

CASE STUDY MIGRANT CONSTRUCTION WORKERS' HOUSING IN AHMEDABAD: SEASONAL LABOUR MIGRATION, TRANSLOCAL LIVES, AND URBAN GOVERNANCE

Renu Desai & Shachi Sanghvi – 2018



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Erasmus+ Programme
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Language Editor: Nalini Ramachandran



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Suggested Reference:

Desai, Renu / Sanghvi, Shachi (2018) Migrant Construction Workers' Housing in Ahmedabad: Seasonal Labour Migration, Translocal Lives, and Urban Governance. Report prepared for the Building Inclusive Urban Communities (BInUCom) project, funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union: <http://moodle.donau-uni.ac.at/binucom/>



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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the lived experiences and practices of seasonal migrants who come from the tribal borderlands of eastern Gujarat, southern Rajasthan, and western Madhya Pradesh to work as construction labourers in the city of Ahmedabad. The case study attempts to understand the factors and dynamics that shape these seasonal migrants' housing experiences, practices, choices, and constraints in Ahmedabad. For this purpose, two key analytical lenses have been used: one is the multilocal and translocal lens; the other is the urban governance lens vis-à-vis informal housing. The paper elaborates on three key findings:

First, labour recruitment and migration pathways play a significant role in shaping migrants' pathways of housing in the city. For migrant workers who look for construction work through a naka (informal, roadside labour market), their own kin and other migration-source-area-based social networks crucially shape these pathways, thus influencing their housing location and typology.

Second, while migrant naka workers come to inhabit a particular location and informal housing typology through these networks—becoming squatter migrants, homeless migrants, or tenant migrants—urban governance, with respect to these particular typologies, plays a predominant role in shaping their conditions, everyday experiences, and practices around housing.

Third, along with urban governance, the translocal lives of these migrants which are forged through multilocal livelihoods and multilocal households—along with the village being the main venue for social events, networks, and obligations and a relatively more secure place to recover in, in case of ill health—shape their habitations in the city in vital ways.

In conclusion, the paper discusses the implications of these three findings for urban policies, planning, and governance. ♦

“What are the factors and dynamics that shape the seasonal migrants' housing experiences, practices, choices, and constraints in Ahmedabad?”

ABBREVIATIONS

AMC	Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation
GCWWB	Gujarat Construction Workers' Welfare Board
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ICDS	Integrated Child Development Services
MHUPA	Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation
MUD	Ministry of Urban Development
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NSSO	National Sample Survey Office
NULM	National Urban Livelihoods Mission
PDS	Public Distribution System
PMAY	Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana
RAY	Rajiv Awas Yojana
RCC	Reinforced Cement Concrete
SUH	Shelter for Urban Homeless
TPS	Town Planning Scheme

CONTENTS

Abstract	3
Abbreviations	4
PART 1	
Introduction	6
PART 2	
Seasonal Migrant Labour in Indian Cities	8
PART 3	
Research Methodology	12
PART 4	
Pathways to Housing in the City: Role of Translocal Networks of Migrant Naka Workers	15
PART 5	
Urban Governance and Seasonal Migrant Workers' Housing	20
Squatter Settlements on Public/Private Lands	20
Homeless Settlements in Public Spaces	24
Rental Accommodation	25
PART 6	
Translocal Lives and Migrants' Habitations of the City	29
PART 7	
Conclusion and Future Directions	37
Acknowledgements	41
Author Bio	41
References	42

