettlings was the production of strong emotional responses of fear but also excitement and joy, which situated the trainees within situations forced to negotiate with themselves and potentially others in order to face, manage, and overcome that embodied experience of fear. As the Women on Wheels program provided the trainees with new experiences, their participation imposed new practices that were in radical contrast to their customs in terms of livelihood skills, general capabilities, gender perceptions, and the places women of their backgrounds get to go and the people they get to meet.

The spatial constellations of "commuting alone" and "learning to drive" were particularly fraught with experiences of fear. The trainees were thrown right into them because the learning and doing were concurrent; they learned *by* practicing. In the experiences of fear the women's

negotiations within themselves often derived from the doubt of one's own capabilities, the unfamiliarity of the situation, the feeling that the given task was extremely difficult or dangerous, concern about reputation, influences from past experiences or stories relayed, and the perceptions put forward by others. These inter-relational "movements" participated in the production of fear and influenced the negotiations the trainees had within themselves in certain moments of participating in the training program. Drawing on some of the new capabilities and perspectives the spatial constellations had instilled, the women negotiated with themselves, others, and their surroundings in new ways through the fearful moments. Often trainees used their "knowledge" of a module's insights as much as its practical use as a tool to cope and gain leverage in moments of fear or to make verbal threats in negotiations with others.

Growing in capability, acquiring new experiences of mobility, receiving encouragement for doing gender differently, and experiencing a corporeal and emotional sense of power from doing self-defense, sitting behind the wheel and commuting alone were some of the aspects that produced a notable increase in confidence for many women. The women explicitly verbalized these experiences in an affective vocabulary of "greater confidence," "excitement," "power," "autonomy," and "independence," which I take as indicative of a transformation in their sense of self. Across the four spatial constellations we have heard mention of a sense of being able to "do more" or "go anywhere," which attest to increasing confidence of the women but equally to an experienced expansion of social and geographical worlds and with that mounting possibilities. These sentiments became even more pronounced once the women started working as drivers, and I shall therefore develop it further in the following chapter.

The increasing confidence was also demonstrated through the way trainees began negotiating spatial politics differently in relation to others and surroundings. They suddenly voiced their opinions, argued for their rights and ideas, and even defended themselves physically in some cases, which is a stark contrast to the custom of remaining quiet and staying within the defined gender roles and practices expected of young women in the communities. Trainees used both verbal threats and simple physical force against men harassing them on public transport – negotiations clearly influenced by knowing self-defense, gender rights, and having the police helpline number. In these productive moments – spaces of transformation - the women negotiated spatial politics in new ways and thus transformed them. Negotiations with others also took place in the home as a consequence of the women questioning their traditional roles and subjectivities within the households, but also as an outcome of their increasing confidence and newfound capabilities, for example of mobility.

Looking across the four spatial constellations, it can be seen that each has an aspect of learning

new practical skills (e.g., taking public transport, using self-defense, filing a police complaint, driving a car), which are linked to the experience of gaining new perspectives and capabilities in a larger sense (mental, emotional, and corporeal). In different ways, the structure of the program, the gender perspective behind it, the methods applied, and the spatiality and materiality of its production became unsettling factors within the trainees' lived experiences of becoming drivers. Having been spatially affected, negotiations happened as a consequence concerning who they are as women and as poor and what they can become. In this sense, the social entrepreneurial organizing of Azad did more than give these women a chance for a better economic livelihood; it questioned their sense of gender, relations and way of life. This chapter has shown how such processes of social transformation began and were carried into a multitude of micro-negotiations of spatial politics within the trainees' everyday lives as they were affected by the spatial constellations of the program.

# Theorizing the negotiation of space

*Theoretical reflection part Two*

This chapter has empirically demonstrated that the social entrepreneurial organizing that aims to transform the lives of the poor women in my study can be seen as producing deliberate spatial constellations, or pre-planned spatialities (Massey, 2005), that unsettle the status quo and instigate specific identity-related negotiations for the women with themselves, others, and their surroundings at large. This is how processes of social transformation take off in this context: through the productiveness of spatial constellations, the women gain a new sense of – and practical experiences with – how they can change themselves, which sets off new social processes (Massey, 2005; Steyaert, 2012). In the previous chapter, we saw how the proposition of a radical alternative politics and the consideration of such an "other" worldview served as a force that unsettled the givenness of space in the poor communities. That was the first "crack," opening space up to the production of novel negotiations for the women and their families, but a far more comprehensive process of negotiation and potential transformation was set off when they physically participated in the Women on Wheels program. The unsettling proposition moved from being an idea into being part of a fully embodied lived experience of negotiating everyday life in a new way. The empirical material clearly demonstrates such processes were rich in strong emotional responses. Indeed, this is the "emergence of the conflictual new":

> The negotiation will always be an invention; there will be need for judgement, learning, improvisation; there will be no simple portable rules. Rather it is the unique, the emergence of the conflictual new, which throws up the necessity for the political. (Massey, 2005: 162)

**Emotional spatiality and embodied negotiations**

Emotions matter, as they form our experiences and expressions of everyday life. From the empirical material, it is evident that emotions are essential to include in a theorizing of social transformation and how it is practiced. Acknowledging not only the presence of emotions, but also their importance might influence the way in which we conceptualize social entrepreneurial organizing and social transformation, as well as how we consider organizing it in practice. Aligned with the spatial lens of this thesis, and elaborating on the understanding of the emotional component to social transformation, I draw on Kirsten Simonsen's (e.g., 2013, 2007) reflections on corporeality and emotional spatiality. Simonsen describes emotional spatiality thus:

> Emotions are neither 'purely mental' nor 'purely physical', but ways of relating and interacting with the surrounding world. This relational account gives occasion for a double conception of emotional spatiality. (2013: 17)

This "double conception" is a distinction between an *expressive space*, seen as "the body's movements, which might be seen as a performative element of emotions," – that is, when they are "practiced and shown" – and the other side, the *affective space*, "which is the space in which we are emotionally in touch – open to the world and its 'affect' on us" (Simonsen, 2013: 17). In other words, we make a mark on the world, and the world around us makes a mark on us. Marks are made through our emotional experiences, which are simultaneously experienced bodily, emotionally, and mentally. Simonsen elaborates:

> In taking up or inhabiting space, bodies move through it and are affected by the where of that movement. It is through this movement that space as well as bodies takes shape. Inhabiting space is both about 'finding our way' and how we come to 'feel at home.' It therefore involves a continuous negotiation between what is familiar and unfamiliar, making space habitable but also receiving new impressions depending on which way we turn and what is within reach. (2013: 16)

Certainly the trainees in the program were affected by "the where," but also "the what" of the movement –for example, driving across the city of Delhi or commuting alone. I include "the what" to say that the symbolic or political statement of that movement also participates in the negotiation of space in which bodies take shape. The women's lived experiences of participating in the program can surely, aligned with Simonsen, be seen as "a continuous negotiation between what is familiar and unfamiliar," in this case the tensions that arise from contesting the givenness of spatial politics through the deliberate spatial constellations of Azad's organizing.

Exploring social transformation by attending to the women's lived experiences as they interact within Azad's organizing implies the acknowledgment that although they were participating in a program, the transformative processes concerned the practices of the women's *everyday lives.* This was the context of their lives at this moment in time. The social entrepreneurial organizing interfered with the practices of their everyday lives; as this chapter has illustrated, such practices were intrinsically corporeal, emotional, and relational. That space both is affective and expressive means that there is reciprocity to negotiations and that spatial politics transform *relationally.* Simonsen argues that emotions can be public and relational:

> Emotions are formed in the intertwining of our 'own' bodily flesh with the flesh of the world and with the intercorporeal flesh of humanity. This sense of mutuality should, however, not be mistaken for harmony, since the kind of emotions involved is not necessarily positive and appreciating. They take form of the whole register of different emotions such as for instance love, desire, hate or fear. (2007: 177)

In the notion of lived experiences, "the body takes up a dual role," as Simonsen elucidates, inhabiting space as "located in the 'mid-point' between mind and body, or between subject and object" (Simonsen, 2007: 172). As the women train to become drivers, they were gaining radically new and different experiences within their everyday lives that concerned access to new places, meeting new people, learning new capabilities, and being presented with new perceptions, particularly of gendered practices. They *experienced* and *perceived* themselves differently because of it. This is the *practicing of place* of which Massey (2005) speaks, where negotiations can be seen as 'forced' upon them. Simultaneously, the women experienced themselves in the dynamics between being subjects and objects in the ongoing production of spatial politics. They perceived and they were being perceived, and they perceived that they were being perceived. Participating in the program to become drivers, I argue, threw the women into negotiations with one's self, others, and surroundings, that were corporeal, emotional, and relational practiced in and through the "whole sensing body" (Simonsen, 2007: 172).

Central here, then, is the body. If we do not have bodies, but *are* bodies, then waves of thoughts, emotions, atmospheres, and moods are deeply situated within bodily experiences and evidently penetrate our realities as human beings. Our bodies are capable of other types of experiences and knowing than our minds are. The empirical material of this chapter has demonstrated how Azad's organizing through bodily practices to different degrees contested and transformed emotions and perceptions within the women, and that this knowledge was also "stored" corporeally, a sensory knowledge (Stewart, 2011). This means that when they negotiated spatial politics in new ways – say, when a woman poked a man on the bus with her elbow to defend herself from harassment – this productive moment produced a corporeal memory and affect besides the emotional, mental, and relational aspects. This also suggests that Azad's organizing through incorporating bodily aspects into their modules might in fact be a smart way to enable the transformation of emotions and perceptions. These are bodily and experiential ways to almost impose negotiations upon a woman related to how she perceives and feels about herself. Placing women behind the wheel forced such reactions for all women I have interviewed, as did commuting alone, self-defense training, and the skits and instances of sharing experiences of gendered harassment and violence in their lives.

**Matters matter, and driving *does* something more**

Pursuing a relational perspective within organizational studies means having an attention toward the "material, embodied, and affective conditions of organizing" (Steyaert, 2012: 151). While giving precedence to human activity rather than leveling human and non-human agency, I find that the materiality of space is of significant importance in understanding the production of space and its politics. The social and the material are intrinsically interwoven, which means that encounters are not merely between bodies of people, but as much between people, things, and geographies (e.g., places, nature, cityscape). In other words, matter matters, as Shotter (2013: 36) puts it:

> And it is in this sense that matter matters to us: our 'seeing' things, 'hearing' things, 'making sense,' and 'talking of' things, are all material practices, involving the intra-twining, or the entanglement, of certain of our material bodily processes with those of the material world. To repeat, we are not separate agents, but 'participant parts' within and of an indivisible, continually unfolding, stranded, flowing whole, able to set the boundaries that matter to us within it in one way at one moment and in another way the next.

Sitting behind the wheel of a car affected the women of poor backgrounds. Having a mobile phone with the number of the police helpline became a tool used by the women in negotiations with themselves or others. The material affects of the experience of commuting alone, seeing and knowing the city, affected the women too. The materiality of space participated significantly in women's negotiations and, as they gained new experiences of the material world, their ability to negotiate changed.

That Azad & Sakha's methodology for transformation is centered on the act of women becoming drivers thus did more than "merely" provide livelihoods that break gendered stereotypical practices. Driving *does* more. This observation is well aligned with Sheller (2004: 222), who talks about "automotive emotions" and states that "movement and being moved together produces the feelings of being in the car, for the car and with the car." Furthermore, the author suggests, "there is a crucial conjunction between motion and emotion, movement and feeling, autos and motives" (2004: 226), something which the empirical material strongly supports – not merely because of one's individual response to driving and affiliation with the car, but also because of socio-political symbolic aspects of driving in terms of these women being from poor communities:

> These feelings are neither located solely within the person nor produced solely by the car as a moving object, but occur as a circulation of affects between (different) persons, (different) cars, and historically situated car cultures and geographies of automobility. (Sheller, 2004: 227)

Sheller (2004: 230) links driving to social inclusion or exclusion, as she finds that "driving offers many people a feeling of liberation, empowerment and social inclusion, while the inability to drive may lead to feelings of social exclusion and disempowerment in cultures of automobility." Indeed, that seems to the case for the women of poor backgrounds, who traditionally were widely socially excluded from participation and movement in the city due to the socio-economic, caste-stigmatized, and gender-subordinated politics of their everyday lives. Learning to drive and being drivers provided a new level of inclusion or access from which the majority of the women (and men) from these backgrounds were utterly excluded. This potentially influenced the status women have in their communities, but also exposed them to increasing opposition. Stradling (2002: 11) links driving to age, gender, and class, finding that different groups holds varying feelings of "projection, pride, power, self-expression or independence," and argues that:

> Thus different kinds of persons obtain different kind of psychological benefits from car use. Driving a car is particularly attractive to the young and the poor because of the sense of displayed personal identity it conveys. (Stradling, 2002: 11)

This relational ontology of the co-constitutive interaction between people, places and things is central to the processual and performative conceptualization of space. Massey (2004; 2005) also acknowledges the affective aspects of space in and through the "relations-between." The material, embodied, and affective are inherent to space as products of the interrelations generated in the here-and-now of encounters, which implies an open-endedness of the processes themselves and thus the openness of the future – a movement of becoming, and one of deep feelings.

**Continuous unsettling producing negotiations**

Although just considering the proposition of becoming a driver started an unsettling of the givenness of spatial politics as addressed in previous chapter, the unsettling became far more invasive when women trained to become a driver in Delhi. The notion of unsettling as something that both can dissolve and build, as "moments of disorientation" (Simonsen, 2013: 20), ascribes to such productive moments qualities like destabilization, confrontation, or discouragement, but at the same time also encouragement, excitement, hope, and new directions. Seen from an organizational perspective, the modules and methods are put together to deliberately unsettle "the traditional" or "the familiar," meanwhile building up "the new" or the alternative becoming.

The unsettling is not the same as the negotiation; rather, the unsettling instigates it. I perceive being affected – corporeally, emotionally, and mentally – by the spatial constellations of Azad's

organizing to be that which unsettles the givenness of spatial politics for the women in their homes and communities. This tension between the taken-for-granted of the traditional and an alternative view is what instigated *a possibility* for negotiations, which can be with one's self, with others, or in relation to the surroundings at large – mostly all at once. This tension is an opening of space, and negotiations the response within it. They are intrinsic to each other, but not the same. When the women started to sense, feel, reflect, or discuss in new ways due to this unsettling, I perceive this to be the negotiations, or in Simonsen's (2012) terms the expressive space, whereas the affective space is that which caused it.

If the spatial constellations deliberately orchestrated by Azad can be seen as an opening of space, and if space can be said to inherently comprise an affective and expressive character, then the dynamic within each unique spatio-temporal moment is between the extent of the affect and its influence *for* expression, but it includes the specificity of its politics. As we saw in the empirical analysis, certain spatial constellations, like learning to drive, forced negotiations unto all the women; the affective space of the car and driving produced an expressive space of practicing emotions of fear, of overcoming fear, and of the excitement and pride of driving. When I say that the expressive part of a spatial constellation relies on the specificity of given spatial politics, I mean that the affective space – for example, of self-defense training with the Delhi police – might have led a woman to negotiate new practices of thoughts and action with herself, but in a given situation she might choose to elbow a man on the bus, and the following day she might choose not to, maybe because of a perceived threat of increased violence. My point is that the affective and expressive characteristics produced through the spatial constellation might have an influence on "inner" practices that might not always be exercised outwardly. The affect of space is not bound to a specific moment, but can come into expression across time and spaces. This is how the past also influences negotiations in the here and now.

Contesting traditional politics occurred through myriad daily negotiations that gradually enacted the new. Take the example of the woman elbowing a man on the bus: in that productive moment, she contested the traditional (the perception that it is a man's right to touch a woman's body) by enacting a novel and non-traditional response in the situation (she pushed him off and exercised her right not to be touched). In this context, the confrontation of traditional practices that the women experience through participating in the program largely related to how power is distributed and perceived between caste, class, and gender (will be addressed in different ways the following three chapters). This tension existed just as much within the women, where negotiations also occurred ongoing and non-linear in their apparent expressions. Recall the poem at the beginning of this chapter, which depicts this part of the process eloquently:

> We do not grow absolutely, chronologically. We grow sometimes in one dimension, and not in another, unevenly. We grow partially. We are relative. We are mature in one realm, childish in another. The past, present, and future mingle and pull us backward, forward, or fix us in the present. We are made of layers, cells, constellations. (Nin, in Stuhlmann, 1971)

The empirical findings of this chapter resonate with Nin's statement: processes of social transformation were practiced as something partial and relative, instead of movements that were absolute and chronological. Rather, the processes appeared quite uneven, indeed or non-linear; which correlates with the notion that identities are multiple, open, and relationally negotiated in the practicing of space. Evidently, the women's identities were challenged and transformed in the program, even just from relating to the function of being a female driver. Embodying and embracing this new aspect of the self and life had no specific recipe or manual for navigation; it was a negotiation that in its very nature implied back-and-forth deliberations, experimentations, and adjustments. It drew on the past, but was contested in the present of the contemporary politics of a given woman's life, and opened by a pull toward an alternative becoming of the future. The women were not just either the "old" or the "new"; they were multiple "beings" all at once and may be not even sure of what. Experimentation was required as there exited no manual for the next day's negotiations or processes of becoming.

Each woman's multiplicity of identities, and the ways in which she was perceived, explain how her practices might appear contradictory at times. She grows partially, she negotiates relatively each day, she transforms practices in one realm, but not in another; maybe she changes her mind. She is made of constellations and relations with herself, others, and the world around her. Recall this observation by Massey (2005: 162): "The negotiation will always be an invention; there will be need for judgement, learning, improvisation; there will be no simple portable rules." On the basis of my empirical findings, I think that this observation applies well to how social transformation can be understood processually. Despite the relative, partial, experimental, uneven, and non-linear nature of processes of social transformation, there were still certain commonalities and directions in the processes over time, which implies that even if this movement appears somewhat messy, it was however not random or without direction. I shall address this further in Chapter Seven.

When I say wind, I mean breath
When I say breath, I mean word
When I say word, I mean meaning
When I say meaning, I mean depth
When I say depth, I mean feeling
When I say feeling, I mean passion
When I say passion, I mean streaks of soul across the air of night
When I say streaks of soul across the air of night
I mean extensions beyond the rooms we live in
When I say extensions beyond the rooms we live in,
I mean balconies
And when I say balconies, I mean a place to watch the wind.



Luzien Zell

# THE EXPANSION OF SPACE

Chapter Six

Behind the wheel and in the function of drivers, the women from poor backgrounds enter and encounter new social and geographical worlds. In this chapter, I offer an account of what this expansion of space does to the women and the way social transformation is practiced. I examine the materiality of being a driver and its affects, as well as the drivers' relations to clients and encounters with the city of Delhi. I consider, among other things, how the performativity of being a driver contests and confuses traditional norms of caste, class, and gender, and how female drivers in the streets of Delhi are a collective performativity of critiquing and redoing those norms.

# Being a driver: encountering new worlds

"This session is called 'How to Be a Millionaire!'" Azad & Sakha's founder and director exclaims, discernibly excited, arms rising upward, wide-open, in a theatrical gesture toward the gathering. "And," she continues with a smile, on the verge of bursting, "if we want to change the world, who must change?" There is just an instant of a pause as the rhetorical question hangs in the air before it is overrun by an echoing, "We must!" as about 40 Sakha drivers reply in chorus.

We are in the large basement of a residential house in a well-off area in south Delhi. It belongs to the women's rights activist Kamla Bhasin, who is a close friend of the founder and a vocal supporter of its work. The occasion that brings us all to this place is written on a large purple poster: *Sakha Chauffeur Meet May 25, 2014*. It is Sunday, the drivers' only day off, and Sakha is hosting an event for all their chauffeurs. It started at 9:30 a.m. with "registration and tea," with some 20 women short of the 60+ the staff had expected. The women are seated in a U-shape on white cushions at the floor. It is a large, spacious room with a little tea kitchen and bathroom attached to it. Looking out onto a minute garden in front of the house, the windows just below the ceiling allow some daylight inside. Otherwise, the room is lit by neon lights in the ceiling. Four large fans are spinning at full speed, bringing some air circulation to the room and making the temperature quite pleasant. The walls are white; there are large cream-white tiles on the floor and very little furniture. Posters on the walls tell stories of social and feminist activism. Against the colorlessness of the room, the turquoise uniforms the drivers are wearing stand out like paint on a white canvas.

It is now 1 p.m., and the two female directors of Azad and Sakha, respectively, have taken the floor. The former continues her opening speech of the session:

> So first we must work on ourselves. We must work with the nervousness of talking to clients. We must find the confidence to be honest with the client and, for example, say it if we don't know the way somewhere.

There is silence. The women listen. Some look attentive; others gaze at the floor or giggle or whisper quietly amongst themselves. They seem pleased to have some time together. "Do you know Mercedes?" the founder says in a slightly playful manner, breaking the quietude. "YES!" the women shout aloud in unison, and a cheerful vivacity takes presence in the room. The founder elaborates in a language of economistic achievement:

> Clients must be proud of Sakha drivers, as people are proud of owning a Mercedes. You must develop your brand; you cannot afford to be an average driver.

The directors are addressing what they in the organization often refer to as "challenges with professionalism." They find that the women generally have difficulties with behaving like professional drivers – for example, there is a lack of punctuality – that creates conflicts with clients. Today, they are introducing a new initiative aimed at providing incentives for the drivers to establish better work relationships with their clients. The two directors hold up an oversized, colorful check look-alike of purple and pink cardboard. The operational director of Sakha takes over:

> So there are three different stages [in the incentive scheme]. The first three months, if you manage to create a good relationship with your client and maintain it, then you will be able to receive a cash prize of 2,500 INR.[87] If after six months a strong relationship is in place, you will receive an additional cash prize of 2,500 INR. And after one year of a successful, good relationship, the cash prize is 7,500 INR. You will only receive any of the prizes after a fully completed year of good relationships. If you get in trouble, you will have to start over.

The founder brings a woman up from the floor; in a playful way, which makes everyone laugh loudly, she makes a point about creating good relationships with clients. She continues the explanation of the new incentive program:

> There are some parameters to receive the bonus. You must have had the same client for 12 months, unless the client moves or something like that. And if you choose to leave Sakha, you must give notice one month before. There are some non-negotiables that you must live up to as a professional driver. One is punctuality, to be on time. [...] For example, for our event today, many girls didn't cancel and just didn't show up. If a client calls you at 9:30 a.m., you should be able to be ready at 9:50. You must show up when you have agreed to.

She proceeds with the "non-negotiables." First, she mentions trustworthiness, referring to the importance of letting clients know if a driver is late or needs to cancel, and more generally highlighting the need to be honest in their communication. It can happen that women suddenly disappear from work for days in a row, without giving any notice to either clients or Sakha, if they

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[87] 2,500 INR equals 39 USD or 248 DKK. Likewise, 7,500 INR equals 116 USD or 745 DKK

have other obligations at home – attending a wedding, for example. Azad's director continues to list points, now a bit more rapidly:

> *Alertness and concentration* when at work; *being responsible* – for example, think ahead and fill up the tank before it is too late, and don't postpone errands; *personal grooming*, which means looking clean and presentable; and *professionalism* in your behavior toward the job, client, and the car.

On several instances, while elaborating on these points, she refers to the idea of "creating your own Mercedes brand." Then she returns to the "non-negotiables":

> *Positivity*; approach your work with positivity. Many clients complain that our drivers are too grumpy, no smiles, and that you cry too easily if you are corrected.
>
> Smile! Smile! [She makes an exaggerated smiley face. Everyone laughs aloud.]
>
> Nalini [jokingly addressing the director of Sakha beside her], next year we will hold a smiling contest to see who has mastered smiling.

A driver jumps in with a remark:

> [Driver] But sometimes we greet the client nicely in the morning and they don't respond or are just grumpy.
>
> [Founder] It doesn't matter. It is about you doing your work well and building your own Mercedes brand; you are not building your client.

Reaching the end of the presentation, the founder talks more softly, kindly, making funny postures and jokes to make the women laugh. It works: there is a high level of giggling and outbursts of laughter. A final point is made about the importance of, and empowerment in, saving up money in the bank. She calls on Lalita, a driver, pointing her out as a role model, and asks her to stand up:

> Lalita saved money from the very beginning. One day her family's house flooded and they had to borrow a lot of money from a moneylender to make the repairs, so they obtained a difficult mortgage. But because of her savings, Lalita could buy the family free.

Everyone claps loudly, and Lalita smiles.

The Sakha chauffeur meeting brought the female drivers together for a full day of workshop and socializing. It is particularly interesting because it brings together many of the issues Azad & Sakha see the women face when they become drivers for women from other socio-political worlds. The event also highlights how the organization attempts to address these challenges and ease the women's entry into working as drivers. In this chapter, we will see what happens when the women start working as professional drivers in Delhi. Equipped with a driver's license and a uniform, the women encounter clients and enter the city through performing the function of being a driver. What does this performativity look like, how it is experienced by the women, and – more directly pertaining to the research interests of my thesis – what does performing such a radically different function in the socio-political sphere of Delhi imply for processes of potential social transformation? This chapter engages with these questions by focusing on the practices and lived experiences of the female drivers in their relations to the clients and the city.

This chapter thus is about how the social entrepreneurial organizing of Azad & Sakha can be seen as a social and geographical expansion of space. Through a profound increase in mobility, and in working for female clients, the drivers encountered and entered new worlds. These encounters initiated negotiations with themselves, with others, and in relation to "the city". Materiality, bodies, and places participated in the negotiations, which concerned both what it means to be a female driver in this setting, but also their individual subjectivities in relation to it. Through driving, which enables an expansion of space, the women from poor backgrounds gained insight into – and at times, access to – places and socio-political worlds from which they were previously completely excluded. This influenced how they perceived the world around them and their own place within it. Meeting new worlds *did something* to the women. Both the expansion of the experience and awareness of other socio-political and geographical worlds, as well as the clashes and inspirations emerging at the verge of intersecting worlds, seemed to facilitate processes in which identities and subjectivities were challenged and potentially transformed. The materiality of being a driver, encounters in the city, relations to clients, and their negotiations animated not only the sense of self of the women, but also a broader process of social transformation in the realm of their everyday lives. As drivers, the women embody an alternative way of living gender (and "being poor") in this context, and they claim a right to appear in public spaces in a new way, albeit still within the contours of a service function to the higher societal classes (Butler, 2015).

With an analytical focus on the expansion of space, this chapter first introduces how the women begin their job as a driver and their first meeting with clients. I then proceed to discuss the materiality, corporeality, and politics of performing the function of a female driver in Delhi and how these aspects participated in the negotiations. I show that the uniform particularly affected

the negotiation of space, albeit in different ways. Finally, I consider the ways in which encounters between the drivers and their clients produced tensions and clashes, as well as encouragement and inspiration, in an ongoing negotiation of their relations. I end with a note on the women's encounters with "the city." Driving across the multi-million-inhabitant capital of Delhi, with upper class women in the backseat, these women from poor backgrounds visited places they had never seen before. As they moved through the city as drivers, they were affected by the "where" of that movement, as well as by the "with whom" (Simonsen, 2007).

**On the bench and beyond: transitioning from trainee to driver**

Before we explore what happens when the women start working as drivers in Delhi, I want to mention the minor transition process between being a trainee and being a driver. While it may be a small detail in relation to the scope of the training program or the processes of working as a driver, this "in-between" phase is hardly minor when it comes to the amount of women who leave the organization at this juncture. This transition phase was an organizational challenge, perhaps a defect of Azad & Sakha's hybrid structure. Although the staff members sit together and work as one organization, processually the work is organized such that Azad is in charge of mobilizing, the training programs, and the trainees, and Sakha is responsible for the drivers. However, something seemed to be problematic in the process that took place when a woman finished as a trainee and needed to land her first job as a driver. Some women literally got lost in transition. In the organizational systems, the women need to pass from Azad's care over to Sakha's management, which they call "holding the girls." The challenge is that when Azad stops "holding the girls," it appears as though Sakha does not get the same "hold" immediately. Furthermore, as the women pass into Sakha's domain, more often than not it takes a while before they land their first job. During this period of time, the women in transition often experienced themselves as neither a trainee nor yet a driver. This period of waiting for a job is deemed "being on the bench" by the organization. As a term traditionally used in sports for players who are not "in the game" but waiting off the field on the bench, it speaks of a similar situation in this context. It was often associated with feelings of frustration, nervousness, and impatience by the women, at times increased by pressure from their family members to make money. Organizational members, likewise, have shared that they perceive this period of time as a crucial and challenging passage.

Once the women have passed the official driving test in order to earn a driver's license, they organizationally finish in the Azad part of the program, and Sakha takes over. The organization found that at this point, although the women have a driver's license, they are not yet experienced enough to start driving clients. The first thing that happens, therefore, is that the women train in the Azad

& Sakha cars, but without a trainer. Usually they practice driving in this fashion for a few weeks, at times with other women, taking turns driving. When Sakha staff find that a woman is ready for the next step, they schedule her for what they term "the Sakha test." This is an internal driving test made by Sakha in order to assure that the women are ready for taking clients. A small group of volunteers, referred to as "Sakha test panel members," work with Sakha for this purpose, acting like clients and assessing whether a woman is ready to work as a driver. The driving test consists of a woman taking one panel member on a drive across the city, just like if they were a client; subsequently she will receive an evaluation on whether she has passed or not. If not, the women train some more. Once a woman has passed the test, Sakha staff arrange for job interviews, which also include a test drive with the potential client, but this time in the client's car. Sakha calls these jobs as private drivers "private placements," as the first type of job the women can get is usually a placement as a private driver for well-off women in Delhi, or in a few cases as private drivers for a company. Only after two years of experience as a private driver can the women who are interested apply for a taxi license.

Getting an inexperienced driver to land her first job is a challenging task. It can take a few months. The test drive with a potential client might not go as well as hoped, or a woman might get fired quickly because a client was not satisfied with her level of competency. Since the new drivers generally lack experience when beginning their first job, it sometimes takes a while to convince potential clients to give them a chance, as one Sakha staff member explains:

> One thing we face in private placements is that the drivers we send out on their first job are not as accomplished as most people hiring a driver would want them to be. So it takes a lot of convincing from us to tell them to give her a chance. The first job is always difficult, so you know, we argue, "If you don't give her her first job, how will she ever get to her second?" It [the first job] either goes very well or badly, in the sense that if it goes badly maybe the driver has an accident in the client's car, or there are attitude issues of not being able to report on time, or things like that – in which case the employment is often terminated. It is roughly half-half for good and bad first job experiences for the drivers. After the first job and with time, they become better and better.

This means that clients must be willing to take a chance with a newly trained driver; sometimes they want an experienced driver, making it hard for the new ones to become employed. It is a back-and-forth negotiation between Sakha staff and a given client, with the new driver stuck in the middle. In some instances, this can turn into a demotivating experience for the driver. One of my research participants, Geeta, got a job immediately after getting her driver's license, but after three months of work, the client moved abroad, putting her back on the bench. Finding her a second job took a while, a staff member recalls:

> There was a job with a renowned corporation as a driver for the daughter and grandchildren of one of the owners. I was trying very hard to place her there […]. They wanted someone who had a lot more driving experience. While they were very enthusiastic about having a woman driver, there was a mismatch. I think that made Geeta feel… see, the negotiation took a long time to happen, so in that period she got a little disheartened. It was over a month of back and forth; then they said okay, and then not. Then out of the blue she said that she wouldn't be able to do it, and then she got back and said, okay, she would be able to do it. So it got a little tedious for everyone. The client wanted a much more senior resource.

**The first meeting between clients and drivers: the job interview**

Whether a new driver waits for a long time on the bench, has an accident within the first weeks of work, or gets fired rapidly again, it seems that for about half of the women there is a rough start to being a professional driver. One reason is that their levels of competency and experience are significantly lower than what most clients expect when hiring a private driver. Clients I interviewed expressed that they needed to train the women themselves in the beginning because their driving was too rough and the women were too insecure. Consider the following statement from a client, Madhu, who has had Sakha drivers for over four years. At the time we met, my research participant Geeta had been her private driver for three months. This was Geeta's second job, after a long wait on the bench, and Madhu's sixth female driver from Sakha:

> You know, if you believe in women empowerment […] for me it was obvious [to hire a female driver] […] none of them are excellent drivers when they come. There are issues when the car gets banged initially, so you mentally prepare to go through that, because you believe they will gain from it all somehow.

Another client, Rita, a university professor, shared how the new driver she had hired several years ago – Anika, now an experienced private driver – was lacking some skills at first. Instead of firing her, the client urged Sakha to give her more training:

> I realized there were some issues with Anika's driving which needed to be addressed. So I rang them [Sakha] up and said, "I am going to be away for a week to 10 days, so if you in the meantime could reacquaint her with these little nuisances, it would make it much easier." They were very small things like changing the gear and so. They said, "Okay, and you don't have to pay, we will just do it." So Anika had five or six lessons more.

It was common for the clients, who are women of middle and upper class backgrounds, to be more patient with the new drivers than they would be with a traditional male driver, since to different

degrees, clients also felt that they were supporting important work for women's empowerment in Delhi.

For the new drivers, meeting a client for the first time in the test drive was often associated with fear, worry, and nervousness – particularly because they were driving the client's car. Anika vividly recalled her first test drive with a client, a job that she eventually landed:

> I had gone for the interview [at the client's residence], and "sir" [the driving trainer] was also present for some time. The client asked me to take the car out and take them to the petrol pump. Sir came with us to that place, but then we dropped him off. She [the client] asked sir to leave me with her, since she had some work to be taken care of and in the process she would also be able to see how I was able to drive around. So I was left alone with her. I grew very scared then. I was scared of something happening and was wondering how I would take the car back if something were to happen on the way. Then I took her around and everything turned out fine.

The first drive with a potential client was characterized by an embodied experience of strong emotions for most of the new drivers. There was the pressure of wanting the job, wanting to make a good impression, the unfamiliar responsibility of driving someone else's car (someone of higher social status), and the obvious fear of accidents of different kinds. The pressure, the increase in fear or worry, and the weight of responsibility are suddenly felt much more strongly than when the women were driving as trainees. The first meeting with a client was a new kind of negotiations for the women – one that related to their function as drivers, as well as the fact that they were meeting with a woman, and often her family, from another social background. Many things were at stake in the transition from being a trainee to becoming a driver – for the women in particular, but also for the organization. Like a crack between two organizational systems, some women disappeared in this transition (women leaving the organization will be addressed more in Chapter Eight).

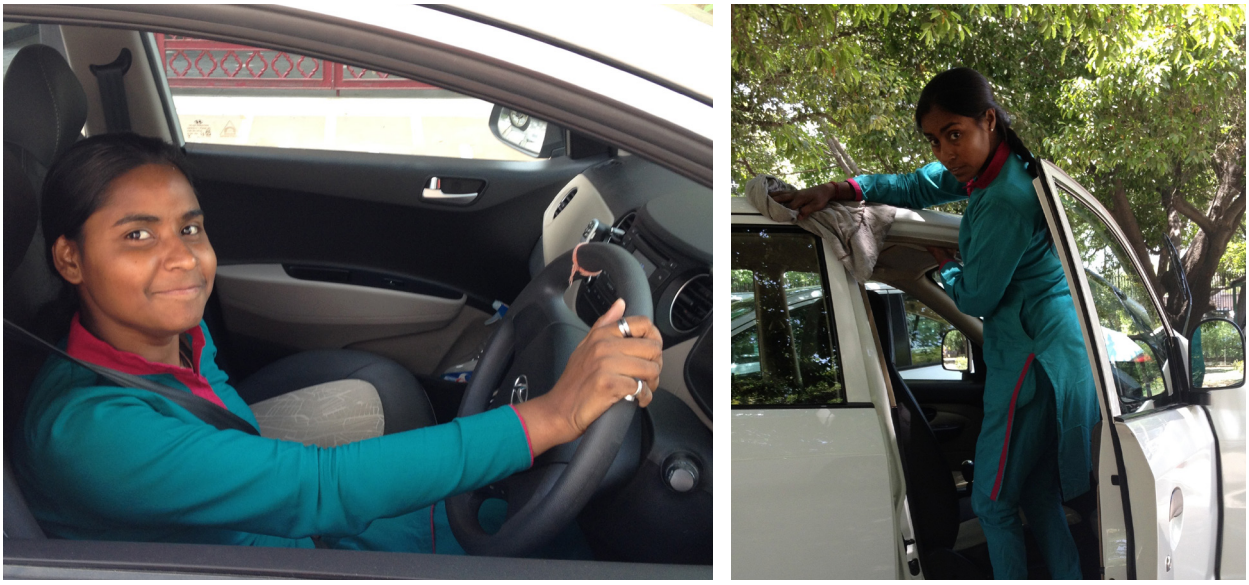
Being a driver with Sakha provides certain new material manifestations of their function, some of which are directly visible to others, others of which are not (e.g., salary and bank account). The visible material artifacts that participate in producing one's function as a female driver with Sakha are a uniform and an official driver's license; additionally, for the taxi drivers, there is an identity badge, a Sakha sign to put on the front door of the driver's household, and the taxi vehicle itself. The women deployed and experienced these organizational artifacts in different ways in order to perform the function of a driver. Yet while the artifacts obviously participated the women's function as drivers, they concurrently appeared to facilitate underlying negotiations of the women's identities and subjectivities in their everyday lives. To explore the material, corporeal, and symbolic aspects of performing the function of a Sakha driver in Delhi, I found the uniform

to be a highly influential artifact, and I will thus examine it in greater detail than the deployment of badges, signs, and the car.

Zoya,
taxi driver: It feels good to drive. I go out wearing a uniform, so people also turn their heads giving me looks. I have driven a lot of cars, SUVs, big vehicles; people also used to stare in disbelief that indeed a girl is driving. Now I am driving a taxi; girls don't do that at all. I feel good and I feel proud.

**The performativity of a uniform**

Once the women land their first job as a private driver, they receive two tailor-made sets of the iconic turquoise-and-pink Sakha uniform; the taxi drivers wear the same. The new drivers can choose between a uniform of a shirt and pants or a suit, which – like a traditional Indian suit, what many of the women wear daily – consists of *churidar salwar*, tight pants, and a *kameez* (also commonly called a *kurta*), a long shirt or tunic. Most women opt for the latter.



*Different places in Delhi*
Drivers in the turquoise-and-pink Sakha uniform on different occasions.

When the new driver suddenly enters the city in a uniform, there is a visible difference – physically, symbolically, and relationally. The Sakha uniform makes the drivers stand out in public spaces while taking public transport, doing errands, or driving. This was particularly the case for private drivers, because in driving the clients' cars, they did not have the branded Sakha taxi as a testimony to their function as a driver. The uniform, then, is what made the private drivers stand out in the public space as embodying a professional role. Moreover, it participated in the negotiation and

performativity of being a driver in relation to others, to the city, and also in relation to themselves. Kanishka, an experienced taxi driver, had come to appreciate what the uniform *did* to her:

> Kanishka, taxi driver: If I am in a normal dress [Indian suit], no one will recognize me. I don't know why, but I have this fear that if I go anywhere, someone will hurt me. But when I go out wearing the uniform, even if it is midnight, I feel bold and confident. So I find it really important and feel like all my clothes should be like this dress [the uniform]. You are easily recognizable in it. I have noticed that when I used to go to my private job in normal clothes, people used to comment and pass remarks [of harassment], but when I was in a uniform they would not say anything. Initially I didn't like the uniform and this color, but after starting to work, I realized the uniform made me bold.

Notice how wearing the uniform did something more to Kanishka than signifying she belonged to an organization. She experienced it as making her recognizable (relationally to the city), as it granted her more respect (relationally with others), but it also made her feel more bold and confident, as she puts it. The uniform in this way becomes a relational tool for her to negotiate both her function as a driver and her subjectivity in the spatial politics of encounters with one's self, others, and surroundings. The uniform emotional effect is part of this, too, in making Kanishka feel more confident when wearing it. When Kanishka states, "The uniform made me bold," it is not the uniform that is making her bold – as if it had its own agency – but the way Kanishka relates to and with the uniform is "making the uniform bold," so to speak. The change in her emotions and practices was derived from the relation between herself, as a driver, and the uniform as she experienced and perceived the uniform, and to some extent how it was perceived by others as well.

This is an important distinction: the way an artifact, such as the uniform, is experienced and perceived by a driver predominantly determines its affect. This can certainly be influenced by how others perceive it, but is not necessarily always the case. Other women drivers wearing the same type of uniform might not feel more bold and confident in it. The relationship between women and the uniform is neither a given nor "uniform." Given the heterogeneity of the women, the clients, and their respective relations, the uniform was experienced differently. Despite the fact that it is compulsory for all drivers to wear the uniform while working, some private drivers did not always comply.

Geeta, one of the private drivers whom I followed, made such exceptions. In all our meetings, I never saw her wear a uniform; she typically wore jeans and a shirt, T-shirt, or *kurta*. Since the

private drivers mainly deal directly with clients and do not wait around in the Azad & Sakha office like the taxi drivers, the staff members have no way of knowing if they are wearing the uniform. One day, as I was following Geeta on the job, she was dressed in white jeans with a gray shirt tucked into them. It occurred to me, as she drove us across the city, that in this moment, outsiders looking into the car could assume it to be her own. Maybe she enjoyed the feeling that gave her, that for a moment she might just be seen as a woman with her own car, I wondered. Momentarily, the situation blurred the boundaries of caste and social class, it seemed to me. However, the question remained open: Geeta's only reply to why she tended not to wear the uniform was, "I don't like it much."

**Standing out: "This uniform, it is quite strange"**

Not unlike Kanishka's description of being recognized when wearing the uniform, Zoya, the taxi driver quoted earlier, spoke of feeling proud when people "turn their heads," noticing her in uniform behind the wheel. What both drivers were addressing – a point echoed by several other drivers I interviewed – is that in the uniform they stand out and become noticed. The experience of feeling the gaze of "the others" in the spaces of the city appeared to produce a sense of pride for some women; they felt recognized for doing something radically different *as women*. That they were doing and living gender outside of the norms was noticed – and emphasized by the uniform. I also noticed this when shadowing Anika, a private driver, on a full day's work, much of which she spent waiting around at the campus of a university where her client works. The following fieldnote description portrays my observations and gives an impression of a typical day on the job for a driver like Anika.

**Wearing a uniform: standing out, or belonging to something or someone?**
*Fieldnotes 27.05.15*

> It is 10:15 a.m. when we arrive at the university campus in a northern corner of Delhi. Anika stops the car in the middle of a large parking lot, close to a narrow lane that crosses a lawn of downtrodden, dry grass toward the buildings farther down. Her client, Rita, immediately gets out and walks briskly down the lane until she disappears in the far distance. It all happens automatically without words or hesitation; clearly a daily routine. Anika then parks the car in the shade of a tree in a parking lot. She goes to the trunk, pulls out a computer bag and a few other bags, and takes off at a rapid pace down the same lane. It leads to a large building; she enters, turns quickly to the right, and goes into an office, where she leaves the items. Just as swiftly, she is out again.





*Delhi University, north Delhi*
A driver at work.

Walking back along the same lane, we arrive at a square in front of a large building with a library. On the opposite side there is a small kiosk selling chai, drinks, and snacks. Anika goes to the kiosk and starts talking to the man behind the counter and a woman who stands at the kiosk. She hangs out there for a while engaging with them; clearly they know each other. After a little while, each with a chai in hand, Anika and the woman go to sit down in the shade on a concrete configuration that serves as a bench. It is situated under a large tree with an impressive crown of spring-fresh leaves that cast a welcoming shade over the area. The air is still; not a trace of wind. They chat like two friends who do this often. The campus is beautifully located, with lush gardens and greenery all around. In all directions there are trees, plants, and brightly colored flowers. The area is buzzing with birds, squirrels, and insects, too – explosions of colors, smells, and sounds.

After a while, Anika gets up and goes toward where the car is parked. She stops to talk a few minutes to a man who sits under the large tree next to them; she seems to know him too. Then she disappears in the distance into the parking lot area and returns with something in a small plastic bag. It is a knitting kit. She takes the same seat as before and carries on chatting with the lady, now while knitting. Suddenly she yells something to an elderly lady walking by with another woman along the lane. "Auntie[88]…[something short]!" They all laugh. They engage like this from afar and then the woman carries on, disappearing down a lane. Every so often, Anika nods or waves to someone passing by. People recognize her.

[88] Addressing others as "Auntie" or "Uncle" is common in India as a way to reference elders in an amicable way (despite not being of the same family) as opposed to the terms "ma'am" and "sir," which denote social distance and hierarchy.




*Delhi University, north Delhi*
Anika hanging out with a woman at the university campus.

Observing Anika in this setting I notice that she stands out in her turquoise Sakha uniform. Everyone else is wearing "regular" everyday clothing, either jeans and shirts or the traditional Indian suit in fabrics with colorful patterns. The woman Anika is talking to happens to be working as a cleaning lady at the university. She wears an Indian suit in light orange with a white pattern and a purple scarf. If Anika had not told me, I could never have guessed that the woman was a member of the cleaning staff and on duty at this moment. In what she wears, she looks like many other Indian women in the cityscape. Anika, on the other hand, stands out, both because the fabric of her uniform is bright turquoise and atypically single-colored, and because of the uniform look of it. It is evident to everyone that she is on duty of some kind. The others blend in more, including the cleaning lady. I wonder if Anika is aware of this or if she minds?

So, Anika stood out in terms of her clothing, as it did look like a uniform; also, because since she wore the same thing every day, people recognized her more easily. Second, a lot of people engaged briefly with her and clearly seemed to know her, as they were coming and going through the outdoor campus space where she waited for hours most days of the week. Consider the following account from Anika's client, who had her own observations on Anika's function as a driver and the way the uniform participated in facilitating novel negotiations – and processes of transforming practices – within the spaces of the campus.

In the backseat of her car, as Anika, her private driver of over three years, took us through

morning traffic toward the Delhi University campus, Rita started talking about her experiences of having a female driver. “This uniform, it is quite strange,” she remarked. Reflecting on that statement, she slowly elaborated, “At the university there are two other women who have Sakha drivers. One of them has a very high level power in the university bureaucracy, and because she has a Sakha driver, my driver is able to drive into little pockets of the university that would otherwise be barricaded for us.” The traffic was busy, at times at a standstill, and I registered how people in passing vehicles or on the side road stared insistently at Anika. At times, they pointed or made a remark to fellow travelers once they noticed her behind the wheel. Anika just focused on the road. Rita continued:

> Because Anika is in the blue uniform, she takes me in there and they salute her, because they think that whoever has a driver like this is important. So I am sort of a celebrity there. They [university staff] recognize the uniform. When I tell them I have a female driver, they look at me in a different, special way. So sometimes I feel as though she has given me a status in a way, as a woman who employs a woman – not in a normal way, not just as domestic help, but as a chauffeur.
>
> Everyone on my campus knows her very well, and they tell me, “I met your driver today. She is really nice.” They would not do that otherwise. In my life she is a “conversation person” [a topic of conversation, and someone who talks to people in her life]. As I said earlier, I have access to new areas, because of her and her uniform, which were otherwise not allowed. [...] I can go straight to the vice chancellor’s office.

As I suggested above, the uniform participated in negotiations within the spatial politics of drivers’ everyday lives. But what this account so amply shows and adds, is that the performativity of the function of a female driver in Delhi – made visible due to the uniform – also transformed spatial politics in certain spheres of the client’s life and the spaces they moved through together. In this account, the recognizability of the driver, the symbolic, socio-political affect of employing a female driver, and the coincidence that a person of high power in the university hierarchy also employed a Sakha driver worked together to grant the client greater levels of status and access than before.

In a way, both women assisted each other in achieving heightened status and access within different spatio-temporal settings – around the performativity of being and employing a female driver. This is an interesting and relevant twist, because in my time in Delhi I seldom heard accounts of women from poor backgrounds giving greater status to women higher in the societal ranks; often the narrative within the development discourse was the opposite. Here, the uniform

became what made the relation visible for others to know of and notice, a premise on which the recognition rests. The Sakha uniform did far more than merely giving the women something to wear for work.

