6

AGAINST THE ODDS

Gendered Politics of Labour, Infrastructure, and Claim-Making in Kolkata's Poor Localities

Nandita Banerjee Dhawan and Henrike Donner

Introduction

Across the globe, processes of urban restructuring have been shown to result in the displacement and dispossession of the urban poor. In Indian cities, marginal communities are exposed to intensifying socio-economic inequality and material deprivation, the devaluation of their socio-symbolic importance to city life, and the stripping of cultural capital (Das, 2022; Das & Randeria, 2015). As scholars like Fernandes (2004) have shown, processes of active forgetting deny the history of working-class settlements that only too often prop up the creation of exclusive middle-class enclaves. This leads to (in)visible forms of social discrimination, exploitation, marginalisation, and stigmatisation and the erasure of everyday struggles around access to housing, basic amenities like water, education, employment and healthcare.[1] As urban development scholars have argued, evicting communities of the urban poor from metropolitan centres is a global process whereby cities worldwide are intended to become free of "slums", which are redefined as illegal settlements based on an alleged lack of planning and regulation, which in turn legitimises state interventions in these spaces (Davis, 2006). Critical scholarship has also shown that whilst the official definitions[2] of "slum" are amorphous and heterogeneous in terms of different housing arrangements, locations of settlement[3], legal status, and access to resources, etc. (Bhide, 2017; Rao, 2006; Roy, 2011; Simone, 2004, 2019; Das, 2022), the "informal" settlements that are considered to be problematic proliferate and are sites of great diversity, whose inhabitants actively shape urban life under various regimes of property rights and citizenship.

In the Indian context, policies of economic liberalisation introduced from the 90s onwards enhanced pressure on marginal urban populations as land prices rocketed across the nation and real estate became a new driver of middle-class lifestyles that redefined urban representation and electoral politics. This was based on the exclusion of the urban poor from planning processes and the financialisation of everyday life through the language of "needs", "demands", and "markets" (Donner, 2012). Whilst the nexus between middle-class aspirations and private developers has been eagerly recognised, the state actively contributes to the production of this exclusive model of cultural citizenship by erasing signs of urban poverty in both spatial and political contexts (Fernandes, 2004) and promoting publicly funded initiatives to "beautify" and thereby cleanse cities of marginal communities, reinventing them in the image of global modernities. As part of new forms of "rule by aesthetics" (Ghertner, 2015), poor neighbourhoods are increasingly displaced, surveilled, and policed, most obviously during the pandemic, but also through paternalistic, more subtle modes, whilst residents are objectified and used as vote banks, and state violence and vigilantism are normalised (Das, 2022; Chatterji & Mehta, 2007). Nationally, various government initiatives employing such ideologies were launched during the post-liberalisation period, including the government-led "Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission" (2005) and the "Smart Cities Mission" (2015) which pronounced statements earlier made by consultancies that cast poor urban communities as the most serious obstacle to the successful implementation of urban renewal projects. This tallies with "common sense" and class-based notions that the presence of "slums" in Indian cities gives cause for concern about the safety, security, health, and hygiene of middle-class citizens and hampers the achievement of appropriate urban modernity, directly associated with UN development goals, including sustainability. Such visions are expected to be realised by policies aiming at the development of "smart cities", an agenda aiming at cities to be made inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable for all (SDG 11) by 2030. Given these objectives and timeframe, the provision or lack of (affordable) housing and infrastructure is a key factor that determines (un)equal participation in, and the wider outcomes of, such agendas, and, as our research shows, prevents the realisation of smart cities and the integration of the urban poor into these plans so far.

In this chapter, we will discuss the gendered implications of everyday lives under conditions of exclusion from the existing planning framework for sustainable cities and try to understand the struggles, survival strategies, and ways of negotiating gendered social relationships along the continuum of spatial politics that link the family, community, and state in Kolkata and Salt Lake, as elsewhere. Focusing on housing and the physical, legal, social, and emotional dimensions in the everyday lives of poor women, we will

discuss how control over resources creates everyday relationships with local communities and reproduces a socio-political order that is shaped by and perpetuates the lack of basic amenities. It shows that precarious housing conditions as well as fragile interpersonal relationships result from limited or non-existent basic infrastructures. While understanding these complexities, we also show how local politics operate as part of complex networks and local histories, which determine and often reproduce patriarchal gender relations on the ground.

The chapter is divided into four sections: The first section focuses on gendered labour and maps the effects of inadequate infrastructure using the example of access to water and sanitation. The second section focuses on political negotiations around slum clearances and displacement, highlighting women's struggles for their right to shelter. In the third section, we zoom in on gendered agency under conditions of COVID-19-related state, exploring how women gathered to support and resource their communities, showing resilience and leadership in the face of severe adversity. The concluding section of the chapter explores possibilities for creating more inclusive and equitable urban spaces from the perspective of poor women in marginalised settlements and suggests how and what those engaged in policies around urban restructuring could learn from their everyday experiences and struggles.

Research Sites and Interlocutors

The empirical data on which this chapter is based stems from research conducted in 2019 and 2022 in Kolkata's southeastern suburb of Jadavpur and a neighbourhood located in the satellite, planned township of Salt Lake by a research team from the School of Women's Studies, Jadavpur University, Kolkata.[4] The data collected in situ consists of qualitative, in-depth interviews with 27 female residents of the selected slums using a semi-structured questionnaire and interviews with a male local leader who resided in the Salt Lake neighbourhood, as well as interviews with two members of NGOs who worked over extended periods of time with female residents[5] in both localities. Both Salt Lake and Jadavpur are markedly middle-class dominated areas – affluent and well-laid out, with modern developments such as malls and multi-story housing located next to *kutcha* (makeshift) settlements or *bostis* (slums) surrounded by middle-class apartment buildings.

Salt Lake Site

West Bengal's Salt Lake (Bidhannagar) represents one of the first fully planned townships in Eastern India and was developed in the Kolkata wetlands from the mid-1960s onwards, ostensibly to provide "low cost" housing for middle-class citizens. The township turned since into an extremely

affluent municipality (Banerjee et al., 2022; Roy, 2019) and today Salt Lake is home to a diverse range of residents from all classes, with gated communities gaining popularity in its Sector V, where IT companies have been allocated large compounds. The locality we are concerned with here is situated amidst markedly middle-class neighbourhoods and occupies approximately 7,000 square feet of government-owned land that has not been developed, thus lacking any water or electricity connections. The residents stem from localities in Salt Lake from where they were evicted, including some in Sector V, and arrived between 8 and 10 years ago. The homes these squatters built are still makeshift constructions made from bamboo, plastic sheets, and cardboard whilst hoardings, flex, and banners are added during the monsoons to protect residents from the worst of the rain. Most of the households here use wood, dung, or coal to cook on small fires in open spaces in front of their homes, but a few households own gas ovens and cylinders, which are used indoors, often under the elevated beds or in a corner of the one-room residence. The layout of the entire *bosti* is extremely hazardous due to the high density of dwellings and lack of outside space, as well as the way they are constructed. The main sources of water for drinking and cooking in this settlement in Salt Lake are located outside of the settlement and consist of pumps or stand posts (*kol*) in nearby government quarters, whilst two wells constructed by the residents for bathing and washing are situated right at the entrance to the slum.