PART 1 INTRODUCTION

Seasonal and circular migrants are a significant part of the labour force in many Indian cities. Large numbers of these migrants work in the manufacturing and service sectors, particularly in the construction sector, small hotels and roadside food stalls, security services, and domestic work. Bhagat (2014) estimates that the largest proportion of seasonal and temporary migrants, about 36 per cent, is employed in construction. The economic contribution of seasonal and temporary migrants, based on the major migrant-employing sectors, is estimated to be 10 per cent of the national GDP (Deshingkar & Akter 2009). Despite being central to the national and urban economy, the significance of these migrants is unrecognised by national, state, and urban local governments, creating a huge gap in policy, planning, and governance, and leading to the social, economic, political, and spatial exclusion of migrant workers and their accompanying family members in their urban destinations. Scholars have noted that seasonal migration is expected to increase in India over the coming few decades. Based on data from 2007–2008, the annual rate of temporary labour migration has, in fact, been estimated to be seven times higher than that of permanent labour migration (Keshri & Bhagat 2013). Progress towards meeting the Sustainable Development Goals in India, especially Goal 11—“making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable”, Goal 3—“ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages”, Goal 6—“ensuring availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all”, and Goal 8—“promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive growth and decent work for all”, will hinge upon recognising and addressing seasonal and temporary labour migration.

Research on seasonal migration in India has picked up in the last decade (e.g. Deshingkar 2008; Deshingkar & Akter 2009; Srivastava 2012a; Bhagat 2014; Coffey et al. 2015), some of which also outlines the urban policy-, planning-, and governance-related gaps and suggests necessary interventions. However, there is still little in-depth research on these migrants' housing conditions, experiences, and practices in cities, creating challenges in thinking through the implications for urban policy, planning, and governance.

This paper aims to address this lacuna in research by examining the lived experiences and practices of seasonal migrants who come to work as construction labourers in Ahmedabad (**Figure 1**). Using two analytical lenses in this investigation—a multilocal and translocal lens; and, an urban governance lens vis-à-vis informal housing—the case study seeks to understand the factors and dynamics that shape seasonal construction workers' housing experiences and practices in the city.

The paper is structured as follows:

It begins with a discussion of key questions examined in the seasonal migration literature and the insights and gaps in this literature vis-à-vis migrants' housing in the city. It then outlines the research methodology. Following this, it presents the findings in three sections: In the first, it discusses labour recruitment and the migration pathways through which migrants forge a livelihood in the construction sector, to trace how these play a significant role in shaping their pathway of housing in the city. The second focuses on how urban governance with respect to three informal housing typologies inhab-

ited by migrant *naka* workers—squatter settlements on public and private lands, homeless settlements in public spaces, and rental accommodation—shapes housing conditions and everyday housing experiences and practices. The third discusses the multilocal and translocal lives of these migrants to explore how this shapes their habitations in the city. In conclusion, the paper discusses the implications for urban policies, planning, and governance. ♦

PART 2

SEASONAL MIGRANT LABOUR IN INDIAN CITIES

Research on seasonal, circular, short-term, and temporary labour migration—terms that are often used interchangeably, but sometimes also refer to slightly varying migration patterns—in India has picked up over the last decade. To provide context as well as to highlight insights from and gaps in the available research literature on seasonal migrants' housing in the city, this section discusses four key questions: the magnitude of seasonal migration and the nature of seasonal labour migration streams; its drivers; its impacts, especially on household poverty and migrants' working and living conditions in the city; and, interventions to address the social, economic, and political exclusion of migrant workers.

Numerous studies have attempted to gauge the magnitude of seasonal labour migration in India, pointing out that national surveys do not capture this type of migration. This is because the Census does not collect any data on seasonal migration, while the NSSO surveys capture only part of the seasonal migrant population due to definitional issues.¹ Thus, while the NSSO 2007–2008 estimated around 14 million short-duration migrants, scholarly estimates of seasonal migrants in India vary between 40 million (Srivastava 2012b) and 100 million (Deshingkar & Akter 2009), based on microstudies. Gaps in official data have led to a gap in knowledge and policies. Lower castes and tribes have been found to be more involved in short-term migration than other groups (Srivastava 2005; Deshingkar & Akter 2009). Microstudies have also shown that migration streams from specific regions are often linked to specific occupations. For instance, in Ahmedabad, migrants from Gujarat, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh—the group that is the focus of this paper

—form a significant portion of the construction workforce in the city. Tribals from these three states are often unskilled workers, while migrants from Rajasthan are also found in skilled areas like carpentry, stone laying, and stone polishing (Aajeevika Bureau 2007).