Rita's statement also attests to evident inequalities within Indian society concerning gender, class, and caste, which the function of a female driver throws into sharp relief. When she says she is given status "as a woman who employs a woman – not in a normal way, not just as domestic help, but as a chauffeur," it underscores these inequalities of spatial politics. "The normal way," grounded in norms of gender, class, and caste in Delhi, entails poor women working as domestic help for households of higher income.[89] This is a spatial politics in which social and economic opportunities, rights of different kinds, recognition, participation in the city, and codes for corporeal behaviors, to name a few areas of discrimination, are differentially distributed. The norms, as they are acquired and reproduced in relational spaces over time, become lived modes of taken for granted embodiment, until or unless someone contests or breaks with them. When the client expresses that she employs a poor woman "not just as domestic help, but as a chauffeur," and that this gives her status amongst her peers, it is because she is associated with breaking radical unequal norms – yet this is only made possible because those norms are still widely enforced. Otherwise, there would be no novelty or status as such in having a female driver, which is still a service function to those of greater economic means.

The uniform, however, can also serve another purpose: it disguises the women's background of "poorness," which some clients prefer. It was my clear impression that there were clients who were less consciously concerned by, or sensitive to, the societal inequalities around them, but merely wished to employ a female driver because it was more safe and comfortable for them – or, in a more hierarchical mode, they wished to "help the poor." I interviewed one such client, whose driver was not fond of wearing the uniform. She believed that when wearing her regular clothing, the driver looked poor, not like someone with a job:

> Sometimes she [the private driver] would not come in her uniform, and they [the drivers] don't come from a very privileged background, so when she would come in her own clothes, she did not look like she would be working for a company. She looked like someone picked up from the road.

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[89] This problematic of differential distribution is of course not alone to Delhi, but present in societies across the globe. Divisions of labor and rights are often segregated on matters of gender, class, and race, and connected to social status.

What we have seen so far is that performing the function of a female driver draws on material, corporeal, and socio-political aspects within the embodiment and enactment of the function – a function that breaks with many traditional norms and is amplified by its visibility. Due to the visibility of their relation, drivers and clients alike are somewhat forced to relate to their respective roles and the way in which they are perceived by others. In the light of such negotiations and visible "unconventional" relations, the emotions, identities, bodies, gendered practices, and matters of their everyday lives were contested and altered. This took place not only on a one-to-one basis, but there was also a collective coherence – a form of alliance between bodies acting while dressed in uniforms.

**The blue *kurta* brigade**

In the citation below, Anika's client perfectly nails what I wish to address when describing how several bodies in uniform break the same norms and move across public spaces in the same city, time and again:

> Rita, client: When Anika [her private driver] passes by other drivers, they wave at each other. Whenever they spot each other, there is a friendly interaction. I guess she just feels quite happy that she is a part of this blue [turquoise] *kurta* brigade. [...] When I see other young women dressed in a blue uniform, it really gives me a charge. I really feel this is amazing.

When several women in the turquoise uniforms are seen driving in the city, the uniform starts to become a movement of some form. The female drivers were part of "something larger" in being a part of a visible group in the city – of turquoise moving bodies. The clients equally felt that they too were part of that "something"; and inhabitants of Delhi notice their presence, recognizing the movement primarily because of the uniforms and slightly due to the taxi vehicles, as they are still few in number (14 cars). It has become a "blue kurta brigade." Even if the drivers do not know each other personally, the performativity of their specific presence in the city creates an alliance amongst them and collectively claims and communicates a right to appear and a right to do gender differently. Drivers often told me how excited they felt when passing other Sakha drivers out in the city:

> Kanishka, taxi driver: I really like it [when I see other Sakha drivers on the road]; usually we see men driving. So when we are together or we go to a

> place like Jagori [women's rights organization], then I feel like we have a group now. I feel that you see men standing in groups here and there; we should have so many girls driving that we are also able to make a visible group and stand out.

Kanishka here refers to an explicit desire to be visible as a means to disrupt dominant gender practices. Again, note the importance of performativity in standing out in this case, because standing out is exactly what challenges the norms and breaks open more space. In uniform and behind the wheel, without even uttering a word, Sakha drivers' mere presence as female drivers in public spaces contests the norms for women, for "the poor," and for the lowest castes in Delhi spatial politics.



*From Azad & Sakha's annual report 2015-16*
The blue *kurta* brigade

As some drivers, clients, and staff have shared with me, noticing a Sakha driver on the road by happenstance elicited feelings of hope and excitement. In major and minor ways, they make way, I would argue, for alternative modes of living gender and precarious positions. It is interesting to note here that the sense of being part of something larger not only applied to the drivers, but also to some clients. This was only made visible and spatially productive because of the uniforms.

There are of course other material artifacts that participate in the performativity and negotiations of being a driver. I shall briefly present those in the following section before turning to the relations between drivers and clients, as well as drivers' encounters with the city.

**License, badge, and door sign: legitimizing being a driver**

All new drivers receive an official driver's license once they pass the driving test. As an important token testifying to their unusual achievement – which many had deemed impossible at first – and necessary for gaining access to working as a driver, receiving a license was unquestionably associated with a great feeling of pride for the women.






*From Azad & Sakha's facebook page*
Licenses and the Sakha Taxi badge (in pink).

Zoya,
taxi driver: In my college, that I drive is a matter of shock for them. They never believed it; only when I showed them my official license and some pictures, then they believed [it]. So now they believe I drive a taxi, but they always ask why I am doing it.

When they pass the driving test, the driver's license is the first material documentation they receive that can legitimize months of training – months that have been seen as time away from the household, the community, and the rhythm of daily chores. "Now they believe I drive," Zoya voiced in the quote above, echoing a common utterance amongst trainees in the program that attests to the prior disbelief in their efforts and the effectiveness of material "proof." It was my impression that the license and identity badge were particularly persuasive material tools when used in negotiations against the doubt upheld by family and community members, whereas the uniform communicated to a "broader audience" as result of its visibility by distance.

A final artifact I wish to address that serves to provide legitimacy for the taxi drivers is a branded sign they can place on their front door. The sign depicts a cartoonish car with Sakha's name and logo and is meant to communicate to the community "Here lives a taxi driver." It was not clear to me how many taxi drivers had actually placed the sign on their front door. I learned that some kept it more as a trophy they could display inside their home. Kanishka, for example, regarded the sign as an artifact she treasures and wanted to protect:

Kanishka
taxi driver: I got a logo [sign]; I have that. But I have not put it on the door. My home is on the first floor, so I did not feel safe putting it near t he stairs, so I did not put it. I have put it next to my television.




*Arjun Nagar East, east Delhi*
Entry to the home of a driver with Sakha sign on the door.

Over the years, several of the more experienced drivers have received awards of different kinds: internal schemes of acknowledgement by Azad & Sakha and recognition by external agencies rewarding social initiatives for their efforts. Once, when I visited the home of seasoned taxi driver Inika, within the one-room space of their dwelling, I counted three trophies on orchestrated display related to being a driver with Sakha – and those were just what was visible.

**The Sakha taxi**

It is not my intention here to address the notion and performativity of a car in general; rather, I wish to address the specific cars of Sakha's taxi services that are branded with their logo and thus visible as taxis in the cityscape:




*Greater Kailash 1, south Delhi*
One of Sakha's taxis. Next to a contact number, it reads "Cabs for women by women," Sakha's slogan.

At the time I was conducting my fieldwork, Sakha had 14 taxis on the streets of Delhi. In number and thus visibility, in a city with some 20 million inhabitants, this is negligible. Yet for a female driver sitting behind the wheel of a taxi, the experience was different than for the private drivers in regular cars. The uniform communicates one aspect of being on duty behind the wheel, but this specific vehicle lets everyone know that the woman is a taxi driver. The vehicle legitimized, facilitated, and displayed the women's function as a taxi driver all at once; it also made them stand out even more due to the distinctiveness of the Sakha vehicles.

The taxi drivers, unlike the private drivers, occasionally got to bring the taxi home and park it near their dwellings overnight, depending on their shifts. According to a Sakha staff member, this raises the drivers' status in her community:

> Nalini, staff: One thing is, the taxi gives an increased sense of identity, of belonging to an organization. [...] And it is also something unique in any of the slum areas in Delhi [to come home with a car] – it immediately raises your status symbol in the area. All that also makes a lot of different in their persona, in the way they walk, talk, hold themselves.

There can be no greater proof of the women's legitimacy and capability of driving than bringing a car home. For taxi drivers to take a car home thus debunks – in practice – a prevailing gender norm. In their bodily doings and practices of being a driver, they become living examples of another way to live gender in this context. Furthermore, their association with, and access to, a car is perceived as a symbol of status in the poor communities, where driving cars is a luxury reserved for few, if any.

Inika, as an experienced taxi driver with Sakha, shared an example of how she had deliberately used the car to impress community members; this specific situation concerned relationships in the school her children attend, where the other children and their parents refused to believe that Inika was a driver. "They [my children] told me that their friends don't believe them when they say that I drive a taxi," Inika recounted, explaining that they begged to be picked up one day from school in the car. They wanted people to see – and believe – that their mother indeed was a driver. The taxi drivers are not allowed to use the car for personal errands, so unless they are on duty, the car is parked. Inika, however, saw an opportunity one day, when the route she was taking went in the direction of the school:

> I was in a taxi and their school was on the way. I thought this was a good opportunity. So I picked my daughter and her friend up from school, and from then on, everybody in her school got to know that I drive around.

On numerous occasions, taxi drivers have relayed to me that bringing the car to their community makes them proud, while private drivers and trainees have shared that they wish they could do so. While on duty, the car is an inescapable foundation of performing their function as drivers. Being in the car driving, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, was an expressive and affective space for the women; interestingly, however, it also seems that if a woman were able to bring the car home while off-duty, community members were affected by their perception of its appearance in relation to the driver and her identity. In this way, the car participated in negotiating spatial politics differently, particularly through granting the driver increasing status.

**Materiality deployed to negotiate and transform spatial politics**

So far, this chapter has shown that certain materiality, due to its symbolic or socio-political value, makes specific negotiations concerning alternative ways of living gender and poverty increasingly possible. Matter clearly matters – although, as the analysis of the use of uniforms has demonstrated, the heterogeneity of the women and the constitution of their everyday lives imply that matter differs in the ways in which it matters. The materiality of being a Sakha driver was embedded within, and carried out through, bodily, emotional, and relational practices within the many spatio-temporal constellations the act of being a driver brought about. One of Azad & Sakha's staff members summed it up quite well:

> Gayatri, staff: The girls look different after the first few months. They have gained a sense of freedom and found a community or a place where they belong and some people care for them [Azad & Sakha]. We could be better at this once they have become drivers. Then we lose a little grip on them. You can see their change in their language, the rights they are asking from us and clients, the way they carry themselves, and they take care of their appearance as more clean, well-dressed, and healthy. Their communities tell them how much they have changed.

The uniform and the car do more than serving the practical means of their functions. In uniforms – or specifically without uniforms – and with licenses, badges, signs, and cars, the women were negotiating with themselves, others, and their surroundings in terms of their identities and sense of self. My empirical material suggests that the uniform visibly fed into novel processes of

negotiating space. The act of wearing – or not wearing a uniform – related to the performance of being a driver, but also to the women's personal sense of self or identity in relation to others and to the categorizations assigned to them by others. The doubleness of subject–object dynamics was being negotiated simultaneously. For some women, the uniform instilled a sense of strength, confidence, and belonging to an organization, which made them feel proud and special; they enjoyed standing out. But wearing the uniform was also a reminder of social hierarchies: they were on duty as drivers for middle and upper class women, making the social and economic divide symbolically visible, too.

In other words, the material, corporeal, and socio-politcal embodiment of being a female driver in Delhi – through the use of a license, badge, door sign, uniform, and car – made visible a movement of female driving: a movement that both unifies and divides. The materiality of it operated like a connecting device, tuning drivers and their clients into a sense of a collective movement. Simultaneously, the processes of negotiation that arose through the embodiment and symbolism of that materiality concerned the women's subjectivities and transformation of identities in relation to others within the everyday politics of space – while driving across the city.

In the remaining part of this chapter, I will attend to the women's experiences of encountering new worlds in the form of clients and the city. Here, an expansion of space, and the inevitable encounters produced by the "throwntogetherness" of space when being a driver, is a crucial element for social transformation amongst the urban poor women of this study.

## Meeting new worlds: a social and geographical expansion of space

To describe the spatial importance of encounters through the means of being a driver and the notion of a social and geographical expansion of space, I first wish to make a brief note on three types of different spatial relations or modes of encounters (Koefoed et al., 2017).

The most obvious mode of encounter is that between a driver and her client, where a woman from a poor background is working as a private driver for a woman of higher social status and caste. In this constellation, the former is driving the latter around the city in the client's own car on a daily basis six days a week. The driver brings the client, and perhaps her family or children, to the places of their everyday activities of life. The space of the car – the same car and the same people over time – can be seen as a place of intimacy and intensity, not merely because they are wedged together in a small space for many hours per week, but equally so because it presents the driver with a intimate knowledge of clients' lives. The driver knows the everyday routines, the

children, the arguments and discussion amongst family members in the backseat; she overhears phone conversations about life and work, meets their friends, sees the places her client shops, eats, exercises, and so forth. In this way, what we could term *driver–client* relations have certain predictabilities and routines.

The second mode of encounter, which I call *driver–passenger* relations, refers to the female drivers who drive taxis for a wide range of different passengers. The taxi drivers do not have a regular client. Rather, they drive the Sakha taxis and pick up passengers assigned to them by the Sakha call center. The Sakha policy holds that a taxi cannot pick up random passengers from the street, but must be ordered through the website or call center in order to ensure drivers' safety. Only women can make the bookings, although male passengers sometimes come along for the ride. The Sakha taxi service has developed quite a steady customer base, implying some level of regularity in the passengers the taxi drivers encounter. However, new customers also keep materializing; some become regulars for different periods of time (like I did), while others are one-time passengers. The latter is the case, for example, in Sakha's collaboration with a Canadian travel agency, G-Adventure, in which Sakha drivers pick up G-Adventure's international travelers at the airport. Usually the drivers only encounter the travelers once. The driver–passenger encounters of taxi driving are therefore less predictable or familiar than for the private drivers, as they include an increased element of randomness or happenstance. Taxi driving provides an infinitude of many brief encounters, as opposed to regular everyday experiences with the same client over many months. Taxi driving also involves night shifts. These encounters can be seen as less intimate than working for the same client, but more diverse and perhaps less secure in the sense that a taxi driver never knows "who they are going to get." Likewise, the routes the taxi drivers need to take across the city are also more diverse than for the private drivers. Although the majority of Sakha's customers are Indian citizens, foreign expats and travelers passing through Delhi also make use of their services, predominantly through booking taxis.

Finally, any woman working as a driver – entering and participating in the city in a new way and a specific functionality related to public transportation – is bound to experience many other types of encounters from being "on the go" or waiting in the city. I would characterize this as happenchance mobile encounters that are inevitable due to the "throwntogetherness" of the space of the city (Koefoed et al., 2017; Massey, 2005). I call this *driver–city* relations to include the random mobile encounters with others, but also to insinuate that this entails a spatial relation to places, the geography and materiality of the city, the surroundings. The drivers' relation to the city and the potential for random mobile encounters evidently occur simultaneously with either driver–client or driver–passenger relations.

A large majority of the Sakha drivers work as private drivers; only a small percentage choose to continue as taxi drivers.[90] In 2014–15, there were roughly 60 private drivers and 20 taxi drivers with Sakha. Additionally, all drivers with Sakha have been private drivers at some point for at least two years, and therefore have lived experiences of entering the staff of a well-off woman's household. This mode of encounter is formative for any driver; unsurprisingly, descriptions of these experiences are more predominant in my empirical material than accounts of encountering random passengers. For that reason, in the following section I will focus on driver–client relations, exploring different dynamics at play in the negotiations of such relational spaces, and end with a brief note on the women's encounter with the city more generally, which takes place while working as a private driver or taxi driver. The drivers' relations to their clients are therefore extremely influential to their relation to the city, too.

**Entering the worlds of clients: clashes and tensions when worlds intersect**

Through their function as a private driver, the women encountered other social worlds up close, both in the space of the car and in waiting inside or outside the client's home about 10 hours per day, six days a week. The driver–client relations were continuously negotiated. This was primarily done between the driver and clients, of course. But in their role of almost bridging the two parties – two different worlds – the Sakha staff participated significantly in the negotiations and the spatial politics of those relations. In this section, I will therefore draw upon and weave together empirical material from the perspectives of drivers, clients, and staff, as I find that together, they produce these spatial configurations and relations.

This section begins at Azad & Sakha's office. It was here that Sakha staff made calls to set up job interviews for drivers and received calls from clients and drivers, particularly in times of tension within their relations. Clients would make complaints over drivers' lack of professionalism, and drivers complained of clients treating them unjustly. Whether on the phone – where they spent a large portion of their time – or in the space of the office, the small group of Sakha staff members often attempted to sort out tensions of different kinds.

"Handling the girls is difficult," Nalini, a leading Sakha staff member, said with a smile and an overexaggerated facial expression of exhaustion. She spoke in a joking manner to describe her role in the organization, stressing that managing the clashes or tensions of driver–client relations made her slightly fatigued, but that she loved her job nonetheless. In fact, she shared on numerous

[90] The reason for this, as staff and drivers have reflected upon, is that most women enjoy the security of having the same client, daily routines, fixed hours of work, and a fixed salary. Some drivers have also shared that they really like their client and the client's family, so they want to stay. Taxi drivers work night shifts and have less structured working hours being on call, but also offers a slightly higher salary and the greater sense of independence that comes with driving all over the city, meeting different kinds of people, etc.

different occasions – such as this moment of conversation – that witnessing the women from poor backgrounds enter society in a radically different and more empowered way, and supporting them in that, provided her with a great sense of meaning and joy. Working for Sakha, she reflected, "has also changed how I am leading my own life. […] It has given me a whole new dimension to my being." More often than not, she could be seen on the phone, usually with clients and drivers on the other end. Nalini found it quite perplexing at times to play the role of intermediary between parties of constant negotiations; sometimes the stories did not add up, she explained, so it remained difficult to get a clear picture of what was really going on in the driver–client tensions. During my fieldwork, I often heard staff members talking of the challenges between drivers and their clients. On this day, when I asked Nalini to elaborate on these types of challenges as the organization perceives them, she replied:

> For example, a girl is at a client's house. She has been told that she can use their bathroom, so she does, but she makes it dirty because she is not used to using a bathroom of this kind. Then the client gets upset and tells her to clean it, which makes the girl upset and says it's degrading that they want her to clean bathrooms now. So there is a conflict here, and we then have to deal with it. It could also be issues of the girls not being punctual in their work, which leads to complaints, or if they accidentally make scratches in the car.

On another occasion, a few days later, Nalini turned to me in the shared office space, where we were both seated on squeaky swivel chairs at a tiny wooden desk, to share with me another situation of relational tension that had just come to her attention when a client called to complain of the driver:

> We had an incident with a trainee yesterday. She is very intelligent and confident and above average in driving. Maybe she was a bit tired yesterday. She fell asleep for two hours in the maid's room [where she was allowed to wait] of the client's house. Small things like that prove challenging. So the client called me to complain; we spoke about it and we both spoke to the chauffeur.

Tensions in the relations between a driver and her client(s) were common; they were grounded in diverging expectations and practices related to – but not confined to – the function of being a female driver and how that functionality was performed. Equally, these clashes and conflicts were testimonies of different social worlds meeting. In entering middle and upper class households, the women from poor backgrounds became intimately situated within an entirely different world. One day, as this fieldnote description illustrates, I witnessed a negotiation premised in conflicting worlds as it unfolded in the office between staff and a driver:

**When expectations from "old" and "new" worlds collide**

*Fieldnotes 14.05.14*

> It is a Wednesday in the office. Well past noon, a young driver enters the common working room, her turquoise uniform revealing her status behind the wheel. She heads straight for a Sakha staff member and they start talking. This quickly involves two more staff members, who roll toward them on their office chairs. They are talking quite loudly. Since they often mix Hindi and English, I hear the following words: "I am happy with her," "professional driver," "professional woman," and something about being "comfortable." The woman is explaining herself and smiling a lot, but then the conversation turns increasingly quiet and she looks more downcast, gazing at the floor. The conversation continues like this for a while, now just between the Sakha staff member and the woman, when the founder, Meenu, suddenly enters the room. The staff member introduces the woman, Beena, to the founder and they all converse together. They are trying to convince the driver of something, it seems. There is persistence to the way they are talking. Beena is laughing, but her head is slightly bent down toward the ground. The conversation now has passed on to Meenu. It has become quieter again, and there is a long pause of silence during which the woman is shyly avoiding any eye contact and the founder's voice is softer, almost reassuring. As the woman quietly leaves the room, the founder explains the situation. The driver, Beena, just got a job with a client after a year and a half of training. After less than one month of work, she has asked the client for 20 days' leave due to her brother's wedding, which the client complained about:
>
> > So we tried to tell her that as professional women, we cannot do that. Women's time in India is taken for granted; people just expect that she can come for a month or so for a wedding, so we are trying to tell her that this is not how we can afford to behave when we have jobs.
>
> I ask if the woman understood that. Meenu replies, "Her heart is still struggling – so let's see if her rational mind wins over her heart or not."

Again, there was the mention of the notion of "professionalism" – a "professional driver," "professional women" – that staff members try to convey to the drivers. How, then, might we understand why some drivers are seemingly not professional enough, according to the organizations' and the clients' expectations? Nalini had the following interpretation:

> People management is the main challenge [in Sakha], because I think that while the drivers get a lot of training and empowerment, they don't have the experiential knowledge to back them up; how to react in a situation, how to react to a customer or to me. That becomes a challenge, and the things we just assume they will do, they don't do. For example, why would you [a driver] not let me know if you are coming late? Then the drivers will say, "Oh, but I was only ten minutes late," but that is not what we would expect from a professional. […] Punctuality remains a challenge, or informing the clients, for example, before

> taking a leave. We have drivers calling up at 8:45 in the morning saying they are not coming to work because they are not well. You don't get unwell at 8:45, so you could have called the client at 6:30 in the morning and given her a chance to reorganize the day.

Instances of drivers coming late to work without notice or staying away altogether were, as the account reveals, repeatedly mentioned in the organization as a pervasive challenge and a common source of conflict with clients. Maybe a part of the answer lies in what Nalini concludes when she claims that many drivers "don't have the experiential knowledge to back them up". In numerous cases, such as those mentioned in this section, the drivers' performativity of being a driver were misaligned with the organization's and clients' expectations of them performing as "a professional." But how did the drivers and clients experience conflictual encounters from their points of view?

Inika has worked as a taxi driver for several years, but she had previously been employed as a private driver for a couple of different clients over a few years. These relations, she said, were entirely incomparable experiences based on the manner in which the clients regarded and treated her. "My first client had a lot of attitude; my second did not have any," she explained. "My second client, she behaved normally toward me. She would treat me like any other person. But the first client behaved like she was my boss and that I was her servant. She had that type of thinking going." As staff members pointed out, drivers' encounters with each respective client can have vastly different constitutions; this was also the case in Inika's experience:

> I would at least be allowed to sit in the second lady's house. That would never happen with my first client. With the second one, I never felt that she was my boss and I was working for her. She always made me feel at home, like I could cook for myself if I was hungry or make tea if nobody was around; if it was very hot outside, then I didn't have to wait outside in the car. I could come inside, switch on the fan, sit on a chair, and be comfortable. I felt almost as if I were working in my own home. With the first lady, I would take her to her job, wait outside until she had to go back in the afternoon, and in the meantime clean the car inside and out while waiting. That was my only interaction with her and nothing more.

Evidently, the expectations of a driver–client relation, and the way it was performed through practices, were profoundly dissimilar in Inika's experiences with two different clients. In this light, being a female driver was not a pre-given functionality or categorization, but rather one that was open for and premised on negotiations. In turn, these negotiations were premised on the spatial politics of the everyday lives of both driver and client (their past backgrounds and present

situations) and produced in the contemporaneous spaces they were inhabiting – or, should I say, becoming – together. I will return to why that might be later in the chapter; first, consider the following account from a client.

In this account, we travel to another site. At a fancy café in Khan Market, one of Delhi's posh markets, I meet a client for a cup of tea one afternoon. I want to hear about her experiences with having Sakha drivers; she has had a few. Padma is a well-dressed woman in her early 50s, and conducts herself in a fashion that implies that she is a regular customer at the market. Her Sakha driver is waiting outside somewhere. "She is the only female driver in the market, so everyone knows her here," Padma says, confirming that she often comes to this part of town. Because Padma's work involves charities and serving as an interpreter for foreigners in Delhi, her driver encounters many different types of people in the space of the car:

> Not long ago, we had a Swiss couple coming over for dinner. She [my driver] took them around and they got lovely stuff for her. Sometimes my husband teases me and says, "I don't think she can adjust anywhere else." She does have a good time. I also enjoy that.

To Padma, encouraging the driver and educating her on socio-political etiquette, practices, and belief systems were part of her responsibility as a client and an employer of household staff. She did this for everyone working for her: the maids, drivers [they have two drivers], the gardener, and the dog-walker. She perceived this as a moral obligation, but also a means to have a good and well-functioning crew of household staff. "When I have a party in the house, everyone thinks I have a fantastic staff," Padma shares, seeming proud of her achievements, "but I know how much of pushing I am doing. I get so exhausted and fatigued." She gives another example involving the first driver she had a few years earlier. "The major problem with the first driver," she explains, "is that whenever we reached home, she would want to close the car and come and sit inside. She would say, "That guy is staring at me," and I told her to stare back." To Padma, this was a necessary act of "pushing" for the driver's own good. Then there was the driver who never showed up for work when she had her period:

> She would call and tell me, "I am having my periods." When she would finally come to work, I would tell her, "It is not a disease; you have to adapt, you have to adjust your body." She would tell me, "I cannot come," but in the morning when I am ready to leave and the driver is not there, I get upset. I would have to take either a taxi or my husband would have to drive me. Eventually, I called Sakha [to complain]; the first time she would say, "Please don't tell them," so for the first few times I did not. After a while, I told them I cannot cope with her.

Padma was adamant that her female drivers must wear the Sakha uniform in order to appear clean, presentable, and professional, not like "someone picked up from the road" (a phrase also quoted earlier regarding the use of uniforms). If a given driver did not wear a uniform initially or was hesitant to do so, Padma as a client insisted on it. Her opinion – and "pushing" – in this regard was about more than a uniform; it concerned the driver's overall physical appearance. Her current driver, Lalita, has learned to comply with the etiquettes in the household, she shared with a smile: "She does not have much choice [of what to wear] since she wears her uniform, but she can just tie her hair properly. That she does now, because she knows that I would comment otherwise." In the clients view, this was another example of her role as someone who educates her staff and "pushes" them "forward." Padma reflected on the episodes she had shared and the dynamics within her household management; After a moment of silence, she says, "I think somewhere they like to be like me."

Although Padma's relations to her drivers over the years surely were far more nuanced than this brief account depicts, it offers insights into the different ways clients perceive their roles and relations to the women of poor backgrounds; and illustrates how some clients reinforce caste and class divides. Rather than encouraging the women's subjective transformations (emancipations), some clients instead seek to "mold" the women according to their expectations of them and how they wish to be perceived by others in having a groomed and well-functioning crew of domestic labors. This of course produces vastly different spatial settings and the type of negotiations this induce.

**Neither males nor maids: gender troubles in the performativity of a female driver**

Because the functionality of being a female driver in Delhi does not connote the same pre-given expectations as the traditional role of a male driver, the vagueness and openness of the role make way for both challenges and opportunities. The empirical material suggests that due to the unconventional nature of female drivers, the relational negotiations of the function draw instead on norms, perceptions, and practices related to the traditional roles of male drivers, on the one hand, and of poor women as maids for middle and upper class households, on the other. It seems that drivers and clients struggle with "placing" and performing their function in the relationship between them, as well as in relation to other's responses, and orient it somewhere between the typical practices and expectations of a male driver and a household maid. However, what if the role of a female driver cannot be situated within those traditional practices, but instead needs to find a "place" of its own that breaks with those traditions? Given that the phenomenon of a female driver appears more open for interpretation than that of a male driver, it is perhaps not surprising

that both clients and drivers – although uncertain or fumbling at times – tend to draw on the known practices of male drivers and female maids. This is also why those very practices become contested when poor women perform the function of drivers, because they are neither males nor maids. I suggest here that traditional practices of gender, class, and caste become interwoven concerning the norms of urban poor employed as domestic laborers in well-off households across Delhi; furthermore, these practices are challenged in negotiating the function of a female driver in everyday spatial settings. Consider the following vignette from a fieldnote observation that took place in Azad & Sakha's office:

**Negotiating gender as a female driver in a male-dominated "world"**
*Fieldnotes 21.05.15*

> There is a buzzing vibe in the office today. I am sitting in the common shared office room at one of the tiny wooden desks, perched on an old blue wobbly office chair that is a genuine mismatch for the height and structure of the table. The heat is high and the air thick as Delhi enters the fullness of summer. A young driver enters the room, taking a seat next to a Sakha staff member, and they engage in a longer, vocally pronounced conversation. The driver's tone of voice sounds defensive to my ears; she seems to be explaining and justifying herself, and her body gestures echo this. After about 20 minutes, the woman leaves and the staff member, Pooja, explains:
>
> > We have three girls placed at a car showroom, but this place also has several male drivers who take the cars around and it is generally a male- dominated place. Someone from that organization had put in a complaint that this woman was talking too much with the men and they suspected that she was flirting, having an affair. The complaint was made to HR, and a woman from that department called me and informed me about this complaint, to which I replied that I would talk to the woman in question.
>
> This was the talk they were just having. The driver had explained that there were usually just two women in the workplace at the time; the rest were men, and naturally she needed people to talk to during the day, so she could not avoid speaking to men. Furthermore, she didn't have a good relationship with the other female driver there, which made it difficult for her. "She was considering to leave the job," Pooja says with a serious expression on her face, and continues:
>
> > But I told her that if she didn't do anything wrong, she shouldn't leave like that, but stand up for herself. If something is not right at the place, she herself can file a complaint to HR and should just make sure to get a copy of that. I had to motivate her a little, but now it is better. I think she will stay.

This incident points vividly to the female drivers' lived experiences of contesting gender norms when entering a male-dominated working space, buttressed by the confrontational manner in

which colleagues reacted to her presence in the function she performed. The viewpoint of the client was shaped by traditional patriarchal gendered practices and their experiences and norms for male drivers. The Sakha staff member held an opposing view of an alternative way of living gender and encouraged the female driver to stand up for this; however, in embodying and performing this alternative way, she was somewhat caught in the middle. Clashes springing from opposing gender perceptions and practices, and unsettlings of class and caste divides, were often further exposed within the spatial politics of upper-class household management when a female driver suddenly entered the game.

I opened this chapter with an ethnographic account from a large workshop, gathering some 40 drivers and a handful of staff for a full day's activities. In addition to bringing drivers together, the purpose of the workshop was equally to address certain challenges of "being drivers" that the organization saw necessary to explain to the group as a whole. I had often heard mention of a dilemma typically phrased as "they are drivers, not maids," and on this day, just such a topic was on the agenda. This phrase in itself so amply speaks to the entwinement of practices of gender, class, and caste – especially concerning the role of the urban poor as domestic laborers in Delhi – and attests to the fact that the notion of female drivers disrupts and confuses those norms. At some point in the early afternoon, Azad & Sakha staff had scheduled a panel session in which three clients held a discussion with drivers on the function of a female driver and the driver–client relation. I subsequently interviewed two of those clients on separate occasions. One of the clients, Nalini, shared what she had addressed on the panel and some of the challenges they had discussed:

> When you have a female driver, there is a lot of explaining to do, since people question it. Very often the problem arises that people think Sunita is my maid, not my driver. It is a problem the girls [drivers] face a lot. It is a problem that in some homes, there are some clients who think since they are girls, they might as well do some household chores while they are waiting [on duty, not driving]. But that is really wrong; they shouldn't do that. Nobody would ask a male driver to clean, do laundry, and the like, so of course they should not do that. [...] You know, sometimes the girls might even attempt to do it in order to please the client. Sometimes I have to keep Sunita away from these things, but it is important.[...] They are not maids!

Her statement also reveals the complexities of such driver–client negotiations and the inter-relationality of performing the role of " driver." For instance, not only did some clients make drivers do chores expected of maids, but drivers themselves also sought out that role – a typical position for young women of their backgrounds. In this account, Nalini and Sunita were negotiating – back and forth – this boundary between driver and maid within the household, but they were

also confronted with others' immediate perceptions of Sunita as Nalini's maid. They negotiated this function between them, as well as with and against others. "They are not maids!" I found it interesting and somewhat surprising that the lines between driver and maid were seemingly that tricky and posed so many challenges to drivers and clients alike. I asked another client, who had also participated in the panel, how she experienced this boundary:

AS: Do you find this balance between driver and maid as challenging? Does she [Anika] pick up groceries for you and such kinds of errands?

Rita, client: Yes, I often get her to pick up things for me when it is on the route. Like running to the post office for me, she does this often. But a male driver would also be asked for such errands. I try to make it related to the car.

AS: But is there a balance?

R: Yes, of course, and actually, after that meeting [in May 2014], I became much more aware of it. I gave it a lot of thought and asked my husband if I crossed this line. I realized, for example, that I had made her make tea for all of us a few times in a period where my father was very ill and we were all at his place a lot. There I asked her to make chai for all of us, including her, of course. I would never ask her to do it for just me or us, but in a large group, you know, where she was a part of it. She makes excellent tulsi [herbal leaves from the tulsi plant] tea. It just happened a few times, but after that meeting, I have never asked her again.

As with Nalini and Sunita, the boundaries were not clear to either party; rather, the spatial encounters were gray zones for micro-negotiations and potential tensions within and between them. In some situations, like this example of a driver making tea to a client, the negotiation was not outspoken between them, as the driver merely did as asked, but still the experience produced subsequent reflections for the client; which made her change her practices.

It was my impression that the drivers usually tended to follow the clients' orders, but there were also many stories of drivers refusing to undertake certain chores they found to be outside their job description. Geeta, a private driver, shared with me in an interview that she was unsatisfied with her client telling her to run errands using a scooter, which was more convenient for the client in certain situations. "I am a driver, so I did not like it," Geeta exclaimed.. She obeyed for a while, but eventually told the client that she was supposed to drive cars and not scooters, to which the client took notice. Geeta also reached out to Sakha to share her frustration and asked to

be transferred to another client, but she said the staff member reassured her and convinced her to stay: "She explained the situation to me so that it is fine, like what if there are even more problems at another place? So I kept working here," Geeta concluded. For now, she would stay with the client, but was contemplating if she should move on to become a taxi driver.

**Why "there is a lot of explaining to do"**

The widespread employment of urban poor as domestic laborers in middle and upper class households means that many poor women work as maids and poor men as drivers. These specific politics in Delhi can be seen as an institutionalized unequal and differential distribution of labor and resources. The wages the poor domestic workers usually receive do not enable them to move out of the poor communities, and for the maintenance of certain lifestyle practices, well-off citizens rely on the services of the low-paid poor (see Chapter Three). Although clients are aware, to various degrees, of the power asymmetries and social transactions related to having a female driver in their household, they are still struggling to negotiate the boundaries of traditional practices of domestic help – as are the drivers, who likewise are accustomed to women of their backgrounds working as maids in prosperous neighborhoods (indeed, some drivers had previously worked as maids).

Female drivers are still rare and few in number in the city of Delhi. The performativity of a female driver is an ongoing negotiation of spatial politics in spaces of the car, the streets, public transportation, sites of waiting, and within the walls of well-off households who employ a woman for driving. Everyone seemed a little unsure about what being a female driver fully entailed. Was the role similar to a male driver, or was there a difference? The female drivers were therefore confronted daily with encounters that forced negotiations of this function upon them and those they met.

Slightly more hidden behind the surface of negotiations, but visible within their relational practices, were the blurry overlaps between notions of a maid and a female driver within the households; after all, to clients, the drivers appear to belong to the same group of social categorization as typical maids. In the montage that opened this thesis, I presented an account entitled "She did not know what she *now* knows," in which a staff member of Azad & Sakha shared an honest reflection on how she used to perceive and relate to her household maids before working for the organization. I re-cite a passage of it here, as her narrative addresses these relational issues and traditional practices within Delhi household dynamics:

> [Before Azad & Sakha], [i]t was like an invisible population ["the poor"], even in my head. I have had women who would come and help in my house. I knew their names, but I have never asked them, "What else would you like to do? Could you imagine that you, one day, maybe could drive a car? Or do something one day that is completely different from what you are doing right now?" I have never given them that much credit. I have just assumed she is good to clean my floors, cut my vegetables, and that is it.

So far, I demonstrated that the embodiment and performativity of a female driver draw upon specific materiality with socio-political affect, and that encounters with others – primarily clients, but also Azad & Sakha staff, family members, and 'strangers' – configure negotiations of the role. Clashes and tensions were inevitable outcomes of different socio-political worlds intersecting, but additionally provoked by the vagueness and controversy with which the notion of a female driver was perceived. I now turn to a second pervading narrative within the tales of driver–client relations: encounters of encouragement, inspiration, and new imaginings.

**Encouragement, inspiration, and new imaginings when worlds intersect**

There is a story that was recounted for me numerous times in the organization by different people at different occasions. This tale, depicting an occurrence between a driver and a client, was shared so widely that I took it to be a sort of organizational myth. Since the client and driver in question happened to be amongst those I followed closely, I asked the client, Rita, to share what took place:

> I used to have this old car which was a bit fussy. I mean, there were often some problems with it, which would be really irritating for her [the driver]. So one day, we were just driving back from work and she told me that there is some oil leaking underneath the car, so we will have to get it checked. So I said, "Anika, you know what? There is this Hyundai showroom on our way back. Let's just stop there and check out the cars." So the two of us went into the showroom and checked out the cars. I asked her which car she preferred and she sort of smiled widely; which one should we trade the old one for? We took this new little one. She and I made this decision to get this car, and it was much easier for her to drive as well.

Azad & Sakha staff enjoyed relaying this story because it demonstrated a situation – and a relation – in which the client gave the driver an unusual amount of say. "The client actually took Anika, who was only about a month into the her first job, to the showroom, got her to sit in different cars, and told her to choose the car she wanted within a certain price range, to make Anika take ownership," a Sakha employee told me on one of the many times I heard about the incident in the office. She then elaborated on the impact she perceived it had made: "Anika, who was a

completely new driver, drove the new car out of the showroom! That is the kind of confidence the client gave her. And she has really blossomed."

It is worth mentioning here that by the time I met Anika, she had worked for Rita, her first and only client, for several years, and expressed no desire to change clients or move into work as a taxi driver. When I asked her about their relationship, she said, "They [Rita and her husband] have been very good with me." I have spoken to both women – driver and client – separately on several occasions, spent time with them in the household and in the car, and waited with Anika at Rita's workplace. The impression I gained was that although they had a professional relationship and, with mutual respect, maintained a certain level of distance to set boundaries for the role, they genuinely seemed to care for each other. Later, I learned that Anika had come in sudden need of medical attention and shared her concerns with Rita, who then found the necessary treatment and paid for it. It was not uncommon to hear Rita say that Anika was a part of her extended family. As a client, she seemed adamant to treat Anika as a professional worker – for Anika's sake – as opposed to a relationship of greater intimacy, but as can be seen, the lines might be experienced as somewhat blurred. In this sense, it was not unusual to witness clients take a more nurturing and mentoring role toward the drivers, although, according to a Sakha employee, this can provide its own challenges:

> Some of the clients really nurture the women, mentor them. They are much more than clients, which is not always the relationship desired by the organization [Sakha], because at the end of the day, we want them to have a fairly professional relationship. But it happens; you can't help it. Sometimes it works and sometimes it is detrimental. What happens is that when things are going well, it is fine [to have a friendly relationship], but the moment there is a problem or something going wrong, then there is a backlash from the client. The sentiment is like, "I allowed her to do this and that, I let her sit in my house and so on, and now she has done this!" [...] We advise clients to treat her like they would with any driver, but the driver being a woman, they tend to be a bit kinder.

The sentiment that "the driver being a woman, they tend to be a bit kinder" resonates with what I witnessed and heard time and again. Since the drivers are female and from the poorest segment of society, it is unsurprising that many clients perceived them differently from a typical male driver. When a household is motivated to hire a professional driver as part of its staff, hiring a female driver seemed to be prompted by an additional desire for charity and support of the wider gender movements in India. In relations where the clients were moved by sentiments of charity, the way in which they practiced the role of "client of a female driver" was often through considering themselves a mentor of sorts, to varying degrees. In such cases, the relational space

takes on greater intimacy than a traditional work relationship. Furthermore, when I inquired into clients' lived experiences of having a female driver, one of the most frequent replies was that it was far more comfortable and pleasant. In cases where clients had young children, I was often told how they felt that the children were safer, and in better hands, with a woman. On one occasion, I had the chance to interview a 16-year-old daughter of a client. Since one of the driver's primary responsibilities was to bring her and her 5-year-old little brother to school each day, they spent many hours together, week after week, in the space of the car. When asked about her experience with a female driver, her immediate reply was, "There is a lot more security," and rapidly added, "Also, I feel she can be friends with me." Going on, the daughter used terminologies like "friends," "someone to talk to," "someone to interact with," "someone who understands me," and "I can be a lot more open with about my life." She expressed a clear difference between her experiences of having male and female drivers:

> For a male driver, even if he has been with us for a long time, it does not feel the same way. I remember I once had a [female] driver, she used to go to college on Sundays; she used to tell me about her college, her friends, and so on. She had a child, so she would tell me about him. Like I said, the comfort level is in a different area; even psychologically I feel more comfortable with a female driver.

This leads me to a final point I wish to stress in regard to the driver–client relations, namely that the driver's exposure to the world of clients was not merely in the form of clashes or tensions, but just as much of amicability, encouragement, and inspiration. As drivers, the women spend more time with their clients and experience the "sites" of their everyday lives in a way domestic maids, for instance, would not, as they remain in the home and almost invisible at times. Poor women as drivers therefore get access to another kind of experiential knowledge and have a closer proximity to the clients' lives, which might produce another sort of relational intimacy. This amounts to an unsettling of traditional class and caste norms, although, of course, it does not remove the hierarchies since the women are still domestic labors to those more well off. The new was that in some driver-client relations the women were not made to feel like servants, but treated as relatively more equal and "at home" to different extents given the premise of the function they perform. This might also be due to the sense of a shared (social) mission of belonging to the larger movement of Azad & Sakha in some driver–client relations, as addressed earlier in the chapter.

In the following excerpt from an interview, Anika mentions the inspiration she has gathered from working for two university professors, and waiting at a campus full of students, over several years:

Anika,
private driver: When I go with them [clients] and I see them teach people and I see people studying, I also feel like completing my education. And that is how I thought of continuing with my education.

Indeed she did. Anika, like most of the female drivers, had finished her studies by 8th standard (grade). However, the experience of working for professors and the affect of spaces of higher education, as she pointed out, informed thoughts about her future and compelled her to further her studies. At the time I left the field, she had just passed the exam for 10th standard. Through the personal and spatial encounters of being a driver, Anika felt and thought differently about her abilities and possibilities, which in turn transformed practices – in this case to pursue education. She told me that she was considering college. This can be considered a direct outcome of the social and geographical expansion of space.

Sunita, who for the past three years has been driving for Nalini, a woman working for an NGO on women's empowerment, was similarly inspired by her client's work and direct encouragement. Whether in the space of the car, in Nalini's apartment, or at her office, the driver and the client discussed personal matters of life as well as general topics of women's empowerment. "Sunita told me that before driving, her entire life was like a very small circle," Nalini shared, recalling one of their many talks, "but now it feels like a large circle, all of the city, and she has even become aware of the world outside of Delhi." Actively engaged in a movement for women's empowerment, having a female driver was an obvious choice for Nalini, who unsurprisingly adopted a mentoring role toward her driver. She was outspoken in her concern for Sunita's options and wellbeing in life. On several occasions, Nalini transcended the traditional role of a client; for instance, she brought Sunita to work-related events, where at times Sunita would speak of her experiences as a driver and life in general. "She also told me, one of these past days, that she had gone to the mall the day before and had eaten at McDonald's," Nalini continued, "and then she showed me some pictures of it. I think she desires to do things that "other people" do, but which she never had access to earlier – you know, the middle class aspirations – and now she can." On a different day, Sunita shared with me her thoughts on working as a private driver:

> In this job I have met so many people, talked to them. I have seen things I had never seen before. I took people out for roaming around as well. I have met a lot of my client's friends. I remember one who lives in South Extension [a posh area of Delhi], another one went with us to India Gate [a famous monument akin to the Arc de Triomphe of Delhi]. I remember them because they sat in our car and we talked. I meet a lot of people; I get to learn new things. Then I feel like trying those things when we go to new places.

During my fieldwork, I often heard drivers talking about the desire to try out new things as a consequence of spatial encounters. It was evident across all accounts that many drivers both learned from and derived inspiration from indirect and direct engagements with clients, as well as from the spatiality of the clients' everyday lives. Things akin to what Nalini calls "middle class aspirations" and the "desire to do things that "other people" do,'" like going to the mall, McDonald's, or famous city sights, were mentioned by many women as an experienced transformation in their lives from being drivers. In such instances, the drivers were transgressing and transcending traditional practices of caste and class boundaries: they were visiting places urban poor women typically are excluded from. This shows that the expansion of space – socially and geographically – mattered for the negotiation and transformation of identities and practices. In encounters with "new others" from different worlds, these women from poor backgrounds were experiencing spaces in which they could "make themselves" differently than before. In other words, while the female drivers were negotiating the function of that profession, they were simultaneously negotiating their subjectivities and identities more generally. You cannot take the woman out of the driver, so to speak; while being a driver, therefore, the woman gets to experience new things, which instigates negotiations with self, others, and the surrounding world. And once a woman has experienced an expansion of space that experience remains with her, even if she leaves the program. My aim in the remainder of this chapter will be to elaborate on the geographical expansion of space and supplement the above perspective of encounters between drivers and clients to include the encounters with "the city" itself.

**Encountering the city: "Things change because your map is enlarged"**

Rita, client: Things change because your map is enlarged; your world is bigger. The map of things you know is enlarged. I know when Anika is waiting [while on duty], she might go inside the sweet shop to have a dessert or a drink. So she is not just waiting; she is enjoying the city.

Becoming and being a driver innately gave the women exposure to the city of Delhi in a whole new way, allowing them access to places they otherwise never would have seen, let alone visited. As demonstrated in the last chapter, the women experienced a vast increase in mobility and exposure to the city already as trainees. In becoming drivers, the geographical experience of the city expanded even further. As Rita also had noticed in her driver's practices while waiting on duty, some drivers started to "enjoy the city." Where the city had previously been largely a foreign

land to most of the women, something from which they were significantly excluded, driving as a profession provided an invitation to partake in the life of the city, however careful or minute their participation might be (cf. limits on mobility in Chapter Three). Rita's testimony reveals how she perceived Anika negotiating these new experiences:

> Rita, client: I feel it is Anika's confidence and initiative that allows her to negotiate these aspects of being a part of the city, of being a public working person in the city. She uses the toilets in the university quite easily [reference to caste], and even elsewhere, somehow she just manages to go there and come back. She has self-respect toward herself and she conveys it by her body language. She is not hesitant; she is not fumbling. She does not culturally fumble. Because she just walks in and asks, I don't know any circumstance where she has been denied anything.