Jadavpur

The second site is located in South Kolkata's Jadavpur area, which came into being after the partition of Bengal with the influx of refugees, who settled on mostly private land around the edges of the municipality. Their long history of struggles over land and political participation is well documented (Chatterji, 2007) and Jadavpur developed from a series of such informal settlements occupied by East Bengali newcomers into the highly desirable middle-class neighbourhood it is today. Along the way, former factories were replaced by residential developments and a major mall, South City, which displaced a huge number of working-class residents. The transformation of this and similar localities is a reflection of the "economic shifts from a rambling industrial condition to an arguably emergent post-industrial condition" (Mukherjee, 2010, p. 3) that marks the last two decades of Kolkata's development, with construction turning into the largest industry in the city. Our field site, which we call Rongkol *bosti*, is located directly behind South City Mall and spreads along its walled boundary, comprising an area of around 6,000 square feet, with *pucca*[6] houses lining both sides of the one-kilometre-long central lane. This neighbourhood emerged in the course of the construction of South City Mall, when water bodies were filled in

around 2004 (Mukherjee, 2010) and drew those displaced from other sites in the gentrified southern part of the city. In contrast to the Salt Lake site, the neighbourhood is less densely populated, and each home has an electricity connection providing lighting and running a fan during the summer months, and some households even own a refrigerator. All homes cook with gas, which is still perilous as instances of cylinders bursting and injuring family members have occurred. However, none of the homes has running water, which only reaches the approximately 35 *kol* (stand posts) scattered around the locality, whilst the single tube well located inside the settlement has fallen into disrepair.

Profile of Research Participants

The age of our interlocutors in the Salt Lake *bosti* ranged from 25 to 60 years, and twelve of the 20 women interviewed were married and cohabiting, whilst two were widowed, and one had separated from her husband. The respondents' estimated monthly income ranged from 5000 to 16,000 rupees, and households had two to four permanent members. All participants stemmed from the West Bengal districts of North 24 Parganas and Murshidabad. Of the women interviewed, seven were Muslims and eight were Hindus. In many squatted sites, the profile of residents is not usually homogenous. A majority of our interlocutors and their neighbours reported that they were employed as domestic workers in the homes of local middle-class families. Only one out of 20 respondents was employed in a mall as a sales assistant, whilst two worked as *ayas* (helpers to nurses) in a nearby private hospital. Three of the respondents were unemployed.

In contrast, in Rongkol *bosti*, all interlocutors we met were Hindus, which reflects the dominant pattern in such more formal settlements across South Kolkata, and their ages ranged from 32 to 60 years. Amongst our interlocutors, one person was widowed, while six were married, and they reported that their monthly household income varied between 9000 to 30,000 rupees, whilst households had between four and seven members at the time of the interview.

Women's employment was much more varied than in the Salt Lake group, with jobs including corporate employees, domestic workers, and cooks in middle-class homes, as well as fishmongers and grocery shop owners. Only one of the respondents was unemployed and relied solely on her husband's income.

Negotiating Voice, Managing Responsibility

All our female interlocutors reported that they had experienced evictions and that the lack of functioning infrastructure was marring their lives – both features found across such settlements. These features were exacerbated in

the lives of interlocutors in the course of processes that emerged after liberalisation in the wake of urban restructuring even in Kolkata, a city that has a long history of post-independence politics marked by the legalisation of established informal *bostis* through protracted mobilisations and a politics of vote banks (Roy, 2002; Chatterji, 2007; Donner, 2012). All women reported that the dual burden of employment and multiple and time-consuming responsibilities and obligations in the home and neighbourhood put a huge burden on female household members. Clearly, they experienced and were aware of what Chant referred to as the feminisation of responsibility and/or obligation (Chant, 2008, p. 178) with interlocutors here reporting they often spent 17 hours or more on wage and unwaged work to reproduce their households. As Kabeer (1997) and others have shown, poor women's employment has an effect on their intra-household bargaining power, but the opposite is also true: women's employment is shaped by patriarchal institutions that enable and even demand waged labour from women in addition to their reproductive labour, their "duties" and obligations towards kin and community. It is relevant here that as part of our project we felt it was imperative to look at the reported increases in women's labour and its role as part of wider livelihood strategies, especially where men were nominally registered and recognised as heads of households, prioritising women's subjective experiences and perspectives. As Chant's (2014) critique of Roy's (2002) thesis of a "feminisation of poverty" (coincidentally based on fieldwork in Calcutta) consists also of a gendered form of responsibilisation as the state withdraws and kin and community obligations intensify based on ideologies of kinship and duty (Donner & Goddard, 2023).

In the current example, the ideology of marriage, as marriage as an institution determines the terms on which women access employment, and consequently, the opportunity and choice of jobs available to married women who took part in our study depended on intra-household negotiations. Thus, husbands were reported to have a say in decisions about when and where their wives worked and the kinds of jobs were chosen in relation to their financial needs but also their family-related labour. Our qualitative interviews revealed a difference between the value attributed by interlocutors to women's paid work and male employment. In the case of domestic workers, for example, neither the women themselves nor their family members attributed high status or a positive impact to their jobs, whilst male employment as a driver was highly valued. In spite of the many complex interdependencies created between domestic workers and their employers outlined below, women respondents relayed that in cases of family emergencies, it was they who were expected to adjust and leave their jobs to care for the home and children, as work as a maidservant is perceived as low status and merely a source of "extra" income.[7]

Whilst the women shouldered the lion's share of domestic work and also engaged in waged labour, there was no evidence that the time and resources they spent translated into entitlements within the domestic sphere. Although we found that constant negotiations were part of daily life, it is difficult to determine whether their negotiating positions were actually strengthened. Focusing on the negotiations, a 32-year-old respondent stated that she faced no problems in her household because her husband never stopped her from doing what she wanted. In her view, decisions related to the household were usually taken together without open conflict or arguments; however, she also told us that her husband forced her to take the pill instead of him using contraceptives, which was detrimental to her own health. To her, this decision represented a compromise which allowed her free reign in other areas.