Drivers of seasonal migration have received significant attention in literature. Moving away from the binary notions of pull or push factors, recent studies illuminate how both these factors play a role. Available literature also throws light on both structural drivers of this migration and the reasons that lead households to decide to engage in seasonal migration. Among structural drivers are growing regional inequalities (with growth being concentrated in some pockets), the spread of labour-intensive production and services, and under-employment in rural areas (Deshingkar 2006); spatial and sectoral differences in distribution of economic activity and employment opportunities (Agarwal & Chandrashekhara 2015); and, the wage gap between rural and urban areas, with relatively more regular work being available in urban areas than in rural areas where work is tied to the crop season (IOM 2005). Many studies point to the construction sector as crucial in driving seasonal migration flows in India. Mosse et al. (2005) have argued that in the tribal belt of Gujarat, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh, labour migration is a means to cope with below-subsistence agriculture and debt. Also located in this regional context is Coffey et al.'s (2015) study which explains that short-term migration is a way for agricultural households to insure themselves against poor harvests, loss of livestock, or other risks inherent in small-scale agriculture.

1 NSSO captures short-term migrants defined as household members who spend 30–180 days in a year outside of the village for work.

They write that theories of the 'new economics of labour migration' point to households diversifying their income streams by getting family members to split between locations—i.e., some members migrate and some remain in the village to do farming. In this region, however, they found that at times entire households would migrate in some seasons while staying put in the village in other seasons for agricultural work, thus diversifying income streams across the seasons of a year. The authors point to short-term migration rates as well as the determinants of this migration differing by season. These studies point to seasonal migration as a permanent part of a household's long-term economic strategies.

Scholars like Deshingkar (2008) have discussed these as "multi-locational livelihood strategies". But Deshingkar (2008) has also argued that the decision to migrate cannot be explained through simplistic push-and-pull analyses even though it is useful to look into the new pushes and pulls facing people who live in marginal areas throughout India. She points out that the decision of households to migrate is complex: "it is not just a simple rational choice by individuals seeking to maximize incomes but a decision rooted in social relations and influenced by history, culture, and policy regimes". She further points out that migration among the poor is often circular rather than permanent not only because "of their desire to 'keep a foothold' in home areas during the agriculture season, but also [due] to the lack of social security and barriers to settling more permanently in urban areas" (Deshingkar et al. 2008).

An important discussion in the migration literature revolves around the impacts of migration. Broadly speaking, there are three theoretical approaches to migration, each of which entails a particular view of these impacts. Neoclassical theories argue that migration would reduce poverty and inequality, while structuralists—arguing that migrant labourers are exploited by capitalists, leading to accumulation by the latter at the cost of the

former—see migration as neo-bondage and not as something that could lead to poverty reduction or asset accumulation for the migrant (IOM 2005). The third viewpoint lies between these two theories as it argues not only for "recognizing the potential benefits of free movement, but also recognizing that power relationships and imperfect markets exist, thereby compromising the benefits to poor labourers" (IOM 2005; Deshingkar & Start 2003). Empirically, studies seeking to understand migration impacts have traced remittances, their use, and the extent to which they reduce household poverty (Deshingkar et al. 2008b; Deshingkar & Akter 2009; Surabhi & Kumar 2007; Korra 2011; Bhagat 2014; Srivastava 2005).