That Anika "does not culturally fumble" can be viewed as an indication that she has transcended certain traditional caste and class constraints, tensions, and ambiguities. From this perspective, in her manner of practicing being a driver in the city, she is demanding her right to appear, to participate in the city, and to inhabit space in a novel way toward greater equality. Zoya, an experienced driver, had always wanted to see the city, something she achieved through the practices of being a driver. Not only did she fulfill a dream of mobility; additionally, she said, the expansion of space and accumulated experiences of encountering others and the city over time made her less shy and capable to "talk to anyone without hesitation, even to a stranger":

> Zoya, taxi driver: I am really young right now, and I wanted to see Delhi and learn driving, which is done. Before, I did not know anything about Delhi; the only way was from school to home and vice versa, or at rare times we went somewhere with the family. I did not know any routes or how to get to different places. [...]. Talking to someone was beyond question, and I was not even able to look at anyone properly; I was that shy. But now I can talk to anyone without hesitation, even to a stranger.

Notice the change in Zoya's practices within her account: the fact that she moved from "talking to someone was beyond question" to "I can talk to anyone without hesitation" is quite a transformation of her sense of self and practices of relating with others. This was largely informed by the expansion of space through her encounters with others and the city. Even though the trainees in the Women on Wheels program do not enjoy the same mobility, or intimacy and variety of encounters, as they

will as drivers, the rupture of their limited mobility and the experience of seeing more of Delhi made an impression on them. The expansion of space in encountering the city began the very first day the women had to commute alone and when they first drove in Delhi.

> Sita, trainee: Before, I had only seen things in the city from a few tours with school. Sometimes, my father would take the family out for tours, so I had seen some parts of Delhi. But I have only seen places close by, and never outside of the city. [...] But I see more of Delhi now. When "sir" [driving trainer] drives and takes us around according to a particular route, only then I am able to see new parts.

When the worlds of these women expanded, things previously believed to be out of reach became reachable and in turn produced a sense of capability to do things. The women often expressed, with a tinge of surprise and excitement, that they used to imagine some places – such as famous sites they had heard of but never seen – as being extremely far away until one day they drove past these places, saw them, and realized that indeed things were not as remote as first believed. As several drivers have said, places were experienced as within possible reach all of a sudden, which testifies to their geographical sense of the city; their own abilities of mobility had transformed notably:

> Bhavani, trainee: One day I drove by Akshardham Temple for the first time. I had never seen the temple before so close, only from afar. I asked "sir" [driving trainer] if this was the Akshardham Temple, and he said yes [...]. Now I know where it is and how to get there. I used to think everything was too far to reach. It makes me feel good that sir takes us to far-off places.

I find that Rita gave a fine description of this shift, as cited in the title of this section: "Things change because your map is enlarged; your world is bigger. The map of things you know is enlarged."

In the final account of this section, I engage with this enlargement of the women's worlds – the expansion of space, as I call it – by examining a driver's lived experience of visiting Delhi's international airport. This story was briefly introduced in the opening montage of my thesis, titled "When that out of reach is research," because it underpins a central argument of my work: the importance and affect of an expansion of space for the urban poor women in this study. On the

one hand, visiting places the women believed they would never get to see in life produced an incredible sense of accomplishment, excitement, liberation, and expansion of possibilities. On the other hand, visiting previously exclusionary places had notable impact precisely because of the discriminatory practices between groups of people and segregating spatial politics in Delhi.

At 42 years of age, Seema was one of the oldest drivers to graduate from the Women on Wheels program. Unable to land a job rapidly with Sakha, she was recruited to join the regular taxi company, Meru Cabs, for which she was driving at the time we met. In our encounter, she spoke about what it was like to be a driver. "I feel really proud of myself that from the four walls of my house I could actually come out and now I roam all around," she shared. Leaving her home – unaccompanied, that is – Seema, like the other drivers, had the map of her world enlarged. However, increased mobility did more than simply make the women more mobile in their practices and movements in the city; innately, such movements produced transformational negotiations related to their sense of self. Note how Seema's depiction of visiting the airport for the first time is fraught with emotions, but also produced a shift in how she saw herself and the opportunities before her, however abstract and undefined in nature:

> When I saw it for the first time, I was scared. Like, I mean, how will I go and what will I do? I was scared for some time, the first two times, but then I gained confidence; and after that, I really liked it. I had never thought I would be able to see such a place, ever! Now when I have seen it, I feel really proud and confident that I also can do things.

She smiled as she conveyed this to me, and her eyes were momentarily tearful. The pride she felt from this and similar experiences was evident from the manner in which she spoke of it. I was stuck by her sentiments; it was one of those moments in fieldwork that became imprinted in my mind. With a few words, Seema said quite a lot about differential treatment and discriminatory practices within the politics of organizing in Delhi, and on the experiences of transgressing such boundaries.

What I find even more potent and intriguing in her statement is her final phrase: "Now when I have seen it, I feel really proud and confident that I also can do things." Interestingly, there was no specific "thing" that the visit to the airport had explicitly enabled her to do outside of that experience; rather, she experienced a more general sense of increasing possibilities and the confidence to pursue them. Although the "outcome" appeared quite abstract, the shift in how Seema saw herself and her options was nevertheless easily perceptible. This sense of pride, excitement, and opportunity was shared by many of the Sakha drivers. I have heard such testimonies in many

forms – the commonality was the experience of having done something the women had previously deemed impossible. Driving to the airport, in this case, was a profoundly productive moment and movement. Seema literally drove into another world – like a traveler, although herself working for travelers – and it opened her imagination of her own participation in the city and in life. Her "map" was enlarged in more than just the geographical sense. Concurrently, the experience produced a sense of the world enlarging, yet also becoming more reachable.

**Concluding note**

This chapter has demonstrated that being a driver as a poor woman in Delhi was like entering an entirely different world – professionally, socio-poligically, and geographically. It enabled a notable expansion of space, which fuelled negotiations with self, others, and the surroundings. Performing the untraditional function of a female driver, the women drew on material, corporeal, and symbolic aspects of enacting and embodying being a driver. I have shown how the materiality of being a driver was deployed using organizational artifacts to legitimize the role and to negotiate and transform spatial politics. The uniform was a particularly significant component of the performativity of being a driver and in negotiating relations. While there were nuances in the drivers' usages and perception of the uniform, the visibility of their uniform more easily allowed others to see that women behind the wheel in Delhi were doing and living gender differently. The coherence of their appearance implies that, seen in the space of the city, the female drivers were bodies moving in alliance – what one client referred to as "the blue *kurta* brigade." In performing the function of being a driver, these women were claiming the right to appear in the city in a new way and to exhibit alternative modes of living gender, caste and class, despite precarious positions.

When drivers became noticed, their clients were noticed too. In some cases, they gave each other status through the perceptions of others. The performativity of a "female driver" was therefore constructed continuously in and through relations, with the role of the client being the predominant counterpart. Working for middle and upper class women gave drivers intimate insight into clients' ways of thinking and living. The negotiation of the function performed as a female driver and the underlying negotiations of identity and sense of self can therefore not be seen as separate. Perhaps exactly because they cannot be pulled apart –the woman cannot be taken out of the driver – it also means that facilitating negotiations of gender, caste, and class relations implies challenging the politics of space on different levels.

It appears as though, by being taken out of their familiar context, the women were starting to perceive themselves, their lives, and the "world" at large differently. When women spoke of their encounters with clients and the city, I was often struck by how frequently they mentioned a sense

of an abstract, but pronounced, feeling of being able to "do more," "do other things," or "try out new things." The expansion of space and of meeting other worlds, I thus argue, was important for social transformation, experienced by the women as increasing opportunities and capabilities in life in general, and in providing a repertoire of new spatial imaginings of what that might look like. As space expanded, identities were opened, practices changed, and the future became reimagined – making another becoming possible, and in turn making it political. I will end this chapter with the words of Inika, as she voiced this point so meaningfully:

> Ma'am, I feel that [...] around here [the basti], I have told so many people that when we sit in the house, our thoughts would be limited to the house only. As long as we don't go outside, then our ways of thinking would not change.

# Theorizing the expansion of space

Theoretical reflection part Three

Having trained to become drivers, the women who make it through the program can now enter the city of Delhi as professional drivers. The "unsettlings" continue; their negotiations with self, others, and surroundings continue; but what characterizes this specific part of the organizational program and its aim toward social transformation? What can being a driver tell about how social transformation is practiced and experienced in this context? The empirical material of this chapter has shown that the social and geographical expansion of space embodied in the meeting of other worlds through encounters further fuelled processes of transformation.

**Becoming with others: transformation through new kinds of relations**

Space, as the sphere of interaction and inter-relations, was at the forefront of this chapter. I considered the materiality and spatial politics of the relations in which the poor women negotiated and performed their function as drivers, and which rendered their everyday lives open for alternative becomings. This chapter also pointed to the inequalities of power and privilege and the complexities and multiple expressions of such negotiations within driver–client relations. It demonstrated that when radically different worlds intersected, clashes and tensions were common outcomes, but equally, bonds of care, encouragement, and inspiration were formed. From this perspective, this chapter joins Massey (2005) in her argument that "space unfolds as interaction" which means an inevitable "engagement within a multiplicity":

> If time unfolds as change then space unfolds as interaction. In that sense space is the social dimension [...] in the sense of engagement within a multiplicity. It is the sphere of the continuous production and reconfiguration of heterogeneity in all its forms – diversity, subordination, conflicting interests. (Massey, 2005: 60).

What is interesting here, pertaining to conceptualizing social transformation, is not merely that this chapter showed that the production and reconfiguration of heterogeneity was indeed taking place – in forms of "diversity, subordination, conflicting interests" and more – but that it demonstrated how, and pointed toward some reasons *why*. As Massey (2005: 55) notes, "Change requires interaction. Interaction, including internal multiplicities, is essential to the generation of temporality." On the surface, negotiations concerned the function of being a driver, but the expansion of space through encounters forced the women to relate to themselves, others, and the world differently. Indeed, through confronting the challenge of having to negotiate the multiplicity of space, the women were not only negotiating being drivers – they were simultaneously negotiating their subjectivities

and identities in relation to others and the city.

In their encounters with others of "different worlds" and with the city in entirely new ways, the women were thus equally faced with "internal multiplicities" of who they were. As Massey writes, "We cannot 'become', in other words, without others. And it is space that provides the necessary conditions for that possibility" (2005: 56).

This is essential. If we cannot become without others, then does it not matter "which kind of others" we encounter in order to shape our lives? This chapter has suggested that it certainly matters. As the women from poor backgrounds gained intimate knowledge of lives lived by women of higher social status, who in a way represent a life they might aspire to ("the middle class aspirations" as Nalini deemed it), their imaginations of their own futures opened up. Irrespective of whether relations produced clashes and tensions or more amicable ties, the drivers experienced an expansion of space through direct interaction with new kind of people and places. This, in my interpretation, had important value for the processes of social transformation. For instance, a driver pursued further education because her client worked at a university, and another driver spoke at women's empowerment conferences due to her client's profession. The relations of encouragement, as illustrated by these two examples, did appear to be more "productive" for the drivers' transformations beyond being a driver than relations where, for instance, a driver felt "like a servant." There were surely differences in the extent to which the relation enabled or inspired the poor women to change certain practices in their everyday lives.

Nevertheless, even in relations where there was not a visible, explicit link between the client's professional life and the driver's change in practices, what was common amongst all drivers was that they saw how women of "other worlds" lived, spoke, engaged, dressed, ate, moved in the city, where they went, with whom they spent time, and so on. And they saw it in close proximity – in the intimate spaces of households or from hours spent together in the car – which is widely different than observing people higher in the social hierarchy from afar. This close proximity to the lives of others, the shared intimacy of that closeness of lives, took on the nature of "affective intensities" (Lorimer, 2005). Simonsen (2008) uses the term "spatial imageries," which might be an apt way to term this product of such an expansion of space. The poor women, in their function as drivers, participated in, co-produced, and moved through spaces they otherwise would be excluded from, providing them with entirely new spatial imageries.

**Driving as an alternative way to live caste, class, and gender**

The notions and practices of driving contest and unsettle traditional norms of social organizing and politics of spatial segregations based on caste, class, and gender. This is precisely the reason

why Azad & Sakha chose the non-traditional livelihood of driving as the focal point of their organizational methods. Whereas many livelihood programs in Delhi still operate within a gender-traditional paradigm, Azad & Sakha have deliberately sought to break with it. In fact, their methods are designed to distort "the spatialisation of class divisions," as Rao (2010) documents. However, this does not merely come down to an economic division of rights, labor, and opportunities, but is innately tied to social and geographical segregation practices. In this context, driving – as a profession for urban poor women – breaks the boundaries of all these spheres concurrently.

Interestingly, because the function of female drivers confuses caste, class, and gender boundaries, it appeared to bring those topics to the surface somehow. This was most clearly demonstrated in the apparent challenges drivers and clients experienced in defining and performing their roles, in that the drivers are "neither males nor maids"; indeed "a female driver" contested and deviated from the norms. There thus was an opening to perform and live caste, class, and gender differently – relationally – for drivers and their clients. Being a driver is therefore different than traditional occupations for "the poor" in service of those better off; yet it is not unproblematic, as the caste and class divides are still clearly enforced in such a service function as (relatively low-paid) domestic help.

In a way, the performativity of the function of being a driver can be considered an opening or a potential to live and "do" caste, class, and gender in an alternative way. To some extent, all the poor women working as drivers were doing this with the mere act of performing a non-traditional and controversial role. However, when I say that it is more of an opening or a potential, I wish to emphasize that the extent to which a woman can pursue living alternatively or feeling increasingly liberated in her life varied greatly. Some women naturally disrupted these caste, class, and gender boundaries more than others. Some were more inclined to conform to traditional practices, but some clients were also more prone to enforce such practices. In this sense, their negotiations were those of power, privileges, rights and social positioning. Being a female driver and an employer of a female driver surely unsettled the givenness of spatial politics, yet in that opening, these two roles – which mutually produce each other – can be performed in any form within a continuum between traditional norms and practices of greater equality. As Simonsens (2010: 228) notes, with reference to Ahmed (2000: 49), "[T]his world is not a general world of humanity, but a differentiated world. In such a world, Ahmed argues, what sociality is about is more often than not 'precisely the effect of being with some others over other others'."

Motivated by charity or the aspiration for a more equal society, this chapter showed that some (but not all) clients encouraged the poor women far beyond the role of a driver, particularly with regard to pursue greater opportunities in their lives. This is not typical caste/class behavior; in such cases, although hierarchies remained clear, both clients and drivers were breaking traditional

boundaries and practicing a new world of "betweenness." Whether in minor or major ways, spatial politics became transformed in these productive moments through the expansion of space and its relations. As I will further address in the next chapter, the poor women were able to acquire "socio-political confidence" through experiential knowledge of navigating and observing higher social realms (for instance, that it is okay to work while menstruating).

That said, many ambiguities and fine lines remain in these negotiations between different worlds and the conflicting tendencies within these relations. For instance, there is a significant power asymmetry in the employee–employer aspect of the relationship: if the client becomes dissatisfied, the driver can easily be replaced. Hence, the pressure to conform overshadows the women's freedom of agency. On the one hand, there is an argument that learning to "be professionals" – which was often a topic of tension – can help the poor women to advance in their professional lives, which in turn informs the quality of their everyday lives in general. On the other hand, people of higher social status were attempting to "mold" the poor women into the versions they consider best or appropriate, in which the pressure to "become" in a specific way is quite strong. To the extent that learning to be professional concerns meeting the expectations and performing the duties specifically implied in the role of being a driver, this is what can be expected in any case of fulfilling a job description. When clients' expectations blur those lines, however, such as when a client had strong opinions about a driver's hair and grooming, this can be an ethical dilemma veering between helpful encouragement and acquiring useful knowledge, on the one hand, and pressuring others to conform to an image not of their making, on the other.

Massey (2005: 59) argues for "the necessary outwardlookingness of a spatialised subjectivity"; in this case, perhaps the encounters facilitated by being a driver were producing a space of alternative politics, and with it, the outwardlookingness necessary for opening spatialized subjectivities and for alternative becomings. In other words, the "who" and the "where" of the encounters *did* matter for the processes of social transformation explored in this study. As Simonsen (2010) has pointed out, sociality is produced by being with some rather than others. I would add that it makes sense in terms of social transformation to consider the specific contextual setups of those encounters that can facilitate a positive change.

**Not just happenstance: planning encounters for social transformation**

Urban literature and human geography commonly conceive of the city as a spatial formation comprised of people who are unknown to each other and trajectories yet to meet, highlighting that the throwntogetherness of city spaces inevitably entails encountering "the stranger" (e.g., Massey, 2005; Simonsen & Koefoed, 2015; Ahmed, 2000). However, this implies access to the city and

the ability to participate in its ongoing production, which might not be the case for some groups in society. Considering the lives of women in Delhi's *bastis* before they entered the Women on Wheels program, their mobility was restricted and monitored and their exposure to the city was minimal, which made serendipitous encounters with "the stranger" quite limited across the caste and class segregation of social ordering. Mobility and participation in the city are privileges grounded in temporal relational spatial politics, which are significantly unequally distributed in this context. Women from poor backgrounds rarely experience mobile encounters with strangers in Delhi and are not accustomed to encountering many people of higher social status, celebrities, or foreigners – but this happens through being a Sakha driver. The encounters were effective also *because of* this divide. Previously excluded from the city and encounters with "different others," the women participated in and became affected by the ongoing production of the city-spaces in entirely new ways due to the practices of being female drivers.

Happenstance encounters, of which Massey (2005) speaks frequently – for instance, "happenstance juxtapositions of previously unrelated trajectories" (Massey, 2005: 94) – traditionally do not occur naturally for the women in this context. If encounters are a given part of the dynamic nature of space, and important as "an aspect of the productivity of spatiality, which may enable 'something new' to happen" (Massey, 2005: 94), then it becomes relevant to consider how to make productive encounters happen for women who are otherwise excluded from such possibilities. Azad & Sakha did so by offering the poor women the opportunity to become drivers. Relations were central to their organizing and were carried out in everyday material practices, ongoing and continuously negotiated. As Beyes and Steyaert (2012: 53) suggest, "[b]eing attentive to spacing directs the organizational scholar toward embodied affects and encounters generated in the here-and-now and assembled from the manifold (im)materialities." It could similarly be said that attentiveness to spacing does the same for social entrepreneurial organizing, as the empirical material has illustrated that this correlates with how Azad & Sakha operate. The organization provided specific material artifacts to enable the women to corporeally perform the function of being a driver, and in that sense steered the performativity of a driver and the negotiations hereof in a certain direction. The embodied affects and inevitable encounters deriving from working as a driver seemed seminal to Azad & Sakha's methods of organizing for social transformation. Being attentive to spacing, in this regard, would mean that an organization's work for social change in different areas could stand to gain from thinking spatially, in its unique contexts, and considering these dimensions of transformation: bodies, emotions, encounters, relations, places, materiality, and spatial affects. Based on the empirical material of this chapter, I believe these dimensions can be engaged with the aim of social transformation through an expansion of space.

**The geographical expansion of space**

Since the women's mobility had been extremely restricted before entering the Women on Wheels program, becoming and being drivers that produced experiences of driving in the city, seeing places, and visiting different neighborhoods had a profound impact on them. It provoked re-imaginations of themselves as women in Delhi, influencing the way they perceived their own capabilities and opportunities. Paradoxically, while their "map was enlarged" and their geographical sense and experience of space expanded extensively, this "map" simultaneously became "smaller" in that places were suddenly reachable and did not seem as far away as they had previously imagined parts of the city they had never seen. They have acquired a mobile experiential knowledge and a sense of autonomy, making them able – perhaps as the sole person in the family – to navigate through Delhi to visit cultural destinations.

Being on the move in the city as drivers led to encounters with others, up close and afar, as well as with the city itself. Koefoed et al. (2017) uses the term "mobile encounters" or "spaces of mobility" to denote the relational spaces of meeting, seeing, sensing, hearing and experiencing others while being on the move – spaces which "involve meaning and are inscribed by power" (Koefoed et al., 2017: 10). Jensen (2010), in a similar reasoning, finds that gender practices are produced, and can be confronted, through daily urban encounters, or what he terms "mobility performance." Koefoed et al. (2017) adds that spaces of mobility relate to how "place, identity, and subjectivity are produced on the move," but emphasizes that spatial negotiations are not merely a matter of power relations; that there are also other "social qualities of these spaces" (Koefoed et al., 2017: 10).

I find that this notion of qualities of different spaces in the city explains precisely why being in the city did more to the women than present power-relational negotiations. Having visited famous monuments and seen different neighborhoods, having waited around in Delhi's large botanical parks, having seen places clients shop and eat – all together, this provided the women with a sense of *knowing* the city. The women were beginning to enjoy the city, something they barely had known about before. Doing new and different things inspired the women to have more of such engagements in the city, with increasing confidence that they too the had rights and social capability to do so. This change in practices instilled a sense of possibilities expanding; hence, there was not just an "enlargement of the map," to paraphrase a client quoted in this chapter, but also an enlargement of opportunities and accessible activities within that. The expansion of space is simultaneously about geography, social worlds and their politics, mobility, new imaginings, and embodied and experiential knowledge. Being a driver in this regard intrinsically produces an "outwardlookingness" caused by the expansion of space (Massey, 2005). In this view, the city can

be seen as affective space, which means that the women were emotionally receptive and touched by the city-life around them (Simonsen & Koefoed, 2015). Massey (2005) also refers to instances such as this as the disruptive character of space, "its enablement of new relations-to-each-other of previously disparate trajectories" (2005: 41). My argument here is that such encounters were not just happenstance; they were deliberately orchestrated from an organization's point of view.

**Collective performativity and driving across borders**

The expansion of space not only impacted the women themselves; on another analytical level, there is also the question of female drivers entering and standing out in the cityscape – what this "blue *kurta* brigade" does to the spatial politics of the city. Public spaces in the city of Delhi are often segregated based on perceptions and practices of gender, caste, and class (see Chapter Three). Movement within, and access to, places in the city is thus highly regulated by social behavior and expectations along these parameters of unequally and differentially distributed rights, precariousness, and recognition. Women living in extreme urban poverty in Delhi, as a group of social categorization, are traditionally excluded from the city for reasons I have addressed throughout this thesis. In Butler's (2015) terminology, they are being denied their rights to "livable lives" in that they do not have the freedom to perform their sense of gender and generally live their lives freely expressed by their own choosing. But they are also being denied the right to appear, since the field of appearance in Butler's terms – what I call spatial politics – is highly regulated. For instance, Butler (2015: 35) writes, "But what if the highly regulated field of appearance does not admit everyone, requiring zones where many are expected not to appear or are legally proscribed from doing so?" This is indeed the case in Delhi's "spatialisation of class divisions" (Rao, 2010: 403). Delhi's international airport, as we have seen, is one such zone, but they also exist in everyday spaces in the city like malls, markets, and means of transportation.

Female drivers in Delhi, however, do not (yet) fit into this order of organizing, and therefore provide an opening and opportunity to contest and redo certain practices at its boundaries to some extent. As drivers, they embody an alternative way of living gender in this context, and they claim a right to appear in public spaces in a new way. They unsettle and break open the field of appearance because the role of a female driver considered highly unconventional in this context. However, the right to appearance is premised on and conditioned by the functionality of being a driver. In other words, they do not have a free right to appearance as poor – and as poor women – hence, the inequality of right to appearance and recognition in Delhi's spatial settings remains.

Nevertheless, the poor women claim new access through their function as drivers. Azad & Sakha aspires for this access to "spill over," opening up ways to gain recognition, rights, and

opportunities for women and for the poor in Delhi in general. Due to the non-traditional and radical nature of a female driver in Delhi, the presence of female drivers in the streets can be seen as "a public insistence on existing and mattering" and as a form of critique against the norms limiting their options in life (Butler, 2015: 37). "The blue *kurta* brigade" is an expression of the visibility and performativity of Sakha drivers acting in concert across the city of Delhi. Although relatively small in number, the Sakha drivers still stand out in the cityscape. Considering all of the drivers "out there" together in the city, points to a collective or plural performativity of their common actions of driving (Butler, 2015). Such collective performativity is to be perceived as a movement – of what happens when bodies assemble. In this view, each driver in uniform, and every taxi vehicle roaming the streets, communicates within this web of plural enactments of female drivers. They are "exercising a performative and plural right to appear, one that asserts and instates the body in the midst of the political field" (Butler, 2015: 11). Embedded in the materiality and socio-politics of performing the function of a female driver, these women are forming temporary alliances in pursuit of greater equality, recognition, and more livable lives. They were noticed.

We but mirror the world. All the tendencies present in the outer world are to be found in the world of our body. If we could change ourselves, the tendencies in the world would also change. As a man changes his own nature, so does the attitude of the world change towards him.

Mahatma Gandhi

# TRANSFORMING SPATIAL POLITICS

Chapter Seven

In this chapter I suggest that in becoming and being drivers, women of urban poverty in Delhi transform spatial politics through changes in their corporeal, emotional, and relational practices of everyday life. The chapter focuses on how the women negotiate matters of everyday politics and investigate what sort of contextual practices are being contested and transformed.

# Female drivers in Delhi: being the change

Seema,
taxi driver: Before [Azad & Sakha], I would cover my head or use a veil at times. Now, no one says anything. I would be wearing things like a *sindur* [a red dot or line on the forehead],[91] bangles, some jewelry, and so on. I have stopped doing any such thing. Even if someone says something against it, I don't care now. I feel that, why should women do all such things? Men should also do it, then. If they are not doing it, then we will also not do it. Men are also married, but they don't do anything to show it [physically] – then why should we?

In different ways, the three previous chapters have demonstrated how novel processes of negotiation with self, others, and the surroundings are instigated and undertaken as the women considered becoming drivers, trained to become drivers, and finally, as they worked as drivers. Across these different "stages", different spatial constellations have influenced the women's lives. The empirical findings suggest that social transformation takes place through micro-negotiations of everyday spatial politics. These spatio-temporal moments – in which the women negotiate their subjectivities and identities in new ways to their perceived advantage – are what I recognize as spaces of transformation or the transformation of spatial politics. Such spaces are like battlefields of negotiation wherein the politics of these women's everyday lives were confronted, challenged, and at times changed.

While these negotiation processes and the consequent changes in practices took place in different constellations of people, places, and things and across diverging contextual "topics" regarding the women and others, there was a recurrent theme concerning who the women are, who they are allowed to be and to become, and how they translated these demands in their everyday practices. This chapter focuses on the specifics of these negotiations and explores how the women transformed spatial politics throughout the process of becoming and being drivers. What exactly are they negotiating, and what is being transformed in the spaces of everyday life?

[91] The use of *sindur* is a common practice in Hindu communities applied to show that a woman is married.

Analyzing the empirical material, three central elements in the transformations of everyday spatial politics stand out: changes in corporeal, emotional,[92] and relational practices. Even though these were innately interwoven, I treat them separately for analytical purposes and they serve as the structure of the chapter. There were also notable material changes in the women's lives when working as drivers, from earning typically the double of the prior total household income. Given that the economic aspect's profound influence on relational dynamics, I treat it as a means to an end of negotiating spatial politics, rather than as an end in itself. The economic changes are, therefore, discussed under changes in relational practices. Given the context of this case, these ways of practicing social transformation were inherently gendered.

**Social transformation as changes in corporeal practices**

One way in which staff, clients, and drivers alike often expressed the visibility of transformation taking place was through changes in the way the women dress, "groom themselves," and carry themselves in terms of body posture, tone of voice, eye contact, and the use of clothing and ornaments, for instance. Many accounts attest to the fact that the women change *corporeally*:

> Avni, staff: The women hear comments and face issues on what they are wearing; they have to take a *dupatta* [long scarf] over their *kurta*. If you see, all the girls will be wearing a *dupatta*. Even if a girl is wearing jeans and T-shirt, she will be wearing a *dupatta*. It is to cover their breasts. These things just reduce their mobility. Before joining the program, if you notice, some girls will wear traditional big earrings, bangles, chains. Now they are free from all that. Heels reduce mobility, and now they wear shoes. Earlier they would not speak properly; now they can answer you very easily. Before this, they were too shy. They were not able to speak anything.
>
> Azad is a very friendly place; here the women are free to do whatever they like, but in their houses they have to keep quiet and there are a lot of restrictions. If you see their passport photographs, [between the] first day of the training and last day of training, in six months there are lots of changes – in their expression and the level of confidence seen on their faces.

[92] I consider "emotion" or "emotionally" as situated within and between bodily and mental responses; a view aligned with Simonsen's (2013) notion of emotional spatiality (see Chapter Two).

As addressed in Chapter Three, the women are accustomed to strict traditional practices and expectations regarding how they should dress and behave corporeally in relation to others. The ways women conduct themselves are generally thought of as constitutive of a family's honor, *izzat*, and social status; therefore, the women's scope of action is often exposed to expectations, restrictions, opinions, and monitoring by others. Spatial politics thus forms gender performativity. Often, such gendered bodily practices are upheld and continuously re-enacted, but rarely questioned. When the women became drivers and met other worlds, however, they increasingly began questioning these traditional practices. Changing or "disobeying" these corporeal traditions held profound implications. It can be seen as a physical manifestation and symbolic rebellion against patriarchal confines and a clear statement that the women are claiming more autonomy. The complexities and relational back-and-forth dynamics of negotiating spatial politics corporeally are illustrated by Inika's account, whose life story was introduced in Chapter Three.

I had never seen Inika cover her hair until the day I visited her at her home, because at Sakha, the women generally do not use *dupattas* (scarves), unless they are Muslim and use a *purdah* to cover their hair.[93] This is generally also the case for women working in service professions, e.g. in stores, at NGOs, or as maids. On this day, dressed in loose pink pants and a white tunic with a pink floral print, Inika came to find me and Mary, the translator, on one of the main streets near her home to guide us through the maze of tiny, dusty lanes, *galis*, to her place. She waved at us from afar, smiling and calling for us. Her hair was covered by a *dupatta* matching her suit.

As we sat down in her home, Inika explained about her veiling practice:

> You must have seen that when I went outside to pick you up, I had to cover my head with a *dupatta*. If somebody had seen me outside during that time [as we crossed the lanes], I might have had to lower the *dupatta* to cover my face a bit more.

It was Inika herself who brought up the topic of covering her head. I got the impression that she wanted to address it because I witnessed her covering her hair – for the first and only time throughout our many encounters – as we crossed the lanes of her community. She explained that she used to dress conservatively, following traditional customs to the fullest, and therefore it surprised her neighbors in the community that she took up driving.

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[93] As addressed in Chapter Three, the Hindu forms of veiling practices are termed *gunghat*. Similar practices for Muslim are called *purdah*. Both refer to practices of women covering their hair and sometimes concealing their face most typically by using a dupatta or hijab (scarf), the loose end of the sari, or a burqa, (Abraham, 2010).



*Gharoli Extension, Phase 3, east Delhi.*
Notice the difference in Inika's and Mary's (translator) way of dressing.

I wasn't sure what she was trying to convey through bringing up the veiling practices, so I asked more directly, "Why do you have to cover your head?" She replied:

> It's a custom in Uttar Pradesh [her native state], even though I don't use it that often now. My father-in-law died a few years ago, and my brother-in-law died about three months ago. So I don't use it that much, but when I wear the uniform, I usually cover my head and go outside [when I leave the house].

She reflected for a moment and added: "If I have to wear it for even two minutes, I feel like taking it off and throwing it away." She seemed to be saying that she had to conform to the expected practices, but at the same time that she wanted to decide for herself. Perhaps because her male in-laws had died recently, she felt less pressured. Even though she said she did not want to wear it, I asked her again why she wore it today then, and she said:

> What to do?! It is a compulsion. If I don't go outside covering my head, then people say a lot of [bad] things behind my back. They will say things like, "She has already caught the outside influence; there must be someone somewhere" [implying adultery]. They would say so many things that I would not be able to stay here [peacefully]. The only difference is that I used to do it [veiling] a lot earlier. But now I only do it as much as it keeps others – and therefore myself – happy.

Inika's approach to veiling demonstrates how gendered bodily practices were negotiated in both households and communities. It was a relational and political matter that was tested, contested, expanded, and experimented with. Although Inika still followed the custom of covering her head – "it is a compulsion" – it was less frequently. Now, as she said, she does it of her own choice for the sake of peace or showing respect in the community.

A few weeks later, I met Inika and her husband for an interview outside of her community, and she did not cover her hair at all. Again, she brought up the topic, declaring, "Earlier I used to wear saris only;[94] now I wear suits and don't care about anyone else. Whoever is saying anything about me, let them talk. I do my work as per my will." Although her accounts appear slightly contradictory, I take them as a representation of the tensions within negotiating gendered practices in her everyday life. It is not a case of either/or. There is no one way she enacted the veiling practice. Instead she tried to make the practice more of her own choice while keeping harassment at a manageable level. Indeed, this is a part of the complexity of social transformation. She said that she does not care what people say about her, but she also demonstrates that she *did* care because she wants to avoid too much gossip and "keep others happy."



*Jangpura Extension, south Delhi.*
Inika with her husband.

[94] There is an implicit message in this statement: the cultural association that wearing a sari in everyday life is conservative and often also associated with poor women. Middle- and upper-class women, considered more "modern," usually wear suits (like Inika in the above photo) or more Western-style clothing like pants and a shirt or *kurta*

This resonates with a staff member's characterization of her first impressions of Inika when she enrolled in 2011. From the way Inika looked and carried herself, the staff member, an educated, upper-class Indian woman, said:

> She is someone who I initially didn't think would become a driver. Her whole persona when she first came in – she used to be in a sari and covering her head. I was kind of stereotyping her in my thoughts, just because she was wearing a sari, wearing bangles, having her head covered; thinking that she won't be able to become a taxi driver. This was my failure. She did well. In fact, she is an extremely responsible driver.

Her statement shows how appearance can be a way of discriminating against or misjudging others, but also that corporeality is an aspect of the politics of space and thus an area in which to expect social transformation to be experienced and practiced.

*When transformation becomes "visible"*

On several occasions I have heard staff mention that the women's physical appearance can change too fast or be perceived too radical, leading to unnecessary challenges for the women in their households. In some situations, staff members recommend some women to reduce the pace with which they embody and enact their new sense of self. A staff member from the Jaipur office relayed one such story:

> We have a situation with a driver; the husband suspected her [of infidelity] and she fought with him. Instead of talking it out calmly, she fought back with him, and one day he gave me a call and said, "I am taking my wife." Even before we could do anything, he took her away [out of the city] and we have not seen her since. Before the training, she was a very different woman. She would wear saris, not very clean; her hair would be dirty, she would smell. But she was very beautiful, dark-complexioned. When she started coming here there was quite a noticeable change in her. Her sense of dressing improved, the way she used to talk improved. First she started wearing *salwar kurta* [traditional Indian suit], then she wore jeans. Now, when you see a woman wearing a sari to suddenly then wearing jeans, it was too fast a change – even for us, let alone her husband. It was too much for her husband to accept, and she did not really prepare him for all this. She chucked him into it.

The sudden corporeal transformation can in certain circumstances become a provoking tipping point that abruptly causes a family member to put a stop to a woman's enrollment in the program. "We spend a lot of time convincing the women not to change superficially, like just changing your clothes and bringing in gadgets," a staff member explained, emphasizing that the changes must

be gradual, and added: "what they actually need to change is the mindset. Change in attitude, behavior, mindset is important."

Many women saw the program as an opportunity to depart from some of the patriarchal expectations regarding their corporeal expressions and were, perhaps, also inspired by the people they encountered through the organization. Increasingly, they started wearing what they wanted to wear, and not what others expected them to wear. This is, indeed, a transformation of the everyday politics of gendered practices.

Clothing, ornaments, and body postures send messages. They cause effects and affects in inter-subjective relational negotiations with others. Often these corporeal messages are decoded and used as a means to discriminate against or evaluate others, consciously or not. In the previous chapter, an account portrayed how a client preferred her driver to come in uniform because "when she would come in her own clothes, she did not look like she would be working for a company; she looked like someone picked up from the road." It is an example of how a driver's corporeal appearance made the client immediately associated the woman with poverty. Corporeal appearance and conduct matter in the negotiations of spatial politics, and the Women on Wheels program deliberately addresses this in a module called "work readiness" and "communication and grooming."

The ways in which the women dressed and carried themselves were essential elements in the processes of social transformation; serving as a tool in their negotiations with self and others. Chapter Five demonstrated that the module on self-defense affected how the women carried themselves, i.e. with an increasing sense of confidence. The same can be said about wearing the Sakha uniform (see Chapter Six). Also, earning their own income influenced the women's ability to on their own buy clothing and other items related to their physical appearance; something they could not have done prior to their becoming drivers.

The corporeal transformations are symbolic as well as political. The noticeable change in veiling practices is a strong illustration of this: it is a very visible rupture with existing gendered practices and a move toward more autonomy. This was also largely influenced by the women's increased economic power. Nevertheless, it was typically a process of negotiation and experimentation with micro-adjustments in practices. While women like Inika might want to decide on what they wear, how they wear it, and how they relate corporeally to others in different social settings and situations, the context of their everyday lives remained largely the same, and they had to manage their lives within these settings. As in the example above, if the women transform too fast and far from traditions (i.e. from sari to jeans), then this is likely produce a backlash in families and communities seeking to maintain a strong hold on traditions. This points to notable, and perhaps

inevitable, tensions between traditions and "the new." The ways the women conducted themselves corporeally was inseparably linked to how they felt about themselves and the dynamics of the relations of their everyday lives, which I will address in the following two sections.

**Social transformation as changes in emotional practices**

> Zoya,
> taxi driver: Talking to someone was beyond question [before Azad]. I was not even able to look at anyone properly; I was that shy. But now, after the training of self-grooming, it is amazing… being a person who can talk without any hesitation to even a stranger. They have given me confidence with this training.

This brief citation from Zoya highlights how the corporeal, relational, and emotional aspects of social transformation intermingled in crafting a new sense of self. She saw herself as more confident, more daring, and expressed feeling better about who she is. Inika expressed similar sentiments of "changes from within":

> There have been a lot of changes from within. I am now able to talk to you. Earlier I would sit inside and find it difficult to decide if I should talk or not. But I have opened up so much from within that I can talk to anybody, and I would not hesitate while talking to that person.

Different expressions of increasing confidence are visible throughout my empirical material. "Confidence" and "pride" are two key words often used by the women when they spoke about the transformation they experienced, and by staff and clients on the changes they witnessed. As trainees the women began to feel more confident from participating in the training program (Chapter Five); yet for the women working as drivers, there was an even more pronounced surge in confidence. Consider these following testimonies by female drivers:

> Seema,
> taxi driver: I used to get very scared, but then during the training we were given so many classes and courses that I felt confident. […] I am really thankful to them [Azad & Sakha] because they taught us confidence. They helped us to gain self-confidence, but they did not fulfill all their promises [by giving me a job/she left Sakha]. […] Initially no one used to think about us [poor women]; now when I know driving I feel very proud of myself.

Geeta,
private driver: I also used to feel embarrassed [about being a driver], thinking what will I tell at home or to the people. But now I am proud and have no inhibitions saying I work as a driver.

Inika,
taxi driver: Now there is so much difference that I don't care for anybody about what they might say. I do my things on my own.

Anika,
private driver: I stay amidst all of them [male drivers] like a tiger – I am not afraid of anybody. I am quite aware of the fact that I am the only woman driver out here [where I work].

These processes of social transformation must be understood as a product of the full experiences of Azad & Sakha's organizing. Experiencing a vast increase in mobility, having learned to drive a car, knowing self-defense, earning a steady income, having a bank account, knowing their rights, gaining support, having seen far more of the city, and having met many different kind of people across societal hierarchies – including celebrities and royalty – all participated in producing an increasing sense of autonomy, pride, and confidence within the women. The accounts above demonstrate such shifts across several drivers. Staff members and clients made similar observations:

Bivan,
staff: One change is confidence. When we talk to girls individually, we see the confidence they gain while driving. The reasons and excuses [for not doing things] are reduced; they are confident to go and come from anywhere alone. They get a sense of "I can do it" and they are actually able to do it.

Rita,
client: She [her driver] knows her value. I can see sometimes with other people, who are other drivers and who are at the street level, she knows how to deal with them too without being aggressive. She also knows how to deal with my neighbors. She is very firm about telling them to move their cars and giving her the keys. In that sense she has an immense sense of confidence.

Many aspects played into the women's experiences of increased confidence and pride, but often mentioned reasons were that: they had done something different with their lives, had experienced things others in their families and communities never had, knew how to do (new) things (e.g., commute, drive, defend themselves, file reports to the police), had gained financial independence,

and achieved status from those endeavors. Performing these new practices of different kinds throughout the program were embodied and emotional experiences that enabled many women to break inhibitions of "traditional" thoughts patterns related to their sense of self. Practicing another way of being fuelled transformations of emotional practices, which further facilitated enacting changes in everyday practices; "the feeling" and "the doing" were in this manner closely interlinked and could reinforce – but surely also hinder – the transformative processes. As with the corporeal changes, the emotional and relational changes in practices also brought out tensions with family and community members, as a mobilizer shared:

> Pusha, staff: Even if women leaves the training, they are taught enough that they are able to do something with their lives. They gain confidence and awareness. I have seen this in the community as well. People are scared, and they say, "Don't go there, you will change." This becomes a big question in the community. But getting to know about your rights – the women learn this, even if they come for a few days and leave the training in between.

Since the women were brought up in environments with strong patriarchal traditions and gendered practices this has informed their sense of self and identity. For instance, favoring sons over daughters is widespread practice in the poor communities that manifests in many everyday relational practices (see Chapter Three); and which cannot but make marks on how the women think about themselves, their lives, and future prospects. On this ground, Azad & Sakha often states that the most significant part of their work involves changing mindsets or belief systems. Transforming discriminatory gendered practices therefore also relies on changing emotional practices of the women and their families. For instance, when the organization host meetings with a woman and her family in their office is a deliberate attempt to influence the emotional spatiality of the household constellation.

The expressions of emotions addressed in different ways throughout the thesis, I consider as the emotional spatiality of social transformation deriving from the practices of becoming and being drivers for the women of poor backgrounds. Emotional spatiality is central to the production of spatial politics. I therefore propose that there is an aspect of emotional spatiality to Azad & Sakah's social entrepreneurial organizing in that they produce spaces in which the women can potentially transform their emotional practices; that in turn are innately entwined with their corporeal and relational practices, and abilities to transform those.

As can be noted from the above statements, the women's confidence pertained not only to

themselves but also to their *relation* to others regardless of whether these others were people they know, random people they encountered as drivers, or abstract others as the gaze of "society" in relation to caste, class, and gender perceptions. This suggests that processes of social transformation for the women were experienced and practiced *relationally*. Social transformation, in other words, concerns the relations "between" which are constantly negotiated and form the politics of space; through corporeal, emotional and relational practices. In the final section I will turn to explore the changes within relations of the everyday.

**Social transformation as changes in relational practices**

In Seema's case, the transformation in the dynamics of relational dependencies was pronounced. With 42-years of age, Seema was married and had always asked her husband's permission to go outside the house; but that changed:

> Initially, I used to be very scared [going out alone]. The difference is I am not scared anymore. Initially, I would tell my husband to drop me off different places; now I don't have to, and for that I am really proud of myself. I don't even ask now if I can go out on my own. I just go. If I face any harassment, I reply to them immediately. I tell them I know the way; I can manage.

Her declaration "I don't even ask now" is a stark and evident contrast to her previous practice of asking permission. Similarly, Inika shared how she before working with Sakha could not leave the house to go shopping, but she too no longer stay at home nor ask for permission (see Chapter Three). The increased mobility had for many women enabled them to claim the right to go out without being chaperoned by male family members, as is otherwise customary. Relational practices of speaking up more, voicing opinions, taking more responsibility for everyday activities (e.g., buying groceries or clothing, going to the bank, going out alone) and generally having more independence were aspects that many women said to have transformed in their relations to others.

> Anika,
> private driver: I now speak much more, voice my opinions, and in my own ways, I have become smarter and speak up when I find that things are wrong.

According to a staff member from the Jaipur office one woman because of her involvement with Azad & Sakha suddenly decided to speak up against years of violence in her household:

> There is this one girl [driver] who had seen her father beating her mother every day since she was five years old. One day, she saw it again and she was so emotionally charged that she called the cops. She knew that no one would like it or support the act. The police came and they took the father. She told them not to beat him up and not to file a complaint, but she wanted her father to learn a lesson. This act was very difficult for people in the community to accept. It had never happened before in her neighborhood. Some sensible individuals supported her, but others did not.
>
> She came and shared this with us [the Azad & Sakha office in Jaipur]. We supported her and tried reasoning with others from her neighborhood as well. If five families could support her, I think it was a good number. It must have been difficult for her, but I think it is a good start. You have to start from somewhere. She will have a better life for herself, her mother, and her siblings too. Her father is more careful now. He has not stopped completely, but he was very scared. […] Things are not perfect, but better than before. Her grandfather does not like his son, but despite that, he got angry with her. He was putting pressure on her to quit her job and get married. We took a stand [with the driver] and made it clear that she has to work. He knows that having her working and earning an income is economic help for the family. Nevertheless, he used a lot of abusive language, but now as she has money in her hand, she has much more power to negotiate her stand. She is very strong also. She told him, "I can also use the same language. The day I lose respect for you, it will be difficult for you. So mind your language." In a way, she was threatening him, and I was very happy to see that. She actually used her right.

This account exemplifies a space of transforming politics in which, through negotiating the relations between a driver and her family – particularly two male elders – the relational space was notably transformed. The politics within the four walls of her family's home had been shaken and momentarily altered. The driver was re-crafting gender practices. It demonstrates that the constellations of spatial politics shifted as the driver performed new practices, reinforced by support from the organization. That does not imply space had settled into a new "static" order ¬– just that it had become more open; an emergent process of new relational dynamic that possibly take further hold with time.

In some cases, economic independence was a strong force enabling the women to make changes in their living situations and relations at home. In a few rare cases, women have gotten divorced and bought a small place of their own. Generally, the relational dynamics in the household changed when the driver became the primary breadwinner. "Being independent," "standing on my own feet" and "not caring what others think" were common phrases in interviews, revealing the shift in relations the women experienced. In different ways the women's positions changed toward depending less on others to varying degrees. Through Azad & Sakha (staff, clients, other drivers,

women's groups and shelter) they had access to a resourceful support network, which granted them greater freedom to make larger life decisions. The fact that they in theory *could* manage on their own served as significant leverage in negotiating spatial politics within their households.

This relative economic prosperity was noticed by community residents and often impacted the way the women were perceived and the relational constellations therein. Inika, for instance, experienced a noteworthy change in relational practices in her community; where before she needed to take out loans from others, today she gives loans to others, including her husband:

> Ever since I started doing a job, I have never had to borrow money. If my husband is on some work and he needs an advance of some money for it, he comes to me to ask for some money, which he repays later on. It feels good that we don't have to go out to other people anymore. I do say a thing or two to him, like, "You are doing such a job, but you still have to ask," but I still feel good that we don't have to ask for money from others. And this is quite something for me.
>
> [My relation to others] has become much better now. People used to think that if I was going to them, it was to ask for money or something else. But they don't think so anymore. Now, on the other hand, I am able to help people. If somebody comes to me respectfully […] I don't refuse them. If it's possible, I in turn give them money.

She reflected on what these changes have meant for her relation to others in the community:

> A few things have changed and others haven't. People's respect for me has only increased. There were people who would make comments about me when I had joined the foundation. [...] There were people who would say, "She will not be able to do the training." I am now a role model for them. [...] They used to think that I would not be able to do anything. They see me work and say that they are happy for me. I feel very happy when they say these things, and that is enough for me.

With her income, Inika has been build on top of her in-laws' house a one-room hut with a kitchen corner and access to a small balcony with a sink. She lives here with her husband and children, like having home of their own, which is a seldom luxury in the neighborhood where extended families share the typical one- or two-room mud-brick structures (*jhuggi*). "People saw that and changed their attitude toward us" Inika states, giving voice to an increased status.

> I didn't have a lot of things earlier. People are jealous now, because there was a time when I did not have anything to eat, but now, by the grace of God, I am able to eat as well and buy a few things for myself.