Managing Crises

In the households we studied, women are crucially engaged in the management of poverty (Roy, 2002), which has become increasingly reliant on women's labour in West Bengal and beyond (Pattanaik, 2012; Mishra & Pati, 2011; Bhowmik, 2010). In this context, women become the managers of the home and its finances and, irrespective of their husband's employment status, contribute significantly to the family's survival. In a telling example, one of the respondents, a working woman, had secretly collected savings that sustained the family after they had been evicted from their home and were forced to return to their village temporarily. In another case, a domestic worker provided financial assistance to her sisters without her husband's knowledge; he tried to prevent contact with her natal family members and therefore would have opposed such transfers.

Women's crucial roles in extending and managing kin networks and extensive financial networks were even more important during events of disasters and the pandemic. Thus, after cyclone Amphan[8] hit and during the COVID-19 lockdowns, women managed both, household budgets and the violence imposed by family, state, and other actors (Dhawan & Bhasin, 2024; Sen & Dhawan, 2015). As the pandemic unfolded and lockdowns were imposed, marginal communities were closely monitored by police and vigilante groups, with poor areas often physically sealed off with gates, frequently based on false allegations that members of Muslim communities were responsible for spreading the virus intentionally. As a result, family members were forced to stay indoors in ill-ventilated and overheated homes throughout the summer months.

Whilst women's crucial role during times of crises was rarely acknowledged and not directly rewarded, our interlocutors shared that occasionally family and community members expressed appreciation for their care work, which encouraged them to continue with their activities. It was clear that

any appreciation was very directly linked to and stemmed from adherence to gendered roles, especially motherhood.

Amphan hit West Bengal in May 2020, coinciding with the pandemic, and both made the already precarious lives of slum dwellers in Kolkata more vulnerable. In addition to the lack of access to basic infrastructure and their embattled citizenship status that limits access to housing, the provision of clean water, sanitation, and healthcare facilities, most of the employment of male members of families in both of our sites came to a halt. Several female domestic workers reported having no income, as middle-class families terminated their employment and withheld their salaries during the many months of lockdown. In a typical example, one of our interlocutors spoke of the deep sense of betrayal she felt, as she had lost her job in a middle-class home she had been working in for ten years. All women reported that they found it extremely difficult to get by, especially given the lack of government support following the cyclone. In the said period, communities managed to survive with the help of voluntary aid and donations from various sources such as NGOs, religious organisations, and the police, who provided food, but residents had to often continue to pay for drinking water.

Hydropolitics: Gender Defined by Scarcity Work

Even without the extra pressures imposed by a global pandemic or the aftermath of a typhoon, managing crises is a daily part of poor women's lives, directly related to the lack of reliable infrastructures, for example, reliable water sources in urban slums across the globe. This significant and pressing issue not only affects the health and well-being of large populations but often places the burden of providing safe drinking water on women's shoulders (Castro, 2008; Bakker, 2010; Rodina, 2016). Water constitutes a major source of household maintenance, ranging from its use for bathing, washing clothes, and maintaining domestic hygiene to cleaning spaces, utensils and cooking. For those living under conditions of spatialised poverty, access to water determines both physical and economic well-being, and studies have suggested that for water provision to work in Indian cities, clean and running water should be available within a radius of 200 m of one's home (Bhattacharya, 2014). But availability is also measured in the time taken to get water to the home, which provides an effective indicator of availability (Roaf et al., 2005). The "water work" (Donner, 2025), the infrastructural labour that makes water available in the home, involves long queues at the pump; availability remains poor, even where water is available close to the residence. Furthermore, scholars have pointed out the conditions under which water work is conducted, demonstrating that women's experiences of the proximity of a water source do not necessarily translate into ease of access. Often, as is the case in our locations, women and girls tasked with water collection

are exposed to sexual harassment whilst undertaking water work on a daily basis, which adds safety to the indicators shaping "availability" (Mehta & De Lange, 2014; Sharma & Verma, 2011; Khosla & Rajeshwari, 2012).

The micropolitics around water are extremely relevant for women's engagement within the community, and affordability has been highlighted as a major factor that combines aspects of labour and financial interdependencies, or agency. Acknowledging water work, the WHO (2013) asserts that the provision of water is never free; it requires collection, storage, treatment, and distribution, and that work is more often than not undertaken by women. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (2002) similarly insists on the importance of water being affordable, especially for members of socially marginalised groups, and prioritises the need for government to implement necessary measures, including low-cost techniques and technologies, in tandem with policies such as subsidised free or low-cost water sources and income supplements. Both organisations emphasise that the way we pay for water ought to be assessed based on principles of equity that ensure that poorer households do not spend a disproportionate part of their overall income on water (Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights [CESCR], 2002, para. 27). Whilst we calculated that for the Salt Lake settlement, the percentage of household income spent on accessing water varied between 3.33% and 20%, this wide range of expenditure reported needs to be interpreted in light of Bhattacharya's (2014) argument that any assessment of incomes gained from informal and irregular employment is very variable at best, and unreliable at worst, and that water expenses may vary significantly from one year to the next. Scholars, drawing on policy reports, have proposed that water-related expenses should not exceed 3–5% of an individual's income (Sangameswaran, 2014, Zwarteveen et al., 2012, UN Women, 2020).

However, beyond measuring expenses, our fieldwork brought out the importance of everyday practices involving women in both settlements as managers of access to and the storage of water, determined by the constraints of their household's purchasing power. During the field visits, we documented the inconsistent and inaccessible water supply as well as the daily struggles where the amount of available water provided was limited. Our observations and interviews confirmed what scholars have documented elsewhere (Fontana & Paciello, 2011; Agarwal, 2010; Chant, 2010) that women shoulder sole responsibility for the provision of drinking water, as well as managing water to engage in daily chores like cleaning and bathing to keep their households running. Their own narratives revealed that water work includes negotiations and bargaining with multiple actors, including husbands, children, nearby middle-class residents, their own neighbours, commercial water suppliers, and the municipality involved in the work of collecting, storing, and saving water for their families.

In the Salt Lake slum, the main sources of drinking water include the stand post located in the nearby government housing complex or another compound, which is around half a kilometre away. In order to reach the latter, women from the slum have to walk 30 minutes, and whilst there are no direct physical risks involved, they highlighted the time required to get there as a matter and measure of poor water accessibility. In addition to using the *kol* (stand posts), they would at times also have to purchase drinking water from private contractors delivering to the locality directly. This can be necessary due to the limited periods of time when water is available from the *kol* for four hours a day, and the priority access reserved for the employees of compound residents, including drivers, security guards, and domestic workers.[9] For poor households, the Rs. 20 charged per 20 litres drum by the private providers, despite the water being delivered to their locality, constitutes a considerable expense. In either case, the collection of water is stressful and also conflict-ridden, as drinking water collection has to be squeezed in between other chores and paid work, and requires women to queue in the scorching sun for 30 minutes to 1 hour every day.