Some scholars have sought to differentiate between circular migration for survival or coping and circular migration as a means of mobility and accumulation, arguing that circular migration does not affect everybody in the same way and that "the returns from migration can improve over time as migrants acquire more knowledge, confidence and skills, enabling them to cut out exploitative middlemen and contractors" (Deshingkar & Start 2003; Deshingkar 2008b). Other scholars emphasise that migration does little to improve household incomes and conditions, and that it may even put the migrant in a state of perpetual debt, although high indebtedness, in fact, drives households to join seasonal migration streams. This is because labour migration may itself involve informal debt relations. For instance, having studied migrant construction workers from the tribal belt of Gujarat, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh, Mosse et al. (2005) have argued that "for a few, migration is a route of upward social and economic mobility, but for the vast majority, it perpetuates debt and dependence, exposing the poorest to extreme hardship and cruel exploitation". They have also argued that "migration may index neither transforming social mobility nor the erosion of rural ways of living", but it may have become "the only means by which settled agricul-

tural livelihoods are possible or sustainable” and “valued agrarian lifestyles can be reproduced”. This points to not only migration’s impact on agriculture and rural lives, but also how migration becomes a part of a household’s multilocal livelihood strategy.

Literature also reveals the risks and vulnerabilities faced by migrants at their migration destinations resulting from their treatment as illegal residents of the city and their lack of access to subsidised healthcare, subsidised food and fuel through the public distribution system, state-run schools, and proper housing and sanitation (Deshingkar 2006). One study, which was carried out in the migration source areas in Gujarat, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh, found that 85 per cent of those surveyed had no formal shelter while away from their village; some cooked and slept at the construction site where they were working; and, 58 per cent “simply did these things out in the open in public places” (Coffey et al. 2015). Numerous studies point out that these risks and vulnerabilities are caused by the fact that these migrants cannot establish their identity in the city, that is, they are unable to gather those essential proof-of-city-residence documents such as voter cards or ration cards, as this would mean giving up these documents in their village. They are not willing to do this because of their desire to maintain a foothold in their village as they still practice agriculture and also due to the barriers to settling more permanently in urban areas. This creates a catch-22 situation—the migrants do not get documents of the city because of the barriers to settling there permanently, and this absence of documents in turn creates barriers to improving their urban living conditions. Beyond this, migration studies have not looked at migrants’ housing in the city in depth.

There are a few studies on housing that have looked at the migration question though. For instance, a study from Ahmedabad identifies different housing typologies occupied by seasonal construction workers

and documents the conditions pertaining to tenure security, basic services, and housing quality (Desai et al. 2014)². Another study—focused on the rental housing of migrant workers in Gurgaon, including that of seasonal migrants (Naik 2015)—has found that while informal rentals offer advantages such as affordability, flexibility, and proximity to livelihoods to the migrants, they are also sites of exploitation and poor living conditions. The study also revealed that social networks that carry over from places of origin, along with household migration strategies, strongly influence housing choices in the informal rentals market.

Yet another study, which is from Indore, looks at the housing conditions amongst four different migrant groups in that city: old settlers (living in Indore since more than five years), seasonal migrants, migrants who have been in the city since 1–2 years, and migrants who have been in the city for less than a year (Agarwal 2016). This study found that seasonal migrants experienced some of the most significant disparities, with 68 per cent being squatters or living in temporary housing conditions, 31 per cent living in rental accommodation, 73 per cent living in housing made from temporary materials, and 69 per cent lacking access to any sanitation facility and thus practising open defecation.

Studies have also explored the legislative frameworks with regard to the impacts of migration, often focusing on construction workers and their “institutional access and representation” (Mosse et al. 2005) and highlighting the provisions and loopholes in labour laws and the governance issues that lead to poor enforcement of these laws (Mosse et al. 2005; Srivastava 2005; Surabhi & Kumar 2007; Ferus-Comelo 2014; Banerjee n.d.; Deshingkar 2008; Desai 2017). In fact, Deshingkar and Akter (2009) argue that the human costs of migration are high not due to migration itself per se, but due to faulty implementation of protective legislation and loopholes in law.

2 Also see Naraparaju 2014, which studies construction workers’ living conditions in Navi Mumbai.

Some studies have also argued that the systems of recruitment specific to the construction industry lead to the lack of a clear relationship between the ultimate employer and the workers. This leads to migrant construction workers' dependence on intermediaries—who are both their patrons and exploiters—which creates further vulnerabilities and risks with respect to work conditions, wages, health, and housing and amenities (Mosse et al. 2005; Srivastava 2014).