Her savings has furthermore enabled invests in two pieces of land in areas she deems slightly better. Her plan, she said, is to sell the one that is worth more in a few years time and build on the other. Access to money – and what money can build and buy – earned the women more respect in communities where extreme poverty is the norm. These women were perceived as successful, even if they were simultaneously exposed to harassment regarding their choice of profession and "loose" practices of mobility. Exposing another way to live their lives the women unsettled the givenness of spatial politics. The economic aspect of Azad & Sakha's program is paramount to facilitate social transformation. "Money matters a lot," a staff member exclaimed, both because the women's economic gains spill over to improved living standards for their entire households, but as much from the leverage that position brings in negotiating their rights. She elaborated:

> If they have money, they don't have to borrow or ask anyone else, and it influences their decision-making, it has a lot of impact; earlier they had to ask everyone for everything, but now they are able to make decisions themselves. Earlier it was a low level of decision-making for them; now they have the power to do anything. Confidence is also another important factor.

The theme of economics entered into discussions of another central topic in the women's currents lives: marriages. Most of the trainees and drivers are between 18 and 25 years old, the age where their parents start arranging marriages for them. At what age and with whom they get married will have tremendous influence on their future options and wellbeing in life, therefore Azad & Sakha directly address these traditions in the gender modules. They urge women and their families to allow marriages later in life and preferably with more involvement of the women in their choice of partner.

Initially I had not understood the importance of this topic in relation to my research, but it came up in interviews time and again through different kinds of discussions, because it was a pressing matter in the women's lives at this moment. All the women who spoke of potential forthcoming arranged marriages univocally wanted to have it postpone, and seemed to find a sense of relief in the organization's attempt to make that argument together with them. It was quite pronounced that from their engagement with Azad & Sakha the women began to perceive their marriages, future, and options in life differently. Interestingly, these thoughts tied to concerns about economics because the women reasoned that they at least wanted to be economically independent before any marriage was set up. The trainee Bhavani, for example, shared that she had told her parents the following: "I want to better my future and won't do anything [i.e., marry] until I stand on my own feet." She went on and explained this reasoning, which was shared amongst the women I spoke to:

> It's also because, if I know how to do something [drive] and if something should happen between us [in a marriage], I can do something on my own. Take up a job. At least I won't be left with not being able to do anything. Even if a fight breaks out or something like that, I would at least be able to run my household. That's why I feel that I should not marry as long as I can't stand on my own feet.

The private driver, Geeta, expressed similar concerns having the means to take care of herself in case of a difficult marriage, which she had not thought about before joining the organization:

> I have no interest in marrying right now. I will buy a house first, then marry. This is my dream, but I don't think it will happen in two years. I had never thought about all this before. I used to think I would marry and go to another place [the husband's household]. Although now I think, when I see people living on rent, that I should have some savings, a house, and after that it is okay if I get married. And, God forbid, if there should be some problem [with the marriage], at least I will have a backup plan to fall back on and will not be dependent on anyone. I have seen people fighting in any kind of marriage, be it love or arranged ["love marriage" refers to a situation when a couple has chosen each other themselves, see Chapter Three].

This illustrates that the women's economic situations have profound say in their negotiations of relations and opportunities to enable better and safer lives for themselves. The income from being a driver can give them options in situations of for instance abuse, which otherwise would be far more difficult. Dependencies are therefore central to relational negotiations and important in regards to social transformation in this setting; gaining economic independence makes a significant difference. The women were also motivated to postpone their marriage arrangements due to the high probability that a potential new husband would not allow their pursuit of driving; forcing them to give it up. Were they already drivers, however, making the case to remain so would be far stronger because of their income level that exceeds the norms in the communities.

For these reasons, negotiations between women and their parents on postponing wedding dates were aplenty, and many succeeded. Only a few months into the training program, Bhavani took up the discussion at home:

> They [my parents] tell me that I am next, but I tell them not to think about it yet. I won't do anything as long as I am not able to stand on my own feet. So they should not bother to think about my marriage until then. Even if it takes five, six, seven years, I won't do it until then. I tell them, "I still look like a child, and you are thinking about getting me married off?!"

AS: What do your parents respond to that?

> They say that they will have to think about it. “How long will you stay in the house? When will you stop being a burden on us?” they ask me. I ask them, “Are girls a burden on their families?” I ask them to either send me away to my brother and sister-in-law’s place or to rent me a place so that their burden is removed.

Her statement portrays how new kinds of gendered negotiations were taking place in the space of the home concerning intimate family matters. Nothing got settled at that point, but Bhavani voiced her opinions on marriage in manners unusual in this context.

Geeta on the other hand, with support from Azad’s mobilizers, succeeded convincing her mother (her father had passed away) to delay marriage preparations; although at her age of 23-years her mother thought it was overdue. “But I refuse” Geeta remarked. Her sister got married at the age of 15. “Whenever I go to my village, people still tell me to marry, but I am adamant even though I am 23,” she explained, and accentuated the evident pressure: “there is no unmarried girl of my age [there].” Geeta’s mother was open to her daughter’s demands: “My mother says, “I have waited for so long because of you,” so I told her, “Yes, but give me another year or two; then it should be okay.” This, her mother did.

That Azad’s mobilizers had influence on facilitating this negotiation between mother and daughter can be seen from an interview I conduced with Geeta’s mother.

> They told me I am a very good mother that I am allowing my daughter to work. […] Later they asked me, “You already got your one daughter married off so young - you will not do the same to Geeta?” I told them, “I will not.” They also asked, “If she is with us and if she likes some boy here, will you allow her to marry who she wishes?” I told her, “Yes, why not?” “Ma’am” [the mobilizer] is also like a mother; if she likes him [a prospective husband] and Geeta likes him, why should I mind then? I will be more than happy for that.

These conversations not only transformed Geeta’s thoughts and practices concerning marriage, they did the same for her mother. She reflected differently on the traditional practices because Geeta’s made new demands: “I had four daughters and because of my poverty, I thought if I marry the eldest one off, then slowly I will be able to marry all of my daughters. I was thinking like this at that time,” Geeta’s mother stated retrospectively, and added; “Now I regret it.” She regrets having married her eldest daughter off at the age of 15: “I ruined her life by marrying her off so early, I know that.” Despite having followed conventional practices for most of her life, Geeta’s mother was willing to transform her own practices due to Geeta’s changed practices:

> Geeta is different. She refused to marry, and I also realized it is fine. She is different from the rest of our family, she wishes to do something with her life first […] Geeta is intelligent, you can see. If she can stand up on her feet, it will be great. She does not let me talk about her marriage and wants to do something with her life; otherwise she would also have been married by now.

There were noticeable transformations in the relational practices between the mother and daughter in this incident. It demonstrates how social transformation was experienced and practiced *between* a driver and a close family member; that is, spaces of transformation within household dynamics. When the trainees and drivers in household and community settings took up these uncommon discussions that contested gendered norms, they unsettled the givennes of spatial politics, and in some case, this opening altered their relations toward greater rights and freedoms. They reconfigured the relational dynamics. This underscores that social transformation is a relational phenomenon.

I shall end this chapter with an anecdote from a day I was shadowing the driver Anika on a full day's work. It was one of those fieldwork moments that became imprinted in my mind, because of the astonishment I felt by what I witnessed in an encounter in space of a parking lot at Delhi University. The observation is emblematic of the spaces of transformation that occur throughout the everyday lives of the drivers, whether within the familial, communal, or public spheres; where the women practice and embody an alternative becoming, transforming spatial politics. They are "being the change" in such productive moments.

**Negotiating and transforming everyday spatial relations**

*Fieldnotes 27.05.15*

> It is exactly 11:50 a.m. on a warm summer day at the end of May. In the parking lot of Delhi University's northern campus, the private driver Anika, dressed in the turquoise Sakha uniform, is knitting in the shade of a large tree, seated on a concrete bench-like construction around it. She is waiting; her client is at work. I am seated a meter away from her. For a long while, we have been sitting like that, quietly, not much going on. Anika has already washed the car, something she does most days while waiting. Suddenly, a conspicuously well-dressed older woman walks by us and enters the car right next to Anika's client's car. She is wearing a long colorful kurta with exquisite embroidery, noticeable jewelry, an untraditionally short, smart haircut, and generally carries herself with a sense of elegance and almost pride. To me, she looks like the sort of lady I see in Delhi's posh malls, cafés, and restaurants. I am observing the scene. Anika is still knitting; however, she occasionally glances over to the lady, who seems to be cleaning out some things in the backseat. It is a glance to check what is going on, not one compelled by gossip or probing.

> The lady gets in and out of the car with things for a little while. I am not fully sure what she is doing. I see her go to the lawn next to us, bordering the parking lot, and then back to the car. She moves briskly back and forth for about 10 minutes. Then she suddenly locks the car and takes off toward the university buildings from where she first appeared. She passes us where we sit under the tree. Still paying attention to the lady's movements, Anika swiftly gets up and says something to her in Hindi. It makes the lady stop; they approach each other, and exchange a brief conversation. She then turns around, goes back toward her car, passes it, enters the green park area, and bends down to pick something up: trash. At a rapid pace, the lady passes us again in the direction she was heading before Anika stopped her, now with trash in her hands.
>
> I look at Anika, and she looks at me and says, "I told her that there are dustbins here, why throw…" she searches for the word "…garbage at the ground, in the park here? She was going to throw her garbage right here!" Her words carry a certain insistence and dismay. "Good, well done!" I say with a smile. I am quite impressed with her confidence and courage. Anika carries on knitting. However small in time and matters of the world, this moment stands out clearly from my fieldwork as a very convincing moment of negotiating spatial politics; a space of transformation.
>
> The negotiation that took place right here between two women of radically different backgrounds and social status – along the lines of caste, class, education, age, and physical appearance, for instance – is not common. Given the context, this is actually a highly unusual scene. It says a lot.

**Concluding note**

This chapter has empirically demonstrated that processes of social transformation for the women in Azad & Sakha's program were practiced corporeally, emotionally, and relationally through ongoing negotiations with self, others, and the surroundings. I have focused on what was contextually being negotiated and what sorts of practices that were changing as the women became drivers. The spatial politics of their everyday lives were being contested and unsettled in a multitude of ways through their engagement with Azad & Sakha, but their transformative experiences and practices were particularly notable in the corporeality, emotionality, and relationality of becoming and being drivers. The politics of spaces were negotiated and manifested in bodies, emotions, thoughts, materiality, daily doings, and relations to others. The women negotiated what it meant to be a woman in this specific spatio-temporal context – what women can do, should do, and might do. They were altering certain gendered practices, for example: corporeally, in changing veiling customs and body postures; emotionally, in feeling more independent and confident; and relationally, in postponing arranged marriages, daring to voice their opinions, or leaving the house without asking permission from male elders. In minor or major ways, this chapter has emphasized that the women practice and embody an alternative becoming. Their sense of self and identities as experienced in relation to others were opened, unfolding and transforming over time by the way in

which they engaged and carried themselves in the spaces of their everyday lives. A central finding is thus that social transformation was experienced and practiced relationally due to the spatiality of bodies and emotions.

Spatial politics were produced and reinforced relationally; therefore, to grasp the potentiality for social transformation, and how it is facilitated, experienced, and practiced the relational dynamics of space must be grated attention. The empirical accounts indicate that processes of social transformation manifested gradually over time, meaning that there was a visible difference between trainees and women working as drivers. Social transformation can therefore be understood as myriad processes of ongoing and open-ended micro-negotiations within the spaces of everyday politics – which over time produces an increasing tendency to transform spatial politics in ways the women experience to be more favorable to them.

## Theorizing spaces of transformation

Theoretical reflection part Four

If social transformation can be seen as novel processes of negotiation with self, others, and the surroundings for the women in Delhi's poorest communities, then this chapter has explored what is being negotiated and how transforming spatial politics is experienced and practiced. It has shown that contesting spatial politics and potentially transforming them occurs in and through practices that are simultaneously corporeally, emotionally, and relationally produced. This finding is aligned with Simonsen (2007: 175), who argues that there is "an indispensable relationship between practice, body and space(-time)" and that "the intercorporeality and connectivity of bodies involve not only spaces of sensation, but of affectivity and emotion as well." Social transformation is profoundly *relational,* and that is the politics of it. This is why I suggest considering social transformation as processes of negotiating everyday spatial politics. Spatial moments where the women alter practices toward greater equality and freedom (i.e. more favorable to them) I perceive as spaces of transformation. That is, when they enact new ways for living "more livable lives" (Butler, 2015).

The relational ontology is also central in Massey's (2005) notion of space, which she perceives as the product of interrelations and "the sphere in which distinct trajectories coexist" (2005: 9). In space, therefore, there must be multiplicity. Recognizing multiplicity as intrinsic to space, and "can force into the imagination a fuller recognition of the simultaneous coexistence of others with their own trajectories and their own stories to tell" (Massey, 2005: 11). The multiplicity of coexisting trajectories and the relations-between, which includes the materiality of the embedded practices, makes space processual, always in a state of becoming, and thus open for potential transformation. Space is thus "always in the process of being made. It is never finished; never closed" (Massey, 2005: 9). To Massey this is essential to the politics of space, because it insists on a "genuine openness of the future." As she states, "Only if the future is open is there any ground of a politics which can make a difference" (2005: 11).

In the contexts of the women in urban poverty in Delhi, space appeared as fairly closed and regulated, initially, because of the dominant patriarchal politics entailing an extremely restricted mobility for them. Exposure to other worlds, socially and geographically, until their association with Azad & Sakha was limited.

But even when space seems robbed of its openness, it is still always potentially open; meaning the potentiality is inherent to the characteristics of space, and is in a way what a

social enterprise can tap into or awaken. Through social entrepreneurial organizing space can become more open, which is central to catalyzing new social processes. It implies, as this chapter has addressed, that although some might try, space cannot truly be tamed. Relations – like those between a social enterprise and the people in disadvantaged positions who seek transformation – are the potentiality of space in the sense. What before were distinct trajectories suddenly became a spatial encounter producing opportunities for altering circumstances and transforming space. Transformative encounters happen because space is open, it has "loose ends":

> However, these are not the relations of a coherent, closed system within which, as they say, everything is (already) related to everything else. Space can never be that completed simultaneity in which all interconnections have been established and in which everywhere is already linked to everywhere else. A space, then, which is neither a container for always-already identities nor for a completed closure of holism. This is a space of loose ends and missing links. For the future to be open, space must be open too. (Massey, 2005: 11)

The social entrepreneurial organizing of my case can be seen as a movement that increasingly makes evident the openness of space. The unsettlings of their organizing bear witness to the fact that space indeed is not closed, but rather constituted of multiplicities. The unsettling serves as "cracks" into the givenness of space – a space that to the women might have been experienced as quite closed – until they were made aware that it was not. Hence, organizing in order to facilitate an awareness of the openness of space – and of the future – is political; it is an act of opening spatial politics to the potential of transformation.

The multiplicity of coexisting trajectories, with their own stories to tell, and the openness of space also relate to the multiplicity and openness of identities. Massey (2005: 10) finds that the construction of identities and "the relations through which they are constructed to be one of the central stakes of the political." This is indeed what the empirical findings of this thesis have demonstrated in a multitude of ways: social transformation entails processes of negotiation of the everyday politics of space concerning the women's sense of self and identities in relation to others and their "place" in society. "It is a world being made, through relations, and there lies the politics" (Massey, 2005: 15). I agree with Massey's relational notion of space and politics, and the empirical material has demonstrated that the production of space *is* political.

In Chapter Three, I presented some of the dominant spatial politics of the contextual setting of the women's everyday lives in the poor communities and also touched briefly upon the politics of poverty, caste, and gender in the cityscape of Delhi. These perceptions, norms, rules, and expectations molds how practices are performed – informed by intersecting politics

of caste, class, gender, ethnicity, and more – and become the everyday politics of the women's lives. Ultimately, this concerns the production and experiences of subjectivities and identities constituted relationally as ongoing negotiations. The gendered politics in the poor communities where the women live were enacted and maintained through practices or expected social codes of behavior – that, much like a grand narrative, has inscribed who the women are supposed to be and become. Identities of the women have in this sense been taken hostage, as they for instance have not been free to live their own sense of gender, and of self. In becoming and being drivers, this chapter has illustrated that the women transformed spatial politics in and through their relations to themselves and the people in their lives, and that this was practiced corporeally and emotionally. In experiencing themselves through the social entrepreneurial program as more, and as someone else, than "before," the women's sense of self and identities became confronted.

**A corporeal involvement in the world**

The relational character of space – and of transforming spatial politics – means that transforming relational practices cannot but be enacted corporeally and emotionally. It is in and as bodies with thoughts and emotions that we relate to others and the world around us. The empirical material of the women's lived experiences portrayed an inseparable trinity of bodies, emotions, and relations as constitutive for comprehending social transformation spatially. This highlights that the sensory and affective aspects of human practices are central to a deeper understanding of social transformation as process. Simonsen (2007) finds that bodily doings and sayings are equally constitutive to practices; as well as thoughts and emotions – which she addresses as "emotional spatiality" elsewhere. I find that this more "whole" approach to understand human experiences and practices is an important perspective to shed light on the nature of social transformation in theory and practice. As Simonsen (2007: 172) recognizes, "it concerns the whole sensing body" and lived experience is an "intersubjective space of perception and the body."

Lived experiences of social transformation include sensuous dimensions of living bodies that relates to self and others, which sheds light on why social transformation was experienced and practiced corporeally, emotionally and relationally. Corporeality is relational – which is why Simonsen (2007) refers to it as "intersubjective" or "intercorporeality" – meaning that not only do the women exercise transformation bodily, but also that their bodily transformations potentially affect others. As Simonsen puts it, "One does not just perceive another body as a material object; rather one is affected by the meaning of its appearance" (Simonsen, 2007: 172). As the women transform physically and in their bodily and emotional practices, spatial politics are influenced by how they now appear and behave differently to others. Social transformation in this fashion exceeds

the individual; as demonstrated in the account where a driver and her mother together transformed marital customs. The women's corporeal and emotional changes in practices – as spaces of transformation – affect their relations; to the self, to others, and in their involvement with the world.

This makes the body itself spatial (Simonsen, 2007). The spatiality of the body includes the notion of time and change, what Massey (2005: 140) terms the "history and a geography of thens and theres" versus the "here-and-now" negotiations "between both human and nonhuman." Similarly, Simonsen (2007: 173) writes, "The meaning of a woman's body is connected to her projects in the world – to the way in which she uses her agency – but it is also marked by all her other life-situations." Identity and subjectivity are re-created in and through practices formed through negotiations of space that draws on past experiences, but is opened and re-negotiated in the here and now. The familiar politics are negotiated against the unfamiliar alternative politics or the openness of other "becomings," and the tension between past and future is negotiated in the now; given that space has become opened for negotiation, which is what Azad & Sakha's social entrepreneurial organizing seeks to do.

"In taking up or inhabiting space, bodies move through it and are affected by the "where" of that movement. It is through this movement that space as well as bodies takes shape" (Simonsen, 2007: 173). In becoming and being drivers, the women's bodies tended to take a "different shape," as did the spaces of their everyday lives. However, there were vast differences between bodies, relations and how individual women were affected by the where, what, and how of the movements facilitated through becoming and being drivers. The simultaneous experience of lived bodies as subjects and objects can also produce contradictions and clashes between traditional politics and "the new," both within the women and between them and others. This was particularly so because the performativity of being a female driver was considered highly unconventional and controversial in their context. Massey (2005: 180) argues, "If entities/identities are relational then it is in the relations of their construction that the politics needs to be engaged." Indeed, that seems apt for understanding how Azad & Sakha organizes to facilitate social transformation: their methods tinker with the relations that construct the women's sense of self and identities. I propose that emotions, understood in the spatial sense without a sharp distinction between "inner" and "outer," are productive spaces, situated corporeally and produced relationally, and that they are essential to facilitate spaces of transformation. Entwined with body and mind, emotions matter for processes of social transformation, and fuels the performativity of subjectivities and identities in the relational web of encounters and dependencies of the women's everyday lives (Simonsen, 2013).

**Negotiating subjectivities, identities and power relations**

At the core of the negotiations of spatial politics and everyday practices, the women are negotiating their subjectivities and identities, which must be understood as plural and open. To Massey (2005), this is what makes space inherently political, something also stressed by Butler (2015). According to Butler (2015), questioning of dominant discriminating norms is in itself political and necessary for transformation. Whether through corporeal, emotional, or relational enactments, the women of Azad & Sakha's program were negotiating, contesting, and redoing how gendered lives are lived in this time and place. As this chapter has demonstrated, challenging and redoing gender norms and practices were implicated with dependencies and power relations: "Gender norms have everything to do with how and in what way we can appear in public spaces" (Butler, 2015: 34). Butler (2015) argues that for gender norms to exist and persist, they have to be reproduced continuously in bodily enactment. It therefore makes sense, as this chapter has argued, that in changing bodily practices the norms can be altered, tampered with, or even broken altogether.

It was somewhat surprising to me, given that corporeality has not received significant attention in social entrepreneurship discourses, to witness the extent to which social transformation for the women in this study was practiced corporeally. The performativity of poor women becoming drivers in Delhi is an example of what Butler (2015: 31) describes as "making room for ways of living gender that challenges prevailing norms of recognition." Butler (2015) emphasizes the element of power within gendered negotiations, which also is evident from the empirical material of the thesis. For instance, the experience of increasing mobility and growing confidence led a 42-year-old woman to leave home without permission from her husband for the first time in her life. Another driver told an upper-class lady to pick up trash from a public parking lot, while an experienced taxi driver, as the primary breadwinner in the household, felt independent and gave loans to her husband, which is quite an atypical power dynamic in this setting. Generally, the economic independence the drivers achieved provided significant leverage in negotiations and was particular impactful in shifting the dynamics of power. While a woman might use this increased position of power as a verbal threat, even if in reality she would never leave the household, but that she *could* (because she can survive on her own) however, still made a profound difference. These are all situations in which traditional power dynamics are re-negotiated and redone in that moment of a transformative spatial constitution. One of Butler's (2015) arguments is that any re-production of gender necessitates a negotiation with power; the same might be said for caste and class, as all of them often intersect.

Although, as Butler (2015: 29) writes, gender norms "make their way with us, animating and structuring our own forms of responsiveness," and they "inform the lived modes of embodiment we acquire over time," she adds that "those very modes of embodiment can prove to be ways of

contesting those norms, even breaking with them." In this, she is referring to acts of rejecting gendered terms, deviating from them or altering them in different ways. This can also be read as changing gendered practices from "within" the practices themselves. One example of this, in my case, could be the practices around veiling, *gunghat*, that are a dominant gendered norm expected of and embodied by many women in the program. In this chapter, I showed how a driver did not wish to conform to this practice anymore and started to experiment with how and when she used a scarf to cover her hair or face. Given that it is a dominant practice, she communicated in her relations to others a clear transformation – a resistance to traditional norms – when she suddenly refrained from covering her hair. In a change of bodily practices, she performed gender slightly differently, thus altering spatial politics. However, as she also demonstrated, sometimes she chose to conform in order not to become a target of harassment, which implies that it is a profoundly embodied struggle in that it provokes others. Almost paradoxically, the practices of claiming more power – which is how the changes in practices that contest norms must be seen – often simultaneously also exposes the women to greater vulnerability by becoming targets for increasing harassment and even violence.

Hence, not surprisingly, there was never an either/or change of practices against gendered norms; it was more along the lines of a continuum and in the form of a pragmatic experimentation of how far they could go in expressing themselves more freely. In Butler's terms, this means that the women sometimes broke with the field of appearance and at other times conformed to it – a tension which in itself was quite a negotiation within the women, and one that required great courage. In conforming, they were "reproducing certain norms of recognition over others, and so constraining the field of the recognizable" (Butler, 2015: 35); when they did not conform, the "field of norms break open" (Butler, 2015: 31). It becomes a corporeal, emotional, and relational power struggle because the field of appearance is highly regulated, determining who has rights to appear, who cannot appear, and how people are expected to appear in the familial, communal, and public spheres. In Butler's words, there is an unequal distribution of recognition, and an uneven liberty to live livable lives – that is, to live, express, carry, and move oneself freely in the world. I have argued that spaces of transformation are carried out time and again, and that processes of social transformation are the multitudes of spaces of transformation moving in a certain direction; the direction being actions believed to aim towards those more livable lives. However, what the women hoped to be more favorable to them did far from always turn out to be so, which I shall address in the last empirical chapter on spatial ambiguities.

We will not know our own injustice if we cannot imagine justice. We will not be free if we do not imagine freedom. We cannot demand that anyone try to attain justice and freedom who has not had a chance to imagine them as attainable.

Ursula K. Le Guin

# SPATIAL AMBIGUITIES

Chapter Eight

Many women leave the Women on Wheels program and do not become drivers. This chapter explores why. The ambiguities associated with the tensions, struggles, risks, and unpredictability of spatial relations and politics are the primary causes of many "walkouts." I discovered another, and surprising, reason for "walkouts" during my fieldwork: many women left for jobs in regular taxi firms. This is another kind of unpredictability.

# "Walkouts" and tensions of transforming spatial politics

It is mid-April 2015. Azad & Sakha have gathered most of the staff for their annual review process in a hotel 15 km outside of Jaipur, the capital city of the dusty desert state of Rajasthan. The team at Azad & Sakha's small office in Jaipur has been in charge of the practicalities of this three-day workshop. The larger team from Delhi arrives from an eight-hour train ride in high spirits, full of chatter, jokes, and giggling, much like a school class going on a field trip. The hotel, situated on the outskirts of the city of approximately 2.5 million, appears worn down, but tents and decorated chairs in the garden bear witness to an additional use: rental for wedding parties. A lonely camel tied to a rusty pole speaks to a wish, perhaps, of attracting visitors; of which there aren't many.

It is the second day of the workshop. The group is discussing a slide from a PowerPoint presentation showing the numbers of women who register for the learning and the women who end up with a driver's license. This shows the number of women who drop out during the training. The workshop participants question these numbers because, as someone points out, data is missing on some steps in-between. After receiving an official driver's license, the drivers need to pass Sakha's own test, which ensures their readiness for taking client. Once they pass this test, the women have to land their first job. Some women disappear between the two steps – that is, while being "on the bench." What is being discussed at the meeting is how many, and why. The staff often describe this as "holding the girls" and in the context of their discussion, mention failing to do so. A conversation breaks out across the large table:

Devshre, staff: First the girls train with Azad. Once they get a driver's license, they take a Sakha test to become a driver in the organization, and once they clear that, they pass on to the Sakha part of the organization, and it is for Sakhastaff to hold them. But Sakha doesn't have the capacity now, so I still try to hold them, which is not ideal.

Meenu, founder: It is a very key challenge, this passing of the girls from Azad to Sakha. We lose too many here.

They begin talking about the crucial stages in the program when women leave the organization. The discussion suddenly turns to what they "call" those who leave or disappear:

Simran, staff: I think it is very important to know the difference between a "walkout" and a "dropout." The word "dropout" is very negative, so I prefer to say "walkout," which is more referring to coming into, or off from, a journey. It doesn't mean you cannot come back – you are free to walk out and walk in again. "Dropout" doesn't hold that meaning.

There is widespread agreement about this distinction. Subsequently, "walkout" used when referring to women who for various reasons have left the organization. Often they come back, sometimes after months or even years. The workshop participants move on to discuss reasons why women may walk out. Excessive pressure and resistance from the household is the most common reason. However, the founder adds a different perspective:

Meenu: Something happens when they are in Azad… they have experiences with empowerment and changes in their lives. When they come to Sakha, they are more confident and mobile, which makes them more reckless and careless at times. It is like a phase for some, where they have the attitude of, "I will just go where I want, I will take my boyfriend, I can do what I like to, etc."

Their discussion ends with a general consensus about the need for a closer "holding" of commercial drivers and explore more about why women leave – they are walkouts, not dropouts.

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This excerpt from a fieldnote observation brings us to the core of a central issue vexing the organization: many women leave before becoming drivers or, once a driver, they leave their jobs. Azad & Sakha estimate that about 60% of women who enroll leave again. Why is this the case? Walkouts is not only an organizational challenge; its frequency is suggestive of the complexities of social transformation. In other words, the many "walkouts" cannot be neglected. This final empirical chapter therefore explores reasons for "walkouts" in order to examine what this might disclose about processes of social transformation.

According to Azad & Sakha's 2015–16 annual report, about 42% of enrolled women leave the program again within the first few months. The majority of women leave as trainees. Based on open interviews with 30 trainees who had "walked out" between 2009 and 2015 in Delhi and Jaipur, the report concludes that the main reasons for leaving were:

Table 8.1 REASONS WHY WOMEN "WALK OUT" OF AZAD & SAKHA

| *Description* |
| --- |
| • Family violence and opposition to driving training |
| • Time poverty because of non-negotiable unpaid domestic and care work |
| • Opportunity cost of training in terms of income lost, owing to full-time training |
| • Lack of confidence, leading to inability to accept and respond to critical advice by faculty |
| • Dissatisfaction with job obtained after training, owing to distance from home |
| • Problems with employers who expected the women drivers to perform domestic chores |
| • Alternative opportunities or goals such as mainstream education, professional dancing, etc. |

Undoubtedly, some women left the organization because driving was not for them, i.e. they were not genuinely interested in driving as a livelihood, or because their family required their assistance in the household. However, according to the organization and aligned with my empirical findings, most women faced another challenge – "family violence and opposition to driving training." This pressured many women to leave, but even for those who remained, violence and opposition were not uncommon experiences. Previous chapters have touched upon how the women's changes in corporeal, emotional and relational practices tinkered with household dynamics. As drivers they were "making room for ways of living gender that challenge prevailing norms of recognition" (Butler, 2015: 31). It can be considered as an embodied and performative critique of existing power relations, with the aim of shifting inequalities.

Transforming spatial politics engenders certain tensions and risks, particularly within familial and community spaces. This made the processes of social transformation incredibly unpredictable – and dangerous at times. The first part of the chapter focuses on this, and is illustrated through the account of Adya, one of my research participants who suddenly disappeared from the program. The self-journal method I had encouraged, Adya had taken to; and although she was nowhere to be found, her notebook came back to me through her friend with a written entry that provided some explanations as to what had taken place. It gave a surprising insight into a more intimate account on the struggles of everyday spatial politics.

In the second part of the chapter, I address a quite different aspect of spatial ambiguities: the fact that the drivers suddenly left the organization after getting jobs with regular taxi firms. There were mixed reactions to this movement amongst the staff. It demonstrates that processes of social transformation cannot be controlled or predicted, and might in fact contradict the plans and exceed the visions of the social enterprise.

**The tightrope of social transformation: struggles and dangers of relations**

I was often told that experiences of psychological violence, as discriminatory and degrading

remarks or physical harassment, were an everyday occurrence for most women in the program and their female relatives. “Eve teasing” it is called in public parlance. In the wake of becoming a driver, the women typically felt the harassments increased. Their unconventional choice of training and profession made them stand out; easy targets for suspicion, scorn and opposition:

> Anika,
> private driver: The neighbors would make comments like “You will not be able to drive around. You should learn sewing or do a course with the beauty parlor.” Both males and females were making such remarks to me.
>
> Inika,
> taxi driver: Neighbors and my husband challenged me in the past, saying, “You will not be able to drive.” I told him [her husband], “You wait and watch. I will show you.”

Family and community members doubted the women abilities, at first, and many insisted driving is a man’s job, inappropriate for women. Negotiating this resistance appeared hardest in the training period, because they were trying to do (and prove to others) the impossible. As two trainees shared:

> Adya,
> trainee: Right now we are under the training, so they [community residents] think we are roaming around unnecessarily. They question where we are going and are doubtful because there is no fixed time. When we will be in a job, they will know.
>
> Bhavani,
> trainee: There are some ladies who taunt us [her and a friend] or tell our mothers things – that we were roaming around unnecessarily, that we have boyfriends, and that we do not go to work or for driving. […] Once the lady [neighbor] even alleged that I was going out to meet her son.[…] The lady kept saying that she would need to see that I truly did drive a car; she was sure she would reveal what kind of work I have really been doing [implying prostitution]. I told her that there were no boys there, that it is all girls, and that if she didn’t believe me, then I could take her with me.

This type of outspoken disbelief and negative gossip appeared customary. The women, and in particular the trainees who had yet to prove themselves as drivers to community members, were often accused of promiscuity because the new mobility practices brought them out of the home unaccompanied. The women who were drivers had uniforms, cars, badges, and an income to

validate their work, and these artifacts significantly eased their negotiations. Although disapproving remarks and gossip subsided, it did however not disappear.

The organization acknowledges that tensions and struggles are inevitable when women brake with deep-routed gender norms and practices, and consider it part of the social transformation. "We respect that. That struggle in itself is a transformation process" a staff member said, and elaborated:

> There is often conflict between the girl and her family, but there is also external pressure from the local community – and the community asks the parents why the girl goes out and works like that, because it is not a traditional occupation for women. There is pressure on the family from the local community. So these women struggle a lot in their personal lives to even come to Azad & Sakha.

As these excerpts demonstrate, contesting prevailing gender norms constituted through webs of relations and communal ties, make it a complex relational and political matter that extend beyond just household decisions. Some women began plotting new strategies for safety, as this brief fieldnote anecdote depicts:

**She has agency, man!**
*Fieldnotes 26.05.15*

> "This woman, she has agency, man! I mean, her life is really difficult, but she has agency. You know what she asked me?" a staff member exclaims, addressing two other staff members and I as she comes out of the meeting room next door from a counseling session with a young woman and enters the co-working office, where we are seated at the small wooden desks. The room is lit by sharp fluorescent light, as the only small window is covered by thick blue paper. She immediately launches into her story:
>
> > She said, "Ma'am, where can I get a bottle of those sleeping pills? I want to make my husband dose out. I can just put it into his food or chai." I told her that of course you cannot do that. "But ma'am, I see that in the movies," she said. I told her that it would not be the way to solve her problems. But I am thinking that it is good that at least she is looking for ways out. She also said that she was reading the board signs when passing a police station, so that she could find out what she could do. Her husband had said to her, "You go to this training and become so smart. What won't happen – when you start earning money, you will not be controllable." And she said, "You bet so, and I won't even look at you." She has agency, I am telling you!

As can be noted, tensions and pressures emerged within the multiplicity of community relations, and these were difficult for some families and women to navigate. While some women considered strategies to revolt, enacted new practices and followed the guidance of the organization, others were more conflicted. In difficult situations of gendered violence the tensions between community practices and Azad & Sakha's visions were often pronounced, seemingly making some women feel torn between the opposing views. According to the organization, women who file police reports against abusive family members were still few in number, but they detected an increasing awareness amongst the women of their right to be safe and of there being options to pursue in face of discrimination and violence.

For some women, however, their exposure to violence was both psychological and physical. It was a common understanding in the office that the majority of the women in the program were subjected to gendered discrimination but also violence. "How widespread is violence for the women in the communities?" I asked the staff member, who is known as an expert on gender issues. "It is there in each house. All the married women are victims of some form or other of violence," she replied. On a regularly basis in the office, I would hear – and sometimes witness – stories of violence. The following fieldnote description depicts one such episode where I witnessed the severity of gendered violence and the difficulties of handling such deep-rooted practices.

**"A family matter, not a police matter"**
*Fieldnotes 15.07.15*

> A police car is parked on the street outside Azad & Sakha's office, and two uniformed officers stand idle beside it as I arrive at the office around noon on a Wednesday in mid-July. Whether it is related to the organization is not evident at first glance, but as I pass the drowsy-eyed elderly security guard, who dutifully keeps watch on a worn-out chair at the entrance of the apartment building, and come up the stairs, the answer appears. A few police officers are standing in the staircase, blocking the doorway and talking to someone inside Azad & Sakha's office, so I cannot enter. There is a full-on commotion; perhaps about ten people standing in and around the doorway. "Excuse me," I tell the policemen, asking them to step aside so I can pass; in unhurried and mute acknowledgement, they accommodate and I get inside.
>
> A young woman sits on a bench in the entrance hall, looking blank-faced, pale, and motionless, with a crowd gathered around her. The atmosphere feels tense. Most faces are folded into serious and worried expressions. Three female staff members seem to have the lead in what looks like a lot of negotiation back and forth. Suddenly, the woman gets up and follows the police officers out of the office.
>
> The crowd disbands, and two staff members rush to the window to keep an eye on the event as it unfolds. They are still talking back and forth about it. After a while, the office settles down again; people are back at their desks, and the daily routines pick

up. “There is now time for me to ask “What is going on?” to Parmita, an engaging woman in her late twenties, who is always alert on keeping me informed:

> This girl, Sadhna, she was beaten up very severely by her husband last night. This has been going on for a long time, but last night it was even tougher and he almost strangled her. That is what he does now. He chokes her because that leaves less bruises than if he beats her up, which will be visible and maybe then the police will do something. The girl has already filed a police report against him, but nothing much happened; after a little while he is back home and then he gets even tougher with her. You see, even some police officers say that this is a family matter, not a police matter. There are many people who think that it is the man’s right to beat his wife. Last night she apparently locked herself in a room and then later managed to escape, and she came to the office. He was following her and she was scared for her life. Sofie, I have never seen her like this. You should have seen her when she came in the morning; it was like she wasn’t there.

Sadhna’s story is extreme, but not uncommon for the staff to encounter. Dealing with issues of violence is central to Azad & Sakha’s mission and work with the women, but as this account painfully illustrates, it can be a complex and dangerous matter. Filing a report against an abusive perpetrator might have as faint of an effect as blowing into thin air if the police officers on duty find that it is a “family matter,” a visible reinforcement of patriarchy. Parmita’s voice peaks more than usual, the articulation faintly amplified, and her pace of narrating has picked up as she continues to fill me in:

> First, Sadhna went to the other office [Azad & Sakha have two offices next to each other at their main office in Delhi] this morning, and some of the staff there locked her up in the meeting room because she was so afraid that her husband would get to her. She was pleading, “If any man comes and rings the doorbell, someone that you don’t know, please don’t let him in, please.” He was lurking around in the area, as he had followed her here. Later she came to our office [the second office], and she was not present at all, she was unconscious. She just sat there, staring blankly, and she didn’t speak. We couldn’t get a response from her. Normally she is quite a strong woman. We had to splash water on her face, put her under a fan, give her something to drink, and make her lie down. She had been running also. She vomited. I think she was deeply scared for her life. I was talking to her, and she was using this term in Hindi, which shows respect to males or elders, when she spoke about her husband. I was telling her, “Why do you still show him this respect when he does this to you? He doesn’t deserve that, and he is not more than you.” And she said, “Well, to you I can talk about him without using the respectful words, but I cannot say that in my community or home.” So you can see she still has a bit of this patriarchal behavior, which automatically gives the man authority, respect, and the right to do with his wife as he pleases.

Parmita seems quite upset, oscillating between what I take to be (or perhaps recognize from my own feelings) a certain hint of frustration, anger, and sadness, as she relays the happenings of the incident. “Now,” she says, “they were discussing who should

take her. I mean, she can't go home. We had called a female violence helpline, so they were there, the ambulance was there, and the police were there – and yet no one could agree who to take her. The police didn't want to take her before they had called a female officer to be there with her."

The issue is not settled while I am still in the office, but the next day I am filled in. Sadhna is also in the office then discussing her future options; it is a discussion that appears to be ongoing, with different staff members weaving in and out of it. Parmita updates me immediately:

> We told Sadhna that it is up to her what she wants to do. Does she want to file criminal charges against him for attempted murder, file for divorce, or what would she want? We cannot make that choice; we can only support her.
>
> She was telling us that he also sees other women, and one day she woke up at night and he was even having sex with her sister – all in the same bed, and with their children also beside them. She is concerned about her reputation, so she is hesitant to file any kind of charges against him. If he beats her or yells at her outside in the lanes, she always takes it inside so people will not see. I doubt she will stand up and be able to speak in court. She has gotten so used to his behavior and she is more concerned about her own and the family's reputation, even though she is scared for her life. He might actually kill her. He is a horrible man. He has done terrible things to her. But what to do?!!

Parmita, who is more or less of similar age to the trainee in question, makes a facial expression that I read as hopelessness. She seems genuinely disappointed as she finishes the story:

> Last night she was offered a stay at a shelter with Jagori [a women's rights organization with shelters], which we had arranged. But she wanted to go home and find her daughter. He was waiting for her by the bus stand where he knew she would be coming from. He didn't go home, because people had told him that the police had been there. They went back together and he didn't do anything to her last night. I think she is like that; if he just sweet-talks her for a few days, then she will drop all charges or ideas of prosecuting him.

The story of Sadhna portrays the severity of gendered violence entrenched in complexities of personal relations and traditional patriarchal practices. According to Parmita, Sadhna's concerns for her life were in conflict with apprehensions for her family's reputation. Personal and community matters intermingled in her worries and struggles. It is impossible to predict if these escalating occurrences of violence between Sadhna and her husband increased due to her enrollment in the program. The violence was already prevalent beforehand, but did it intensify to such extremes as a reaction to her efforts to transform her life? While I, and staff members, asked such questions

aloud, they could in most cases not be answered in any simple or certain ways. Incidents of violence were situational, and often an augmentation of a multiplicity of past experiences and practices, making them complex to discern.

**The risk of transforming practices – and the risk of not doing so**

Sadhna's story accentuates a dilemma: the widespread practice of violence against women *does* make it a risky process to become a driver and contest the norms, because it *could* provoke and escalate violent behaviors; but at the same time it might be just as risky *not* to do something – *not* to try and change current relational dynamics. It is painfully unpredictable and a terribly fine line sometimes. It is therefore a difficult choice to make. It demands courage, and it is a choice the women have to re-make time and again. The decision whether to be a driver, even for the women working as drivers, for many never seemed settled. The women who remain with the organization probably do so because they assess that overall it betters their lives, in spite of the risks; which many accounts of transformations in previous chapters have attested to.

The point I wish to make evident is that social transformation in this context was full of risks, even when the processes also improved the women's lives in many regards. It was not either/or. The accounts of this chapter furthermore demonstrate that changing taken for granted practices – corporeally, emotionally, and relationally – is difficult and requires time. It is closely tied to reactions of "the central others" in the women's lives and how the women perceive themselves and their rights in relation to those others. Breaking those patterns, in thoughts and doings, was a hurdle for many women, the mobilizer Pusha explained, slightly disheartened by witnessing Sadhna's struggle: "The hardest part is when they [women in the program] are beaten up every day and still are not able to make any decision [to do something about it]," she said with a worn expression on her face, and elaborated her sentiment: "When a woman never agrees to file a complaint [to the police], but keeps accepting the abuse and still has full faith in the family." She looked despondent. Her reflections buttress the difficulties in altering practices of abuse that has been reinforced for long periods of time:

> I explain to them that they must come to us: "Don't allow yourself to be subjected to so much exploitation. Be strong and treat your problems; don't feel like a victim." But it is really difficult to see; they still don't understand and accept all the abuse silently. They keep on adjusting themselves to any circumstances. Even after the training, they are not able to let go of their cultural patriarchal norms.

Altering conventional and routine practices imbued in power asymmetries is complex and ambiguous. Azad & Sakha's staff members are witnesses to relations of violence on a daily basis and seeing women maintained in abusive situations is replete with strong emotions and takes a toll on the staff; but women change practices in their own pace, and sometimes, not at all. The staff not only engage in negotiations with women on these topics, they are also confronted with patriarchal conventions of gendered discrimination and violence within state institutions like the police or the court system, when they support women to claim their rights. Here they are often met with the common belief that it is "a family matter, not a police matter," which accentuates the social norms they are up against across many organizations, situations, and spatial settings.

The vast difference between traditional practices that the women were accustomed too – from within their homes, communities or encounters in public spaces – and those advocated by Azad & Sakha produced unsettlings that were often difficult to navigate. They had, in a way, a foot in two remarkably different worlds. This tension is aptly demonstrated in the following account of when Adya, one of my research participants, abruptly disappeared from the Women on Wheels program, but left me a written journal entry that read like a suicide note.

Before I begin Adya's story, the topic of suicide need a short elaboration, which I consider relevant to include to this research on social transformation, because it speaks to the enormous pressure some women are exposed to. According to the organization, suicide attempts are not common amongst the trainees and drivers, but they do happen every so often.[95] Several staff members relayed stories of women who had died while being a part of Azad & Sakha, presumably in acts of suicide, although they suspected murder framed as suicide in a few cases. However, these remained speculations since they were never subject to a police investigation.

The topic was brought up one day in the shared workspace at Azad & Sakha's office, as two staff members engaged in a short conversation, and looked upset. I could not understand the words they spoke, but their facial expressions, body language, tone of voice, and repeated deep sighs conveyed that they were speaking about a serious matter. Afterwards, one of the women, Ishanvi, explained that a relatively new driver, a young woman named Poonam, had attempted suicide – "or at least that is what we think, but you never know," she said, implying suspicion of murder. "She took just six months to complete the training. She did amazingly well, but then, after the training, she was not able to go for the job because of some family-related problem. Her husband and sister-in-law harassed her a lot and did not let her go for the job." Although the organization

[95] In India it is not uncommon to hear about suicides, Münster (2012) for example writes on "the suicide crisis" of Indian farmers. A longitudinal study of suicide deaths in India from 1990-2016 concluded that every third woman who in 2016 committed suicide was an Indian. This makes suicide rates exceedingly high proportionally to inhabitants in India and is considered major public health problem (Lancet Public Health, 2018).

knew she had tensions at home, they did not know the extent of it, and Poonams's suicide attempt took them by great surprise. Ishanvi, who was searching for explanations, explained:

> We often see such cases, where the women are allowed to complete the training, but then have issues of actually taking the job. She actually raised her issues with us, but we were not able to address them properly. She was under so much pressure emotionally and mentally that one day she attempted suicide by drinking mosquito-repelling medicine. The family did not let her go for the job; they created unnecessary tension for her. They wanted her to sit at home, which she could not do. It also caused problems with her client, who would complain [that she did not come to work]. So instead of solving her problems, we also scolded her. Then the client called her and told her, "If you are not going to come, we will fire you from work."

Having spent many hours with the woman after she learned of the incident, Ishanvi suggested an overwhelming feeling of pressure from many sides and explicit household harassments as the main causes. Poonam, who luckily survived, quickly came back to work:

> She survived, was taken to the hospital, and after a month she came back asking for work. I talked to her a lot. We told her to at least call us once before dying and that life is much better than dying. "Whenever you feel like dying, do give us a call; at least we should know the reason why Pushpa died!" We made it sound like a joke [to lighten things up]. I was actually present at her first induction meeting [when she joined the program], where we drew and wrote down aspirations and childhood dreams. I had her story with me and I asked, "If these were your dreams, then how you can think of dying without fulfilling them?" She had tears in her eyes and she said she does not want to die. She wishes to work. I don't think things are better at home, but she has coped well and is trying hard to manage.

This incident takes us right into the complexities, vulnerabilities, and difficulties that some women in the program experienced – or can come to experience – in their pursuits to transform their lives. I am in no position to evaluate whether being a driver participated in the severity of the situation, or in fact helped her to cope better subsequently from the organization's support. I included this account because suicides and attempts of it did happen, which underlines the severity of pressures some women experience. This topic, however, came up once again during my fieldwork, this time through one of the women I followed closely. Adya's story shows, in my interpretation, spatial ambiguities and how missteps that can suddenly turn into serious misfortune; like walking a tightrope. I received an unexpected and far more intimate account of these complex, personal, and vulnerable relations and processes in the self-journal entry she wrote. Here is Adya's story.

**Adya's story: "I feel like taking my life away – please forgive me, brother"**

Early in the afternoon on a warm summer day at end of May 2015, Bhavani, a trainee, came to me during a break in a training session and handed me a notebook. "Adya..," she uttered, with no further explanation. It was Adya's notebook, which the first page with her name neatly written upon the striped notepaper confirmed. From this, I understood that Adya was not at the training session, and soon learned that she had been absent for some time. Nobody seemed to know why. Nobody knew where she was. One mobilizer who had heard some rumors:

> I understand that Adya was caught with some boy in the house – her parents are staying in the village, and her brother, whom she lives with, came home and found them. He got very angry and might have beaten both of them or just the boy. It was a little unclear exactly what took place, but I think she then was sent to her sister's house, who lives with in-laws, and then the family decided to send her back to the village.