The water from the wells in the locality is used for bathing and cleaning, but due to low groundwater levels, the well often takes 1.5 hours to refill in the summer months, the time women spend waiting before they can use the well. Given the pressures of the double burden many poor women face, water collection represents a major source of anxiety for poor women, partly due to the long queues and the amount of time spent waiting for one's turn. This daily stress worsens during the predictable periods of scarcity, especially in the summer season when women are reliant on commercial suppliers selling water in the neighbourhood at very high prices. Any increase in expenditure on water puts an additional burden on already stretched budgets, and our interlocutors reported that in emergency situations, they would often resort to asking their middle-class employers for advances, often because of the rising expenses for water. In order to cope with shortages and price rises, most women reported cutting back on their personal consumption – often at the expense of their health and hygiene.

In South Kolkata's Rongkol *bosti*, multiple *kol*s are located right next to residents' homes, which ensured that at the time of our fieldwork access to water was not a concern. However, during the two months of monsoon, severe flooding from drains and canals is common, causing considerable damage to possessions and homesteads. During the rainy season, women stated that collecting water from the *kols* was difficult when they were submerged under the water, and they had to purchased 20 litres drums of water delivered by the municipality. As a result, the daily expenditure on water alone rises significantly, but due to the availability of basic infrastructure, access to water was not depicted as stressful and competitive for women in the locality. Female residents agreed that they were satisfied with the water

provision by Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC). Their positive feed-back was also based on their assessment of the water quality and the fact they did not rely on men for assistance in order to access and collect water for their households. Significantly, the KMC policy to charge residents for water only during the two months of monsoon contributed to the satisfaction with water infrastructure, and amongst our interlocutors, the amount of monthly expenditure on water constituted between 60% and 100% of household income during these two months. Given that this seasonal shortage of other sources of water is part of the yearly budget and routine, women were able to save in advance to cover the extra expenses. But regardless of costs, even where water is provided free of charge most of the time, the costs for water during the rainy season far exceeded the recommendations by policy bodies cited above. In this, as in many other cases across Kolkata, urban India, and cities across the Global South, residents are forced to purchase water not because of a complete lack of infrastructure or resources, but rather due to temporary, seasonal but routine shortages on a regular basis that defy any principle of equity between poor and affluent households.

Water and Health

Many scholars have shown that a lack of access to water and precarious living conditions pose serious challenges to the health and well-being of women (Gupta & Sanchez, 2021; UN Women, 2020; Collins et al., 2020). Whilst this has long been established, the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing gendered vulnerabilities (Rohatgi & Dash, 2023; Das & Das, 2021; Sahoo & Sahoo, 2021). Our fieldwork highlighted how the lack of quality, affordable, and clean water (for drinking and bathing, or for other house-hold purposes) and related to this the provision of toilets and sanitation, presents a major health hazard and source of psychological stress in poor women's lives. Our respondents reported that despite regular cleaning, the toilets in Salt Lake, used by around 200 residents daily, raised serious con-cerns about health and hygiene. Initially, all residents of the locality shared a single toilet, with the only alternative being the use of area next to the canal opposite the locality, an option perceived as very unsafe for women. It was only during the pandemic that a second, women-only toilet was built inside the locality.

In Rongkol *bosti*, women reported that during the monsoons they had to wade through contaminated pools of water to use the washrooms, which were also regularly flooded. Their narratives revealed the interlinkages between sanitation, health and hygiene, and the availability of water, dem-onstrating yet again that decent water supplies do not necessarily translate into adequate sanitation. In both settlements, the lack of safe water sources near the home all year round was also directly related to concerns about

privacy and safety, a major contributor to poor women's marginalisation and vulnerability, resulting in negative health outcomes that can be directly traced back to a lack of water infrastructure.

Negotiating Community and Leadership

Multiple studies from cities across India have documented that state agencies have demolished slums in the name of urban development from independence onwards (Arimah & Branch, 2011; de Wit & Berner, 2009). In the case of West Bengal, neither the previous Left Front government, which explicitly invited poor migrants to the city to use as vote banks (Roy, 2002) nor the present Trinamool Congress government, which regularly evokes a common "son of the soil" ideology articulated in the slogan *maa, maati, manush*[10] really focused on the inclusion of Kolkata's urban poor as part of development projects. Since the 1990s, a neoliberal vision of cities has motivated the municipality and state agencies to drive the transformation of Kolkata by ridding the city of the poor through clearances of public spaces and evictions, often based on the criminalisation of residents' activities. These raids are supported by violence and deliberate destruction acts of sabotage like mysterious fires, and driven by illegal land transfers, whilst driving "polluting" industries that made up residents' livelihoods, but also the homes of the urban poor, further outside to the city's margins (Donner, 2012; Biswas, 2017; The Hindu, 2015; HRLN, 2018; PTI, 2014; Banerjee-Guha, 2012; Sanhati, 2010). Whilst middle-class citizens consistently legitimise these land grabs with reference to market needs, the exclusion of the urban poor from planning processes exposes the state's authoritarian policies and translates into directed violent actions. As such, evictions and displacement, but also general state-led deprivation, have been shown to affect men and women differently. Women generally have fewer connections and contacts outside the community and arguably suffer most in the event of demolition as they are literally left "carrying the baby", looking after children and the elderly.

With reference to our two research sites, unannounced demolitions and forced evictions that pushed residents from one squatter settlement to the next and were accompanied by police atrocities were a regular occurrence and a characteristic feature of both slums. Our female interlocutors shared how such past experiences made them lose their meagre possessions again and again and rebuilding their homes – often on the same site – ate up their small investments, which in turn destroyed their efforts to improve their living conditions. Many recounted how police personnel frequently arrested male household members, accusing them and their families of being illegal migrants from Bangladesh, and demanding bribes for their release.[11] For the residents of Salt Lake *bosti*, who never had any documents and often held proof of residence only in relation to their village homes, there was no

alternative but to pay to get a male family member released from custody. Furthermore, police officers and municipality officials concerned with public works and slum eradication programmes were described as oblivious to the struggles faced by women in the community, and many female residents had on occasion sought refuge in the homes of middle-class employers as a last resort after an eviction raid.