Migration literature has outlined interventions to address the social, economic, and political exclusion of migrant workers. Urban housing with basic services is often identified as a necessary area of intervention, although specificity on what these interventions should be is generally lacking (Deshingkar et al. 2008; Surabhi & Kumar 2007). An exception is a study by UNESCO (2013), which has listed 10 key strategies for the integration and inclusion of internal migrants, including seasonal migrants, in urban areas: registration and identity, political and civic inclusion, labour market inclusion, legal aid and dispute resolution, inclusion of women migrants, inclusion through access to food,

inclusion through housing, educational inclusion, public health inclusion, and financial inclusion. Under inclusion through housing, provision of dormitory accommodation and rental housing, enabling private housing, upgrading slums in situ, and provision of basic services have been proposed. In another study, Bhagat (2014) has argued that “migration policy should not be viewed merely as part of labour policy, but needs to be embedded in urban development policy and planning”. The study points out that Master Plans of cities hardly reflect a concern for migrants, adding that night shelters and hostels for working men and women could be a solution if incorporated in city plans.

These insights from the literature on migration provide a background to seasonal migrant workers and the dynamics shaping their migration patterns, work, and lives. While some studies reveal the lack of proper housing and basic services amongst migrants in cities and identify some of the main reasons for this, only a few probe into the dynamics of migrants' housing and their related experiences and practices in the city.

PART 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This paper uses two theoretical lenses to study migrants' housing in Ahmedabad city. The first, coming from the migration and mobilities literature, is the **lens of multilocality and translocality**. Lohnert and Steinbrink (2005) have pointed out that a growing proportion of the population in developing countries is organising livelihoods in the context of informal social networks spanning the rural-urban divide. In this context, they have proposed a translocal perspective for analysing this population's daily life as well as the complexity of specific developmental issues. The concept of translocality opens up an interrogation of those elements of migration which create links between places and people, connect the two, shape them, and transform them. Other scholars of migration have used the concept of multilocality, which has been broadly described by Lillian Trager (2005) as "the attachment to and participation in social and economic activities in several places". Many migration scholars have, in particular, examined multilocational livelihood strategies and multilocational households in this context (Deshingkar & Farrington 2009; Schmidt-Kallert 2012).

In this paper, we examine the following through a translocal and multilocal perspective:

- (1) How seasonal migrants access housing in the city—specifically, whether and how kin/social networks that span the village and the city play a role in shaping migrants' pathways of housing in the city;
- (2) The importance of these kin/social networks in creating housing spaces of value to migrants;
- (3) How the translocal lives of these migrants, which include multilocal livelihoods and multilocal households, shape their habitations of the city.

The second lens is that of the **politics and practices of urban governance** vis-à-vis informal housing of the urban poor. Over the past few decades, substantial literature has emerged on this front, focusing particularly on state practices which delegitimise poor, informal neighbourhoods and their residents as well as on the state's extension of recognition, tenure security, and basic services to poor, informal neighbourhoods through negotiations by their residents in the political domain. However, little has been researched on this front, in the context of informal housing spaces of seasonal migrants who are one of the most marginalised groups amongst the urban poor. This brings to the forefront the differentiated practices of the state with regard to different types of informality, in addition to the prominent role of non-state actors in providing (or denying) tenure security and basic services in informal rental housing, one of the housing typologies inhabited by migrants.