Just like that, she was out. I had Adya's notebook in my hands, with two short entries neatly written in Hindi: one in which she had detailed a brief introduction to herself, the other a longer text dated a few days prior. Immediately I passed it to my translator. Adya could not be reached on her phone as before (I later learned the phone had been borrowed from her brother and was taken from her again); and she was not in her household. A few days passed while I waited for the translation; still no sign of Adya, but different versions of the story about how she was found talking to a boy in her home traveled throughout the office. Allegedly she had then been beaten and kicked out of her home, which in the absence of her parents was run by her eldest brother of 26 years. Finally, the email arrived in my inbox with the translation of Adya's words. Eager to read it, slightly worried, I was not prepared for what I read:

**Adya's note**
Self-journal, trainee, Adya
*02.06.15*

> My day off today did not turn out so well for me. Something bad happened to me after 12:00 p.m. today. What happened was that at 12:30, I had gone over to call my student [male] for tutoring. After that, I came back home and the student followed me to my place and started talking to me. After a few moments my elder brother came in, and out of fear of my brother, I hid my student. And it is because of this mistake that my elder brother refuses to talk to me today. I am at a loss to understand what I should do right now. I accept my mistake for whatever happened today, but my elder brother is not ready to forgive me for that.

> My biggest mistake today was that I had hid that boy. Right now, I am very angry with myself. I feel like taking my life away. Please forgive me, brother. I am telling the truth. If you forgive me today, I will be more than ready to give my life up if you ask for it. I won't protest or say anything. Sorry, brother. If there is a mistake that is committed by me, my family members have complete authority to ask anything of me. Even if they want to kill me over it, I will more than oblige. Brother, give me any punishment that you want to, but please not this of not talking to me.

I was utterly surprised and overwhelmed to read her account. Emotions ranging from care, deep concern, and anger toward the injustice I perceived, tears were shed as I worried for her life. It sounded like a suicide letter, and months in the field with the organization and literature on these issues in India, had taught me to take such threats seriously. "I feel like taking my life away" and "If you [her brother] forgive me today, I will be more than ready to give my life up if you ask for it," she had written. Entrenched patriarchal politics were visible on the page. I had never seen it formulated in this manner.

This was a powerful, and painful, example of how a young woman's thoughts and practices were formed and captured by the patriarchal and gender-discriminatory politics under which she had been raised. She writes that she was willing to surrender her life to her brother for having damaged the family's honor. When I read her note, ten days had passed since anyone in the organization had had contact with her. *How is she now?* I wondered. That women abruptly 'vanish' was not uncommon to the organization, which explains why most staff members were relatively calm about Adya's disappearance. It turned out that one person did know more: Bhavani, the trainee who brought me the notebook, happened to be Adya's neighbor and close friend. The two friends had spoken on the phone – before Adya no longer had access to one. "I told her that she should not give up and that she should take up the fight," Bhavani shared in an interview. Relieved to learn that Adya was alive, her friend also confirmed, however, that Adya's suicidal thoughts were recurrent in their talks:

> Her brother was angry and is still very angry. He was saying that he did not want her to become like this. That he had put a lot of faith in her. Her brother had started trusting her a lot, but this incident broke that faith. But Adya was trying to tell him that it was not what he thought, and that she was trying to make the boy go away. […] Then she asked her brother to do whatever he pleased. She was even ready to give up her life. She felt that it was not her fault, but her brother did not believe her. She had come to the office once to talk to "ma'am" [staff member], but she couldn't find her. Adya had met with us friends and was saying that she would die and leave everything, since her brother and father did not believe her. She was staying at her sister's house and would have thoughts

> like this. She kept talking about doing things like eating poison. She was saying that she didn't know what to do and that she would take her life. I told her not to think like that, because it was not her fault. That she should do what she wants to do and move ahead. But she kept thinking like that [of suicide]. […] She doesn't look well. She wants to complete the course, but doesn't know how it can be possible now.

Not long after this interview, Bhavani lost contact with Adya. Another few weeks passed. I kept asking around for information on her situation, but there was none. When I asked a mobilizer what she thought about the incident, she said:

> I got to know the problem really late. I told her, "Why did you not tell me immediately?" By the time I got to know, it was really late. We could have talked to her family and tried something if we knew earlier or when it happened. I thought I should go or send someone, but others [in the organization] said to leave it, since she is not here and is in her village now.

I wanted to understand how what seemed to me like a relatively small incident could be so detrimental that Adya was considering suicide, and asked the mobilizer for her view on the matter:

> See, it will be a problem for any family in the communities. Their honor is associated with their daughters, sisters, and mothers. I have no idea what exactly happened, but it offended the brother's sense of honor for the family. […] It is like the brother is exercising patriarchal authority over his family. I know that shouting, abuse, beating, and scolding happen in the family and toward Adya too.

It was my impression that the organization had concluded the issue was out of their hands, since Adya's whereabouts were unknown. One staff member had quite different view. When asked, she said: "See, I don't think she really wants it [to become a driver]. She has to make up her mind […] I don't think her brother has any influence on her wish to drive or not, and she says her sister is supportive." I wondered if this was true. I mean, the brother had beaten Adya, threatened her, ignored her, thrown her out of the house, and her family had put pressure on her to the extent that she was contemplating suicide; how could that not influence her thoughts about her life, opportunities and driving? This particular staff member reasoned that Adya lacked genuine desire to become a driver, which she found to be a common problem amongst some trainees.

Since no one was contacting Adya, I managed to persuade a mobilizer to assist me in that pursuit. After a few days' attempts, I was successful when the sister eventually picked up. We were told that the family was in a hurried process of getting Adya married. Adya came on the

phone, and we scheduled a day to meet for an interview in the office.

The day arrived, and Mary, my translator, and I were waiting in the office for Adya to arrive when Bhavani came out from the training room. “Adya is coming. I am talking to her today,” I told her, and her face lit up, bursting into a big smile. “Adya?!” she exclaimed, visibly surprised. “Yes, Adya is coming now,” I replied. Just then, Adya entered the hall where we were standing. In a matter of seconds, the two friends fell into a lengthy embrace. The giggles, smiles, and bodies touching each other spoke of two friends genuinely pleased to reunite. Adya, unusually dressed in a fancy, bright neon-green satin dress typical for festive occasions, she had a tired, worn expression on her face, and looked like she was on the brink of a breakdown.



*Kalkaji, south Delhi.*
Trainee Adya at an interview in Azad & Sakha’s office.

At last we could hear Adya’s version of the story. She confirmed the specifics of the event as we have heard it already (though the nature of her relation to the boy remained unclear), but – as with the note she wrote – her testimony provided a rare insight into how a young woman reasoned and acted in response to a gendered incident in her everyday life, as she was caught between worlds (her household versus Azad & Sakha) and wrestling with the tensions between wanting to conform and wishing to transform:

> My brother thinks I made a mistake. I am regretting it; I don’t know what to do. It is not allowed in our family to make friends with boys. […] I was crying so much, I thought of committing suicide since my brother is not talking to me. I

did not share it with anyone [at home], but I was having such weird thoughts. My brother is like a parent to me. My parents are in the village, so he is everything for me here. I was thinking of committing suicide. But then I also thought that if I commit suicide, what would my mother think? They will think I must have done something wrong and that is why I killed myself, so I decided not to do it. My brother called my sister one day and told her to send me back to the village. I looked at my sister's face and thought she would also be blamed if something happened to me, if I killed myself, so I did not commit suicide.

Although Adya's family's decision to arrange her marriage allegedly had nothing to do with the incident, it increased the family's interest in it happening quickly. Adya did not oppose it, yet when asked, she said that she did not want to get married, not now.

On that day, the last time I saw Adya, she spoke for a long time about the incident and even longer about the dynamics within her household, as it was a pressing concern. The following excerpt from that conversation, testifies to the struggles of spatial politics and the violence with which it was enforced. I have emphasized some illustrative phrases to draw attention to statements where, at least on this day, Adya seemed to negotiate her sense of self and the patriarchal relations engulfing her.

It is not allowed in our house to speak in front of the elders. I also don't like it and I have never done any such thing; neither do I have the courage to stand up and say anything to them. I never said anything to my brother. […] He beats me. I am 20 years old and still he beats me. My friends object to it, but I still do not say anything. Considering he is my elder brother, whatever he will do it will be for my own good. At times I feel that he should not beat me, since I am a grown-up now, but I never said anything.

AS: Have you seen or learned in Azad that you can say no to such actions?

Yes, ma'am, we learn this in gender class. If someone beats you, you can take a stand, tell them not to. But I think that if I say anything, my brothers would think I am misbehaving, so I never think about speaking out. My brother will feel bad if someone sees that I speak against him, and they would also say that I am misbehaving. I don't do any such thing. My sister-in-law refused to do some work for him; he told her to get some medicine, and she refused. My brother then beat her up and said, "My sisters have never replied back to me and you are shouting in front of me." He beat up my sister-in-law and she left for her parents' house. This is not my habit, and I would not talk back to my brother. Irrespective of the various number of gender classes, I would take a stand outside the house, but never say anything at home. I don't have such a value system.

I do feel like saying something sometimes, but then I don't wish to actually do it. I don't wish to talk against my brother. If he does not want me to do the course, then that is fine. I will finish it after my marriage [then her husband would decide if she was allowed]. When I joined, I liked it and felt happy.

The above account shows how Adya struggled within her relation to her brother, the main patriarch of her household in the absence of her parents. She thought it wrongful to speak up against her brother, repeatedly accentuating that she would not want to be such a person, although she wanted the violence to end. She used phrases like "It is not my habit," "I don't have such a value system" or "I don't do any such things," and almost sounded frightened of becoming influenced by the non-traditional approach Azad & Sakha represents. These statements can be read as Adya disassociating herself from the organization's suggestions for living more gender-equal lives. This certainly echoes conversations I have heard from the office staff, e.g. the comments on how trainees are unwilling, unable, or hesitant to engage with the alternative gender perception the organization advocates. Viewed in this light, the contrast between two radically different gender perceptions – the juxtaposition of the traditional and the new – was too large for Adya to handle. The leap she would need to make was experienced as too large or risky. The women caught in between the old and the new, like Adya, were negotiating the tensions of conflicting worlds in and through relational practices.

The account also illustrates that transforming gendered practices and relations within the household was often experienced as more challenging and fearful than standing up to community harassment or to men in public spaces. In the intimate sphere of the familial space, negotiations with violent and discriminatory family members were the hardest. Adya's statement "Whatever he will do, it will be for my own good," is, as I see it, emblematic of the patriarchal negotiation of power within household relations in the poor communities. Adya's hesitation to resist her brother was related to her fear of physical violence and "relational punishments" (e.g., he ignored her, threw her out of the house) and concerns for his reputation and the family's status. But it was also related to relational ties of dependency and emotions of care, as Adya expressed: "My brother is like a parent to me. My parents are in the village, so he is everything for me here." The tensions between conforming and transforming, staying within the old or leaning toward the new, tampered with Adya's negotiations with self and the intimate relations of her everyday life. Motivated by care and fear, she conformed with traditional practices.

Two women amongst the staff engaged attentively with Adya as our interview came to an end, and she immediately burst into tears. "Look at all the things he has done – he should be ashamed, not you," one woman said, consoling Adya with a reassuring hand on her shoulder. They were encouraging her to fight for her rights, to finish the program, to claim the space to create life changes, but Adya, apprehensive and hopeless in her response, seemed less convinced of that strategy. As she left us and entered the adjacent room, her batchmates, who were having a break, encircled her. Seven young trainees hugged her all at once; while inquiring into her wellbeing.

Adya, moved by her friend's care and on the brink of tears, left the office and has not returned to the program.

This first part of the chapter has emphasized the women's struggles and the unpredictability of negotiating everyday spatial politics. For women in the program, there are risks and dangers of contesting – or merely just living within – authorities' perceptions and practices of gender. The widespread acceptance and practice of gendered harassment and violence amidst precarious and political relations in the urban poor communities where Azad & Sakha operates is what brought gendered struggles to the center of their work, but also what causes many women to leave the organization. Ambiguities of space and the complexities of relations, particularity those of intimacy and proximity, created interwoven ties of dependencies and emotions ranging from care to fear, placing some women in situations without any obvious solution. The pressures from within everyday spatial politics made suicide a consideration – and a response, in a few rare cases. Adya's story demonstrated, among many things, how rapidly a seemingly promising trajectory can deteriorate. This suggests that the effect of organizing for social transformation in this context is ambiguous, as it is complex, conflictual, and potentially dangerous.

In the remainder of this chapter, I turn to another, and more uplifting, reason why a group of drivers left Sakha. This tale is what I in my methods have called an "odd story" that I chose to pursue and include, because the occurrence of women seeking jobs as drivers elsewhere was an intriguing movement that appeared to suddenly just happen, starting the organization, and surely offers new perspectives – and unsettling – to understanding social transformation in this context.

**"Walkouts": when Sakha drivers went driving elsewhere**

Through happenstance, Rita – the client of a Sakha driver – caught a regular taxi in the airport that had a woman behind the wheel. The driver happened to be a former Sakha driver, an occurrence that just a year earlier would have been highly unlikely. She was so surprised, that she brought it up to share in an interview:

> Rita, client: One day, coming back from the airport, I got into a cab that was driven by a woman. I asked her about Sakha, and she explained that she used to be with them. She said, "I would never have dreamt that I would leave Sakha, but I had to because I did not like what was happening there. They did not value us." […] I felt nice thinking that what has been accomplished is that these women are able to negotiate with a totally different organization and talk terms [contracts] with them. So she was working for another cab firm, Meru.

In 2015, Sakha experienced a sudden movement of women leaving the organization to seek employment with regular taxi firms, notably Meru Cabs, a dominant industry player.[96] Even though some women may have left Sakha to become drivers in another organization, it was until 2015 highly uncommon. If women left, for the reasons addressed in the first half of the chapter, it was not to be drivers elsewhere.

"Some crazy things have happened here in December, you must have heard…" Meenu, Azad & Sakha's founder, said to me with a laugh, glancing at two other staff members, before she elaborated, "Meru Cabs have started a women's service, and seven or eight of our girls have gone with them." Seven or eight, however, over a few months turned to 26, or more, women leaving. Meru Cabs, headquartered in Mumbai where the company was established in 2007, has a presence across 24 Indian cities with approximately 20,000 cabs, and is considered one of the major commercial taxi firms in Delhi.[97] I was told how Sakha drivers began not showing up for work from one day to the next. Instead of resigning, they told the organization stories about going on vacation, attending a wedding, or falling ill when they had started other jobs. "I am sad that we try so hard to instill certain values in them, ways of being, and then they can do something like this," the founder reflected. Although disappointed by the manner in which the women left without giving proper notice, she perceived the occurrence as a positive sign of increased autonomy that the women had negotiated jobs in the transport sector on their own. "It is a sign of empowerment. It tells me that we trained some strong and professional drivers," she exclaimed, simultaneously dissatisfied and proud.

Being employed in regular taxi firms, which are male-dominated organizations, provided a completely different work environment than what the women knew from Azad & Sakha. Meenu expressed concern about how the women would cope, saying only time would tell.

As the months passed, more drivers left. What started as a few women departing had turned into a small movement by May 2015, with about 26 Sakha drivers working at Meru Cabs and a few at other companies. Zoya, one of my research participants who had recently acquired her taxi license, was part of this wave; she resigned in June 2015 to join Uber. When asked, Zoya and a few other "walkouts" I spoke to said the leave was chiefly motivated by the prospect of higher salaries:

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[96] In Chapter Three, I addressed how the taxi service industry in Delhi saw great changes in 2015 (in the wake of a local governmental election) as women's safety became a topic on the political agenda and several traditional taxi firms suddenly started employing female drivers.

[97] Meru Cabs, "Our Philosophy", http://www.meru.in/about-us/our-philosophy. Accessed April 30, 2018.

Zoya,
taxi driver,
left for Uber: There is not a big reason why I left; the only reason is my salary. The amount of money I get here is not sufficient. The salary is very low compared to the amount of work we do. They train us well in Sakha and Azad Foundation; you cannot get better training than what we get here. I tell everyone if you need training, take it from Azad Foundation.

Another reason for why many drivers left Azad & Sakha for Meru Cab might be that they were 'recruited'. A former Azad & Sakha staff member, who had been fired, started working at Meru Cabs just they were seeking to establish a service of female drivers in response to political pressures and demand. Meru Cabs hired this former staff member in February 2015, and she had direct contact information with many drivers and offered them better-paid positions. One driver who received such a phone call was Seema. Dissatisfied by being "on the bench" too long, while Sakha sought to land her first job, she jumped at the opportunity to work for Meru Cabs.

In response to this movement, the founder and a leading Sakha staff member called all drivers to a meeting in the office in mid-May 2015 to address the issue up front. The atmosphere was unusually tense, with 15-some drivers packed into a small office, as the founder spoke to the group:

> There will be a lot of new companies [Meru, Ola, Uber, etc.]. But a person leaving is not that big a problem; the way they are leaving is. Someone is taking leave, using marriage as an excuse. I just wish to say two things. First of all, if you wish to leave, say it honestly that you wish to leave and join another company. Secondly, there has to be a mechanism and way of leaving. If you wish to leave, you can inform everyone and then go; don't leave silently and without informing. We support and encourage you, so please don't think that you have become so smart that you will do whatever and we will not get to know. […] Those who wish to leave, please go, we are not interested in stopping anyone; we just wish to know who wishes to stay back. Who is looking at Sakha for their careers, taking care of their needs is our worry. As long as they are with us, their worries are our worries. Please note, I want to make it very clear: those who wish to leave, your time starts now, before leaving this place today, you convey it to us, okay?

Meenu went on to explain how Sakha was different than the regular firms and how they differed in terms of their approach to women's safety while on the road:

> We have been contacted by Ola, Meru, Uber, and so on, but we have never agreed for any partnership with them. We wish to do it on our terms, so that you

> and the girls in the future who are associated with Sakha are secure and their interests can be safeguarded. We will never get into a partnership where we will have to compromise on the values of our company. For instance, the case that happened with Uber [rape]… they are a completely unethical company. They kept chasing us, but someone who cannot ensure a woman's safety we don't wish to work with. Someone who is looking out for their personal interest and leaving us is okay, but we are looking for a collective good. If we feel that any short-term deal is not good for our girls, without knowing for sure, we will never get into any such deal. Like you said, you are here because of us. We just want to tell you, please don't sell yourself too cheap.

The atmosphere in the crowded room was still intense. Several women had serious expressions on their faces; some gazed at the floor, and one yawned loudly. It felt slightly awkward, because the probability that some of the women had already taken other jobs or decided to do so – but had not informed the organization – was quite high. There was a sense of secrecy in the air that felt uncomfortable juxtaposed with the organization's plea for transparency. As the meeting reached came to a close, the founder returned to the notion of being a professional driver and a responsible person, urging for transparency:

> If you still wish to leave, please leave in a systematic way so that we are aware of the situation. Our young people are our "today," and they will be our future. Leave with good values. If you will compromise on those values, you will ruin your name and the company's name. So those who wish to leave, we would like to tell them, we wish them all the best for life and we wish them loads of success […]. So be a little professional and say it up front that you wish to go. Don't call each other and inform; this way you are betraying the company. We are no one to stop anyone, but resign properly, maintain rules, and then leave. We would be more than happy to see you working elsewhere, but be honest toward your work and this organization.

Leaving the organization was not necessarily an easy choice, as Zoya voiced when we spoke on the topic. Motivated to try new opportunities and earn a better living, she nevertheless worried that this move would close the doors to Sakha for good. "I am also scared thinking that if I leave once, I do not know if I will be able to come back here or not," she said, expressing her doubts. She elaborated on how she experienced the dilemma:

> I asked about it, but they said, "You are lying and leaving." I told them that I am not lying, because I kept driving [for Sakha] while completing my training there [at Uber]. The training was for two hours every day. Either I used to attend in the morning or the evening, so I never missed any duty with Sakha. But they think I lied and now I am leaving. They told me yesterday, "If you still wish to

> stay back, we will have to think a lot. We have not approved your resignation letter yet, but if you want to go, you can go because it will be difficult for us to keep you here now. You have decreased your value here." I talked with them for two and a half hours, and I considered staying. But then again I thought this lower salary [than Uber] will not help, and there is no harm in trying. One can come back and convince them again afterward and they will agree. But there is no harm in trying; a person should try to move ahead. It is not mandatory to stay wherever you are. Everyone wishes to move forward.

Note how Zoya negotiated with herself and the organization regarding whether she should leave and give driving with Uber a try. The desire "to move ahead" compelled her to leave, yet the tension of parting with what she knew and the organization she had been part of for several years weighed heavily on her.

In addition to economic motivations, a few drivers and some staff members mentioned another concern, which they thought might explain the drivers leaving Sakha – changes in the organizational atmosphere. On numerous occasions, I heard that as the organization had grown larger, they felt it had become more businesslike and less supportive. One driver, who had chosen to resign after many years with the organization, told me, "It is not as warm and comfortable as it was before," and added:

> Two months back, I used to say Sakha is like my home. Suddenly I felt like an outsider. Your work [Sakha] is running because of us, because of the girls. They are like pillars to you. You should think about them, about their rights. During Diwali [a public Hindu festival], also you don't give a single box of sweets. All the girls come from a disadvantaged background. You are getting so much funding from outside.

Drivers and staff, who expressed concerns about the organizational changes, often mentioned that there was less respect, care, personal relations, and time for engagement than earlier. The women's accounts conveyed a sense of a "before-and-after;" the "good old days" versus now, where the organization had grown. Yet quite a few also attributed this change in atmosphere to shifts in a few central staff positions at that time; I was told several stories of disputes between staff and "walkouts." A driver who had resigned shared the following perception:

> They misbehaved so much with a lot of girls who left. They have still blocked the salaries of so many of them. When I got to know about all this, I said, "Even if you give me 20,000 rupees I will not come and work with you." So many girls are cursing them. They have resigned, served the notice period – what is the point of stopping their salary? They taught us freedom, empowerment, and now they are behaving just like others used to do; then why should girls not misbehave?

Some drivers voiced that they felt poorly treated, while some staff were disappointed by the manner in which women lied and left without notice, which they deemed as unprofessional. Although it is unclear to me what specifically transpired within those days and encounters in the office, it was nevertheless clear that an unsettling within the organization took place. From the organization's perspective, many women left in a manner that breached their contracts. As they wanted the women to learn to be "professionals," this was an occasion to teach proper resignation procedures.

The fact that so many experienced drivers left the organization left Sakha in a precarious economic situation. The founder, never the less, saw it as an accomplishment that the women sought new opportunities on their own initiative and found ways to increase their income, even if it did come as a surprise. "It is a time of great change for us, in many ways. We have to look into this and make the [business] models fit accordingly," she stressed, highlighting her belief that Azad & Sakha's methods of organizing must be flexible enough to adapt in a changing environment. Rather than wanting to stop the movement or change the women's behaviors – aside from wanting them to resign with notice – she found that the organizational strategies and methods should instead adjust to the new situation.

It is interesting to notice that while the organization facilitated processes of transformation for the women over the years, the women were also transforming the organization exactly because of the transformations they had experienced. As the women became more independent and accustomed to exercising their rights and as there was a growing demand for female drivers in the market for transportation in Delhi, some women began seeking better conditions than those provided by Sakha.

Azad & Sakha has over the past few years increased enrollment (see Table 1.2 in Chapter One) and thus grown notably in size. On average, staff members, therefore, have less time to engage with the women, than when the organization was smaller. This has not gone unnoticed amongst some staff and women, particularly those who have been with the organization since its early days. Staff members were, however, slightly divided on this matter. On the one hand, there was an overall discourse that the organization had reached a point where greater professionalism was necessary due to growth in size, economics, and reach. This was welcomed, because it was a way to optimize their work and have greater impact. On the other hand, some staff experienced this change in organizational practices as becoming "too business-oriented"; a logic that seems to clash with their participatory perspective and empowerment focus in their methods of organizing. Along with some drivers, staff found the decreased amount of time for personal engagements to be problematic.

I also heard a few staff members offer another explanation: they saw some drivers as behaving slightly "spoiled," like "teenage daughters," because of the care and attention they had gotten accustomed to. According to the staff, operating more professionally would better prepare the women to take on jobs elsewhere. The one-to-one close attention would not be likely in regular businesses employing female drivers, like Meru Cabs. Regardless, the balance between a growing and increasingly busy organization versus personal engagement, knowledge of individual women's lives, and time for support between staff and women seemed to be a challenge

One day in the office, I witnessed two staff members giggling; one had a phone in her hand as she explained to the other that several women, who had left the organization to work at Meru Cabs, were calling her because they found the work environment demanding. They were contemplating whether they should, and could, return to Sakha. The women's engagement with Sakha and their rights and expectations as drivers were being negotiated continuously within them, amongst drivers, with organizational staff, and against other firms in the industry. The outcome of these continuously unfolding negotiations was slightly unpredictable.

The negotiations were reforming the women's identities and functions as drivers, but also the organization's culture and methods. Although Azad & Sakha's strategy was to stay open to an ongoing readjustment of their methods depending on the women's collective developments and movements in the industry, the large number of drivers leaving the organization within a few months might indicate that their adjustment has been absent or too slow. It might, however, simply reflect a rapidly changing industry and indicate that some women had reached a place in which they no longer needed Sakha.

**Concluding note**

This chapter has shown that some women walked a delicate line between seeking to improve their lives and transform spatial politics, on the one hand, and the risk of increasing opposition and even more strict enforcement of oppressing practices, on the other. The women – including Azad & Sakha staff – negotiated gender practices in and across many sites and situations. The accounts of this chapter has illustrated that social transformation in this context is full of risks. Since harassment and physical abuse were prevalent in the women's everyday lives prior to joining the program, it is not surprising that a program seeking to improve their lives focuses on these issues, and that it brings power asymmetries to the surface. It means, however, that seeking social transformation for women in Delhi's *bastis* can be dangerous. However, not doing anything can also be dangerous. Organizing for social transformation in what can therefore be considered an ambiguous spatial setting is replete with strong emotions and challenges for the women, but

also the staff who witnessed the women's struggles up close. The tension between the traditional, taken for granted practices in the households and those the organization advocates was difficult for many women to navigate and produced quite a pressure for some. Altering practices at home with the people closest to them provided ambiguous situations. Whether in thoughts or in actions transforming such abusive patterns of discrimination and abuse must be regarded as a long-term negotiation; social transformation takes time.

In contrast, there were "walkouts" living 'new' gendered practices; who wanted to further improve their livelihoods. They had transformed beyond the scope of the social enterprise. The fact that women saw new opportunities for their livelihoods, negotiated their own deals, and left the organization that had trained them suggested an increasing confidence, agency, and awareness to claim their rights. These drivers challenged the organization, causing some tensions and troubles for the bottom line and their methods, but in doing so, they also transformed the organization. In this light, negotiations were continually unfolding beyond the identity of being Sakha drivers. The transformational processes in this way preceded the organization's visions, producing entirely new kinds of negotiations between drivers and staff, but also opening up the organization for another becoming. It demonstrates that processes of social transformation cannot be tamed or controlled; the way processes social transformation unfold might even surprise those engaged in facilitating it, but witnessing how it is experienced and practiced by those seeking to alter their lives.

# Theorizing the ambiguity of space

Theoretical reflection part Five

This chapter has added to the perspectives of the previous chapters by demonstrating and acknowledging that for the women in this study social transformation must also be seen as ambiguous negotiations with and about power. From this perspective, transforming practices that contested traditional norms within everyday relations proved ambiguous, risky, and at times dangerous. The empirical material suggests that struggles and unpredictability were inherent characteristics of processes aiming to transform spatial politics in this setting. Massey finds that negotiations of "conflicting tendencies" (2005: 95) are inherent to space, which is "the sphere of relations, negotiations, practices of engagement, power in all its forms" (2005: 99), but does not give struggles and violence, as a mode of exercising and wrestling with power, much attention. This chapter has shown that conflicting tendencies related to gendered practices produced struggles within everyday spaces, pressures of fear and harassment, and violent exertions of power, but also that the negotiations were imbued with ties of dependency, familial care, and concerns of familial reputation.

The chapter however also emphasized another aspect of spatial ambiguities, namely, that the processes of social transformation the women experienced and practiced when a large group of drivers decided to seek jobs elsewhere, greatly unsettled the social enterprise. The organization had not foreseen this development, which damaged their income significantly, but which at the same time was a token of empowerment. In the following I will first discuss spatial ambiguities in terms of struggles and risks of social transformation, and end the theoretical reflection on the notion that space – and social transformation – cannot be tamed.

**Precarious and gendered struggles**

Within the familial and community relations of everyday life, the struggles the women experienced were predominantly rooted in gender negotiations. Both in training to become drivers and as drivers, the women were, as Butler (2015: 31) writes, "making room for ways of living gender that challenge prevailing norms of recognition." They embodied a way of living gender that in the poor communities was perceived as inappropriate, provocative, and untamable, and was met with opposition in different forms. Butler (2015) argues that performativity also can be "a way of acting from and against precarity" and that "sometimes it is not a question of first having power and then being able to act; sometimes it is a question of acting, and in the acting, laying claim

to the power one requires" (Butler, 2015: 58). From subordinated positions the poor women did just that, but this also explains why claiming their rights must be considered risky processes. On the one hand, in daring to stand out in performing gender differently, the women might become increasingly targeted for harassment and violence: "precarity is, perhaps obviously, directly linked with gender norms, since we know that those who do not live their genders in intelligible ways are at heightened risk for harassment, pathologization, and violence" (Butler, 2015: 34). Indeed, as Butler points out, the lived experience of precarity and gender norms was interwoven for the women in this study. Yet on the other hand, precarities of poverty and gendered violence prevailed before the women joined the program, and an essential motivation of Azad & Sakha's organizing is exactly to address these matters. In some cases, it might be just as risky to endure everyday violence without seeking to transform the relational constitutions. This means that there is an inherent dilemma within this form of social entrepreneurial organizing and social transformation in this context: will things get better or worse for the individual woman? In a setting where violence is a widespread practice of asserting power over women, acting without having "the power" placed the women in precarious positions of not knowing how "those in power" might respond. In claiming more power, we see again how that simultaneously opens the women to greater vulnerability, yet I posit that more often than not, due to the experiences, knowledge, capabilities, and support network of women living gender differently than in their communities (as addressed in previous chapters), the trainees and drivers have a better chance of negotiating within their vulnerabilities than before.

To many of the women who were subjected to recurring violence within the familial space, such practices were not new, but relational patterns enforced over years. Since the women in the poor communities traditionally depend economically on their families or husbands, Azad & Sakha's methods are based on a view that gaining economic independence is, if not a prerequisite, then a profoundly impactful leverage to begin breaking patterns of domestic violence (together with learning about their rights). As discussed in previous chapters, the power gained from economic security and other capabilities (learning one's rights, having police helpline numbers, mobile knowledge, etc.) were instrumental in negotiating power asymmetries and in cases of harassment and violence. However, as this chapter demonstrated, these negotiations were complex and far from all women managed to escape or break free from violence.

**Precarious pioneering – tightrope walking**

When women from the poor communities become drivers, they become, in my view, pioneers. Whether they were aware of it or not, whether they thought of themselves as such or not, the very

act of learning to drive and the performativity of a female driver in this context placed them in a position of pioneers amidst their peers. This, I have argued, made them stand out, which in certain situations served them favorably, while in others it produced new challenges. The Women on Wheels program enrolled the women in a way of living and thinking gender that differed radically from the practices and experiences of their upbringing and everyday lives (recall, for instance, Inika's life story in Chapter Three), placing them in a process of negotiation between those two opposing perspectives in addition to the worlds of clients and the gaze of society on them as drivers. In this light, the women faced conflicting demands or expectations regarding the ideal version of gender to be achieved (Butler, 2015), producing tensions within the women and within their relations to family members, Azad & Sakha staff, clients, and encounters through driving.

Butler's perspective of tensions rooted in gender performativity is to acknowledge a tension between "we radically choose our genders" and "we are utterly determined by gender norms" (Butler, 2015: 63). Following Butler, gender norms produce us and inform how we live gendered lives, but they do not determine who we are. In this case, the women become exposed to other gender norms over a longer period of time, which unsettles, or maybe momentarily confuses, their sense of who they are and who they can become. But even the fact that women find their way to the program suggests that they are driven by a desire to transform their lives, which means that there is an urge to tinker with everyday politics (albeit to different degrees). Hence, there is a tension between the urge to transform (revolt or break with norms) and the tendency to conform; a dynamic that seemed particularly influenced by the power relations within close familial ties and enforced through fear and violence. While these tensions might be exactly what unsettle identities and spatial politics, setting off new negotiations, they might also be the reason why many women leave the program, and in extreme cases, become exposed to increasing conflict and danger. That is what I mean by using the metaphor of the tightrope walker. Simonsen (2012: 18) writes, with regard to how bodily encounters can become fraught with fear of the other:

> The flesh is vulnerable to material as well as symbolic violence and pain. It is objectified, imprisoned and exploited. It is also subjected to the look, the gaze and the surveillance of the other.

I have argued that social transformation was practiced through bodies, emotions, and relations, but this includes the full spectra of experiences, including those of fear and violence. When Simonsen (2012) addresses intercorporeality, she points exactly to such corporeal negotiations of space, which include the meaning we ascribe to the bodily practices of others. In the interrelational production of spatial politics, several movements occur simultaneously in a given spatio-temporal

setting: the women perceive themselves in a certain way; they are being perceived by others; they perceive others; and they perceive others perceiving them. In other words, they also become affected by the meaning they ascribe to the appearance and corporeal practices of others – and in cases where others appear threatening, potentially violent, or in other ways discriminating, this influences how they think and behave in the relational space. *"The phenomenal body is ridden with power"* Simonsen (2012: 18, emphasis original) writes, and adds that the body is both a "vehicle and victim of power." In the women's corporeal, emotional, and relational changes in practices, derived from their involvement with Azad & Sakha, they often appeared to be "vehicles and victims of power" at the same time. In some instances, as vehicles to claim more power, they instead became even more pronounced victims of power through acts of violence as an oppressing force, which indeed is a highly corporeal, emotional, and relational matter in which, as Simonsen (2012: 18) puts it, "The bodies are marked by others, such that the different bodies are recognized and categorized, disciplined and excluded." To Simonsen there is a contingent relation between the body and identity; in my case, gendered harassment, discrimination, and violence were parts of everyday struggles of space for many of the women, but the women's relations were also based in ties of kinship, care, and familial affection.

Unsurprisingly, the women's intimate relationships had a profound impact on their sense of self, their positions within the households, their possibilities in life, and the way in which they performed gender and sought to transform it. Through their involvement with Azad & Sakha, they contested dominant norms, but how this was received depended on the individual relational constitutions within the familial space or close community. Tinkering with intimate relations fueled tensions that derived from the contrast between the traditional and the new, the urge for transformation and the desire to remain within the familiar and comply with norms. Through Adya's story, these tensions were illustrated. The incident – Adya talking to a young man alone – had nothing to do with her training to become a driver, but it directly influenced her participation, as she was forced to quit. Yet these tensions were visible from the manner in which she reasoned about what happened: she primarily saw the incident within a patriarchal mindset, but on occasions juxtaposed it against what she had learned in the organization. In this light, she was negotiating between an opposing gendered worldview of the traditional/familiar/home and the new/unfamiliar/Azad & Sakha. In what I interpret as coinciding sentiments of dependencies, fear, and affection for her brother, Adya's perceptions and practices were more aligned with those of her brother than with Azad & Sakha. This is why Azad & Sakha staff repeatedly said that the social transformation was ultimately about changing mindsets, and that this was the hardest part of their work. However, this also illustrates that in this case, social transformation was also a

profoundly "personal and vulnerable matter" – a precarious process – as it tampered with the closest relations within the women's lives, and therefore a great deal was a stake. In this sense, the processes were increasingly more about transforming relations, identities, and everyday practices than about achieving better economic conditions.

**Ambiguity and unpredictability: space cannot be tamed**

When considering space as the sphere of relations, Massey (2005: 100) argues that "the character of relations and their social and political implications" are of utmost importance, which I find is exactly what must be acknowledged in relation to notions of social transformation, and which has been demonstrated empirically throughout the thesis. Relations as a negotiation of power, and as "differentially (and unequally) empowering in their effects," produce politics of space:

> Such practices and relations do not so much measure space as create it, the 'distances' they engender may be ones of physical force, of police (dis)alignment, of imagination […]; and in that sense with any one of these they are likely to be a-symmetric. (Massey, 2005: 100)

Although Massey here is addressing neoliberal modes of globalization, her observations apply also to spatial politics of nations, cities, and communities; spaces where people live, meet, and conduct everyday life. A part of the chance of space, as Massey (2005: 111) writes, is that "different temporalities and different voices must work out means of accommodation. The chance of spaces must be responded to." In a way, as the women with Azad & Sakha transform different aspects of everyday practices while their familial and community context remains "the same," there must be a response to the changes they embody. I have heard several staff members reflect that this was a main challenge in facilitating social transformation and relieving the women's experience of opposition. After I left the field, the organization started a program working with the men within the drivers' households to address such potential clashes in response to the women's novel ways of living and doing gender. Ambiguity, as addressed in this chapter, is both a product of existing relations, relations yet to come, and the "throwntogetherness" of space itself.

While these characteristics of space produce tensions and restrains, they are also the causes for "the new" to happen. In fact, the very premise of space as the sphere of "coexisting heterogeneity" and "always under construction" implies spatial ambiguities (Massey, 2005). The chance of space, which Massey writes of, produces unpremeditated happenings, like in the case where Azad & Sakha did not foresee the movement of women leaving the organization. The women responded to an opportunity beyond the organization, which implies that social transformation does not

have an end, but rather is an opening of space, which facilitates even further such openings, the processes unleashed cannot be controlled. The more mobile the women became and with growing confidence in their capabilities and rights, the women started making more demands of those rights, also in relation to Azad & Sakha. The increasing mobility produced more encounters with others, for example people approaching the women to hire them, which provided the women with new opportunities and a sense of they can do more and other things than working for Sakha. This sense of opening and expanding access to options in life they had initially experienced through encountering Azad & Sakha and enrolling in the program, they now found outside of the organization.

In Chapter Two I cited Massey on the importance of conceiving the future as open, which I addressed in relation to the heterogeneity of space and identities as multiple and ongoing constructions. She writes:

> [...O]nly if we conceive of the future as open can we seriously accept or engage in any genuine notion of politics. Only if the future is open is there any ground for a politics which can make a difference. (Massey, 2005: 11)

Where I before discussed this reflection in relation to the construction of identities for the women Azad & Sakha engage with in the poor communities, I here wish to turn it around and apply it to the social entrepreneurial organizing. Based on my empirical material, and particular the occurrence of women leaving Sakha, I find Massey's claim quite important in regards to social entrepreneurship. The openness of the future as an essential characteristic of genuine politics and possibilities to live more livable lives means that programs offered by social enterprises should not be considered an end-station but more like transition. Facilitating this openness of the future means that the women will continue to transform and should be encouraged to do so, beyond the scope of a program. Either way, as the anecdote portrayed, it seemed that the social enterprise could not control it. It simply happened. This might however clash with the business logics of the social enterprise that might depend on the people in their program for their (social) business; as was the case for Sakha. Paradoxically, this movement of women leaving was seen as positive from the "Azad perspective", i.e. the empowerment logic, but as a problem from a "Sakha perspective", i.e. the business logic; and not surprisingly, staff members were divided on how they perceived it. This demonstrates how different, and possibly clashing, perspectives inform social entrepreneurial organizing, and that staff members perspectives are likely to be continuum. The women's experiences and practices of social transformation in this case exceed or deviated from the social enterprise's expectations, imaginations, and ideas of organizing. This indeed, buttresses

the ambiguous character of space. I find this remark by Massey (2005: 111) to be an eloquent way to capture that process:

> On the road map you won't drive off the edge of your known world. In space as I want to imagine it, you just might.

Paraphrasing Massey, the women seeking jobs elsewhere "drove off the edge of their known world" but also the world known to Azad & Sakha as a social enterprise. That is yet an example of negotiating spaces of everyday politics, this time between a social enterprise and women of poor backgrounds engaged in their program aiming for social transformation.

If I am to lead a good life, it will be a life lived with others, a life that is no life without those others; I will not lose this I that I am; whoever I am will be transformed by my connections with others, since my dependency on another, and my dependability, are necessary in order to live and to live well. Our shared exposure to precarity is but one ground of our potential equality and our reciprocal obligations to produce together conditions of livable life.

Judith Butler

# A SPATIAL THEORIZING OF SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

Chapter Nine

The thesis proposes viewing social transformation as processes of negotiating spaces of everyday politics. In this chapter, I address the implications of having pursued a spatial approach. The first part discusses the methodological challenges and lessons learned from the experimental ways I have sought to capture "the social," and how such an approach can contribute to research of the social of social entrepreneurship. The second part focuses on the theorizing of social transformation as process, discussing where it can be "seen," what brings it about, and how it is experienced and practiced, concluding with a conceptualization of the dynamics of social transformation.

# Discussion: implications of a spatial approach

Through an ethnographic study of Azad & Sakha's social entrepreneurial organizing for women in urban poverty in Delhi, I have inquired into how processes of social transformation are facilitated, experienced, and practiced. As accounted for in Chapters One and Two, I have situated my research in the discourse of the social of social entrepreneurship, more specifically in the literature recognizing entrepreneurship as social change (Steyaert & Hjorth, 2006). I was driven by three overarching research ambitions: to conceptualize how we can think social transformation processually, to bring ethnographic methods into studies of the social of social entrepreneurship, and to contribute to the growing stream of literature advocating more critical perspectives of social entrepreneurship. These three contributions come together in my proposition of a spatial approach to researching and theorizing social transformation, which is what I return to and discuss in this chapter. In the first part of this chapter, I address the methodological implications a spatial approach has for the research of social transformation as process, and what it means to "bring" space into the processes of analysis and theorizing. The second part of the chapter is dedicated to a conceptual discussion of the research findings on social transformation and the implications therein for our understanding of the social of social entrepreneurship or entrepreneurship as social change.

## Part I
## Spatial methodologies for researching social transformation

Conducting ethnographic research on social transformation for women in poverty in Delhi made it evident to me that transformative processes are embodied, sensory, emotional, situated, engaged, and profoundly relational. The same, however, can be said for doing fieldwork. In doing ethnography, "fragments of life are connected through reflections of the experimental space of the ethnographer" (Hastrup, 1995: 57). It is a constant process of negotiation, which does not stop when the researcher leaves the field. I have come to experience and understand the affect and importance of all that which cannot so easily be spoken or written. The flesh of the world, the movements of bodies, the array of colors in the sceneries of everyday life, the sounds and smells of life and matter in all its infinite forms, the emotions of relating, the touches and the acts of being touched – all that which not only constitutes the spatiality of our lives, but which also

ultimately forms and transforms us. This is a vision of space, spatial moments, and encounters of doing research.

Inspired by processesual researchers' notion of theorizing and their premise of an ontological turn (Beyes & Steyaert, 2011; 2012; Henare et al., 2007; Law, 2004; Lorimer, 2005; Mol, 2002; Mol & Law, 2002; Steyaert, 2012), I have contemplated how to bring spatiality into researching and writing up my fieldwork. This section takes up the challenges I have faced and the lessons I have learned from working spatially and acknowledging the "more-than-human, more-than-textual, multisensual worlds," in the words of Lorimer (2005: 83). What does it mean to fully recognize the dynamics within encounters, as well as those of research practices (Crapanzano, 1980)? And what about the "methodological problem" Hastrup (1995: 83) identifies in acknowledging "the living body as a locus of experience"? These questions have been inconvenient but impossible to ignore, and have thus informed the ways I did fieldwork, my processes of theorizing, and my write-up of the ethnography.

Although Hastrup (1995: 24) reminds us that theorizing is "a creative process," and Steyaert (2012: 152) encourages researchers "to contemplate and experiment with the process of theorizing itself," it is uncertain, open-ended and situationally conditional as to how this translates into specific methodological practices in a given case and context. I felt compelled – out of necessity – to experiment with how to capture the multiplicity and lived experience of social transformations. I have used a montage as a prelude to the thesis; short poems or literary quotes in between chapters; fieldnote sketches (Taussig, 2011); the life history of a taxi driver (Crapanzano, 1980); multiple accounts without explicit theoretical scaffolding in the five empirical chapters (Henare et al., 2007; Mol, 2002); a journal entry from a research participant; and photos (Pink, 2009) as means to this end. These methodological choices were mentioned in Chapter Two, but I have waited to elaborate on their potential, "potency" and limits until the end of the thesis so as to establish the empirical body of the thesis as a backdrop. The following discussion is not an attempt to suggest a "how-to" account of doing ethnography spatially, but rather to extract the lessons acquired from experimenting with researching and writing up spatiality, and to outline the implications and challenges of such an approach. In this, I hope to offer a composition of a tentative frame for a spatial approach than can serve as a source of reflection and encouragement for the development of more processual and spatial methodologies in social entrepreneurship research.

**Using poems to make space and break space open**

Poems and literary quotes have a way of capturing more than what each single word denotes. The American poet and feminist Adrienne Rich coins it eloquently when she writes, "I knew – had

long known – how poetry can break open locked chambers of possibility, restore numbed zones to feeling, recharge desire" (Rich, 2003: xx). This form of writing communicates atmospheres, opening up for reflections, and this openness allows for a more experiential sense of the text in that it might facilitate feelings. In this way, poems and literary quotes can be considered spatial – they create spaces, inviting readers to engage differently than with traditional academic writing. They are expressive spaces for the writer and affective spaces for the readers (Simonsen, 2013). One feature of poetry in academic writing is its ability to "provide space for a different kind of conversation," which she also terms a relational space (Ramsey, 2011: 16). Using poetry – whether written by the researcher or by others – in the write-up of research underpins an acknowledgement of the relational engagements and constructions of meaning. Ramsey (2011: 20) advocates the use of poetry in academic writing and poses the rhetorical question: "If we argue that post-modern research writing is less of a pursuit of truth and more of a contribution to an ongoing conversation, then is it possible to pursue a genre of writing that is not constrained by discourses of description, linear arguments and conclusion?" She argues that using poetry as a means of communication welcomes and includes "other ways of constructing realities," since "attention is focused on the relational process of meaning *making* rather than meaning *understood*" (Ramsey, 2011: 20, original emphasis). This is so because, as Ramsey (2011: 21) emphasizes, poetry has the potential to give "an immediacy to the emotions and humanity of research."

In this sense, a few poetic words on blank pages between the chapters of the thesis must be expected to affect the reader, but how and in which ways they are affective for the individual are uncertain. I have used poems between chapters as small spatial moments and openings. Hanging there "on their own," they are taken out of context, but can nevertheless communicate and connect across chapter(s). The poems offer a break in the writing style and rhythm of the surrounding chapters.

The usage of poems was not a deliberate methodological choice at the outset of my research, but instead came in "through the back door" as a part of my theorizing process, which in retrospect points toward the use of poetry as a way to facilitate reflection and working spatially. Throughout the years I have conducted this research, regardless of whether I read academic or non-academic literature, certain passages would stand out and make me reflect upon the research and myself in relation to the research findings. Somehow the poems or literary quotes spoke to what I was noticing, and experiencing, through fieldwork and within my ethnographic material, even if it was from a completely different context or even fiction. I therefore started placing a quote or poem on the first page of a chapter as a means of providing inspiration and an opening for my own creativity. This is in keeping with Darmer (2006: 552), who argues that, "Poetry and literary writing in

other forms can help managers in their communication process just like it can help researchers in their research process." Darmer and Grisoni (2011: 6) outline several ways to deploy poetry in relation to organization and organizational research, one of which is similar to the way I have used poems: as "a way to further understand and/or develop research or specific aspects of the research process."