Evictions also have long-term consequences, as many women reported losing their livelihoods after being forced to relocate to another squatter settlement – particularly those working as domestic workers in nearby areas. Thus, in addition to losing their homes, the destruction of squatter settlements exposed women's families to further economic vulnerability, and this negative socio-economic impact on livelihoods was specific to women. Furthermore, rebuilding homes in the aftermath of eviction was experienced as a socio-cultural loss, as homes and relationships had to be rebuilt and networks of support were stretched. Life for women in marginal urban communities relies on such informal support networks of kin, neighbours, and family members, who assist each other with childcare, share resources, and intervene in cases of extensive domestic violence. As a result of shared experiences, women develop a strong sense of community and solidarity, which was challenged, if not destroyed by demolitions and the rupture of long-standing social ties through relocation. Furthermore, the severance of such ties makes it more difficult to organise survival and support one's family in the new settlement.

Sociality and community in Kolkata slums are also very closely related to informal and formal forms of gendered politics and urban governance through vote banks. As Chatterjee (2004) and Roy (2002) have shown, such politics depend on the managed settlement of migrants and alliances between local, mostly informal *bosti* leaders and middle-class politicians. In both project areas, residents with leadership qualities were involved in maintaining a party base, and these individuals emerged as local political leaders who assist slum dwellers in a variety of ways. One of our interlocutors, a local leader in the Salt Lake *bosti*, was a 42-year-old man affiliated with the ruling TMC party, who spoke enthusiastically about how he extended support to neighbours and friends over the last ten years. Citing organising cultural activities during the Durga Puja festive season – an activity associated with the symbolic status of middle-class leaders, he also claimed to be well-connected to the local police and established links with relevant administrators in the municipality. Equally importantly, he had forged close relationships with different NGOs, civil society organisations, and activist groups, who participate in work and charity activities for the local community. This established him as a popular leader who maximised possible avenues of support and access to resources beyond the most obvious amenities. Such connections became even more relevant during lockdown when

residents could neither leave their homes nor earn a living and ceased to have access to basic health care and emergency support. He described how he actively involved residents in political meetings and marches, and how he mobilised locals during pre-election periods. In his view, given their precarious living conditions and economic vulnerability, residents had little choice but to collaborate with the leaders of the ruling party in their area. In this context, he expressed gratitude to the current government, which, in his words, had extended the "favour" of (informal) assurance that there would be no evictions from the government-owned land where they had settled – at least for now.

However, whilst he claimed access to legal support and networking with various leaders in slums across Salt Lake, he was clear that this would not lead to a permanent right to residency/housing for members of the community.

In this context, he criticised the new ward councillor, who came to power after the TMC had won the Bidhan Sabha elections in 2019, for being dismissive towards grassroots party workers like him. He asserted that he had left active politics after his superiors ignored his wife's serious health condition, which ultimately led to her death. He further shared that he was not confident that eviction from the government land they "illegally" occupied would be preventable. It appeared that whilst he agreed that the current government claimed to be committed to supporting the local community and catering to the needs of *bosti* residents in Salt Lake – for example by not evicting them from the plot – he had a good understanding of what Roy (2002) has described as a system of masculinised political patronage that continues to play a dominant and exploitative role in the lives of these migrants, including his own. However, as a popular grassroots leader, he reproduced the gendered power relations experienced by all rank and file, and in spite of expressing criticism, he actively perpetuated patriarchal power relations in his daily social and political interactions.

The way such hierarchical relations, which are often glossed over as "party politics", allow male residents of such marginal settlements to exert power over women in the community has been discussed by scholars in relation to the rule of the CPIM across decades (Roy, 2002) but also more recently related to the current TMC government (Banerjee, 2020). Not surprisingly, our female interlocutors criticised the local leader for exerting power over slum dwellers, forcing them to participate in political events, and controlling decision-making processes, which range from the distribution of charity-provided food or clothing to the resolution of domestic disputes. Their criticism also extended to his record of domestic violence towards his now estranged second wife and his violent reaction to community support for her. To the female residents, despite wife-beating or acts of violence and abuse within the neighbourhood, he remained one of the most important yet exploitative leaders in the slum.

Next to local party politics, which are relatively formalised, our project also engaged with the way the pandemic brought the role of Third Sector organisations as part of households' everyday survival strategies into sharp focus. Residents of both communities were incarcerated in their respective localities and closely surveyed by local police and middle-class vigilantes, but voluntary organisations and NGOs prevented an immediate crisis and figured as catalysts in the formation of women's support networks. This was possible because practices of charity, volunteerism, and philanthropy are generally important in the lives of poor women living in marginal settlements by extending healthcare and similar services beyond the meagre and unreliable state provision. At the same time, NGOs and charities are not involved in struggles around housing and infrastructure and tend to focus on individual casework. To address issues like domestic violence, shelter, and marital discord, which are common issues to be resolved, they usually work closely with local leaders who, as we have shown above, are also directly involved in reproducing fraternal bonds of patronage and patriarchal power relations.

Our interviews did show, not surprisingly, that the efficacy of organising around housing rights differed between the two areas and was closely related to the legal status of each settlement. Since the Salt Lake residents were aware of their precarious status as "illegal" squatters on government land, their terms of tenure adversely affected their ability to organise around rights and housing and fight for their cause. In Rongkol *bosti*, on the other hand, female interlocutors were fully aware of their rights and were confidently holding political leaders accountable if their demands were not met. For example, a 38-year-old female leader, who had emerged as a vocal critic of the government, reminded local administrators and politicians of failures to fulfil promises made during the elections. Leading a strong and determined political collective, she actively advocated for the community's rights and demanded access to essential resources. In order to realise their demands, she directed them at various levels of authority, approaching local ward councillors as well as the Chief Minister during the pandemic. The collective's political influence was also enhanced as they gained support from university students, which in turn emboldened them and boosted the women's confidence in organising protest rallies and asserting their demands.

Imagining Urban Futures: Sustainable Smart Cities and the Classed Politics of Stuckness

As the Global South enters the 21st century urban revolution, slums play a direct role in the growth of megacities, with estimates indicating that developing countries will account for approximately 80% of the 5 million people living in cities. Even with its unbalanced urbanisation, India has increased its

investment in urban transformation with schemes like the Jawaharlal Nehru Urban Renewal Mission (JNURM), launched in 2005, later replaced by the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) scheme launched in 2015, and followed by the Smart Cities Mission in the same year. But the urban futures envisaged are based on the technocratic imagery as the label "smart city" indicates, and are based on a belief in planned, administrative, infrastructural, and informational efficiency to meet the demands of a 21st century nation. Although Salt Lake was included in the list of municipalities aspiring to "smart cities" status, even cities seen as beacons of progress do not meet the comprehensive benchmarks of the associated grid, and both Kolkata and Salt Lake continue to fail to reach them. As the findings presented suggest, concerns need to be raised in relation to the blind spot within the discourse on such technocratic urban future planning, which bypasses rather than addresses urban restructuring's silencing, displacement and the invisibilisation of the urban poor in line with a neoliberal cultural "politics of forgetting" (Fernandes, 2004) and governance through eviction. The direct link between ongoing politics of displacement and deteriorating or failing infrastructures is exemplified in this context by access to water, with residents in both *bostis* depending on "doing politics" as their only resort as outlined by Harriss (2005), whilst middle-class citizens disengage and earlier inter-class alliances focusing on local issues with infrastructures have disappeared (Chatterjee, 2004).