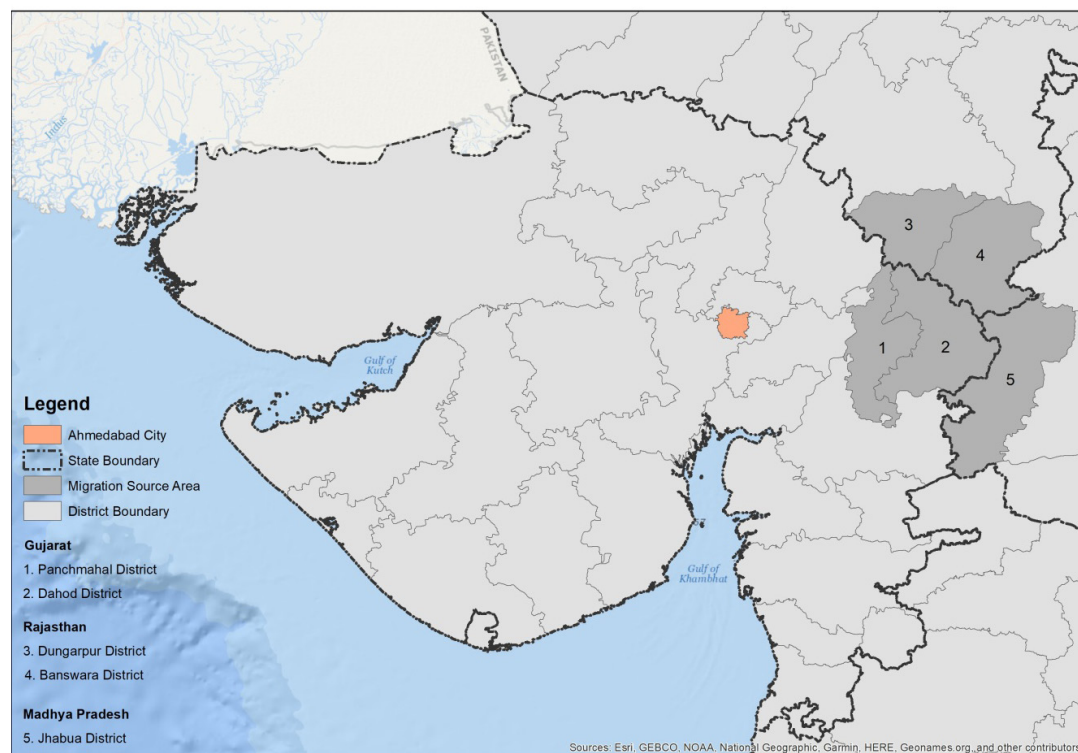
This paper is based on research carried out between October 2016 and June 2017 through fieldvisits to 11 migrant settlements in Ahmedabad, semi-structured interviews and informal conversations in 14 seasonal migrant households, and discussions with municipal officials. The fieldvisits to the 11 migrant settlements (**Figure 2**) covered five housing typologies and included four squatter settlements, two homeless settlements, three rental clusters, one public housing site, and one open plot provided by the contractor where some migrants were living in the open while others had built temporary shacks. Ten out of the 14 interviewees lived in eight of these 11 settlements, which covered all five housing typologies. Although interviews were not carried out in three

settlements, informal conversations gave insights into urban governance. We could not visit the settlements of four interviewees because the interviews were conducted at their villages (more on the village as a site of our interviews in **PART 6**); and either they did not return to the city before the study was completed, or we were unable to connect with them after they had returned to the city. The 14 interviewees comprised migrant families (10 interviews) and single male migrants (4 interviews); unskilled workers (9 interviews) and *karigars* or skilled workers (4 interviews). One of the interviewees was a *muqaddam*, a labour chief/broker who assembles and provides labour gangs to contractors; although, in the past, he too had worked as a construction labourer.

Based on our literature review, we approached the research with the premise that although the focus was to understand seasonal migrants' housing in the city, this had to involve understanding the translocal and multilocal dynamics of their migration and lives. This required us to visit their villages. The research methodology evolved in this context. We met over 20 male migrants across different migrant settlements and labour *nakas* in Ahmedabad before Diwali in 2016. Some of these meetings had been facilitated by two NGOs who work with migrant construction workers. These meetings comprised informal conversations with the migrants during which we also explored the possibility of visiting their villages just after Diwali (when they would still be in their village and may have time for a longer interview).