Initially, I was unsure whether to delete the poems. I decided to keep them: to be transparent, as they have been part of my theorizing, but from acknowledging that there lies relevant methodological reflections on why and how I ended up using poetry, which speaks to the implications of thinking spatially. The poems and literary quotes have assisted me in thinking, sensing, and imagining spatiality in the research. But furthermore, as Ramsey (2011: 22) puts it, "a poem is a contribution to a conversation, not a completion of it" and "[m]etaphor, imagery and form can open for a reader a spacious environment to develop ideas and practice." The poems and literary quotes I have included in the write-up are thus organically "selected" in relation to the chapters they precede. But exactly because poems are incomplete, open for interpretation, and ambiguous – both as they stand alone and in juxtaposition with the academic writing – the ways they are experienced by a reader remain uncertain: "So, rather than a monotone of persuasive argumentation, poetry allows for shades and tones of doubt and uncertainty" (Ramsey, 2011: 24). Poetic writing thus offer a way to operate with, and give room for, ambiguity and multiplicity in the write-up of academic research, which aligns well with a spatial approach.

The way I have turned to poems further accentuates that theorizing indeed is an ongoing creative process, involving negotiations with material outside academic discourses, and that the experiences and worldviews of others are prone to make one reflect on one's own situation. When studying or reading about processes and practices of people's everyday lives – i.e., organizing and transformations – the use of poetry can provide glimpses of a common "being-human-ness." Similar to the montage, the use of poems is thus also a means to provide space for the reader and his or her imagination. Pink (2009: 39) writes that imagination is foundational to the social processes of "everyday place-making" – what I term "negotiations of space" – and therefore also to processes of research, the creation and theorizing of ethnographies: "Imagination is, of course, not simply about the future – it might concern imagining a past, another person's experiences of the past or even of the present as it merges with the immediate past" (Pink, 2009: 40).

Although the context of women in urban poverty aiming to transform their lives is likely considerably different than that of anyone reading this monograph, my ambition with the montage and poems has been to enable the reader's imagining of, and feeling with, "another person's experiences" as I attempt to make sense of the empirical material. It might lead way to

recognizing ourselves in each other, or in that effort to understand and imagine others to create worlds of "betweenness" (Hastrup, 1995; Massey, 2005). In the opening montage of the thesis, I pointed to the everyday odysseys of living gender and living together. I have argued throughout the thesis that transformation happens through negotiating and becoming together with others in and through spaces of everyday life – which includes the written, like poems and ethnographic texts. Rich (2017: 350) coins perfectly the potentiality of poetry in the excerpt below titled "Does poetry play a role in social change?", which in my reading echoes a spatial understanding:

> Yes, where poetry is liberative language,
> connecting the fragments within us,
> connecting us to others like and unlike ourselves,
> replenishing our desire.
> It's potentially catalytic speech because it's more than speech:
> it is associative, metaphoric, dialectical, visual, musical;
> in poetry words can say more than they mean and mean more than they say.
> In a time of frontal assaults both on language and on
> human solidarity, poetry can remind us of all we are in
> danger of losing – disturb us, embolden us out of resignation.

**Playing with the writing style to bring spatiality to the pages**

The creativity of writing styles and presentation of ethnography serves to bring more of the liveliness of the world onto the page, enabling the reader to have a different experience of the ethnographic material (Pink, 2009). A part of the different modes of writing concerns the tense of the wording (past or present, or a mixture) used to write up ethnography (Hastrup, 1995). However, the usages of different writing styles are more than simply means to communicate with the reader; they are part of theorizing (Beyes & Steyaert, 2012). I have used a mix of write-up styles in order to convey theoretical insights, concerning process and space, deriving from within the empirical material and my fieldwork experiences. As Beyes (2006: 255) puts it, "Dealing with a variety of sources, exploring possible openings through connections between different forms of knowledge as well as evading a fixed disciplinary vessel calls for an open, essayistic form of writing."

In Chapter Two, I highlighted how Crapanzano (1980: xiii) perceived theory as emergent from ethnographic encounters as "a response to the encounter and to the burden that encounter imposes on the psyche of the investigator." From a spatial and sensory perspective, the pressure of encounters in the field stems from how to make sense of and assemble onto paper this living, breathing, exhilarating, heartbreaking, constantly unfolding mess. It can seem like an oxymoron and unsettling experience to put "unfolding and animated" life onto paper, But experimenting

with different writing styles, attending to multiple accounts, and juxtaposing diverse kinds of ethnographic material can assist to render the studied "life" onto paper; it enacts space (Beyes & Steyaert, 2012).. Research findings are thus not merely conveyed through the specific words of the text, but also through distinctive modes of writing and their interplay with poems, photos, tables, sketches, and other illustrations. Theorizing and writing up the monograph are intrinsically interwoven processes through the performativity of writing and the specific putting-together-ness of material.

In writing ethnography the juxtapositions of different material and accounts can be assembled so as to accentuate connections, but those connections will always be partial and continuously unfolding (Hastrup, 1995; Strathern, 2004). There is no complete, full view to be achieved (or represented), but instead a co-temporality of interconnected "stories-so-far" (Massey, 2005; Steyaert et al., 2012). As I see it, the aim of the ethnographer is therefore to point to the relevant accounts and how they hang together. I have argued for a view of social transformation that is multiple, in the sense that it can only be understood as emergent lived experience of social transformation. It is not to be "found" somewhere specific as a pre-given entity. This is also why it is difficult to "capture," because it takes place in and through being practiced. The theorizing and write-up concerned with understanding social transformation processually must therefore, in my view, be attentive to the multiplicity of practices of social transformation while acknowledging that such practices are "more than one – but less than many" (Mol, 2002: 55).

The purpose of ethnography is thus to recognize these partial, non-linear but co-implicated connections related to the research focus, and to look across the many spoken and unspoken encounters in the field to form an understanding not given by any one encounter (Hastrup, 1995; Law, 2004; Strathern, 2004): "Such connections are real, yet they are also theoretical in that they are constructed in theories that are but sentences" (Hastrup, 1995: 181). An implication of a spatial approach for writing of ethnography is that the processes of theorizing is like assembling a "living map" or cartographic constellation of these fragments of words and images concerned with processes of everyday relations and practices (Massey, 2005; Steyaert, 2012).

*Sensing and conveying the "more-than" of spatiality through a montage*

In Chapter One I briefly discussed why I had opened the thesis with a montage from the field and why I had specifically chosen to keep contextual references to the city of Delhi, Azad & Sakha, and the women out of the picture. I had sought to emphasize the processes and invite another kind of sensing of the text. I downplayed the context in the montage to juxtapose the thesis's otherwise rich contextual material, to make space for the reader, to bring to the forefront the processes rather

than the contextual facts, to (maybe) enable reflexivity and some self-recognition, and to pause for a moment on any presumptions one might have on the topic of gender and poverty in India. A montage is a method of deliberate juxtaposition with the purpose of emphasizing multiplicity, complexity, and the simultaneity of coexisting trajectories (Massey, 2005), and an apt way of conveying spatiality on paper (Steyaert et al., 2012).

When Mol and Law (2002: 8) urge researchers "to think and write in topological ways" in order to comprehend the multiplicity innate to social life, I propose that using a montage and experimenting with making the writing momentarily context-vague are such means. Something additional or "more-than" can be conveyed in the juxtaposition between individual accounts in a montage, and is produced experientially in the contrasts between accounts. This allows for other and more sensory means of engagement, which can exceed that which is being read. For similar reasons, the prologue is narrated in a tone that deviates slightly from standard academic language even though it is built on empirical material and secondary data used in the thesis. This is also a subtle juxtaposition. As a writer in the genre of ethnography, I am inspired by Strathern's (2004: 15) view on the craft when she poetically reflects, "Writing or reading ethnography is an adventure that leaves one where one began, but perceiving one's location differently because of the adventure took place." As a researcher and writer I can certainly recognize this process Strathern describes, but can only hope that my work is such that the reader might recognize it too.

*Letting the life history of a research participant give life and entry to the context*

The usages of personal life histories or autobiographical narratives of research participants are widely used ethnographic methods.[98] This type of material gazes toward the past rather than to the here and now of everyday practices, permitting the person to articulate and situate him- or herself within a narrative of their life trajectory (Arnold & Blackburn, 2004; Crapanzano, 1980). The underlying rationale for using this type of material is, again, the importance of a multiplicity of ontologies for a spatial approach. In my interviews topics predominantly centered on current events, with occasional references to how things might have been done earlier, but asking into the women's backgrounds, the taxi driver Inika provided a lengthy autobiographical narrative of her life history. This information could have been discarded as being not directly relevant for

[98] In the introduction to their edited volume of essays, *Telling Lives in India – Biography, Autobiography, and Life History*, Arnold and Blackburn (2004: 5) write, "[L]ife histories enable us to render more intelligible precisely the complex forces at work in modern societies and to reflect further, and from more solid foundations, on many of the major themes that dominate the subcontinent – gender, modernity, colonialism and nationalism, religion, social change, family and kinship, and interrelationship between self and society. […] life histories reveal insights not just into the experiences and attitudes of the individuals directly concerned, but also of the wider society, or social segment, of which they are a part."

the write-up, it could have served solely to inform my understanding and ability to ask questions in the field, or it could have been "coded" apart into pieces, but I decided to include it as the scaffolding of Chapter Three because it provided a sense of the everyday spatial politics of Inika's life. It offers a way to become acquainted with her "most fundamental assumptions about the nature of reality" as Crapanzano (1980: 7) puts it:

> The life history and the autobiography, all writings for that matter, are essentially self-constructive; they are moments, fixed in time by the word, in the dialectical process of self-creation. (Crapanzano, 1980: 9)

An epistemological concern could be how to consider ethnographic material in the form of a research participant's autobiographical recollections. Drawing on Crapanzano's (1980) insightful considerations of the use of life history accounts, the ethnographer can never know if the events described truly took place. Are they "real" events or made up – exaggerated as a form of fairytale, or somewhere in between? What is "the real"? Traditionally, history has been considered as a matter of fact, objective, and opposed to storytelling or fairytales, which are deemed imaginary. Crapanzano (1980) disputes any sharp distinction between the idea of accurate history and fairytale, the real and the imaginary. Rather, he argues that any account, whether or not we call it history, is premised on a tension between desire and "reality":

> Tuhami's tale objectifies, then, the tension between a desire we have yet to understand and a reality we can know no more of than the psychoanalyst can know of the reality of his patients purport to describe. His tale carries implicitly, if not explicitly, the Moroccan values. (Crapanzano, 1980: 7)

The point he makes, which has informed my use of Inika's life history in Chapter Three, is that including a life history – regardless of whether the incidents can be verified – offers an insight into contemporary norms, practices, and belief systems of the narrator, which are part of their everyday spatial politics (Arnold & Blackburn, 2004; Crapanzano, 1980). As the tale of Tuhami provides insights to Moroccan values, Inika's personal account both implicitly and explicitly exposes Indian cultural values, e.g., perceptions of the roles of men and women in society, patriarchal family structures, terms of arranging and living within a marriage, occurrences of violence, economic reasoning, and practices around health, education, mobility, etc. Inika's narrative and the underlying perceptions it reveals are of course constructed within a specific context. Presenting her life story alongside research conducted within a similar context and on comparable topics offers a productive interrelation between two types of materials. They substantiate, nuance, and

further supplement each other.

What is interesting about this material is not its factual accuracy, but rather the way Inika chose to share her memories of the past in our encounters. I am not suggesting that she is lying or that her account is fictional, but merely acknowledging the diffuse edges between "the real" and "the imaginary" of such accounts relying on memories of the past. They can, nevertheless, provide valuable knowledge of contextual Indian socio-political practices. Because social transformation as negotiations of everyday politics, despite taking place in present spatio-temporal moments, is also influenced by the past, this provides another argument against excluding material that provides information about research participants' experiences and memories of the past. People's life histories thus facilitate an understanding of their present and their imaginings of the future. An implication of a spatial approach is therefore to recognize the interconnectedness of past, present, and future.

Additionally, including life histories that reveal underlying assumptions about the nature of reality can serve as a means to allow a multiplicity of ontologies. Inika, for instance, mentions the use of curses and black magic in explaining the sudden deaths of her brothers, and she speaks of fate as formative to the events and unfolding of her life. These views, embedded in practices, are ontologically different than prevailing Western thought – something that Crapanzano (1980) has also noted. He makes a suggestion, which I consider incredibly potent for a spatial approach, to bear in mind when approaching ethnographic work that spans across diverging sites, cultures, or trajectories:

> I am not suggesting here that the Westerner's scientific explanations and Tuhami's symbolic interpretive explanations are equally satisfying. That is for the reader to decide on the basis of criteria he finds acceptable. […] I am simply asking the reader to abandon for the moment his assumptions about reality and his ground of explanation as he reads through the following pages. That way he will share, I hope, some of the anguished puzzlement I felt, and presumably Tuhami felt, as we tried to make sense of each other. (Crapanzano, 1980: 23)

Finally, using personal life histories enables another level of intimacy in the text and to the people whose everyday lives have been under study. Life histories offer accounts that are a "more 'emotionally infused' facet of the interviews" essential to research sensory dimensions of social life, because "stories are rich tapestries of facts, embellishments and folklore that allow emotional undercurrents to bubble up to the surface" (Warren, 2008: 569). In a way, Inika invited us a bit further "inside" her life by sharing her story, and there is both value and relevance to this type of exchange: her life story resonates with the life stories of other women in the study, and her narrative provides a backdrop for the other ethnographic material and interview accounts.

*Enabling greater intimacy through journaling of research participants*

The arguments I have made for using life history narratives when working spatially can also be used in favor of having research participants journal about their everyday lives (i.e., voluntary self-narratives). Although journal writing is usually more about the here and now and not the past, it serves a similar purpose as life histories – it allows research participants to articulate their worlds and the underlying ontologies within which they make sense of their experiences. Unlike interviews, the journal method allows for written accounts made at a time other than during direct research encounters. Hence, there is a possibility for personal reflections and intimacy in the words, even though journaling cannot be seen as devoid of pressures, expectations, hesitations, and the social transactions of the research encounters. Furthermore, there is an element of surprise and uncertainty with this method, making it well suited for a spatial methodology, because in the absence of questions, research participants are freer in what they choose to communicate. This can lead to unexpected accounts and insights, as in my case. From a spatial methodological perspective, this method can be a way in which to invite – and even stumble upon – ambiguities in the research that otherwise might not have been noticed or shared, all depending on what the research participant chooses to write.

In Chapter Eight, I included one journal entry written by a trainee, and as I explained in Chapter Two, I only managed to get one entry. Writing was not a common means of expression for the women; self-journaling was therefore something "foreign," and quite plausibly I did not explain the idea well enough. Although the way I went about it could be considered unsuccessful, the one entry I did receive provided valuable insights into why the trainee suddenly disappeared from Azad's program, and into a way of thinking and reasoning – on paper – ingrained in patriarchal politics. In my opinion, it gave unique access to see the given spatial politics conveyed through another type of material. What she wrote was surprising and profoundly unsettling, and it has influenced my theorizing of social transformation. Reading her entry was upsetting due to the specific content and humbling because it gave more intimately access to her personal matters, struggles, and vulnerabilities.

I therefore included her journal entry, even though it was the only piece of that sort of ethnographic material I had. In keeping with Henare et al. (2007: 8, original emphasis), who emphasize that in doing ethnography, "[t]he question then becomes not just how human phenomena may be illuminated […] but rather how the phenomena in question may themselves offer illumination" and that "the ways in which people go about their lives may *unsettle* familiar assumptions," I believe that this self-journal entry did just that, particularly concerning the struggles and ambiguities of social transformation. Working with this method can further a spatial

approach during fieldwork research processes, write-up, and theorizing, as personalized journal entries – like life histories – can provide insights that can unsettle the researcher's (and reader's) assumptions and bring more everyday life matters and emotions to the pages.

**Writing from within the field**

A strong empirical, contextual, and temporal focus underlies the arguments I have made thus far. Behind the composition of methodologies and methods I have used, there is an incentive to attempt to illuminate the research phenomenon in question using the spatial constellations under study (Henare et al., 2007). This is the theorizing in the contact zone I discussed in Chapter Two, which has been a premise of my analytical foundation. One methodological implication of a spatial approach is to write from within the field, including to "think and write in topological ways," as Mol and Law (2002: 8) put it, in order "to make sense of multiplicity."

Theorizing and writing from within the field implies letting contextual, situated, and embodied knowledges and ontologies illuminate the phenomenon. This means that theory cannot be deductively pursued or "applied to" the empirical, but must instead be in conversation with it. In this light, I wrote the five empirical analytical chapters without weaving theoretical constructs explicitly into them. There were thus no theoretical citations and only a few references to academic literature in these chapters. Instead, I concluded each chapter with a section where I explicated and discussed the theoretical insights associated with the empirical findings. In terms of theorizing process, each of these sections are unquestionably implicated in each other's becoming. Refraining from direct discussions of theory within the empirical presentations was an attempt to keep interpretations at a more empirical level and allow for the reader to experience the material as it unfolded, perhaps arriving at some theoretical reflections themselves, before I provided my theoretical interpretations. Mol (2002) has experimented with a similar distinction in the write-up in her book *The Body Mutiple,* in which she dedicates one half of each page to the empirical accounts (above) and the theoretical discussion (below).

The idea of writing from within the field is also concerned with sensitivity to multiplicity, i.e., finding ways to work with and write up the "more than one – but less than many" (Mol, 2002: 55) within the spatial constellations of one's research inquiry. The methods discussed in this chapter are attempts to bring spatial multiplicity into the written text and abstain from reducing complexities to linear, clean overviews and smooth schemes (Mol & Law, 2002). There are several methodological implications herein. Pertaining to the research design, attention to multiplicity of space concerns choices like the selection of research participants, the diversity of sites and situations for observation, the mixture of ethnographic methods – e.g., including more sensory-

focused methods like sketching, participant journaling, photos, or "respondent-led photography" (Warren, 2008: 568) – and also following odd, minor, or contradictory stories. Of analytical implication are, for instance, being sensitive to multiple ontologies; noticing patterns but also their inconsistencies; and including the sensory dimensions of space as analytical lenses to make sense of the empirical material. Lastly a methodological implication, as mentioned, is to deploy different types of ethnographic material and methods of presenting ethnography. The examples I have demonstrated in the thesis are: montage, fieldnote sketches, use of poems, life history material, interview citations, fieldnote vignettes written in the present tense, the visible presence of the writer (the "I" of the ethnographic encounters), photos illustrations, and a research participant journal account – all of which, I argue, can be considered topological ways of making sense of the ethnographic exploration and writing it up in an iterative process of theorizing (Mol & Law, 2002).

**Providing "more-than-text" experiences through visuals and sketches from the field**

Working with photos is another apt method for bringing spatiality into theorizing and write-up. The images can be taken by the researcher or by the research participants, also termed autophotography or "respondent-led photography" (Warren, 2008: 568), which subsequently can be used in interviews, i.e., "photo-interviews" (Steyaert et al., 2012).[99] Photos are particularly useful in attempting to convey (for the reader) the "more-than-human, more-than-textual, multisensual worlds" (Lorimer, 2005: 83) that I as the researcher and writer experienced. Just like fieldnote writing and sketches, "thinking with" photos assists the process of theorizing. As mentioned in Chapter Two, I worked with photos and short videos to reawaken my own sensory memory, but also to bring more of the contextualized, sensory aspects of the spaces of my research onto the pages. Just like I argued that poems are openings or spaces in their own right, photos produce something similar: they invite whomever perceives them into "a more-than-textual" engagement. Even though pictures only provide small "bits" of spatio-temporal events and may attempt to direct one's attention in a particular way, photos mean that "[t]he viewer must grasp at her or his own experiences and memories and engage her or his imagination in trying to reach the sensory experiences of others" (Pink, 2009: 100).

Conducting research through a spatial approach can be strengthened through working with photos. Just like poems, photos capture aspects of the world differently than if had they been described in words. They complement the other's methods and material, in particular when focusing on the materiality, geography, and flesh of the spatial constitutions. The temporality

[99] In Chapter Two, I discussed how I attempted to use his methods, albeit unsuccessfully.

of space means that we can never revisit the exact same spatio-temporal moment – the reader cannot witness the fieldwork encounters – but photos offer a means of bringing the *experience of* the spaces closer to the reader. A photo speaks to the senses in a different way than words, for example by its colors, the many details of the setting, and the facial expressions and body postures of the people in action in a given photo (Warren, 2008). Photos can provide valuable insights into the everyday lives of the research participants. Take, for instance, the photos of Azad's trainees during self-defense training with the Delhi police (Chapter Five). I experienced being there, and the experience of a room full of young women from poor backgrounds, wearing colorful clothing, punching the air and yelling aloud, was quite powerful. To convey this sense to the reader, I found it productive to use the photo along with my written account of the fieldnotes. The photos are visually illustrative of the given practices I wrote about, but also "more-than" due to the spatiality of the moment, which it captures, inviting the reader to "see for themselves," and – if convincing – enrolling the reader into my text. However, as Steyaert et al. (2012: 36) rightly note, "we should remember that though pictures might seem to provide easy access and even a shortcut to reality, they are always constructed, framed and part of a specific context." Visualizations such as photos – but also drawings and fieldnote sketches – cannot be considered as expressions or re-presentations of reality; rather, they contribute to constructing a "negotiated reality," i.e., a particular storyline or assemblage (Latham & McCormack, 2009):

> [T]he key point is, however, that an image is never just a representational snapshot; nor is it a material thing reducible to brute object-ness. Rather, images can be understood as resonant blocks of space-time: they have duration, even if they appear still. Furthermore, the force of images is not just representational. Images are also blocks of sensation with an affective intensity: they make sense not just because we take time to figure out what they signify, but also because their pre-signifying affective materiality is felt in bodies. (Latham & McCormack, 2009: 2)

The "force of images" that Latham and McCormack (2009) address here is essential when using photos in ethnographic research, and conceiving of them as "blocks of sensation with an affective intensity" emphasizes how images convey and produce "more-than" – and differently than – words. Including photography and the use of images as a method is not foreign to modern anthropology (e.g., Ingold, 2011; Strathern, 2004; Taussig, 2011) or human geography (Latham & McCormack, 2009; Pink, 2009), and only more recently has found ground in research on organizational studies propelled by an increasing turn to aesthetics, materiality, and affect in organizational life and processes of organizing (Beyes & Steyaert, 2012; Steyaert et al., 2012; Warren, 2008).




*Sakha Cahuffeur Meet 2014, south Delhi.*
When photographer and photographed are the same.

Steyaert et al. (2012: 35) assert, "In order to analyze organization 'as it happens,' we argue that organizational researchers have not sufficiently explored the potential of visual methods to document and enact the processual and heterogeneous dimensions of organizing." As a method for research processes and the write-up of findings, turning to visual material is uncommon in social entrepreneurship research, but as Steyaert et al. (2012) also identify, it offers a potential to further the research agenda exactly because it encompasses "processual and heterogeneous dimensions of organizing," i.e., dimensions of space. Images help to "make visible a multiplicity – in terms of quantity and quality, discontinuity and continuity, interiority and exteriority – of voices, perspectives, processes, spaces, times, and sites" (Steyaert et al., 2012: 38).

Although images are typically used in research for documentation and illustration, what researchers like Beyes & Steyaert (2012), Latham and McCormack (2009), Pink (2009), Steyaert et al. (2012), Taussig (2011), and Warren (2008) all suggest is that images *do* more than document or present; they are themselves performative and productive parts in an assemblage of material. Analyzing visual research of Bruno Latour on the city of Paris, Steyaert et al. (2012: 40) point to the evident paradox of photography, in this case regarding taking photos in Paris: "Paris cannot be reduced to one image but […] every image of Paris conceals as much of the city as it reveals." Consider all that which is not in the photos, all that which was just "outside" the frame that second, all that which happened right after, all the places that were never seen, and all the photos that were taken but never used, whether it concerns Paris or social transformation for women of poor backgrounds in Delhi. Using images thus, "forms a humble attempt to see a little bit of many things in their connection and localization" (Steyaert et al., 2012: 40). These choices and the way the final material is assembled must therefore be seen as performative, and furthermore as a means to work with multiplicity, which is essential to a spatial approach.

I can by no means say I have explored the potency of images, nor in the form of fieldnote sketches and drawings of which Taussig (2011) inspiringly writes and illustrates. However rudimentary the sketches in my notebooks have been, as addressed in Chapter One, I nevertheless experienced myself to be thinking "with" the drawing, which notably participated in the processes of theorizing. As Taussig (2011: 7) explains of a simplistic drawing he made of a scene he observed at a freeway tunnel in Colombia:

> My picture of the people by the freeway is drawn from the flow of life. What I see is real, not a picture. Later on I draw it so it becomes an image, but something strange occurs in this transition. This is surely an old story, the travail of transition as we oscillate from one realm to the other.

Taussig (2011) demonstrates what I would consider a spatial methodology in ethnographic fieldwork, which the field of social entrepreneurship research – myself included – could benefit from exploring and engaging seriously with. He makes an interesting distinction between using photography and fieldnote drawings: "photography is a *taking*, the drawing is a *making*" (Taussig, 2011: 21, original emphasis). Photography is a stopping of time and relies on "technical junk between you and the world," whereas drawing in a notebook, Taussig argues is in organic coherence with writing in a book, a natural continuation of theorizing on the same pages, which encompasses time rather than taking snapshots (Taussig, 2011: 21). Drawing is more intimate to the drawn, perhaps because it more intensely touches and involves living sensing bodies: "[C]oincidentally there is set up a mimetic relation between you, especially that part of you called your body, with whatever it is that is being rendered into an image, and also with the resulting image itself […]" (Taussig, 2011: 23).

**Limitations and challenges of a spatial approach**

In this first part of the chapter, I sought to point out some methodological implications of a spatial approach, what it means to do ethnography spatially, and why it is important for researching the social of social entrepreneurship. I provided suggestions that could be useful in grasping the multiplicity and complexity of social transformation. In order to unpack "the social", the spatial lens I propose embraces the contextual, temporal, relational, emotional, corporeal (sensory), and material dimensions simultaneously, as introduced in Chapter One (illustrated in Figure 9.1):

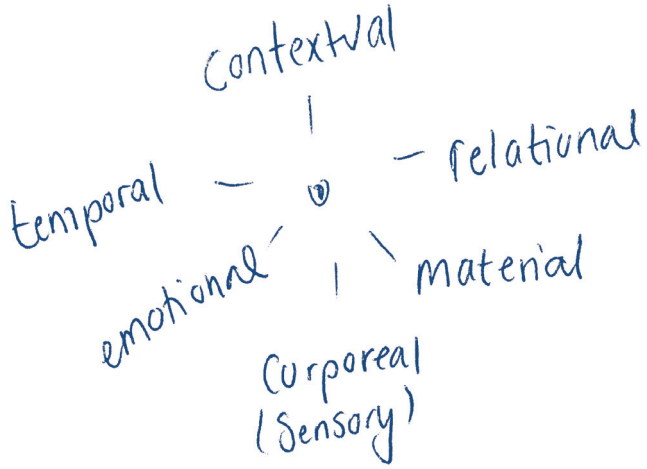



Figure 9.1. SIX KEY ELEMENTS OF SPACE

There are limitations to this approach, of course: conducting the research through a single case was a deliberate methodological choice in order to explore social transformation in a deeply contextualized manner, attentive to rich nuances and developments over time with the same people, which limits theorizing beyond the specific context. My research is thus but a piece in a larger mosaic of theorizing the social of social entrepreneurship that seeks to "describe and narrate contextualized concepts for this interaction-in-the-making" (Steyaert and Hjorth, 2006:9).
Yet even within one case, there are methodological and analytical decisions that set the possibilities and limits of the particular gaze. The analytical choice of considering six spatial characteristics limits the depth of analysis. Each element could be the topic of a PhD thesis. Had I focused on just one of the dimensions, this would in my view risk not capturing the multiplicities of space and, hence, how the processes of social transformations were being facilitated, experienced, and practiced. Thus, for each element much remains to be explored and further nuanced, e.g. each element could be unpacked through different extant bodies of literature.

Furthermore, the thesis shifts the gaze away from entrepreneurial practices to where transformation takes place. Accordingly, I have been less interested in the founder as an entrepreneurial figure or the organization as a unit of analysis, which can be considered as a limitation, because this precludes comparisons of Azad & Sakha and other similar organizations. This has, however, not been my intention. Others might, however, find it relevant to compare Azad & Sakha's endeavors in relation to the work of other social enterprises in India – and elsewhere – as a way to gain further insights into how social transformation is facilitated.

In trying to "pin space down" on paper, I have for instance used poetry, fieldnote sketches, and photos in my theorizing. With these methods, I have attempted to demonstrate sensitivity to the performative and "a willingness to experiment with different ways of presenting a research text" (Steyaert et al., 2012: 45). Poetry, montages, and visual material, like metaphors, are suggestive, with the risk of perhaps being overly suggestive. They are open to interpretation and yet they might also impose a certain sense or atmosphere that "captures" the reader view, exactly because these methods are "more" affective than most academic texts. Visual methods are, furthermore, embedded in relational dynamics of the encounters, might be influenced by unspoken expectations (Crapanzano, 1980; Steyaert et al., 2012). Warren (2008: 572) speaks of how the visual culture of the photographer influences how photos are taken – such as what is being focused on, what is included or not in a given shot, its composition and angles. Therefore, they reveal as much as they conceal (Steyaert et al., 2012). What happened outside the shot – or the second afterward – is always unknown. Using photos in writing up ethnographic research must therefore be seen "a humble attempt to see a little bit of many things" (Steyaert et al., 2012: 40), and should furthermore

be seen in conversation with the other research material. The same argument applies for the use of material like self-journaling and life histories; although they provide a more intimate "feel" for the issues and research participants, they are still written snapshots and present particular views in a given moment. As with the images, such material must be grounded in the fieldwork experience and augmented in relation to the vast amount of other ethnographic material. However, each of these methods leaves much yet to be explored, and I cannot claim to have embraced their more comprehensive potential, i.e. their full "force of images" (Latham & McCormack, 2009: 2). For social entrepreneurship research seeking new ways to grasp the liveliness, mess, and flesh of social transformation, they are "tools" that warrant further exploration.

None of the material derived from different methods stands alone, but participates in the process of theorizing and forms a compilation of the nodal points in my ethnographic accounts of "the more than one – but less than many" ways in which social transformation is facilitated, experienced, and practiced (Mol, 2002). This process of iterative theorizing within the field, strengthened through spending many months in the field in constant and unfolding interactions with research participants and the context that allow for checking and substantiating the emerging findings in and with the field.

In Crapanzano's (1980) words, the outcome of research is a negotiated reality, and even though more-than-representational research has moved "from questions of knowledge and epistemology toward those of ontology" (Henare et al., 2007: 8), there are still "better or worse ways of addressing this reality" (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2011: 4). A strong ethnographic account, in my view, does not show multiplicity in the sense of pluralism or random, unconnected accounts, but through the process of theorizing discerns between accounts within the empirical material to assemble a living map of "the more than one" relevant fragments pertaining to the research inquiry. The strength of ethnographic research comes from putting fragments together and suggesting connections amongst them to provide an understanding not derived from any one person, observation, or spatial encounter but that which has emerged through the process of fieldwork and theorizing. Yet this understanding is recognizable to the field and premised on the research objective that "the phenomena in question may themselves offer illumination" to the research inquiry and relevant field of literature (Henare et al., 2007: 8). The strength of the research thus lies in its usefulness in serving as "a partner for critical dialogue" (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2011: 14). In this sense, the strength of more-than-representational research can be recognized in its ability "for genuinely novel concepts to be produced out of the ethnographic encounter" and how this knowledge of "the ways in which people go about their lives may unsettle familiar assumptions" within the field of research (Henare et al., 2007: 8, original emphasis).

On that note, I will now turn to the second part of the chapter to discuss the findings of the research and their implications for the discourse on the social of social entrepreneurship. It is my hope that my take on social transformation through this empirically rich case might unsettle some of the familiar assumptions concerning social entrepreneurship.

# Part II
# Toward theorizing social transformation

This section discusses the empirical theorizing of social transformation in order to conclude what this study implies for our understanding of the social of social entrepreneurship and the discourse on entrepreneurship as social change. The discussions, albeit entwined, are structured in four parts: 1) a spatial frame to think social transformation; 2) how is social transformation facilitated; 3) how is social transformation experienced and practiced; and 4) what does this tell us about the dynamics of social transformation (see Figure 9.2):

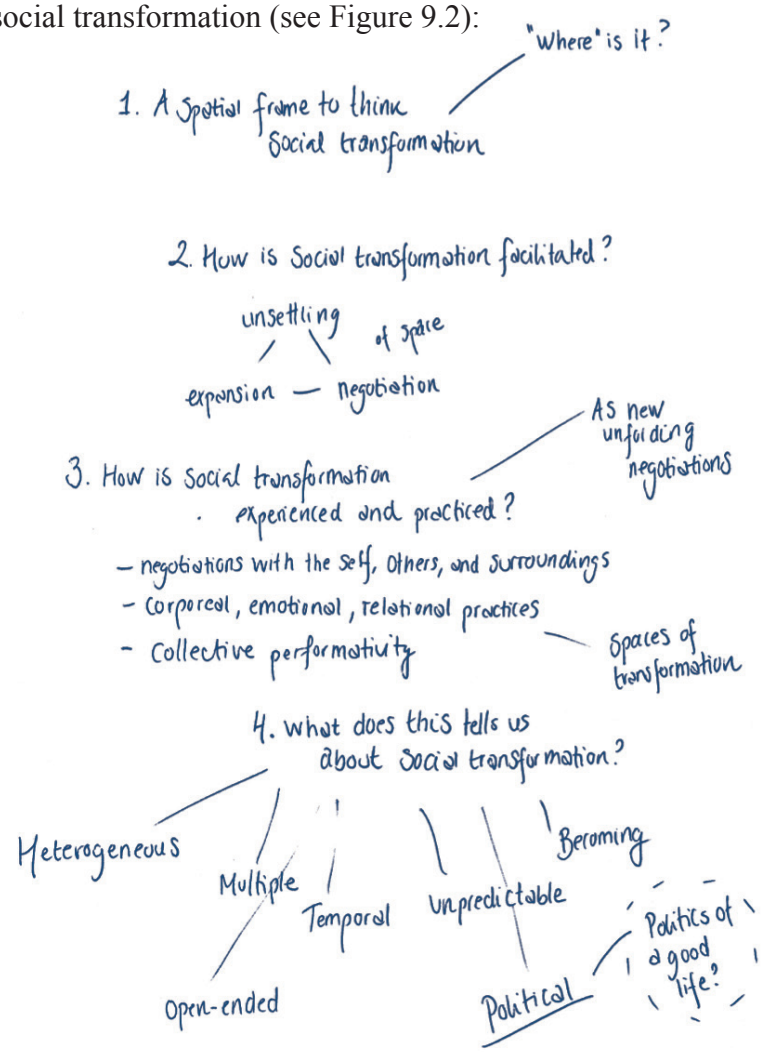



Figure 9.2. STRUCTURE OF THE DISCUSSION IN PART II

## A spatial frame for thinking social transformation: "Where is it?"

The central inquiry of the thesis has concerned how social entrepreneurial organizing might facilitate social transformation and how such processes are experienced and practiced. Before expanding upon this, I wish to address how a spatial framework offers a suggestion for where it can be "seen." "Seeing" is put in quotation marks because, as my research shows, from the processual perspective, social transformation is not something to be "found somewhere." Rather, it exists only in and through the experiencing and practicing of it. The question is, then, which conceptual terms can we use to capture such processes? Through the empirical exploration of how social transformation is facilitated, experienced, and practiced (or not), I have identified six central characteristics of these processes, which offer a framework for analyzing their becoming. This is what I consider – in keeping with Steyaert (2012) – a "living map." In the following sections, I discuss what entails working with this living map and the implications it can have for our understanding of the social in social entrepreneurship.

**Social transformation as a matter of everyday politics**

When Steyaert and Katz (2004: 182) assert that "[b]y relating entrepreneurship and society, a crucial question to be addressed is in what space we inscribe entrepreneurship", an answer provided by this thesis is: within the space of everyday politics. I have demonstrated and argued that social transformation takes place within the sphere of the everyday – it is imagined, embodied, practiced, and contested in the relational matters of everyday life. The processes involved are within the relational constitutions of everyday spaces – i.e., the politics – which inform how people interrelate, behave, think, and ascribe meaning to things and places. Social transformation is about negotiating spaces of everyday politics, as seen in the title of this thesis. Process scholars within organization and entrepreneurship studies who advocate alternative ways of perceiving entrepreneurial organizing have also brought attention to the centrality of the everyday (e.g, Beyes & Steyaert, 2012; Steyaert & Van Looy, 2010). For example, Steyaert and Van Looy (2010) write of "the *everydayness* of organizing" (2010: 3, original emphasis) as an apt "way to understand, conceive, and study processes of organization" (2010: 1). I strongly concur, and can now add that the same can be said for processes of social transformation. Mainstream social entrepreneurship literature has not, to my knowledge, situated the analytical focus and the understanding of social transformation explicitly within the "everydayness" of organizing.

Relations are a central part of everyday life and spatial politics, and negotiations of relations are imbued in dynamics of power and dependencies. In this light, social transformation can

also be a concern of emancipation (Calás et al., 2009; Goss et al., 2011; Rindova et al., 2009; Verduijn et al., 2014). This implies that for people involved in a social entrepreneurial program, social transformation is about gaining greater autonomy, freedom, and rights to living better lives (Butler, 2015). The case of Azad & Sakha demonstrates the transformative potential when what they termed the "personal, social, and economic" dimensions of changes in a woman's life are not treated separately. These different dimensions of everyday life profoundly implicate and reinforce each other. The women were negotiating very concrete daily matters as they transpired within their personal relations, for example, they were postponing forthcoming arranged marriages; experimenting with the ways they spoke and dressed, corporeally contesting traditional norms (e.g., veiling practices); and claiming greater mobility and freedom to go out of their homes unaccompanied. Becoming drivers did far more than provide the women with livelihood and economic advancements. It tinkered with the relational foundations of the women's lives. Why Azad & Sakha's approach to social entrepreneurial organizing makes it a "life matter" can also be explained by the program's lengthy structure and extensive, participatory methods. Combining "economic, social and personal" logics of transformation, the program is more invasive in the women's everyday lives than traditional livelihood programs, which often only encompass afternoon activities or are limited to smaller projects.

As Jacobs points out there is a significant difference between a social enterprise operating from a dominant project logic, centered on managerial, causal, and short-term rationales, or an empowerment logic focused on long-term community development. When he identifies "the problem of projects" (Jacobs, 2006: 250) it is because the project logic dominates the field of social entrepreneurship, but depending on the social causes it might not be a favorable way to operate for the people involved. Jacobs (2006: 251) warns against "overshadowing the ideas of participation and empowerment with the idea of what can be achieved as set out in the project plan." As the case of Azad & Sakha demonstrates instigating emancipatory processes demands a more holistic (personal, social, economic), engaged and long-term approach. Their methods deviate from the "projectification tendency" in the field precisely because they are premised on an understanding that transformative processes concern a multitude of relational practices in the politics of people's everyday lives. This clearly has implications for practice, and is why researchers like Jacobs (2006), Dey (2006), Dey and Steyaert (2010), Hjorth (2013), Ruebottom (2018), and Serje (2017) are concerned about the projectification, managerialization,, and thus depoliticization of social entrepreneurship initiatives.

Lastly, there is also a methodological and analytical explanation to why everyday life became central to theorizing social transformation. The locus of my study was the women's

lived experiences of being involved in the program. My attention was not directly on the social entrepreneur or organization, but on the processes of organizing – the processes induced by the interactions between the women and the program. I thus departed from analytical approaches that give primacy to the organization or the entrepreneur, and/or consider social entrepreneurship as a project or "as a calculable undertaking" (Dey, 2006: 130). In taking up the invitation to engage more with the social of social entrepreneurship, I argue that "the social" is about everyday life matters of the people seeking to transform aspects of their lives through a social entrepreneurial program. I therefore advocate for an approach that brings people, bodies, emotions, sensory experiences, tensions, complexities, and the multiplicity of relations in all this into research on social transformation. This invokes the politics of the everyday and avoids the depoliticization pitfall identified by critical scholars on entrepreneurship as social change (e.g., Dey, 2006; Hjorth, 2013; Horn, 2018; Jacobs, 2006; Steyaert & Katz, 2004; Ruebottom, 2018).

**Social transformation as situated, embodied, and practiced**

Having established that social transformation concerns matters of everyday life and in the context of my research takes place within the spaces that constitute the women's lives, the next step is to address how this production of space is contextual, temporal, relational, emotional, corporeal (sensory), and materially embedded. These characteristics cannot be treated separately in a meaningful manner; hence, I will weave them together in arguing that social transformation is situated, embodied, and practiced.

That social transformation is situated means that these processes are profoundly contextual and materially embedded in a specific spatial-temporal order of things. This is the character of *place,* which affects people and influences their motivations to engage in a social entrepreneurial program, for instance. Space cannot be comprehended without attending to place, "not as points or areas on maps, but as integrations of space and time; as *spatio-temporal events*" (Massey, 2005: 130, original emphasis). Negotiations of spatial politics as unfolding spatio-temporal events occur in localities – the specificity of place – and acknowledging temporality inscribes social transformation in a process of becoming.

Further, in keeping with Pink (2009: 23), who argues for ethnographic theorizing "can engage with both the phenomenology of place and the politics of space," the sensory, emotional, and corporeal dimensions of experiencing place – as a part of practicing place – must necessarily be included in a notion of social transformation. Social transformation is embodied as it is experienced in and between bodies with senses, thoughts, and emotions, and practiced in relation to a sense of self, others, and the surrounding world. Following from the above point regarding

the everydayness of social transformation, my research has shown that these processes are situated within relations. I therefore suggest a process view of social transformation as corporeal and emotional negotiations of relational spaces with the aim of seeking to alter spatial politics. Grounded in a relational ontology, this spatial approach resonates with critical research on entrepreneurship as social change and with performative- and practice-oriented researchers in anthropology, ethnographic methodology, and human geography that emphasize the importance of affect, emotions, sensory knowledge, and corporeal experiences (see Chapter Two).

According to Steyaert and Van Looy (2010: 4), relational practices are "negotiated interaction patterns and forms" that "constitute the building blocks of participative organizing processes." Carlile et al. (2013: 2) emphasize that practices are carried out in material contexts and write that "to know and to learn involves the material world (including the human body) as much as it involves the mind." Similarly, Beyes and Steyaert (2012: 53), proponents of a spatial perspective, write that it "directs the organizational scholar towards embodied affects and encounters generated in the here-and-now and assembled from the manifold (im)materialities." This is indeed what my study has shown. The importance of encounters, including the affect of space, has received a central place within my theorizing. The attention to affect, Seyfert (2012: 29, original emphasis) writes, concerns "the situational nature of affect in conceptualizing affects, as emerging at the moment when bodies meet, *affecting* the bodies involved in the encounter, and *marking the transformation/s* of the bodies."

During my fieldwork, I was initially surprised by the extent to which emotions were widely expressed in the interviews and, thus, central within my empirical material. This seems evident now, given my understanding of social transformation as a life matter, often risky and sometimes dangerous, but also exciting and fraught with hope. It suggests that social transformation cannot be seen exempt from emotions. Contesting and transformation spatial politics for women in Delhi's poor communities, the "rethinking of spatial identities" initiated processes that were "emotionally fraught and liable to touch on deep feelings and desires not always immediately associated with 'the political'" (Massey, 2004: 2). My study has demonstrated the innate entwinement of the relational, the emotional, the embodied, and the political in and through practices, as different constitutions within the production of space, or of "spatial identities," as Massey calls it. In my view, the "missing social" and the depoliticization of social entrepreneurship – identified by Barinaga (2012), Dey (2006), Dey and Steyaert (2010), Hjorth and Bjerke (2006), Jacobs (2006), and Serje (2017), for example – also concerns a disregard for social entrepreneurship's emotional, sensory, and corporeal dimensions. Thus far, relatively little attention has been given to the emotional aspects of social entrepreneurship (Steyaert, 2007), but my research shows the

importance of considering the myriad diverging emotions that constitute the everyday lives of the people enacting transformative practices.

## Facilitating social transformation, instigating negotiations

Given this understanding of where processes of social transformation can be "seen," a central question then becomes: How is it facilitated? It is not enough to say that social transformation is an inherent characteristic of space. If social transformation is considered as *new* social processes that question and potentially alter the status quo of spatial politics, then how do they come about? Hence, within given spatio-temporal events social transformation must be considered an altering in practices of a certain kind, like contesting specific discriminatory gendered practices. In the empirical analysis, I have argued for a view of social transformation as negotiations with one's self, others, and surroundings, and I have introduced the notions of unsettling of space and expansion of space as means to understand how new processes and practices came about for poor women in Azad & Sakha's program. These two aspects of social entrepreneurial organizing, and how they lead to new negotiations of spatial politics, are the focus of this section.

**Unsettling the givenness**

Drawing in Massey's (2005: 151) thoughts on "unsettling the givenness" as a disruptive element of space, I have developed it further based on my empirical findings into a notion of unsettling the givenness of space or spatial politics. I have argued that a form of "an unsettling" was necessary to prompt new kinds of negotiations. Unsettlings occurred through the women's interactions within the spatial constellations created by Azad & Sakha, i.e., as spatial affects. The commonality of these unsettlings is that they led to some sort of questioning of the status quo. The women and their families in the poor communities were, for example, unsettled by the juxtaposition of gendered perspectives (discursively, visually, physically, performatively) conveyed by Azad's mobilizers and through the proposition of female drivers by an organization that appeared legitimate and whose offer was economically attractive. In a context where women are believed incapable of learning driving and where it is considered highly inappropriate, Azad & Sakha demonstrated that women of poor communities were already working as professional drivers; debunking common gender perceptions. In offering this opportunity to new women produced spatial unsettlings. This resonated with how Azad & Sakha saw their work – as disruptive within the poor communities, in the transport industry, and in the city of Delhi. Their presence and mobilization activities in the communities forced negotiations upon the people they encountered. The spatial constellations

affected the people traversing them, just like the poor women who visited Azad & Sakha's office were affected by its appearance. This implies that the affect of space is involved in unsettling the givenness, because, as Lilja (2017: 346) notes, "affects are created and exist within the encounter, while emotions constitute the subjective reaction arising from affects."

These subjective responses, for example in stirring strong emotions, doubts, opposition and hopes I have termed "negotiations." Within families, even considering driving was unsettling, because this forced family members to (re)consider the traditional, predominant gender norms that female driving contested. This made families and community members contemplate and debate what women could and should do. Evidently, Azad & Sakha's organizing of community visits was not random, but deliberately assembled and orchestrated with the specific purpose of contesting (certain) gendered perceptions and practices in these communities. Furthermore, the unsettlings became increasingly embodied, intimate, and pervasive when women started in the Women on Wheels program, due to the stark ruptures in their traditional way of life. The experience of unsettling was thus more pronounced when "thinking" moved into "doings," when considering driving shifted to becoming a driver. Learning new practical skills, gaining new capabilities, having perceptions challenged, meeting new kinds of people, visiting new places, acquiring new material items (including money), and generally having radically new experiences of life significantly catalyzed negotiations and facilitated social transformation.

According to Massey (2005) the inherent chaos within the "throwntogetherness" of space enables "the new," whether preplanned or by happenstance. Following from this, it is interesting to consider how spatiality can be planned to set off "the new." Thinking entrepreneurship as a force of societal transformation therefore, as Beyes (2009: 95) argues, "[i]mplies a revolt against fixed and stable hierarchies, creative destruction (and re-construction) of hitherto taken-for-granted rules and the active creation of new ones, altering the lives of those involved." For a social enterprise the task is, then, to create spatial constellations that have the potential to catalyze the desired affect, facilitating the negotiations they are after. This is what Azad & Sakha is doing, and why social entrepreneurial organizing can be seen as deliberate orchestrations of spatial constellations aiming to stir specific kinds of negotiations. It is however important to emphasize the *potential* to catalyze, because the way people experience spatial encounters – the affect of space – is far from uniform, and cannot be presumed (Seyfert, 2012).