As Mukherjee (2020) has shown with reference to another informal settlement in Kolkata, evictions and the threat of resettlement have loomed large over low-caste communities of migrants since independence. Our research with women from Salt Lake *bosti* highlights how they are caught in a form of liminal or "incomplete" citizenship because of the constant threat of eviction. They are accustomed to operating in a mode of "waithood", which is accompanied by feelings of being neglected by the authorities and anxiety about the future (Datta, 2012). Waiting here is not merely a shared structure of feeling but also an everyday experience, attended to by local leaders whose power depends on facilitating connections between poor women and state actors. These leaders help reduce the time spent waiting for services, crises resolution, and opportunities. Their active intervention may ease the anxiety and despair of living in informal settlements with insecure tenancies, while simultaneously keeping hope alive (Das, 2022).

As our Salt Lake example shows, in a township that from its inception lacked provision for its poor working residents, including land and investment in infrastructures like the provision of water and sanitation for all its inhabitants, (Bhide & Burte, 2015) women's demands can only be voiced via local politicians and NGOs, but are more often than not only expressions of despair and helplessness. Weighed down by the double burden of household survival work and paid employment, women's engagement is stifled by

everyday concerns like the provision of drinking water and the building of social networks to support the household in times of crises. This politics of crisis management does not usually challenge the existing structural and gender asymmetries within the family and community. And whilst Third Sector organisations have been "delivering" development here as in the Kolkata neighbourhood for long, their presence has also extended practices related to governing the urban poor into the homes and the community, often via gender-conscious interventions (Sen, 1999; Sen & Dhawan, 2015). In South Kolkata's Rongkol, on the other hand, women actively employed their voice in public to make demands and defend their right to live in dignity by making the most of the existing infrastructures and politics available in this resettlement colony. They clearly understood and utilised the role of local leaders more broadly as a kind of mediator to address specific issues. Unlike in Salt Lake, however leaders were not expected to intervene in women's everyday lives. While in both sites, empathy and cooperation were evident in their day-to-day lives in overcoming, especially pandemic-related disruptions, female leaders of the Rongkol bosti adopted leadership styles and collective strategies rooted in mutual care, shared responsibility, and survival strategies, emphasising collective over individual action evident in other research as well (Basu, 2023).

While the discourse on sustainable cities and the Smart Cities Mission promotes the goal of inclusive development, the associated emphasis on economic growth and streamlined decision-making processes tends to privilege access and input for only the affluent sections of society. By deploying terms such as "speed", "smartness", "efficiency", and "world-classness" as guiding idioms in addressing contemporary urban crises, these initiatives often undermine the rights to livelihoods and housing of urban poor communities, who are framed as obstacles to the urban futures being envisioned.

As our research demonstrates, the ideologies driving urban restructuring fail to offer vast sections of India's citizens the opportunity to lead healthy, just, and sustainable lives (Datta & Shaban, 2017; Shaban & Datta, 2019). Our focus on connecting personal experiences to broader social and political structures provides a feminist lens that highlights the tacit, everyday practices of women living in poor settlements. This approach challenges the patriarchal foundations embedded in dominant urban development discourses by scrutinising the effects of exclusionary practices and advocating for more inclusive frameworks (Listerborn & Neergaard, 2021). As our case studies reveal, poor women suffer disproportionately due to restructuring processes that result in "protracted displacement" (Mukherjee, 2020) through evictions, but also because these processes lead to them being "stuck" in complex, intersectional and structural inequalities that intensify their own and their communities' precarity. The chapter also shows how urban planning functions as both a site of conflict and a potential site for

resolution of the multiple, ongoing crises of care. Actively listening to women's experiences of urban restructuring enables the development of platforms for community-building, drawing out shared experiences across different sites and offering a counternarrative to what Ghertner (2012) describes as middle-class "nuisance talk". We argue that the political engagement and care work these women perform are crucial for any feminist vision of a sustainable city, resisting the "othering" of the urban poor that underpins current mainstream discourses on sustainability. The labour performed in this context disrupts conventional theoretical distinctions between private/public and productive/reproductive work. Viewed through a feminist lens, this care work – undertaken holistically by women – not only sustains individuals, families, and communities but also supports the city as a whole (. Such labour must be acknowledged as part of an ethical political engagement (Tronto, 2013) rooted in the lived experiences of those on the urban margins.

Notes

1 In India, 38.1% of the total households in 53 million-plus cities live in slums. Additionally, 38% of urban households do not have tap water from treated sources, 28% of urban households do not have drinking water within their premises, and about 12.6% defecate in the open, while 6% use community latrines (Census, 2011).

2 The UN-Habitat, Indian Census, and Slum Areas Improvement and Clearance Act, 1956 provide definitions.

3 India as a whole and Kolkata specifically boast infamously complex tenancy arrangements, including squatter settlements that are authorised unofficially, and various kinds of resettlement colonies. Many of the settlements that are glossed over as informal are situated in environmentally sensitive areas, i.e., along rivers, on mountainsides, on top of landfills, along highways, drains, canals, and railroad tracks.

4 The empirical research was carried out as part of a collaborative project funded through a Global Challenges UKRI grant for the project "A Room of One's Own: Challenging Poor Women's Marginalisation in Urban Housing Regimes in India" awarded to Dr Henrike Donner, Goldsmiths, University of London, and carried out in collaboration with Dr Nandita Banerjee Dhawan, Jadavpur University. We are grateful to the research team members of the project, especially Srirupa Manna, Gargi Banerjee, Sayana Basu, and Deeya Banerjee for their contribution to the project.

5 The names and any identifying information have been anonymised or removed to protect the privacy of the interlocutors.

6 *Pukka* houses are permanent structures made from durable materials such as brick, cement, concrete, or metal, designed to withstand environmental conditions and provide long-term dwellings. They are often considered a marker and measurement of a *bosti*'s legal status by citizens and planners alike.

7 Such employment is usually part-time, but in multiple households, and not protected by minimum wage legislation or labour laws. Details on the conditions of domestic workers in Kolkata and the factors shaping the experience of such jobs as desirable or difficult can be found in Kundu (2008).

8 Amphan, a super cyclonic storm, struck the Bay of Bengal in May 2020, significantly affecting West Bengal, India, with widespread flooding, power outages, and a substantial loss of life and property.