Figure 1

Map showing seasonal migrant construction workers' main source areas in Gujarat, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh



Source: Map prepared by Shaurya Patel

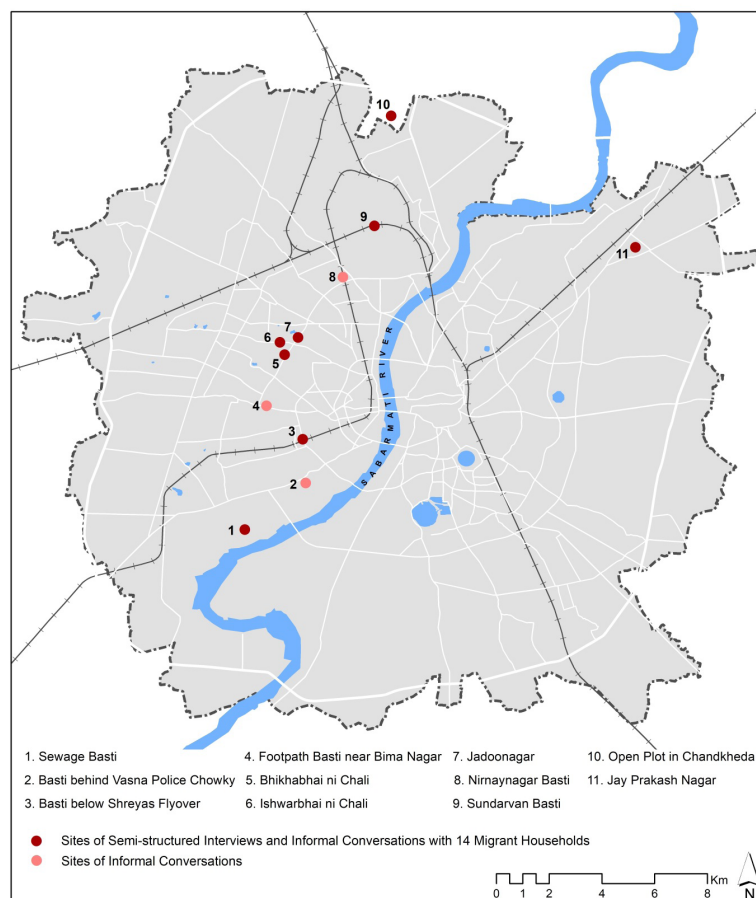
These migrants were from different villages in the tribal belt of Gujarat, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh (**Figure 1**). When we visited the region just after Diwali, we were able to visit the homes of six of the migrants. We carried out interviews with five of them; at the sixth home, the male migrant whom we had met in Ahmedabad was not present, but we interviewed his elder brother (also a migrant to Ahmedabad). Visiting them in their village allowed us to make observations that helped us articulate more relevant probes about migration, translocality, and multilocality when conducting the interviews. During our village visits, we also met some other migrants to Ahmedabad—we interviewed six of them.

Most of the 12 migrants we thus interviewed in the villages had informed us that they would return to work in Ahmedabad for the winter season (from December till the Holi festival in March). We intended to meet them in their settlements and carry out follow-up interviews with them at that time. However, eight of them did not return to the city in the winter season at all. In four cases, this was due to the health of a family member. In one case, the interviewee did not return but her husband returned with two of their teenage children, so we visited him and interviewed him. Among the four interviewees who did return in the winter season, we were able to do follow-ups with two of them; one did not want

to be interviewed again; and one had temporarily moved out of his rental room to live and work on a construction site for several months. In the summer season (from April to June), we found that three other interviewees had returned to Ahmedabad, at which time we visited their settlements and carried out the follow-up interviews and had informal conversations. In short, we were able to carry out follow-up interviews and informal conversations in six of the 12 households interviewed earlier at their villages. We also undertook interviews and informal conversations in the city in two more migrant households during the winter and summer seasons, although we never visited their village homes. The research methodology evolved thus, as we tried to study a group of people whose lives stretched out on a regular and yet uncertain basis across their village and Ahmedabad city. ♦