*Unsettlings through expansion of space*

My study shows that unsettlings do not merely come from experiences of provocation (like a radical idea), clashes, or opposition; they can also derive from moments of hope and inspiration,

encouragement and support, encountering others, seeing other ways of living, gaining new capabilities, doing things one had thought were close to impossible, visiting new places and in doing so "reaching the unreachable" – facets I have associated with the expansion of space. The geographical and social expansion of space had great implications for the women's processes of social transformation. For example, their close proximity to clients' everyday lives and the meeting of different worlds between drivers and their clients produced new negotiations of the women's sense of self and identities in these relations. Focusing on driving as a livelihood option had radical impact also because driving significantly increased the women's mobility, confidence, and sense of autonomy (Sheller, 2004; Stradling, 2002). From new mobile practices, like driving and commuting alone, the women began encountering people from other social groups, seeing new places, and engaging in city life in entirely new ways. Koefoed et al. (2017: 10) emphasize that mobility practices and spatial encounters in the city are essential to transformation because, as they write, "place, identity, and subjectivity are produced on the move." This not only concerns the negotiation of power relations, but also the affect and experiences of the "social qualities of these spaces" (Koefoed et al., 2017: 10).

Unsettling cannot therefore be reduced to "negative" or "positive" experiences, but instead appears in moments that shake up the taken for granted and opens up new possibilities (in thoughts, emotions, and practices). This resonates with Simonsen's (2013: 20) notion of "moments of disorientation," which can be destabilizing, but also productive moments leading to new aspirations and actions. Recall, for example, the account of Seema, a taxi driver in her 40s, who visited the airport for the first time, which produced an increasing sense of possibilities and confidence. She did not "do" something new, but she went somewhere new. The expansion of space led to a shift in her experience of herself in the world. This was a common occurrence for many of the drivers. The drivers' experience of "doing the impossible" and "reaching the unreachable" breaks barriers both of tradition and in their self-perceptions.

This also explains why the empirical accounts were fraught with women's expressions of joy, excitement, pride, confidence, and a sense of being able to do more. Unsettling occurs when something within the given spatial politics, the status quo, is "challenged" and opened for scrutiny, thus invoking negotiations – space becomes more open and affords the possibility of doing things differently. Based on my empirical study, I propose that the notion of unsettling (of the givenness of space), as a movement which sets off new social processes, and the expansion of space were paramount to facilitate unsettlings in this case. These are relevant notions to consider in theorizing social transformation, and warrant further research. In this case, I saw unsettling occurring from acquiring: new corporeal knowledge and capabilities; useful practical knowledge

related to shifting power positions; perspectives that challenge dominant beliefs; empowering, corporeally practiced knowledge, encounters with others of diverse (and higher) social groups; access to places (and experiences) that were previously inaccessible; economic security (and superiority in one's household and community); and standing out in doing something radically unique.

## Experiencing and practicing social transformation

I have argued that unsettlings produced negotiations for the women with themselves, others, and their surroundings necessary to initiate social transformation, this section expands upon how these processes are experienced and practiced, and what this implies for social entrepreneurship. I have emphasized the importance of the corporeal, emotional, and relational aspects of how social transformation comes about in spatial relations. Practices grounded in perceptions of what women could and should do manifested themselves in gendered norms and expectations of the women's community and family members but also in how the women behaved and perceived themselves. These practices were grounded in thoughts, emotions, and bodies that produced and maintained spatial politics, and it follows, then, that altering such practices necessitates changes in these relational practices of thoughts, emotions, and bodies. Moments where practices became altered, I have termed spaces of transformation, and in the following I discuss what these empirical findings implies of conceptualizing social transformation.

**Social transformation as multiple spaces of transformation**

The negotiations of spatial politics catalyzed by the women's interaction in the Women on Wheels program can never be reduced to a specific place or moment. Social transformation takes place *in* being experienced and practiced, and is therefore not a specific predefined outcome. Wherever a woman went and whatever she was doing, there existed an *opportunity* to act differently (toward greater equality) in the way she thought and behaved in corporeal, emotional, and relational practices. In this sense, Azad & Sakha as a social enterprise can instigate the potentiality and the increasing likelihood that the women will enact the new gendered practices. Because each spatio-temporal situation is situated and unique, it is impossible to predict the outcome of social entrepreneurial organizing; the trajectory depends on the individual women and the spatial constitutions of their everyday lives. At times, the women's experiences appeared similar, but at other times "similar" spatio-temporal practices produced different experiences – even for the same woman.

Consider, for example, if a woman elbowed or threatened a man harassing her on the bus, but then another day in a "similar" situation she did not react. Had her practices been transformed or not? I am making the picture a bit simple here, but I do so to stress that transforming spatial politics is an ongoing *fiddling* with everyday practices. Because the experiences and practices of social transformation are situated, relational experimentations and micro-negotiations, they are not a matter of either/or (i.e., either the woman has changed her practices or she has not). In situations where a woman changes her practice, such as elbowing a man on the bus – productive moments (Simonsen, 2013) – I consider it a space of transformation. The empirical accounts of the thesis show that social transformation cannot be reduced to any singular understanding or moment. In this regard, social transformation is multiple, to paraphrase Mol (2002). And, like Mol (2002: 55), I emphasize that lived experiences of social transformation amongst the trainees and drivers are "more than one – but less than many" because of the certain direction in their new ways of negotiating and redoing spatial politics.

Although Azad & Sakha can attempt to organize in a certain manner to create conditions for (the potential of) a desired outcome, the responses hereto by the women are situational. As an organization they produce spaces where social transformation becomes a possibility; and an increasing one. As Beyes (2009: 95) writes, on what he terms urban entrepreneurship, which indeed is a fitting term for a social enterprise centered on female driving, that it "implies the art of producing spaces of transformation."

When spaces of transformation becomes multiple, as this case has demonstrated, over time – with time –in terms of social transformation, it can be expected that certain new practices increasingly replace old ones and that women who remain in the program have an *increasing tendency* to enact the new practices. Since there were visible commonalities within the women's experiences in the program, as well as in the changes they made within their everyday relations, this suggests that the negotiations facilitated by the social enterprise were not random, but had a certain direction. This became increasingly manifest when women started working as drivers, especially the longer they were part of the organization, which speaks to the influence of accumulated experience and increasing confidence over time. Of course, my study provides just a glimpse into these transformative processes, and many aspects of the nature of social transformation remain unknown, particular in a wider time perspective. A truly longitudinal study following participants of social entrepreneurial endeavors, like the women of my study, over decades would shed light on such processes seen across wider space-time movements.

These spaces of transformation, where a woman altered her practices in a manner that appeared more favorable to her, were concurrently experienced and practiced corporeally, emotionally,

and relationally, *and* they were materially embedded. Materiality had a significant influence in the negotiation and changing of practices. This was demonstrated, for instance, when women threatened to use their phones to call the police to report men harassing them, or in the usage of the Sakha uniform. Similarly, when women started working as drivers, the wages they brought home vastly increased their household income. This materiality of money – and what money can provide – boosted their confidence, and typically gave women and their families an increased status. But their increased income did more: in terms of power relations and dependencies in the family, it often granted the women a new and strengthened position. Several women expressed feeling more daring in voicing their opinions or confronting harassment – or even violence – in the household, because of the reassurance they felt from knowing that in theory, they could afford to leave and live on their own (which a few women did indeed do).

This sensation and knowledge – just like knowing self-defense and police phone numbers – worked as mental leverage and verbal rebuttals in negotiating with others for what the women considered more livable lives. Going against the grain of existing (oppressive patriarchal) norms, Azad & Sakha's proposition and program were contentious, implicating continuous micro-negotiations amongst the women in their families and communities. This shows that social transformation was practiced relationally, not as a one-time negotiation but as an ongoing one. What is being transformed then, – potentially – is the constitution of relations through successive spaces of transformation. Social transformation as the spaces of transformation in the women's everyday lives therefore cannot help but touch upon relational dynamics of power, dependencies, and status within the intimate familial and community spaces. However, even though the women's confidence and agency increased, they were at the same time often more vulnerable to increasing harassment, threats, and acts of violence. This caused many women to leave the program, which points to the spatial ambiguities of social transformation in this context.

**Social transformation as ambiguous, risky, and dangerous**

Typically, women becoming and being drivers encountered the most severe opposition from within their households or from close community members. These women inevitably tinkered with household power dynamics, which was not always a welcome change. Some family members' opposition was grounded in concern for the family's reputation. Pursuing a radical livelihood opportunity, with the increased mobility and autonomy this entailed, made the women stand out and caused them to become a topic of debate in their communities. In some situations, this made them more vulnerable and exposed to discriminatory practices, while in others it empowered them as pioneers and change agents, granting them increased status. There were many contradictory

movements occurring simultaneously.

Adding to the complexity, many of the women had already experienced gendered harassment and violence in their lives prior to enrolment in the program. The question of whether contesting gendered practices in the communities made gendered harassment and violence more or less pronounced for a given woman is thus extremely situational and not a clear-cut distinction. What is sure, however, is that extant discriminatory practices on caste, class, and gender were brought to the surface from the women's pursuit of driving as a livelihood.

*Negotiations of and with power*

In my view, the emphasis given to power in processes of (social) entrepreneurship is an important contribution of the emancipatory discourse in entrepreneurship as social change. A central premise in this literature is that "entrepreneurial projects as emancipatory efforts" (Rindova et al., 2009: 478), which seek to disturb the status quo for individuals or a group of people, potentially change the subordinated individuals' positions and perhaps the social order that produces them (e.g., Calás et al, 2009; Goss et al., 2011; Rindova et al., 2009; Verduijn et al., 2014). The emancipation perspective stresses that organizing for social transformation is ultimately about changing power asymmetries. In this light, social entrepreneurship is about creating greater equality and freedom, and is therefore imbued with politics. Albeit in different ways, Massey (2005), Simonsen (2007; 2013), and Butler (2015) all address embodied spatial negotiations with power, particularly concerning issues of discrimination and "othering" – whether premised on gender, caste, class, sexuality, race, poverty, or other segregating categorizations that inform unequal social organizing – that produce differential treatment, access to rights, and opportunities between groups of people. Butler (2015) is particularly concerned with struggles for better lives and the oppositions thereto. Following her terminology, in the act of becoming drivers, the poor women challenge "prevailing norms of recognition" (Butler, 2015: 31). To be a female driver in Delhi is to refuse to adhere with the gender norms traditionally assigned to women, which in turn places them "at the limits of recognizability", which can be both "terrible and exhilarating," because "the very viability of one's life is called into question" but at the same time, one might be "at the threshold of developing the terms that allow us to live" (Butler, 2015: 40). Butler's terminology depicts the tightrope of social transformation in my study. In struggling within relations of power the women did at times appear to experience existing at a limit. In a rare few cases the limit were close to that of life and death, but more commonly it concerned a balance between greater freedom (emancipation) and greater oppression. Oftentimes, spatio-temporal moment of confronting spatial politics could fall out to each side for the women. The opportunity for more freedom, and the risk of more strongly

enforced restrictions co-existed; like a double-edged sword. The notion of spatial ambiguities is thus important for understanding social transformation in my case.

Butler makes another important point that nuances the notion of emancipation when she writes that "sometimes it is not a question of first having power and then being able to act; sometimes it is a question of acting, and in the acting, laying claim to the power one requires" (Butler, 2015: 58). This, to Butler, is gender performativity, and I find it offers a way to perceive how the practices of poor women becoming drivers in Delhi can be seen as emancipatory from a gendered perspective. In keeping with Goss et al.'s (2011: 223) argument that researchers need to explore and understand "the interactions that, over time, give rise to the agentive capacities of both the freedom-seeker and the constrainer," I find that for the poor women, the role of a driver and the performativity of it – exactly because of the non-traditional and provocative social associations of female drivers in Delhi – is what offers them "agentive capacities" and challenges "both the freedom-seeker and the constrainers," which also occurs when the constraints are within their own emotional spatiality. The performativity of being a female driver is ultimately a relational and collective negotiation. Following Butler's argument, the female drivers are acting, and in acting, they are laying claim to more power. The disruptiveness of becoming and being a female driver "spills over" and provides a space for the women to negotiate their subjectivities and gendered identities beyond the role of a driver.

*The ambiguities of relational ties*

That said, the abovementioned dichotomy between "the freedom-seeker and the constrainers" might be too rigid. Although power, struggles, and risks are certainly a part of negotiating spatial politics, my research shows that household and community spatial politics are not just based in power asymmetries. They also involve ties of kinship, encouragement, emotional dependencies, love, care, and concern for each other. This makes spatial politics complex and ambiguous, and led me to argue in the empirical chapters that tensions also arise from contradictory emotions and movements "within" the women and in their close relationships. Someone whom we could consider "a constrainer" in a woman's life is most likely more than that. This was aptly demonstrated in the case of the trainee Adya, who, in a serious falling-out with her brother, was experiencing myriad conflicting emotions and thoughts. There was a clear tension between her traditional practices and what she had learned in the Women on Wheels program. In this situation of facing a dispute with a patriarchal brother, who had thrown her out of their household but who was her closest kin ("like a father") and someone she loved, Adya chose to follow her brother's demands. In using the terms "freedom-seeker and the constrainers" there is a risk of overlooking or neglecting the wider range

of relational dynamics at play.

If we scrutinize the dichotomy of "the freedom-seeker and the constrainers" further, perhaps "the constrainers" are themselves products of constraints and constrained within a larger sphere of spatial politics, again making the relational web more complex. And what about situations in which "the freedom-seeker" becomes his or her own constrainer due to the complexities of embedded relations and practices carried out over time? These sorts of questions, emanating from my empirical findings, would be interesting to pursue further in research concerning entrepreneurial potentials for catalyzing emancipatory processes.

I addressed in Chapter One how Calás et al. (2009: 564) consider the potentials within entrepreneurship for initiating emancipatory processes as a "complex set of social activities and processes unlikely to ever become whole." The authors here problematize the notion of emancipation and open it up for greater ambiguity: recognizing that there is no "whole" against which to perceive it challenges how the notion of emancipation can facilitate our understanding of these complex processes. It implies that emancipation must be contextual, situational, and relative, and perhaps functions more as an ideology or aspiration. I have used Butler's (2015) terminology of living more "livable lives" as analogous to my understanding of emancipation. Butler (2015: 40) writes that freedom in relation to gender "can follow from a demand to live out the corporeal sense of gender, and so to escape from a restriction that does not allow that way of being to live freely in the world."

Although the women have broken many gender norms and enacted new practices – corporeally, emotionally, and relationally – they cannot be said to be free to enact their sense of gender; but they (some, not all) are relatively freer. There are still many restrictions inhibiting them from "living freely in the world." As drivers, the women are not freely enacting their "corporeal sense of gender" of their own choosing, and there are still enactments of caste and class boundaries, even though these boundaries are unsettled to different degrees by the prospect and actions of female drivers. The emancipatory processes are therefore relative – a movement toward greater equality from a position of great inequality along many dimensions. Such processes are "unlikely to ever become whole" (Calás et al., 2009) because the unequal distribution of resources, rights, and opportunities to live safely and freely on equal terms in the world is based on enduring negotiations and power struggles that sometimes call for dramatic shifts of power, often leaving others in suddenly weakened positions. Following Butler this is due to social failures of organizing. Even though emancipatory processes are unlikely to become "whole" because space can never be tamed, social entrepreneurial organizing can still make meaningful contributions toward addressing these social failures, and organize with a vision of greater societal equality.

*The ambiguities of organizing social transformation "for" others*

Extending the above discussion, there is an apparent paradox within the emancipatory perspective, but which might suggest a "role" for social entrepreneurship in this regard. Rindova et al. (2009: 478) touch upon this issue when they raise the important question of what "causes individuals to seek to disrupt the status quo and change their position in the social order in which they are embedded." The discussion of emancipation often assumes that the "oppressed" or "freedom-seekers" are waiting for or seeking greater "freedom." But recall Leung et al.'s (2014: 424) study of middle-class Japanese housewives' engagement in a social entrepreneurial program: they found that the women "were not even aware of the need for change," but became aware of the constraining power of their traditional role by participating in the program. They joined the social enterprise to socialize, but by gaining mobility and new skills and meeting new kinds of people, the Japanese women began to question their identities and the roles they held in their households. Aspects of my study have similarity to the findings in Leung et al.'s (2014) study: many of the poor women did not appear to question the gendered norms and practices in their household initially. This only happened over time. The visions and motivations of a social enterprise might thus be *different* than those of the people joining their program, but with time (and provided the people stay in the program), it is possible for the social entrepreneurial organizing to prompt people in suppressed positions to question the status quo. This could, of course, raise some ethical issues regarding who decides upon the "development goals" and the ways in which social entrepreneurial organizing takes place.

This caution relates to Ruebottom's (2018) assertion that disadvantaged people, whose situation social enterprises seek to improve, should be treated as participants and involved in shaping the organizing efforts. Yet, as the case presented by Leung et al. (2014) demonstrates, sometimes people need to change their environment and engage with people who think and live differently (i.e. who are more free to live livable lives) in order to consider their own position. As with the women from Delhi's poor communities, the challenge lies in the fact that these unsettlings and expansions of space are not likely to take place because of restrictive gendered practices, which is exactly what the social enterprise seeks to disrupt by deciding on the organizing activities "for" the women. The women would most probably never have decided themselves to become drivers had Azad & Sakha not developed these methods. Azad & Sakha perceived the transformative potential of becoming a driver, as opposed to pursuing more traditional livelihood offers like making handicrafts, as far greater for the women (despite, and perhaps exactly because, the women would not choose it on their own), and they developed their methods accordingly. These methods engaged and enabled the women to break gendered norms by doing something

they would not otherwise have done.

One the one side, some women joined the program predominantly to escape the threshold of poverty, but found themselves within a far larger and emotionally fraught negotiation of gender (and caste) rights and practices. In such cases, they did not set out to change the social order, to transform spatial politics. Yet in considering becoming, training to be, and working as drivers, they did just that. This was perhaps more than they asked for and can explain why many women left the program. Azad & Sakha have recently started a program for men in the same households and communities as the women drivers in order to build a more supportive environment for the women's transformations, precisely because the possibilities of social transformation profoundly depends on the everyday spatial relations.

On the other side, many women did not seem to consider the constraints in their everyday lives or in their own perceptions of things before they experienced new environments, heard novel ideas, and learned new practices. In Chapters One and Three I quoted an experienced driver, Inika: "Had I had the thinking I have now back then, I would have gone out [of the house] 15 years ago and done other things; our thinking was so wrong." This nails the dilemma that institutional researchers term the "paradox of embedded agency" (Holm, 1995), or as Steyaert (2012: 162) asks, "[H]ow do we re-invent the assemblages that already produce us?" This indeed is a part of the ambiguity of social entrepreneurship. How do we question what we have already defined and taken for granted? My study suggests that an "out-of-the-ordinary" unsettling was necessary to prompt negotiations and change everyday spatial politics.

This also points to the importance of social entrepreneurial organizing in facilitating processes to re-invent spatial politics toward more favorable conditions for people in disadvantaged positions. Sometimes others are needed to open up that potential – Inika was glad that someone had come into her community and presented another way for her to go about her life. Perhaps this is why it makes sense to speak about becoming together in relation to social transformation and to highlight that issues like poverty and inequalities are collectively produced, and thus ought to be collective concerns. However, as addressed earlier, there is always a danger of falling prey to grand narratives in development thinking, of being "experts" on others' lives, and therefore of robbing space of its heterogeneity and people of their different futures (Massey, 2005).

**Social transformation as collective performativity**

Butler's (2015) theorizing on collective performativity provides an interesting perspective on how social entrepreneurial organizing relates to and potentially affects the society within which it operates. She conceptualizes the relations between the individual, ideas of social categories, and

"the many" not as distinct levels, but as contemporaneous and mutually constitutive. Accordingly, social enterprises cannot be considered a closed system situated in, but separate from, the larger sphere of society. Furthermore, considering the individual and the collective as mutually constitutive, so that each "I" brings along a "we," means that freedom must be understood as being exercised with others. To Butler, the uneven distribution of rights and precarity in society is visible then some social groups are more exposed to violence than others and, e.g., cannot take the ability to walk down the street safely for granted. Should a person appear to be exercising this right alone – walking safely in public - Butler argues that this is only possible because others support this right – "others" here being the silent masses that do not attack the individual. Her point is that qualities like freedom, safety, and rights – or any other aspects of spatial politics – are always negotiated collectively. Therefore, in the production of space, the "I" and the "we" always coexist. In what follows I discuss how this related to my case and what it means for social transformation.

*Social transformation in the reciprocal construction of the "I" and the "we"*

Extending Butler's example of being able to walk safely down the street as a privilege that is unequally distributed to my case: whenever the women in the program venture out and take the risk of claiming their right to appear, they are at the same time doing so as "a social category" (i.e., as women, poor, low-caste, etc.). By taking up driving, living gender differently, the women were often harassed. These moments of harassment were premised in others' view of the women, discriminating along those social categorizations and what was contextually deemed appropriate behavior for them. "[I]f there is an attack, it targets the individual and the social category at once" (Butler, 2015: 51). Although each attack was a profoundly subjective experience, it was also an attack on their social categories. Conversely, it follows that when the women challenge existing expectations and norms for particular social categories by doing things not previously done, they are not only transforming their own lives but also enacting another becoming for these social categories. This can help explain why pioneers or role models can have quite an impact within a specific social group, and how "I's" might just pave the way for the "we."

The first concerns what I would term the "I" and the "we" of the same social categories. Linking this to my case, whenever the women in the program venture out and take the risk of claiming their right to appear, they are at the same time doing so as "a social category" (i.e., as women, poor, low-caste, etc.). The empirical analyses demonstrated, for instance, that many moments of harassment were premised in others' view of the women, discriminating along those social categorizations and what was contextually deemed appropriate behavior for them. The

women were often harassed or assaulted due to living gender differently by taking up driving. Each attack was a profoundly subjective experience, but can also be seen as an attack on their social categories. If instead considering situations of transformation – the spaces of transformation, and not just those of the attack – it follows that when the women are redoing specific practices concerning existing expectations and norms for social categories, they are transforming their own lives, but in doing so also enacting another becoming for these social categories. This can help explain why pioneers or role models can have quite an impact within a specific social group, and how "I's" might just pave the way for the "we."

A second implication is that the "I" and "we" of social groups exist within the larger collective "we" of society. This is coherent with a spatial approach where social groups are not seen as pre-given or solid entities, but considered as continuously constructed relationally as partial connections (Law, 2004; Massey, 2005; Mol, 2002; Strathern, 2004). The women's negotiations must also be seen amidst this larger "we" and as occurring across and beyond social categories. This was illustrated, for example, in cases of client-driver relations where both "social categories" were on new, confusing, and even uncomfortable ground that involved a loosening of the traditional categorizations – the female drivers were "neither maids nor males." These new relations and negotiations of roles extensively confused caste, class, and gendered boundaries existing in the larger collective "we" of society. Suddenly (some) existing rules no longer appeared to adhere. Some clients (and drivers) went along with this opening of categories and reconsidered their traditional practices, whereas others continued to fit the female drivers into similar categorizations, e.g., as household maids.

If these female drivers can be considered pioneers by training to become and being drivers, challenging existing social categories and performing them in new ways, then they are not just doing so individually, they are also doing so on behalf of their "social category." In redoing certain practices, they are also claiming different rights. In other words, the efforts of a single woman exceed her. But the argument goes further: Butler's (2015) work suggests that the manner in which the women are able to redo practices and claim "new" rights is dependent on whether others around them support those rights. Butler (2015: 218) speaks of "our reciprocal obligations to produce together conditions of livable life." This emphasizes the collective responsibility to create spatial politics where the freedom to live freely and well in the world is possible. The responsibility cannot just be placed on "the disadvantaged" or "oppressed" – this is not their struggle (although they do struggle). Rather, it is a collective struggle.

*The importance of corporeality in the collective performativity of social transformation*

Based on the argument that the "I" brings along a "we" in processes of social transformation, that transforming spatial politics takes place within relational negotiations, and that the ability to live better lives (i.e., freedom, emancipation) is collectively produced, the final point I wish to address is the collective performativity that occurs when people assemble and together exercise corporeal demands for the right to appear. Butler (2015) denotes instances when several bodies assemble as temporarily being bodies in alliance, to which she ascribes a collective or plural performativity. Although Butler's arguments derive from exploring situations where people assemble in forms of public demonstrations, riots, and protest, the analogy and her observations are quite cogent for forms of social entrepreneurial organizing such as Azad & Sakha's, the results of which are visible and unsettling in public spaces. Azad & Sakha's female drivers are breaking the field of appearance associated with traditional perceptions of what women can and should do.

People who demonstrate together in public squares are noticeable due to their numbers. The roughly 80 female Sakha drivers in Delhi are not large in number seen in relation to the size of the city, nor do they occupy any specific space, yet they stand out in different spaces across the city because of their appearance (uniforms, cars) and through the unconventional function they perform. Their collective performativity is not site-specific, but manifests itself through material artifacts and the women's movement across the city. When the client of a Sakha driver described the women drivers as "the blue kurta [tunic] brigade" (see Chapter Six), she described their collective performativity. The drivers noticed each other and have been noticed by others. They are not standing together, assembled like demonstrators, but driving "together," a web of cars with women in turquoise uniforms, an assemblage. Also, they are "exercising a plural and performative right to appear, one that asserts and instates the body in the midst of the political field" (Butler, 2015: 11). Their appearance in the city can, in Butler's terms, be seen as a critique of existing conventions, a making of corporeal claims and new kinds of public demands. Their acts of driving can be seen as "a public insistence on existing and mattering" (Butler, 2015: 37). The new practices they perform make the "field of norms break open" (Butler, 2015: 31).

It follows, then, that spatial bodies – bodies that come together in a recognizable collectivity – are also political; indeed a social productivity of entrepreneurship that might be considered as "public entrepreneurship" (Hjorth, 2013) or "urban entrepreneurship" (Beyes, 2009). This point has important implications for social entrepreneurship research that has, as Dey and Steyaert (2012: 93) describe, "mainly turned a blind eye to the political effects it creates and of which it is itself a part." It calls for attending to the political processes of attempting to make new corporeal claims. Discussing the notion of collective performativity in conjunction with social

entrepreneurship and perceiving spatial bodies as political contributes to the development of a "more dangerous" (Steyaert & Dey, 2010) approach to social entrepreneurship research.

*Affect and emotions in collective performativity*

There has been a turn toward affect and emotions within organization studies and human geography with a research agenda to defy the "tendency to write the body out of our accounts of organizational life" (Fotaki et al., 2017: 7). The body has also largely been written out of social entrepreneurship literature but, as the empirical findings have shown, the ability of bodies to be affected and affect, and the emotions it produces, are central processes to catalyzing social transformation. I therefore wish to end the discussion on collective performativity and its relevance to a processual understanding of social transformation by noting the importance of affect and emotions as means to understand how and why, for instance, "the blue *kurta* brigade" might foster transformations beyond those experienced by the poor women. One of my findings is that affect is important for how we think social transformation, both when it comes to catalyzing and maintaining new practices.

Exploring the politics of social entrepreneurship as a politics of affect, or what Thrift (2004) denotes as a spatial politics of affect, warrants further research, but discussions on affect in studies of organization in conjunction with spatial theories is fruitful to facilitate this agenda (e.g., Beyes & Steyaert, 2012; Michels & Steyaert, 2017; Steyaert, 2012). "Cities may be seen as roiling maeltroms of affect," Thrift (2004: 57) writes, presenting affect as "a vital element of cities." I have shown how Azad & Sakha organized specifically to create affective spaces, and emphasized the affect of the encounters when the women of poor backgrounds "meet the city," but what about when others in the city meet the women? The intercorporeality of affect implies that the presence of female drivers in Delhi must in some ways affect others.

A central premise here is that the world around us, and in particular the bodies of others affect us. Intercorporeality is central to our experiences of being in the world. Simonsen (2013: 17) uses the notion of "emotional spatiality" to capture the affective and expressive space of emotions that this involves. The former denotes that the world around us affects us – we are in touch with and being touched by the world – and the latter refers to our reactions to and expressions of our emotional experiences. There can thus be drawn an analytical distinction between that which affects and makes a mark on us, and the responses it produces, but it is inter-corporeally or relationally produced. Fotaki et al. (2017: 4) describe the affect that arises when bodies encounter each other:

> It is what is evoked by bodily experiences as they pass from person to person, in a way that is contagious but remains unspoken. […] Hence, affect is a force that places people in a co-subjective circuit of feeling and sensation, rather than standing alone and independent.

My theorizing of unsettling and negotiations resonates with Fotaki et al.'s (2017:4) position that "affect presents us with the promise of a state of becoming that can potentially destabilize and unsettle us into new states of being." Even though the discussion of affect and emotions pertains to many aspects of my empirical material, I elaborate on it here in conjunction with considering the collective performativity of female drivers: this offers a way to situate "the blue kurta brigade" within the larger sphere of society.

The argument I wish to make is that seeing "the blue *kurta* brigade" affects whomever comes across them. Amongst drivers, clients, Azad & Sakha's staff, and others associated with their work (including myself as a researcher), it produced an emotional experience of belonging – not just to a group, but to a movement. The uniform and the women's actions produced a sense of collectivity, despite their evident differences. Lilja (2017: 347) argues that "emotions bind figures together, which then creates the effect of a collective – and this is the potential of affects to travel that makes emotions binding and draws us together, since they can be transferred from one agent to another." Although drivers, clients, and staff had different experiences of their engagements with Azad & Sakha, everyone I interviewed shared a similar sense of being part of something larger.

The "blue *kurta* brigade" must be assumed to affect people who unexpectedly come across the Sakha drivers. For some people, seeing a female driver was provocative and stirred aggressive emotions, illustrated in the drivers' accounts of how strangers yelled at them in public or how community residents disapproved of their work. The point I wish to make here is that the female drivers are noticed by others; people are affected by what they see. In unsettling the field of appearances, the brigade comes to influence spatial politics. However, assessing the extent of this lies beyond the scope of my research. What I can suggest is that it demonstrates "how different materialities affect the bodies, along with how the bodies, in some senses, produce or reproduce the character of that material context" (Lilja, 2017: 343). Spatial constitutions affect people; emotions are a response to this, and in some instances can be seen to "mediate the relationship between the individual and the collective" (Lilja, 2017: 345). Materiality, like that of the female drivers' uniforms and cars, is innate to the unsettling of givenness in Delhi's streets.

Similar to Butler's (2015) argument about the alliances between bodies, Lilja (2017: 343) makes another interesting argument: research that focuses on "emotions and matter (bodies, spaces, etc.)

can contribute to our knowledge of how resisting bodies signify more than any particular demands that they are making." Considering female drivers as "resisting bodies" – what Butler would consider a public critique and demand for certain rights – accentuates how an individual woman's efforts exceed her. Ahmed (2004: 117) also dissolves the dichotomies between individual and collective, as well as between "within" and "without," through the medium of spatially produced emotions:

> I argue that emotions play a crucial role in the "surfacing" of individual and collective bodies through the way in which emotions circulate between bodies and signs. Such an argument clearly challenges any assumption that emotions are a private matter, that they simply belong to individuals, or even that they come from within and then move outward toward others. It suggests that emotions are not simply "within" or "without" but that they create the very effect of the surfaces or boundaries of bodies and worlds.

Recall Sarita, one of Sakha's drivers, who became the first female public bus driver in Delhi. What affect does she have on others when driving a bus around the city? What happens when people day after day see her – a woman – behind the wheel of a bus on route across the city? She has been in the news across India and in the international news. The BBC did a small video portrait of her. In the interview, she shared how some passengers take her bus just to experience the novelty of having a female driver; some bring gifts and tokens of appreciation, and she receives fan letters, but others are hostile toward her, yelling at her when they see her driving the bus, poking her and speaking derogatively of her actions. Her presence as a female bus driver stirs emotions and reactions beyond the people taking the bus. Sarita's accomplishments, and those of the female Sakha drivers, are situated within the history and politics of Delhi and India, but their actions are also "making history" and must be seen in the context of a wider contemporary movement for freedom and gender equality, which includes the redoing of gender through nontraditional means.

No one who has seen Sarita behind the wheel of the bus can "un-see" it. Her presence as a bus driver has unsettled traditional beliefs regarding the field of appearance. Although not strictly comparable, Sarita's story has some semblance to the historically potent moment – and subsequent iconic photo[100] – when the seamstress and social activist Rosa Parks disobeyed American segregation laws and refused to give up her seat on a bus to a white passenger in 1955 (Wilson, 2005). Already involved in the civil rights movement in Alabama, United States, Parks became the "face" of it, as her case provided an opportunity to bring the racially discriminatory practices

[100] Due to copyright, I cannot display the iconic photo here, but I encourage the reader to look it up online and consider the story in juxtaposition with Sarita's case.

of public transport to court. The symbolic value of her act on the bus and the pictures capturing its time and place still speak to us today. The incident known as "the Montgomery bus boycott" has become a "narrative that constitutes our public memory" (Wilson, 2005: 300). I cannot predict what long-term affect Sarita and the growing number of female drivers in India will have, it is likely that it will exceed the individual women and perhaps transcend time and place. This is one way to consider social entrepreneurship for "the few" as a movement that makes a mark and potentially creates history for "the many" – that is, the potency of collective performativity.



*Photo published in Hindustan Times.*
Sarita, Delhi's first public bus driver[101]

## The dynamics of social transformation

The above discussions have considered terminologies that can be used to understand how social transformation takes place, how it facilitates new social processes, and how it is experienced and practiced within the everyday lives of people seeking to change their life circumstances. Against this backdrop, the final section explores what this tells us about social transformation as process, and leads me to conclude that processes of social transformation can be seen as heterogeneous and multiple; temporal, open-ended, and unpredictable; as becoming; and as political.

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[101] *Hindustan Times,* "Delhi Transport Corporation gets first woman bus driver", April 18, 2015.

**Social transformation as heterogeneous and multiple**

Massey's (2005: 11) call for a "spatialisation of social theory and political thinking" has inspired my study of social entrepreneurship. As Beyes (2009: 95) puts it: "It takes sites and spaces for entrepreneurship to come about, and sites and space may be constituted or altered through entrepreneurial activity."

According to Massey (2005: 11), spatialization necessitates "a fuller recognition of the simultaneous coexistence of others with their own trajectories and their own stories to tell." Concerned with discourses on globalization, Massey (2005: 5) argues that it "is not a description of the world as it is so much as an image in which the world is being made." She contends that the dominant discourse on the inevitability of globalization builds on a singular grand narrative based on Western ideals. It is a proposition that "turns geography into history, space into time" and has "social and political effects" (Massey, 2005: 5). It is a project – and "not a description of the world as it is" – which depicts countries like Mozambique, Nicaragua, or India as "behind," "backwards," "emerging," or at a "less developed" stage:

> We are not to imagine them as having their own trajectories, their own particular histories, and the potential for their own, perhaps different, futures. They are not recognized as coeval others. [...] That cosmology of "only one narrative" obliterates multiplicities, the contemporaneous heterogeneities of space. It reduces simultaneous coexistence to place in the historical queue. (Massey, 2005: 5)

Looking more closely at the context of Indian society, the dominant discourses on inequality, poverty, and development also depict people in poverty as lagging "behind" or as "less developed." Subsequently, all these people need to do is "catch-up" through (primarily) economic advancement. This renders coexisting multiplicities and spatial heterogeneity into an order of temporal development or series of successive "steps" on a ladder.

The Indian caste system does this explicitly by ordering people in a hierarchy of status and power. The lowest category is officially called "scheduled caste," but words such as "backwards" castes, "untouchables," and dalit ("oppressed/broken") are used interchangeably. It is a discursive, stigmatizing labeling that turns living or being into a single (hierarchical) temporal series of "ideal progressions." In this view, "temporality itself is not really open. The future is already foretold; inscribed into the story" (Massey, 2005: 68). Furthermore, the categorization of "the poor" becomes a conceptualization devoid of multiplicity – a homogenous group, consisting of people who are left out or "behind." They are not recognized as equal others; their histories are often either neglected or stereotyped. "The potential for their own, perhaps different, futures"

is obliterated, and people's identities have been taken hostage by their framing as "already, and forever, constituted" (Massey, 2005: 10).

Spatial politics in Delhi stigmatizes and categorizes millions of people as "the poor" – narrating them as a homogeneous group prone to criminality and lagging "behind" because they are not smart enough to partake in and profit from India's otherwise booming economy (Datta, 2016; Rao, 2010). Those held responsible for these developments are the poor people living under precarious circumstances, rather than the systems and policies producing poverty (as addressed in Chapter Two). According to Butler (2015) this "responsibilization" resides in the "neoliberal rationality demands self-sufficiency as a moral ideal, at the same time that neoliberal forms of power work to destroy the very possibility at an economic level," making the vocation impossible (Butler, 2015: 14-15). These critiques resonate with the literature on entrepreneurship as social change criticizing the marketization and depoliticization of the social in social entrepreneurship (e.g., Cho, 2006; Dey & Steyaert, 2010; Horn, 2018; Jacobs, 2006; Ruebottom, 2018; Steyaert & Katz, 2004). Acknowledging heterogeneity and multiplicity avoids simplifying the social and misplacing responsibility.

Furthermore, closer scrutiny of the neoliberal and economic rationales of the development discourse is relevant to advance within social entrepreneurship research. As Horn (2018: 232) notes: "The paradox of social entrepreneurship is that the reliance on neoliberal methods – that is, reliance on the market to resolve social issues – ignores the very cause of those issues is neoliberalism itself." Economic rationales dominate in many initiatives seeking to alleviate poverty, e.g. micro-finance and micro-entrepreneurship. Becoming an entrepreneur is considered a way out of poverty. While this might potentially be the case, it equally might not be; both scenarios are well documented (e.g., Calás et al., 2009; Verduijn et al., 2014). Viewed through the lens of a spatial approach, the economic rationales of self-entrepreneuring or micro-enterprising concern the politics of space (Steyaert & Katz, 2004).

Azad & Sakha's endeavors are based on what Ruebottom (2018) calls a "participatory approach" as the poor women are (to a large extent) considered "participants" and involved in a way that influenced the organization's methods. Azad & Sahka has shown a willingness to disregard its own assumptions and ideas about how the women wished to live and transform their lives, e.g. Azad & Sakha had initially been interested in micro-entrepreneurship, as it was a dominant idea in the field at that time, but when they discovered that the women did not want to become self-employed and instead wanted a stable job with a steady income, they changed this course of action. According to Ruebottom (2018: 198) people are to be considered and treated as "agents" not "recipients." There is a moral danger, she argues, if social enterprises

undemocratically enforce their methods on disadvantaged groups of people and are insensitive to local knowledge, resources, social practices, and kinship ties. In choosing to abandon its ideas about micro-entrepreneurship, Azad & Sahka adhered more to democratic, participatory methods and allowed local knowledge to change its assumptions and methods. This does not mean, however, that the participants are involved in all matters of the organization's operations. The balance between democratic and undemocratic methods and means of organizing is a constant ethical decision-making process for any social enterprise. Pushing this a bit, are disadvantaged people considered customers of the social enterprise's offerings, or are they regarded as citizens, contextual experts in their own right, whose disadvantaged positions are caused by differential societal organizing and not their lack of responsibility (Butler, 2015; Hjorth & Bjerke, 2006)? These fundamentally different perspectives are not merely conceptual and pertinent to academic discourses. They have direct implications for how social entrepreneurial organizing takes place in the field.

The "responsibilization" of the individual (Butler, 2015), depoliticization of the social (e.g., Dey, 2006; Steyaert & Dey, 2010), and a homogeneous view of "the poor" as "less developed or lagging behind" in the single queue of "advancement" (Massey, 2005) is an act of violence that ignores the heterogeneity and multiplicity of people's everyday lives.

**Social transformation as temporal, open-ended, and unpredictable**

There is another aspect of understanding social transformation as multiple: such processes are inherently temporal, open-ended, and unpredictable. In her research examining the experience and practices of patients being treated for atherosclerosis, Mol (2002) offers an intriguing and relevant perspective that can further the conceptualization of how processes of social transformation are experienced and practiced. A central argument Mol (2002) makes is that one cannot speak of what atherosclerosis is, but instead that it is experienced differently in different situations of practices. The illness comes into form in relational practices and cannot therefore be understood as outside practice. Furthermore, given the multiplicity and fluidity of relations and relational practices, the illness is not "one thing." The multiple experiences of the illness hang together and are not random or indefinite – they are "more than one – but less than many" (Mol 2002: 55). Similarly, Law (2004: 61, original emphasis) writes that "if we attend to practices we tend to discover multiplicity," but – crucially – "we discover multiplicity, but not pluralism." Law (2004) and Mol (2002) are abandoning the idea of singularity, but do not suggest a world of an indefinite amount of diverse and disconnected components. Rather, they argue that there are different coexisting experiences of reality in practices that overlap and interfere with one other.

*Social transformation as multiple*

This processual perspective on experiences and practices provides an interesting analogue to the ways in which I perceived the women were negotiating spaces of everyday politics. Indeed, this might also explain why processes, like those we term "social transformation," are hard to grasp and conceptualize. Because processes of social transformation only "exist" as they are being experienced and practiced – in the doing of them – and since space is imbued in time and thus movement, no two spatio-temporal moments are every fully alike. This again resonates with the argument of social transformation as situated. Furthermore, since social transformation is experienced and practiced relationally, the relational constitutions of space participate in how it is experienced and practiced again and again – and again – and in that sense it is multiple. It follows that social transformation cannot be considered linear, but instead as open-ended and therefore also unpredictable – perhaps even contradictory. Adding to the complexity is that any given moment of negotiating space, although occurring in the ever-unfolding now, is simultaneously contingent on experiences of the past and ideas of the future. The women in this case negotiated spatial politics situated in present situations amassed by past experiences and visions for the future – their own, those of the people in their lives, and those of the society around them. However, to accommodate such negotiations, social entrepreneurial organizing entails a certain element of experimentation and improvisation "as we go along," for the organization and the people in the programs alike.

Any discussion of social transformation must somehow relate to the notion of time and the temporality of space. Social transformation is a temporal phenomenon, always morphing: "Change requires interaction. Interaction, including internal multiplicities, is essential to the generation of temporality" (Massey, 2005: 55). Time-based terminologies like temporality, heterogeneity, interaction, movements, openness, past, future, and the now are central elements to Massey's notion of space because space is the sphere of interactions, which necessarily are carried out in, and influenced by, time. Considerations of time therefore lend some necessary terms to discuss social transformation. While temporality and time in relation to social transformation might seem obvious, this is not a topic widely discussed in social entrepreneurship research.

**Social transformation as becoming**

A central premise within the processual and performative perspectives that I have addressed in this thesis (e.g., in Chapter Two), is that space cannot be perceived as closed, nor can the processes within space be considered linear, singular, or causal. This view is grounded in a becoming ontology. As Steyaert (2012: 165) argues, "[A] core premise of taking a process perspective is to shift one's horizon from a being to a becoming ontology." In this subsection, I wish to discuss

what this entails and how it is relevant for (re)thinking social transformation processually. In a way, the notion of becoming sums up many of the points addressed in this chapter, exactly because they stem from an underlying understanding of processes as always in the making and unfolding. There are two aspects related to a becoming ontology that I briefly wish to address in relation to my theorizing of social transformation: becoming is both multiple and relational.

When considering social entrepreneurship as processes of organizing "on the ground" with the aim of ameliorating social problems and catalyzing social transformation amongst groups of people exposed to inequalities of different kinds, the ambition is thus to challenge aspects of the status quo, of the dominant spatial politics. This is in line with the emancipatory perspectives on social entrepreneurship. The simultaneous heterogeneity of space and existence of multiplicity – including that within individuals – imply that politics aiming for transformation must attempt to "deal with the multiple becomings of space" (Massey, 2005: 182). One implication of this, following Massey (2005: 182), is "addressing the nature of their embeddedness in all those distinct, though interlocking, geometries of power." Social entrepreneurial organizing can potentially serve such a function, deliberately addressing these multiplicities of power-ridden and embedded spatial relations. However, in keeping with the becoming ontology, this must be done through methods that open up identities and the possibilities of alternative futures. For example, this could concern how staff members in social enterprises speak, act, and organize. Such a move is not trivial; as Massey (2005: 11) asserts, "[O]nly if we conceive of the future as open can we seriously accept or engage in any genuine notion of politics. Only if the future is open is there any ground for a politics which can make a difference." To Massey (2005), in order for identity politics not to rob space of heterogeneity and reduce the multiplicity of spatial identities, more variegated politics are called for. This poses a few conceptual questions pertaining to social entrepreneurship: How does this notion of politics from a becoming perspective translate more specifically into our understanding of social entrepreneurship? Can social entrepreneurial organizing participate in fostering a genuine notion of politics, as Massey identifies it? And, what might it mean for a social enterprise if an emblem of its organizing is to ensure and enable an openness of the future for the people who participate in its programs?

In various elements and processes of Azad & Sakha's organizing, it could be argued that there is an openness of the future. Most evidently, the proposition of driving as a livelihood path for the women in the poor communities serves that purpose. Since female driving was considered unconceivable, it unsettles identities and opens the future both in terms of ideas and accessible opportunities (that being said, the ambiguity of risks, threats, and oppositions might reduce or hinder that potential openness). Another example is the combination of gaining new skills,

knowledge, and meeting new people and places, which also serves to suggest alternative ways of living and becoming. I have argued for the importance of spatial imaginaries –being witness to and taking inspiration from other ways of life – as a means to make the future appear and become more open. The same can be said about overcoming fears and transgressing spatial boundaries, such as when women visited places previously out of reach. This invited an opening of the future, because, as they often expressed, this gave them the feeling of being able to do more, and new aspirations emerged. There was a *feeling* of increasing options and potential, even if those were not expressed in any concrete terms. A final, and quite apt, example where social transformation can be seen in terms of becoming, and implicated by the necessary openness of the future, was the occurrence of drivers leaving the organization on their own initiative to seek jobs elsewhere. Intriguingly, their "becomings" outgrew the visions of becoming that Azad & Sakha initially held for them. This indicates that the women did indeed perceive the future as more open than it had previously been, and had gained the necessary confidence to pursue these visions by themselves.

Of course, one can discuss and question the degree to which Azad & Sakha is able to provide "variegated politics" while also having the need for a structured program. The program's only offer is for women to become drivers. Within this, however, it is often fairly flexible in terms of accommodating the women's individual needs and situations. Azad & Sakha does not offer a rigid "one-size-fits-all" program, but having concentrated on the transportation business, it can only offer livelihoods as drivers. While I was conducting my fieldwork, Azad & Sakha was researching the women's general livelihood aspirations, and the organization was discussing how to tackle the dilemma of not being able to accommodate a variety of livelihood possibilities. Its ideal was to better accommodate the women to pursue careers of their own choices, and staff considered options for collaborating with other, similar organizations. These are just some examples of how Azad & Sakha, recognizing the complexities of the heterogeneity of space, struggled with providing "variegated politics."

Continuing the above reasoning, the possibilities of becoming – and the extent to which the future appears open – evidently depend on and relate to others around us. That we become together has been stressed empirically throughout the thesis: "We cannot 'become,' in other words, without others. And it is space that provides the necessary conditions for that possibility," Massey (2005: 56) argues. But again, what does this imply for social entrepreneurship? Often the throwntogetherness of space does not facilitate greater equality for disadvantaged groups of people, and the question becomes: How can social entrepreneurial organizing provide such conditions for a more favorable becoming? I posit that an interesting potential derives from recognizing the power in the notion of becoming together. As I have theorized empirically (see, for instance,

Chapter Six) the "where" – but even more so, the "with whom," the new kinds of encounters the women experienced through Azad & Sakha – significantly influenced the processes of social transformation. Recall the example of Anika, the driver who worked for a university professor and became motivated to pursue further education beyond the customs in her community. Anika's client enabled space for another becoming for her; in a way that that might even exceed Anika's own ideas of her potentialities. Anika's client in this sense made space for a more open future for her.