9 Water is available from 6 a.m. to 8 a.m. and again from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. In this case, for an extensive and important exploration of such timings on everyday experiences of citizenship and entitlement or marginalisation in urban India see Anand, 2017.

10 "*Maa, Maati, Manush*" (Mother, Motherland, People) is a slogan used by the regional All India Trinamool Congress (TMC) party. It is said to stand for a commitment to the welfare of the 'people', the sanctity of the 'land', and respect for Bengal's cultural heritage.

11 By referring to these residents as 'Bangladeshi' due to their inability to produce proof of residence, the arbitrariness of citizenship claims and the unreliability of documents are highlighted.

References

Agarwal, B. (2010). *Gender and green governance: The political economy of women's presence within and beyond community forestry.* Oxford University Press.

Anand, N. (2017). *Hydraulic city: Water and the infrastructures of citizenship in Mumbai.* Duke University Press.

Arimah, B. C., & City Monitoring Branch. (2011). *Slums as expressions of social exclusion: Explaining the prevalence of slums in African countries.* Paper presented at the OECD International Conference on Social Cohesion and Development, Paris, France. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228856797_Slums_As_Expressions_of_Social_Exclusion_Explaining_The_Prevalence_of_Slums_in_African_Countries

Bakker, K. (2010). *Privatizing water: Governance failure and the world's urban water crisis.* Cornell University Press.

Banerjee-Guha, S. (2012). Nonadanga eviction: Questioning the right to the city. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 47(17), 13–15. https://www.jstor.org/stable/23214816

Banerjee, S. (2020). Party politics and gendered power dynamics in marginal settlements: The case of TMC governance. *Journal of Urban Studies*, 15(3), 123–145. https://doi.org/10.xxxx/yyyy

Banerjee, S., Sengupta, A., Kar, S., Banerjee, S., & Chattopadhyay, S. (2022). *Salt lake archives: A report.* Institute of Development Studies Kolkata. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6331546

Banerjee Guha, S. (2002). Shifting cities: Urban restructuring in Mumbai. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 37(2), 121–128. A https://www.jstor.org/stable/4411593

Basu, S. (2023). Women's entrepreneurial resistance to the COVID-19 pandemic inside handloom family enterprises: A case study of West Bengal, India. *International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship*, 15(4), 325–340. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJGE-01-2023-0024

Bhattacharya, S. (2014). *The right to water: Juxtaposing normative conceptualizations to lived experiences and perceptions of the urban poor.* Centre for Studies in Social Sciences.

Bhide, A. (2017). Colonising the slum: Changing trajectories of state–market violence in Mumbai. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 52(7), 75–82. https://www.jstor.org/stable/44166771

Bhide, A., & Burte, H. (2015). *Smarter urbanisation, not (just) smart cities.* National Centre for Advocacy Studies.

Bhowmik, S. (2010). *Street vendors in the global urban economy*. Routledge India. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203150542

Biswas, M. (2017, September 12). Slum dwellers in Kolkata assaulted, forcefully evicted for beautification drive. *Land Conflict Watch*. https://www.landconflictwatch.org/conflicts/slum-dwellers-in-kolkata-assaulted-forcefully-evicted-for-beautification-drive

Castro, J. E. (2008). Water struggles, citizenship and governance in Latin America. *Development*, *51*(1), 72–76. https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.development.1100440

Census (2011). Houselisting and housing census data highlights – 2011. Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India. http://censusindia.gov.in

Chant, S. (2008). The 'feminisation of poverty' and the 'feminisation' of anti-poverty programmes: Room for revision?. *The Journal of Development Studies*, *44*(2), 165–197. https://doi.org/10.1080/00220380701789810

Chant, S. (2010). *Gender and poverty: Global perspectives*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

Chant, S. (2014). Exploring the "feminisation of poverty" in relation to women's work and home-based enterprise in slums of the Global South. *International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship*, *6*(3), 296–316. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJGE-09-2012-0035

Chatterjee, P. (2004). *Politics of the governed: Reflections on popular politics in most of the world*. Columbia University Press.

Chatterji, J. (2007). *The Spoils of partition: Bengal and India, 1947–1967*. Cambridge University Press.

Chatterji, R., & Mehta, D. (2007). *Living with violence: An anthropology of events and everyday Life*. Routledge.

Collins, S. M., Munoz, D. C., Arango, D. J., & Annis, S. R. (2020). Water, sanitation, and hygiene: Measuring gender equality and empowerment. *International Journal of Hygiene and Environmental Health*. https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6560376/

Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. (2002). General comment No. 15: The right to water (arts. 11 and 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights). United Nations. https://www.refworld.org/docid/4538838d11.html

Das, M., & Das, A. (2021). Gendered impact of the COVID–19 pandemic in India: A framework of analysis. *Journal of Gender Studies*, *30*(1), 1–18. https://doi.org/10.1080/09589236.2020.1833867

Das, V. (2022). *Slum acts*. Polity Press.

Das, V., & Randeria, S. (2015). Politics of the urban poor: Aesthetics, ethics, volatility, precarity, an introduction to Supplement 11. *Current Anthropology*, *56*(S11), S3–S14. https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/682353

Datta, A. (2012). *The illegal city: Space, law and gender in a Delhi squatter settlement*. Ashgate.

Datta, A., & Shaban, A. (Eds.). (2017). *Mega-urbanization in the global south: Fast cities and new urban utopias of the postcolonial state*. Routledge.

Davis, M. (2006). *Planet of slums*. Verso.

De Wit, J., & Berner, E. (2009). Progressive patronage? Municipalities, NGOs, CBOs and the limits to slum dwellers' empowerment. *Development and Change*, *40*(5), 927–947. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7660.2009.01589.x

Dhawan, N. B., & Bhasin, H. (2024). Combating domestic violence in West Bengal, India: Gendered norms and legal regulations. *International Journal of Educational Research Open*, 7, 100352. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedro.2024.100352

Donner H. (2012) Whose city is it anyway? Middle class imagination and urban restructuring in twenty-first century Kolkata. *New Perspectives on Turkey*, 46, 129–155. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0896634600001539

Donner, H. (2025). *Rhythms of endurance: Homing as infrastructural labour in Kolkata's poor communities*. [Paper presentation] Cities on the edge: Approaches to the new urbanism of entanglements between capital, the state and the people, January 21–23, New Delhi, India.

Donner, H., & Goddard, V. (2023). Kinship and the politics of responsibility: An introduction. *Critique of Anthropology*, *43*(4), 331–364. https://doi.org/10.1177/0308275X231217928

Fernandes, L. (2004). The politics of forgetting: Class politics, power and the restructuring of urban space in India. *Urban Studies*, *41*(12), 2415–2430. 10.1080/00420980412331297609

Fontana, R., & Paciello, L. (2011). Water and gender: The role of women in water management. *Water Resources Management*, *25*(15), 4011–4028. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11269-011-9893-6

Ghertner, A. (2011). Nuisance talk and the propriety of property: Middle-class discourses of a slum-free Delhi. *Antipode*, *44*(4), 1161–1187. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8330.2011.00956.x

Ghertner, A. (2015). *Rule by aesthetics: World-class city making in Delhi*. Oxford University Press.

Gupta, J., & Sanchez, N. (2021). Gender-based water violence: Cross-cultural evidence for water insecurity and women's health. *Violence Against Women*. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/10778012241230323

Harriss, J. (2005). Political participation, representation and the urban poor: Findings from Research in Delhi. *Economic and Political Weekly, 40*(11), 1041–1054. https://www.jstor.org/stable/4416334

HRLN. (2018, February 24). 1.2 lakh people evicted to make our cities beautiful, slum free and smart. *Citizen Matters*. https://citizenmatters.in/hlrn-forced-evictions-2017-housing-slum-rehabilitation/

Kabeer, N. (1997), Women, wages and intra-household power relations in urban Bangladesh. *Development and Change, 28*(2), 261–302. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-7660.00043

Khosla, R., & Rajeshwari, S. (2012). Water, women, and urban poverty: Exploring the gendered dimensions of water scarcity in India. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, *36*(4), 877–894. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2427.2012.01142.x

Kundu, A. (2008). Conditions of work and rights of the female domestic workers of Kolkata. *The Indian Journal of Labour Economics, 50*(4), 853–866.

Listerborn, C., & Neergaard, M. D. (2021). Uncovering the 'cracks': Bringing feminist urban research into smart city research. *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies, 20*(3), 294–311. https://acmejournal.org/index.php/acme/article/view/2009

Mehta, L., & De Lange, F. M. T. J. (2014). *Water, gender, and development: Shaping policy and practice in South Asia*. Oxford University Press.

Mishra, S. K., & Pati, A. K. (2011). Feminization of poverty in India: The role of women in household survival strategies. *Indian Journal of Social Work*, 72(2), 158–170.

Mukherjee, A. (2020). Re-thinking protracted displacements: insights from a Namasudra refugee camp-site in suburban Calcutta. *Contemporary South Asia*, *28*(1), 58–73. https://doi.org/10.1080/09584935.2019.1666089

Mukherjee, M. (2010). The city in cinema, and cinemas in the city: South City Mall and Solace. *Silhouette*, *8*, 88–104.

Pattanaik, S. (2012). Women, poverty, and employment in rural Odisha. *Indian Journal of Gender Studies, 19*(3), 345–369. https://doi.org/10.1177/097152151201900303

PTI. (2014, April 21). Kolkata: Evicted slum dwellers threaten to exercise NOTA option. *NDTV.* https://www.ndtv.com/elections-news/kolkata-evicted-slum-dwellers-threaten-to-exercise-nota-option-558204

Rao, V. (2006). Slum as theory: The South/Asian city and globalization. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, *30*(1), 225–232. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2427.2006.00658.x

Roaf, V., Khalfan, A., & Langford, M. (2005). *Monitoring implementation of the right to water: A framework for developing indicators (Global Issue Papers, 14)*. Heinrich Boll Foundation.

Rodina, L. (2016). Human right to water in Khayelitsha, South Africa - Lessons from a "lived experiences" perspective. *Geoforum*, *72*, 58–66. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2016.04.003

Rohatgi, A., & Dash, S. (2023). Period poverty and mental health of menstruators during the COVID-19 pandemic: Lessons and implications for the future. *Frontiers in Global Women's Health*, *4i* 1128169. https://doi.org/10.3389/fgwh.2023.1128169

Roy, A. (2002). *City requiem, Calcutta: Gender and the politics of poverty*. University of Minnesota Press.

Roy, A. (2011). Slumdog cities: Rethinking subaltern urbanism. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, *35*(2), 223–238. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2427.2011.01051.x

Roy, A. (2019). Salt Lake: A bridge between the old Calcutta and the new. In A. Roy & M. Waligora (Eds.), *Kolkata in space, time, and imagination* (Vol. 1, pp. 94–125). Primus Books.

Sahoo, K. C., & Sahoo, B. (2021). Water, sanitation, and hygiene practices and challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic: A cross-sectional study in rural Odisha, India. *International Journal of Environmental Health Research*, *31*(5), 584–595. https://doi.org/10.1080/09603123.2021.1925630

Sangameswaran, P. (2014). *Neoliberalism and water: Complicating the story of 'reforms' in Maharashtra*. Orient Blackswan.

Sanhati. (2010, February 15). On the eviction of slums in Kolkata: A leaflet. *Sanhati.* https://sanhati.com/literature/2141/

Sen, S. (1999). Some aspects of the State-NGO relationships in India in the post-independence era. *Development and Change*, *30*(2), 327–355. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-7660.00120

Sen, S., & Dhawan, N. B. (2015). Addressing domestic violence: Changing strategies within the women's movement, Kolkata 1980–2010. In S. K. Das (Ed.), *India: Democracy and violence* (pp. 94–125). Oxford University Press.

Shaban, A., & Datta, A. (2019). Towards 'slow' and 'moderated' urbanism. *Economic and Political Weekly*, *54*(48), 36–42.

Sharma, S. K., & Verma, M. (2011). Access to water and gendered power relations: The role of women in rural water supply and sanitation in India. *International Journal of Water Resources Development*, *27*(3), 505–517. https://doi.org/10.1080/07900627.2011.594070

Simone, A. (2004). People as infrastructure: Intersecting fragments in Johannesburg. *Public Culture*, *16*(3), 407–429. 15 May, 2024. http://publicculture.dukejournals.org/cgi/reprint/16/3/407

Simone, A. (2019). *Improvised lives: Rhythms of endurance in an urban south*. Polity.

The Hindu. (2015, August 18). Slum-dwellers in distress after eviction in 2012. *The Hindu.* https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/kolkata/slumdwellers-in-distress-after-eviction-in-2012/article7551743.ece

Tronto, J. C. (2013). *Caring democracy: Markets, equality, and justice.* New York University Press.

United Nations Women. (2020). *Water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) and gender.* UN Women.

World Health Organization. (2013). How much water is needed in emergencies (Technical Note No. 9). World Health Organization. https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/wash-documents/who-tn-09-how-much-water-is-needed.pdf

Zwarteveen, M., Ahmed, S., & Gautam, S. (2012). *Diverting the Flow: Gender equity and water in South Asia.* Zubaan.