This view sheds another light on the issue of not providing an array of different livelihood opportunities for women in poverty, because it suggests that driving is a means, not an end; indeed, this resonates with a becoming ontology. The point is not that poor women should be drivers (although they can, if they like), but that driving is a transition and not necessarily an end station. The opportunity for driving challenges the gendered perceptions of what women can do in this context and opens the way for more possibilities, many of which may be facilitated further through encounters with others. My research demonstrated that in some situations, women pursued different aspirations with, or encouraged by, their clients, and in this way the clients participated in facilitating an "other" alternative becoming. That said, the case also demonstrated that encounters with discriminatory or opposing others can just as well put a stop to women's pursuit of driving and visions for a different future, which shows that this alternative becoming involves a fine line and a fragile negotiation to let "the future seem open."

"Becoming" thus concerns transforming spatial identities through challenging and changing the relational constructions of everyday life. Identities, too, must be opened for the future to be opened in and through the "becoming" that occurs with others and the world around us. While identities might be molded by history and produced in the here and now, the way in which the future is perceived also influences the production of that here and now. I therefore see that a central movement in Azad & Sakha's organizing is exactly to fuel the women with an experience of the openness of the future, however minor or major that openness may seem; but also to plant spatial imaginaries within larger spheres of society of a possible different future for women, and for "the poor," in Delhi and India. For women from poor backgrounds and women working as drivers in Delhi, driving provokes re-imaginations of spatial identities. "The question is what we can do to make the multiple possible and enable the potential of the multiple," Steyaert (2012: 159) writes – an important and political question.

**The politics of a good life**

All the discussions of this chapter point to an understanding of social transformation as political;

through different routes and perspectives, they elucidate how negotiations of spatial politics take place. Is gender not important? I have not used gender as a separate topic or headline in this chapter, and this calls for a brief explanation. My research interest has been to understand social transformation as a process, and contribute to exploring the social of social entrepreneurship. In discussing how we can characterize social transformation processually and the implications this has for exploring and thinking entrepreneurship as social change, gender is in my view a contextual premise. Rather than considering social transformation as gendered, I have suggested a view of social transformation as processes of negotiations with one's self, others, and surroundings concerning everyday spatial politics. Although these processes invoke and are embedded in politics of gender, they are also about more than gender.

When contemporary politics of social organizing differentiate between groups of people producing unequal distributions – of rights, opportunities, status, privilege, spatial access, the ability to walk safely down the street – and when societal organizing therefore renders certain groups disadvantaged and in precarious positions, social enterprises typically seek to address or transform these different inequalities. In this light, social entrepreneurial organizing seeks to transform the politics that separate, differentiate, and foster inequality by moving societal organizing practices in ways that allow people to live livable lives (Butler, 2015). Gender is a social categorization in which discriminatory practices proliferate, but in my material there are other segregating lines: caste, class, sexuality, religion, disabilities, minorities of different kinds, etc. Rather than saying social transformation is gendered, I prefer to say that it is political – although in some contexts and some organizational programs, it is indeed profoundly gendered. However, it is more than gendered because of the heterogeneity of space and the intersectionality of different stigmatization and differential ways of practicing discriminatory politics in Indian society. Social transformation in my case surely is *about* gender, but cannot be *reduced* to gender. For the women in Azad & Sakha's program, it is about improving their lives and living the best lives they can – gender or not, caste or not, poverty or not. The overarching movement is therefore about equality, freedom, and the quality of relations in life necessary to be able to live a good life; perhaps this could be called the politics of a good life. "If I am to lead a good life, it will be a life lived with others" – as I quoted Butler (2015: 218) at the beginning of this chapter – "whoever I am will be transformed by my connections with others." Butler therefore speaks of "our reciprocal obligations to produce together conditions of livable life." That is exactly what is at stake in negotiating spaces of everyday politics and is what can potentially be facilitated through social entrepreneurial organizing.

**Concluding note: implications for practice**

Research can be considered performative "since every time we make reality claims we are helping to make some social reality or other more or less real" (Law & Urry, 2004: 396). This implies that research discourses and dominant conceptualizations of social entrepreneurship in public discourses influence the field practice (Steyaert & Katz, 2004). This is why Dey (2006: 130) speaks of "the persuasiveness" of the view that considers "social entrepreneurship as a programmable and therefore rather easy undertaking"; it is what makes Ruebottom (2018: 195) warn of "the moral danger" of the neoliberal agenda; and Jacobs' (2006: 250) argue about "the problem of projects." Both Dey (2006), Jacobs (2006) and Steyaert and Katz (2004) address how this particular view on social entrepreneurship has had problematic consequences for the field of practices in relation to how projects can get funding, which projects are preferred by donors, and how social enterprises are run accordingly (i.e., the "projectification" in the hope of securing funding). In light of the persistence of many societal ills, the field of practice therefore deserves or needs to reconsider the ways in which social entrepreneurship is undertaken, so as to accommodate the complexities, ethical challenges, ambiguities and politics involved. It is in this light that I wish to close this chapter with a brief reflection on what implications my findings may have for the field of practice.

The perspective of social transformation as concerning matters of everyday life – constituted in relations with self, others, and the surrounding world for people seeking to alter their life circumstances – fits with how Azad & Sakha explains its methods as built upon pursuing "personal, social, and economic" dimensions of transformation simultaneously. By addressing all three dimensions Azad & Sakha unsettled the givenness of space for the women in numerous ways. Common to these endeavors were the building confidence, breaking barriers, and expanding boundaries in thoughts and practices as well as geographical ones. My research has shown how these different aspects of transformation entwine and reinforce each other.

If bodies, emotions, identities, and relations are central to catalyzing social transformation for women in urban poverty, then this opens questions for what these aspects might mean for social enterprises working with other social causes and in other contexts. For instance, what is the role of the body and emotions in activities of social enterprises? And if relations are constitutional to transforming spatial politics, how can a social enterprise assist the processes that enable the people in the program to improve their relations? If a social enterprise can be the unsettling element that enables people to question the status quo, and consider transforming the taken for granted, then this requires great contextual knowledge and sensitivity to the participants' relations and everyday lives to facilitate that opening. If indeed social transformation is a process of becoming with and in relation to others and place, then this has practical implications for how to organize social

programs. For a given social challenge, it could thus be useful to consider what the social and geographical expansion of space might entail for a specific group of people; i.e. the "where" and "with whom" of encounters.

Since unsettlings became far more pronounced when "thinking" moved into "doings" – when discussion of how to live gender differently evolved into new practices through the program, it speaks to the potency of practicing alternative spatial politics. This implies that in social entrepreneurial work raising awareness is important, but taking it further, into activities and "doings" that embody and enact those practices and contest customs are likely to have more impact on the people seeking to improve their lives. Furthermore, practices can alter one's sense of self, but contesting and transforming one's sense of self can also alter practices; these two movements can potentially mutually reinforce each other. For a social enterprise, this connection between sense of self, identity and practices can be used strategically and deliberately to increase confidence for people in disadvantaged or oppressed positions. This again speaks to the importance of emotions and relations.

These dimensions of organizing relate to another point: the encompassing approach to social transformation as community-level development. Moreover, emancipation/empowerment cannot be fostered within frameworks dominated by project logics, or that consider the people seeking transformations as consumers. This depoliticizes the work involved. Social entrepreneurial organizing that seeks to address the root causes of social such as issues of poverty and discrimination, might need to center their methods on understanding the complex, ambiguous, nonlinear, relational dynamics of spatial politics, This calls for a flexibility in methods and organizational structure so as to be able to improvise and change strategy "on the go." This can, needless to say, be challenging, particularly if project-thinking donors expect to see 'the results' (ticked off in predetermined boxes) within short spans of time. One daunting implication of this is, therefore, reconsiderations of the terms for funding and reporting, which additionally relate to how such work is "measured" or evaluated. Ideally it would most likely be more productive were social enterprises and donors to differentiate between different ways of organizing for social transformation and adjust funding options accordingly in order to achieve the best possible impact for the people involved. This calls for greater flexibility in funding schemes that are able to accommodate different specific and contextual modes of organizing. Although it is difficult to see what can bring about these changes in funding practices, closer collaborations between social enterprises and donors could perhaps help. Since the dominant logics and practices of donors and funding agencies influence how practitioners think and operate, this might be quite an important discussion and task to undertake in order to create more favorable conditions for impactful organizing to better our societies.

Lastly, the heterogeneity and power-asymmetries of space makes social transformation complex. The case has demonstrated social entrepreneurial organizing as political, which also raise some dilemmas and concerns. For instance, social transformation is at times a double-edged sword because of the precarious line between increased freedom (emancipation, a more livable life) and a greater risk of harassment, opposition, violence, and even danger deriving from contesting traditional spatial politics. There seems to be an inherent dilemma in social entrepreneurship: To what extent can and should a social enterprise "decide what is best" for others in disadvantaged positions, and how far they can push or facilitate processes of transformation? But if people in disadvantaged positions are not aware that life could be different, is there then not a collective responsibility to provide new outlook and possibilities to them? This speaks for the role of entrepreneurship as a catalyst for social change. The dilemmas associated with "deciding what is best" are not easily solved, but can best be addressed through participatory and democratic methods that regard people in a program as "participants" or "agents," and where both the organization and participants influence each other and the shape of the program. This can ease this dilemma, but not remove it. An important implication in this regard is to consider any offer by a social enterprise not as an end, but as a means to open for new social processes toward more liveable lives, and people are free to "walkout" anytime.

I end on a note from the Indian author and activist Arundhati Roy (2001: 7) because she sums up this dilemma perfectly: "The trouble is that once you see it [social injustice], you can't unsee it. And once you've seen it, keeping quiet, saying nothing, becomes as political an act as speaking out. There's no innocence. Either way, you're accountable."

You can pick all the flowers,
but you can't stop the spring.

Pablo Neruda

# CONCLUDING REMARKS

Chapter Ten

This chapter concludes on how social entrepreneurial organizing facilitates processes of social transformation, and how such processes are experienced and practiced by women in Delhi's poor communities, and on what this research contributes to literature on the social of social entrepreneurship.

# Social transformation through female driving in Delhi

> It is my last evening in Delhi after seven months of intense fieldwork, and I have had dinner at a restaurant in a market about a half an hour's drive from where I have been staying. With no metro nearby, I have to find a taxi or auto-rickshaw to get home. Even though it is an extremely popular place, transportation opportunities are scarce in the evening. With many bidders per ride, most drivers ask incredibly high prices, which can, under the dim light of streetlamps, make negotiations both lengthy and tiresome. Like many of the women I have spoken to over the months in Delhi, I am also concerned about commuting alone at night. As I scout for a vehicle, a middle-aged woman approaches me and hands me a flier. It reads, "Fleur Cabs, for the women by the women." I am utterly surprised, and the serendipity of the encounter makes me smile
>
> Delhi has gotten yet another female taxi service. The woman, who turned out to be the company's founder, shared that only a month into the venture she was hiring more female drivers, and that she was approaching drivers for Azad & Sakha. As we spoke by the side of the road, I thought that her account encapsulated developments within Delhi's transport sector – including the surge of female drivers discussed in this study. When Azad & Sakha began their work in 2008, they were the first transport business to bring professional female drivers to the streets of Delhi. Ten years later, female taxi services are also being provided by dominant commercial taxi firms (e.g., Meru Cabs, Ola, Uber) and by a number of small businesses, like Fleur Cabs. Plus, one of Sakha's drivers has become the first female public bus driver in Delhi, allegedly with more to come. In light of what appears to be a growing acceptance of female drivers, I have wondered whether female driving as a profession in India is an idea whose time has come. While it remains an open-ended question to be scrutinized against the passage of time, these aspects suggest developments that go beyond the work of Azad & Sakha. Almost emblematically, on my last night in Delhi I take Fleur Cabs home. Riding through the busy evening traffic, I ask the woman behind the wheel where she learned to drive. "Azad Foundation, ma'am," she replies. "Before, I worked for Sakha."

This thesis has examined the dynamics of social transformation by inquiring into how social entrepreneurial organizing facilitates such processes and how they are experienced and practiced by women living in urban poverty in Delhi. Focusing on the social enterprise Azad & Sakha and their Women on Wheels initiative, centered on female driving as a profession, my aim has been to develop a contextualized theorizing of how to understand social transformation processually.

Azad & Sakha's social entrepreneurial organizing facilitated processes of social transformation for these women by unsettling the givenness of the spatial politics of their everyday lives and by providing an alternative livelihood. Social transformation can therefore be understood as processes

of negotiating spaces of everyday politics. Throughout the empirical chapters, I traced how Azad & Sakha orchestrated deliberate spatial constellations to unsettle dominant and taken for granted gender, caste and class practices, which in turn provoked a multiplicity of negotiations. I have framed these negotiations as spatial openings creating possibilities to alter practices. Such spatio-temporal situations, I consider to be spaces of transformation.

For instance, Azad's mobilization efforts unsettled the givenness of space through making the proposition for female driving in a context where it was considered radical, if not impossible. This challenged the status quo: the proposition therefore stirred strong emotions as it brought oppressive gendered practices in the communities to the surface. In making the case for female driving, the organization offered the women an alternative vision of what they could do with their lives as women, as poor, and as low caste. The proposition forced women, their families, and members of their communities to relate to it and their own gendered practices and beliefs. The women had to negotiate with themselves, others and their surroundings; negotiations which became increasingly intense and embodied as they became more engaged in the Women on Wheels program. The social and geographical expansion of space, encounters with "new" others – staff of Azad & Sakha, other trainees and drivers, clients, and "mobile others" in the city – were particularly productive in facilitating processes of social transformation.

I have argued that social transformation was experienced and practiced in and through corporeal, emotional, and relational changes interwoven into the everyday politics of space. Participating in the Women on Wheels program and holding jobs as drivers in Delhi produced plentiful experiences fraught with emotions of fear and worry, but also of excitement, confidence, and hope. These embodied experiences are the nascent processes of social transformation, because through them the women began considering themselves, their rights, and their prospects in life differently – they started to experience and practice spatial relations in new ways. They not only questioned the status quo – they began altering it. These processes were supported and strengthened by specific material artifacts, e.g., uniforms, driver's licenses, taxi badges, driver-door signs, the cars themselves, and mobile phones (with numbers for the police saved in them). The embodiment and performativity of being a female driver enabled the women to experience and practice relations to others in ways that contested and at times altered spatial politics. Materiality – in the way it links to corporeality, emotions, and relations – can thus be seen to play a role both in how Azad & Sakha's social entrepreneurial organizing facilitated processes of social transformation, and in how the women experienced and practiced it. The inter-corporeality of these processes furthermore implies, and indeed explains, how social transformation was also performed collectively. As a moving "brigade" of women in turquoise uniforms behind the wheels

on the streets Delhi, they both reinforced one another's becoming, and disturbed existing norms by standing out in the cityscape and affecting others. As drivers the urban poor women became pioneers and role models, negotiating spatial politics on behalf of women from their backgrounds.

Working as drivers, the women were affected by the "where" of moving across the city spaces, as well as by "whom" they were driving for. The expansion of space allowed the women to transgress traditional exclusionary zones and boundaries, which they did with both fear and excitement. Driving forced negotiations upon the women and their clients alike, because the role of a female driver unsettled traditional caste, class, and gender relations. The specifics of these relations differed greatly; some clients were more supportive than others. Yet these encounters with others and the city *did something* to the women: they facilitated negotiations of the women's spatial identities, unsettling and transforming their sense of self. Gaining insights into how women of higher social classes lived, moved, and negotiated themselves and their relations challenged how the poor women experienced and thought about themselves, their own relations, and their opportunities in life beyond that of being a driver.

Social transformation was enacted corporeally in the manners the women dressed, used ornaments and veils, carried themselves, and performed certain inter-corporeal practices, such as keeping eye contact, using physical force in moments of harassment, and speaking up, daring to voice their opposition. Social transformation was also experienced and practiced through emotions as the women began to feel and think differently about themselves, generally becoming more confident. The changes in emotional practices in turn impacted their relational and corporeal practices, particularly within their households but also in situations of public mobility where they claimed greater rights. Albeit to different degrees, many women negotiated more say in directing the course of their own lives, for instance in relation to marriage arrangements and household affairs. They spoke up more against injustices whether in familial, community, or public spaces, sometimes by making threats and using moves of self-defense. Becoming the primary breadwinners in their households was significant in facilitating these changes and of course improved their everyday lives.

However, the situatedness and complexities of spatial relations implies, as I have shown in different ways, that processes of social transformation were not a linear progression. Sometimes a woman enact new practices, like elbowing a harasser in the bus, and in another, similar situation she does not. Yet with time, the women enact new practices more often. Seen in this light, social transformation is an increasing tendency for people to "do the new" rather than a stable outcome.

These new social processes tinkered with and profoundly challenged household dynamics; placing the women in vulnerable, ambiguous, risky, and at times dangerous situations. Relational

tensions made social transformation a double-edged sword or a tightrope for these women, as increasing autonomy or emancipation also entailed greater opposition, harassment, risks and danger. The spatial ambiguities and struggles that resulted from contesting and redoing dominant politics were the main reasons why many women left the organization, some of whom were violently forced to do so by others. Although Azad & Sakha sought to produce spaces that could instigate and facilitate transformative processes for the poor women, they could not control these processes or have any certainty of their outcome. The women's transformative trajectories challenged the organization at times, but also transcended Azad & Sakha's visions for them, as when many drivers left Sakha to find jobs elsewhere in the transport industry.

With this project, I have sought to contribute to research on process perspectives in social entrepreneurship and to the discourse on entrepreneurship as social change; the so-called social of social entrepreneurship, in three ways. First, I wanted to explore and unpack "the missing social" so as to gain an understanding of social transformation though contextual theorizing. Second, I aspired to incorporate ethnographic and sensory methods into social entrepreneurship research in order to develop an analytical and methodological approach capable of grasping "messy" societal processes. Third, I wanted to complement the growing body of research on entrepreneurship as social change that advocates a more explorative and critical perspective on social entrepreneurship. These three motivations are closely interlinked in the spatial approach I have developed. I see this as my main contribution.

Based on my ethnographic fieldwork and ongoing processes of theorizing, I have focused on the lived experiences and relational practices as a means to approach "the social", and have demonstrated that spatial methodologies and perspectives offer a useful framework to this end. Space, as I have come to see it, is simultaneously an ontological position, an analytical lens, and a notion useful to grasp social transformation as process. I have suggested a spatial approach that encompasses the contextual, temporal, relational, emotional, corporeal (sensory), and material as mutually constitutive of space.

The dynamic interactional and interrelational processes between people, places, things, ideas, and perceptions – that is, the negotiations of space – that I noticed in Azad & Sakha's organizing made it evident that thinking spatially had methodological implications. How to "capture" this lively mess of everyday spatial politic? Experimenting with sensory and affective ethnographic methods, researching and writing in manners that sought to avoid reducing realities to neat or causal schemes, and assembling different types of visual and written material have been my means to bring spatiality into writing of social entrepreneurship. My spatial approach aligns with a "more-than" representational mode of theorizing in the attention given to the heterogeneity and

multiplicity of space, including the sensory dimensions of everyday life – all of this is necessary to conceptualize social transformation.

Thinking spatially therefore pushes social entrepreneurship research into "messy", political and risky matters of life. It counters the tendencies of depoliticization found in mainstream discourses on social entrepreneurship and at best can help unsettle some of those dominant assumptions. By embracing the situatedness, multiplicity, and ambiguities of space as the sphere of everyday relations where social transformation is experienced and practiced, a spatial approach provides an alternative, more nuanced and critical way to understand social entrepreneurship. It grants primacy to bodies and emotions constituted through relational and materially embedded practices, and thus suggests considering people's – invariably relational – feelings and the corporeal doings in order to perceive social transformation. This underscores the importance of understanding affect in spatial constitutions. Such spatiality thus offers a highly relevant perspective on the materiality and politics of social entrepreneurial organizing in its encounters with people and places.

Broadly put, a spatialization of social entrepreneurship research therefore contributes to freeing the term from the dominance of an economistic and overly causal logic. This way, the *social* of social entrepreneurship comes into play. While more than 40 different definitions of social entrepreneurship exist (e.g., Alvord et al., 2004; Aygören, 2014; Barinaga, 2012; Dees et al., 1998; Sharir & Lerner, 2006; Thompson, 2002), I have not sought to define, but rather to open and nuance through contextualized theorizing. This is then less about adding yet another definition and more about providing a small piece in a larger mosaic of new conceptualizations, theories and methodologies that enable to trace and perhaps grasp how *social* entrepreneurship takes place.

In keeping with the critical voices in entrepreneurship as social change, my research has depicted social transformation as complex, nonlinear, open-ended, temporal, and unpredictable. I have argued that social transformation cannot be grasped as a uniform outcome, but rather as processes of unfolding negotiations and an increasing tendency to enact new practices over time, which can alter relations in a more emancipatory direction. In this sense, social entrepreneurial organizing entails producing spaces that can unsettle and that hold the potentiality of catalyzing transformative processes.

The empirical analyses have shown that this is not without dilemmas, tensions, risks, and dangers. Accordingly, social transformation is ambiguous; it provides new opportunities but clearly not devoid of risks. On the contrary: the ways in which women conducted their sense of gender, caste and class are fraught with existential risks and dangers as they break with existing norms. Therefore, the contextual and situational specificities and complexities of the social in

social entrepreneurship make questions of whether social entrepreneurship offers something "good" or "bad" far too simplistic. Rather, bringing the dilemmas and ambiguities of organizing for social transformation to the fore can improve our understanding of the social entrepreneurial process and the conditions in which social transformation becomes possible (or not).

A central curiosity behind this thesis has been to explore how people in disadvantaged positions come to transform their lives, and what role a social enterprise might play in facilitating such processes. The women of this study lived under stringent social constraints with limited exposure to life outside their communities before their involvement in the program. How, then, do people in marginalized and constrained positions, like these women, come to sense and trust that they can do things differently and transform their lives for the better? In other words, how are embedded spatial politics contested and re-created when the existent molds people and hinders them to question the status quo? The research has demonstrated that there is a relevant role for the social enterprise in this regard, albeit one not without dilemmas and ethical problems: to serve as a kind of generator of unsettling spaces that make people (more likely to) question the taken for grantedness. If this is the case, then a social enterprise serves as the "outside" influence or irritant to unsettle the givenness of spatial politics and – perhaps – provoke processes of social transformations.

Finally, the spatial view contributes to the discussions of the influences of (social) entrepreneurship in society, or "the entrepreneurship–society relationship" (Hjorth, 2013). My findings on the collective performativity of the female drivers in Delhi, and the different but concurrent interplays between the "I" and the "we," add some perspectives to how social transformation "travels" and is continuously molded between individuals, the social enterprise, and the society in which it is embedded. The spatiality of bodies and the performativity of bodies-in-alliance are intriguing angles from which to consider the politics of social entrepreneurial organizing. "Becoming together" is therefore a relevant terminology to further our understanding of social transformation, as well as the potentialities of social enterprises.

If social transformation entails, as I have argued, that people become together, then social entrepreneurial organizing needs to create spaces for a more favorable becoming together. My research has shown that social transformation cannot be considered "something" the women from poor backgrounds can undertake and practice alone; the transformation is a *transformation of relations*, and thus depends on others. The case of Azad & Sakha has demonstrated that the performativity of a female driver unsettled traditional boundaries of segregating politics: some family members, community members, and clients took this as an invitation to reflect upon and change their own practices, while others reinforced the traditions associated with "poor" and

"low-caste" women. It seems that there is an opportunity here for those in relation to the female drivers to also consider their own practices. Social transformation therefore depends not only on the experiences and practices of the women, facilitated by the social enterprise, but also on their relations to others and how others respond. The women's trajectories of social transformation depend on the ability and willingness of others to accept their changing practices, and change their own. This insight buttresses the complexities of social transformation as a political and relational phenomenon of negotiation in the spaces of everyday life, at the same time it offers hope: it implies that in connecting entrepreneurship with "the social," and in being attentive to opportunities for more livable lives when negotiating spaces of everyday politics, there is much we can do for each other. At the very least, it poses a question: in the everyday odysseys of living gender, caste and class, and living together, how do we enable each other's more favorable becomings? This is the question of the politics of a good life.

# EPILOGUE

## Reminiscences of fieldwork

She released the congested
bursting open
the sky broke free
reborn to a clear day
Monsoon, and mud

Anne Sofie Fischer

**New Delhi, 28 june 2014**

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This well-known quote is credited to Pablo Neruda, although a specific referenc is difficult to find.

# APPENDIX 1

**Autophotography by two trainees and a driver**

The three women were given a camera and asked to photography their everyday life and experiences with being a trainee in Azad's Women on Wheels program or a driver for Sakha. Bhavani and Sita were trainees at the time, Geeta worked as a driver.

*Bhavani*









*Geeta*















*Sita*













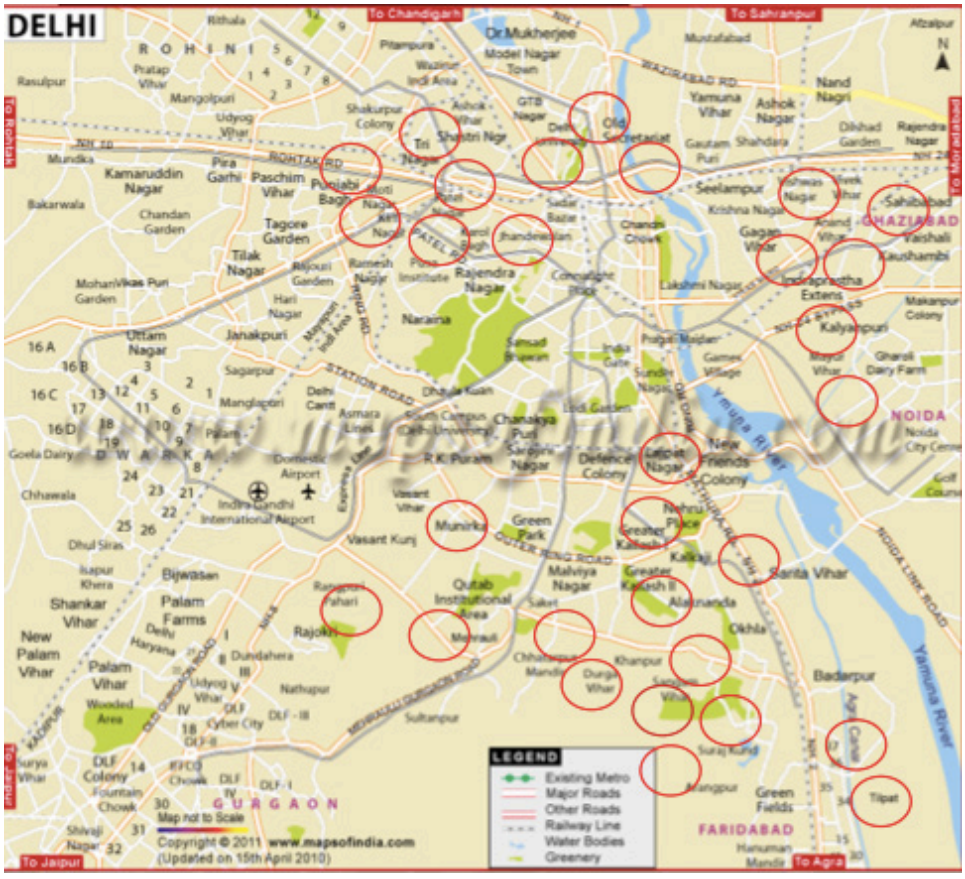
# APPENDIX 2

**Overview of basties in Delhi where Azad work**

The information is from a power point presentation made by Azad's mobilization team for the organization's yearly annual review meeting for their 2014-15 operations. At this time Azad had mobilization activities in these 82 poor communities in Delhi, the basties as they call it in Hindi. In the map of parts of Delhi marked with red circles, the mobilizers have indicated some of the areas of outreach and it illustrates the close proximity between the basties. A basti is a group of households and therefore each area has many basties.

Numbers of areas and bastis for Azad's mobilization in Delhi

| Location | Number of areas | No of Baties |
|---|---|---|
| South Dehli | 6 | 41 |
| North Dehli | 9 | 17 |
| East Dehli | 8 | 24 |



**South Dehli**

| No | Areas | Bastis |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Badarpur jaitpur | 1. Gautam puri<br>2. Khadar phase 1<br>3. Khadar phase 2<br>4. Khadar b1<br>5. Khadar b2<br>6. Priyanka camp<br>7. Ali vihar<br>8. Tughlaga bag village<br>9. Tughlaga bag extension<br>10. Sarita vihar<br>11. Rajasthani camp<br>12. Mohan baba nagar<br>13. Subash camp<br>14. Modband and mitapur |
| 2 | Okla | 1. Gola kua<br>2. Tehkand<br>3. Reka camp 1<br>4. Rekha camp 2<br>5. Majdoor camp<br>6. Sanjay colony<br>7. Indira kalayan vihar<br>8. Ishwar nagar<br>9. Harikesh nagar |
| 3 | Govind puri | 1. Navjeevan camp<br>2. Nehru camp<br>3. Bhumi camp<br>4. Transit camp<br>5. Govindpuri |
| 4 | Sangam vihar | 1. Tigardi colony<br>2. Tigardi J.J camp |
| 5 | Ambedkar colony | 1. Dakshin puri<br>2. Madan gir<br>3. Sanjay camp<br>4. Subhash camp |
| 6 | Sriniwas puri | 1. Indira camp 1<br>2. Indira camp 2<br>3. Gandhi camp 1<br>4. Gandi camp 2<br>5. Dayal singh camp<br>6. Dola kua<br>7. Chankyapuri |

**North Dehli**

| No | Areas | Bastis |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Swaroop nagar | 1. Khusak no 2 |
| 2 | Balswa area | 2. J.J colony<br>3. 12 futa<br>4. 18 futa<br>5. 22 futa |
| 3 | Swaroop vihar | 6. Kadi pur<br>7. Kadi vihar |
| 4 | Natupura | 8. Pilli kothi block<br>9. Mangal bazar<br>10. Tomar basti |
| 5 | Wazir pur | 11. J.J colony |
| 6 | Holmbi kala | 12. Block C<br>13. Shiv mandir<br>14. Muncipal school colony |
| 7 | Bengali colony | 15. jugi basti |
| 8 | Buradi area | 16. Buradi |
| 9 | Balswa diary | 17. Balswa diary |

**East Dehli**

| No | Areas | Bastis |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | New sanjay nagar colony | 1. Vishwas nagar<br>2. Kad kad guma gaanv<br>3. A.G.C.R basti |
| 2 | Laxmi nagar | 4. Geeta colony<br>5. Nehru camp<br>6. Majdur camp<br>7. Chitr vihar |
| 3 | Shadra | 8. Aradhak nagar<br>9. Jhil mil<br>10. Sonia camp |
| 4 | Anand vihar | 11. J.J camp |
| 5 | Kalayan puri | 12. Block 11<br>13. Block 12<br>14. Block 17<br>15. Block 18<br>16. Block 21 |
| 6 | ITO | 17. Sanjay camp<br>18. Anna nagar<br>19. Janta camp |
| 7 | Dilshad garden | 20. Dharm pura<br>21. Shastri park<br>22. Kalander colony<br>23. Shilm pur |
| 8 | Hasan pur dippo | 24. Indira camp |

# ABSTRACT

*Negotiating Spaces of Everyday Politics* is an ethnographic study of everyday lives and processes of social transformation among urban poor women in Delhi, India, as they seek to alter their life circumstances through taking up driving as a profession. With millions living under conditions of extreme poverty, rampant gender- and caste-based discrimination, and violence in familial, community and public spheres, the study addresses acute societal ills. Using the case of social enterprise Azad & Sakha and their Women on Wheels initiative, which seeks to address issues of poverty and injustice against women by helping them become professional drivers, the thesis' central aim is to develop a contextualized theorizing of social transformation. This is accomplished by exploring lived experiences and practices of everyday relations through a spatial approach based on insights from human geography, such as the work of Massey (2005) and Simonsen (2007; 2008; 2010; 2013); gender studies, notably Butler (2015), as well as processual and performative perspectives within anthropology and entrepreneurship. The study focuses on the emergent features and ambiguities of social transformation, seeking to move beyond considerations of social entrepreneurship devoid of politics. As such, it contributes to the growing literature on entrepreneurship as social change that advocates a more critical perspective to social entrepreneurship, i.e., one that focuses on "the social."

Based on nine months of ethnographic fieldwork carried out between 2014 and 2015, the thesis explores multiple experiences and practices of social transformation and how such processes were facilitated. Empirically, the study draws on long-term fieldwork in Delhi that includes working regularly from Azad & Sakha's office, participation in the organization's activities, following of women in training and on the job, visits to their homes, and 57 recorded interviews – as well as a multitude of informal and ongoing conversations – with staff, trainees, drivers, clients, and a few family members. I more closely followed seven women who were at different stages in the Women on Wheels program: three trainees, two private drivers, and two taxi drivers. Drawing inspiration from affective methodologies and sensory ethnography, fieldnotes, sketches, and the use of photos are central methods in my processes of research and theorizing, including experiments with participant-led empirical material through self-journaling and autophotography. I argue that such methodological means and experimentations are necessary when working spatially, and that they contribute to developing a processual understanding of social transformation.

The study explores what happens when urban poor women become drivers in a context where

female driving is rare and considered radical, if not impossible, as a profession. Through the notion of unsettling space, I show how social entrepreneurial organizing unsettles the givenness of contemporary spatial politics, rooted in patriarchal practices. This initiates new kinds of gendered negotiations in the women's poor communities. The alternative visions of Azad & Sakha allow – and force – women and their families to scrutinize taken for granted beliefs and practices. I consider these negotiations to be the emergent processes of social transformation for the women. Prior to joining the program, most women had largely been confined to their homes, unable to go out unaccompanied. Behind the wheel, however, they suddenly drive alone in one of the world's largest cities six days a week with women of higher social classes in the backseat. The "before and after" contrast is significant, and the empirical analyses show how new practices challenge and break with existing traditions. I argue that social transformation is experienced and practiced as negotiations with one's self, others and surroundings deriving from questioning status quo, and that this potentially facilitates corporeal, emotional, and relational changes in practices. Furthermore, the thesis suggests that the collective performativity of an increasing number of women in driver's uniforms, as a critique of existing norms extends beyond the women in the program. Due to the women's visibility as the "blue *kurta* brigade," they form growing alliances that break (open) the field of appearances, accentuating the interconnection between social entrepreneurial organizing and the surrounding society.

The women's subjectivities and identities are being re-negotiated in and through gaining new materiality and embodied experiences, knowledge, skills, and encounters with others and the city. The study shows that the social and geographical expansion of space significantly serves to facilitate social transformation, allowing the women to transgress and transcend traditional exclusionary zones and boundaries of spatial politics related to caste, class, and gender. Through experiences that produce emotions of fear and worry, but also excitement and hope, the women gain an increasing sense of confidence that makes them claim more say and equality in relations. Since social transformation is relational, it tinkers with power and dependencies in everyday relations; this makes it complex, ambiguous, and at times dangerous, as not everyone welcomes these changes; many women therefore also quit the program.

The findings of the research invite a thinking of social transformation across sites and spaces, as multifarious spaces of transformation, in which the women increasingly enact "the new" in the direction of greater emancipation, but in non-linear and unpredictable movements. In this manner, this thesis contributes with a rich, contextualized theorizing of the social in social entrepreneurship centered in the politics of the everyday.

# DANSK RESUMÉ

*"Hverdagspraksissernes politiske forhandlingsrum"* (Negotiating Spaces of Everyday Politics) er et etnografisk studie af hverdagslivet og de sociale forandringsprocesser, der finder sted blandt fattige kvinder i Delhi, Indien, når de i deres forsøg på at forbedre deres levevilkår uddanner sig til professionelle taxachauffører. Da millioner mennesker i Indien, og verden over, lever under vilkår af ekstrem fattigdom og dagligt bliver udsat for køns- og kastebasseret diskrimination og vold i familien, lokalsamfundet og i det offentlige rum, adresserer undersøgelsen en aktuelt samfundsmæssig problemstilling. Den sociale virksomhed Azad & Sakha og deres Women on Wheels-program uddanner kvinder til professionelle chauffører, og søger derigennem at løse problemer med fattigdom og uretfærdigheder mod kvinder i Delhi. Organisationen danner grundlaget for det casestudie, hvorigennem jeg udvikler en kontekstualiseret teoretisering af begrebet social transformation. Dette gøres ved at udforske de fattige kvinders levede erfaringer og hverdagspraksisser der forhandles i deres relationer til sig selv og andre. Afhandlingen udvikler en rumlig tilgang til forståelse af social transformation, baseret på indsigter fra human geografien med udgangspunkt i teoretikerne Massey (2005) og Simonsen (2007; 2008; 2010; 2013), kønsstudier, især Butler (2015), samt processuelle og performative perspektiver inden for antropologi og entreprenørskab. Undersøgelsen afsøger de begyndende træk og tvetydigheder, der er indlejret i begrebet social transformation, og bevæger sig dermed ud over apolitiske tilgange til socialt entreprenørskab. Afhandlingen skal ses som et bidrag til den voksende litteratur omkring entreprenørskab som social forandring, der i sit udgangspunkt har en mere kritisk tilgang til fænomenet og som har fokus på "det sociale".

Afhandlingen er baseret på et ni måneder langt etnografisk feltarbejde udført mellem 2014 og 2015, der blandt andet har omfattet regelmæssig tilstedeværelse på Azad & Sakhas kontor, deltagelse i organisationens aktiviteter, deltagerobservation af kvinderne under træning og på jobbet som chauffør, og besøg i deres hjem, og 57 interviews samt en lang række løbende og uformelle samtaler primært med personalet, kvinder under træning, chauffører, kunder og et par familiemedlemmer. I afhandlingen følger jeg i sær syv kvinder tæt, alle på forskellige trin i Women on Wheels-programmet: tre kvinder under træning, to private chauffører samt to taxachauffører. Med inspiration fra affektive metoder og sensorisk etnografi, udgør feltnoter, skitser og brugen af fotos centrale metoder i mine forskningsprocesser og teoretisering. Ligeledes inddrages eksperimenter med deltagerledet empirisk materiale som dagsbogsførelse og auto-fotografi. Et

centralt argument i afhandlingen er, at sådanne metodologiske redskaber og eksperimenter er nødvendige værkstøjer i studiet af sociale processer, når disse ses i en rumlig kontekst, da de bidrager til at udvikle en processuel forståelse af social transformation.

Afhandlingen er et studie af, hvad der sker, når fattige kvinder bliver professionelle chaufører i en by, hvor kvinder sjældent kører bil, da dette anses som radikalt, hvis ikke umuligt. Jeg viser, hvordan en social virksomhed formår at udfordre og ryste vante forestillinger og praksisser funderet i en patriarkalsk kultur ved at udvikle, hvad jeg betegner som en 'forstyrrende rumlighed'. Ved at udvide de rumlige grænser for kvindernes færden skaber dette forstyrrelser i de etablerede normer og praksisser i de fattige lokalområder og giver plads til nye forhandlinger af kvindernes role. Azad & Sakhas alternative kønsopfattelse tillader - og tvinger - kvinderne og deres familier til at undersøge de konventionelle hverdagspraksisser, som de ellers har taget for givet. Det er disse relationelle forhandlinger, som jeg i afhandlingen anser for at være et element der igangsætter de nye sociale forandringsprocesser. Forud for deres deltagelse i programmet har de fleste kvinder hovedsageligt været begrænset til kun at færdes i og omkring deres hjem, med forbud mod at gå uden en ledsager. Bag rattet, derimod, kører de pludselig alene rundt i en millionby seks dage om ugen med kvinder fra de højere sociale klasser på bagsædet. Kontrasten fra "før og efter" er signifikant, og de empiriske analyser viser, hvordan den nye praksis udfordrer og bryder med eksisterende traditioner. Jeg anser de ændringer der finder sted blandt kvinderne som kimen til en social transformation. Ændringerne er oplevet og praktiseret som forhandlinger i relationer med sig selv, andre og omgivelserne.

Disse forhandlinger åbner dermed muligheden for at skabe - potentielle - kropslige, følelsesmæssige og relationelle forandringer i sociale praksisser. Derudover viser afhandlingen, hvordan der er et kollektiv performativitet ved det stigende antal kvindelige chaufførers i ens uniformer. Deres blotte tilstedeværelse i bybilledet er en kritik af de eksisterende normer, og strækker sig ud over kvinderne i programmet. Kvindernes synlighed i bybilledet - som den "blå kurta-brigade" - danner en emergerende alliance kvinderne imellem, der bryder (og åbner) de eksisterende normer og sociale rum. Det er i denne brydning, at sammenhænget mellem sociale virksomheder og samfundet skal findes.

Igennem en ny materialitet, levede erfaringer, viden, indsigter, nyerhvervede færdigheder og mødet med andre kvinder genforhandles kvindernes subjektivitet og identiteter. En social og geografisk rumlig udvidelse af kvindernes færden er et afgørende element i deres sociale transformation, og afhandlingen viser hvordan denne udvidelse er med til at gøre det muligt for kvinderne at overtræde og overskride traditionelle ekskluderingszoner og grænser relateret til kaste, klasse og køn. Gennem oplevelser, der producerer følelser af frygt og bekymringer, men

også spænding og håb, får kvinderne en voksende følelse af tillid, som gør dem i stand til at hævde sig, forstå deres værd og opfatte sig selv som ligeværdige i menneskelige relationer. Da social transformation er relationel, udfordrer det de eksisterende magtforhold både i en hverdagskontekst og samfundsmæssigt, hvorved den sociale transformation bliver kompleks, tvetydig og til tider farligt, fordi det langt fra er alle, der byder forandringerne velkommen. På baggrund af disse dybt indlejrede socialpolitiske og samfundsmæssige magtrelationer og kampe, er der mange kvinder, der ikke får gennemført programmet.

Undersøgelsens resultater inviterer til en ny forståelse af social transformation der strækker sig på tværs af steder og rumlige strukturer og praksisser. Den sociale transformation som beskrevet i afhandlingen skal forstås som et mangedimensionelt transformationsrum, hvor kvinderne i stigende grad performer og praktiserer "det nye" i forsøget på at opnå en større frigørelse fra de samfundsmæssige begrænsninger og restriktioner. Disse processer imod større social frihed udvikler sig dog i en ikke-lineær og uforudsigelig bevægelse. På denne vis bidrager afhandlingen med en empirisk nuanceret og kontekstuel teoretisering af ”det sociale” set i forhold til socialt entreprenørskab centret i rumlig politik udtrykt i hverdagspraksisser og relationelle forhandlinger.

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*– Studier af indrulleringsprocesser i forbindelse med introduktionen af kliniske kvalitetsdatabaser i speciallægepraksissektoren*

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*A Critical Political Economy Perspective*

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*Public-Private Partnerships: Meaning and Practice*

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*Forestillinger om kvalitet og tværfaglighed på sygehuse*
*– skabelse af forestillinger i læge- og plejegrupperne angående relevans af nye idéer om kvalitetsudvikling gennem tolkningsprocesser*

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*The Business of Co-Creation – and the Co-Creation of Business*

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*"Living the brand" som en brandorienteret dialogisk praxis:*
*Om udvikling af medarbejdernes brandorienterede dømmekraft*

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*Supply Chain (logistics) Environmental Complexity*

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*Corporate Governance in Family Firms*
*The Norwegian Maritime Sector*

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*Enriching Software Process Improvement with Knowledge Management*

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*Franske adjektivisk afledte adverbier, der tager præpositionssyntagmer indledt med præpositionen à som argumenter*
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*Collaborative R&D Capabilities*
*In Search of Micro-Foundations*

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*Employers meet employees*
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*The Great Health of Melancholy*
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*Four papers on how fashion firms create and appropriate innovation value*

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*Metaphysical Labour*
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*Internationalization from a small domestic base:*
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*What we talk about when we talk about space:*
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*En pragmatisk analyse af perception og synliggørelse af værdi i rekrutterings- og udvælgelsesarbejdet*

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*Kontraktsledelse*
*Relasjonen mellom virksomhetsledelse og kontraktshåndtering, belyst via fire norske virksomheter*

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*Performance Talk*
*Next Generation Management of Organizational Performance*

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*Brand Thrust: Strategic Branding and Shareholder Value*
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*Førsokratisk informeret, ny-aristotelisk ἦθος-tænkning hos Martin Heidegger*

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*Processer, sammenhængskraft og fleksibilitet*
*Et empirisk casestudie af omstillingsforløb i fire virksomheder*

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*Kvalitetsledelse på danske hospitaler*
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*Organising Development*
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*Branding på butiksgulvet*
*Et case-studie af kultur- og identitetsarbejdet i Kvickly*

**2011**

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*A Study of Product Launches in the Swedish Pharmaceutical Industry*

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*CSR som noget særligt*
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*Fradragsbeskæring af selskabers finansieringsudgifter*
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*Customer Profitability Measurement Models*
*Their Merits and Sophistication across Contexts*

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*Beskatning af derivater*
*En analyse af dansk skatteret*

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*Essays in Labor Economics*
*Evidence from Danish Micro Data*

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*"Contracts not covered, or not fully covered, by the Public Sector Directive"*

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*Iværksættelse af kommunikation*
*- patientfigurer i hospitalets strategiske kommunikation*

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*CSR - hvor svært kan det være? Kulturanalytisk casestudie om udfordringer og dilemmaer med at forankre Coops CSR-strategi*

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*Tweens, medier og forbrug*
*Et studie af 10-12 årige danske børns brug af internettet, opfattelse og forståelse af markedsføring og forbrug*

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*'This page is not intended for a US Audience'*
*A five-act spectacle on online communication, collaboration & organization.*

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*The Organization(s) of Well-being and Productivity*
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*Management Control, Innovation and Strategic Objectives – Interactions and Convergence in Product Development Networks*

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*Creativity under Constraints*
*Creativity as Balancing 'Constrainedness'*

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*Essays on Family Firms*

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*An empirical study of enacted sensemaking in everyday conflict at work*

**2013**

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*Entrepreneurship in an Organizational Context*

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*Fra ledelse til selvet*
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*Kan giver-idealtyper forklare støtte til velgørenhed og understøtte relationsopbygning?*

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*Dansk CFC-beskatning*
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*Strategi i den offentlige sektor*
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*An eye-tracking and key-logging study*

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*The Internationalization of Emerging Market Firms:*
*A Context-Specific Study*

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*Omtydningen af melankolien og manien som bipolære stemningslidelser i dansk sammenhæng under hensyn til dannelsen af det moderne følelseslivs relative autonomi.*
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*Lederen som oversætter*
*Et oversættelsesteoretisk perspektiv på strategisk arbejde*

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*Open Government Communities*
*Does Design Affect Participation?*

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*En institutionsetnografisk undersøgelse af hverdagen i psykiatriske organisationer*

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*Fortællinger om arbejde*

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*Sustaining lean*
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*Systemic Innovation In The Making*
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*The Structure of Discourse*
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*Issues on supply and demand for environmental accounting information*

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*Website user experience*
*A cross-cultural study of the relation between users´ cognitive style, context of use, and information architecture of local websites*

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*The Determinants for Creating Valuable Inventions*

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*External Knowledge Sourcing and Firm Innovation*
*Essays on the Micro-Foundations of Firms' Search for Innovation*

**2014**

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*Four Essays on Technology Licensing and Firm Innovation*

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*Partnership Drift in Innovation Processes*
*A study of the Think City electric car development*

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*Responsibility Flows in Patient-centred Prevention*

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*Managing Strategic Research*
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*Processuel strategi i organisationer*
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