Figure 2

Map of Ahmedabad showing the location of migrant settlements visited for the case study



Source: Map prepared by Shaurya Patel

PART 4

PATHWAYS TO HOUSING IN THE CITY: ROLE OF TRANSLOCAL NETWORKS OF MIGRANT NAKA WORKERS

Migrants enter the construction labour market through one of two main labour recruitment pathways—the *naka* or the labour gang. The recruitment pathway is closely tied to the migration pathway. Those who enter the construction labour market as part of a labour gang migrate with the gang to the city through arrangements made by an intermediary (a sub-contractor or *muqaddam*), while those who enter the construction labour market by approaching a *naka* for work migrate to the city through kin and other migration-source-area-based networks (**Box 1**). These pathways directly shape the migrants' housing location and typology in the city. In this paper, we focus on migrant *naka* workers.

Migrant *naka* workers come to the city on their own or with their kin. In both cases, their kin and other social networks linked to their source region play a significant role: they inform new migrants about where to migrate and which part of the city to go to, which *naka* to approach, and where they could live. This could be an existing squatter settlement or an open plot where they could get a spot for a nominal monthly rent; it could also be a footpath, a place by the roadside, or under a flyover; or, it could be informal rental accommodation.

Take the instance of Anil-*bhai*, an unskilled worker from Dahod district, who first came to Ahmedabad city when he was 11–12 years old. He came with his father who was living along the railway tracks in a squatter settlement known as Sundarvan Basti and was regularly going to the Akhbarnagar *naka*. During the first few years of his migration, Anil-*bhai* came to Ahmedabad only during his school

holidays in summer; later, after he had left school at the age of 14, he started coming to the city for longer periods. Ever since, Anil-*bhai* has been living in the Sundarvan Basti and going to the Akhbarnagar *naka* to look for work. Today, his father no longer comes to the city for a long duration, but there are a number of families from their village and nearby villages residing in Sundarvan Basti.

Migrants may change their housing locations and typologies (and urban governance may contribute to these changes)—here too, new kin networks developed through marriage or contacts made in the city with other workers from their source region play a role in helping them shift to a new home. Mukesh-*bhai*, another migrant, first came to Ahmedabad when he was 11–12 years old, along with his uncle who was already living in a squatter settlement in the Manek Baug area and who went to the nearby Jivraj *naka*. He continued to live here for several years including a few years after he got married, during which time he built his own shack. Then, due to repeated harassment by the police and a nearby middle-class society, he and his wife moved out of this settlement and joined her relatives in a squatter settlement along the railway tracks near the Shreyas railway crossing and started going to the Ambawadi *naka*. Around seven years ago, they moved with their kin group a short distance from the railway tracks to live under the Shreyas flyover, where they continue to live today.

Yet another example is Lalit-*bhai* from Banswara district in Rajasthan, who first migrated as an adult. His eldest brother was already a migrant worker in

Box 1

Labour Recruitment Pathways in the Construction Sector

The construction industry functions through multiple rungs between those initiating a construction project and the labourers. The former is a registered building contractor / construction company or approaches one, who then hires sub-contractors for different jobs such as RCC work, plastering, painting, electrical work, etc. The labour force might be provided by the sub-contractor himself or through a sub-sub-contractor; so, the one who directly recruits the labourers functions as the labour contractor. Sometimes, recruiting labour involves another tier of intermediaries such as a *karigar* (skilled worker) or a *muqaddam* (labour chief/broker).

Labour contractors resort to two main systems of recruitment: the *naka* and labour gangs. Labourers looking for work congregate in the early mornings at the *naka*. Ahmedabad has an estimated 70 *nakas* (Desai & Sanghvi 2019). Labour contractors approach the labourers at the *naka* and hire them for the day. While there are informally fixed daily-wage rates at the *nakas* for skilled and unskilled work, the wages may depend on the negotiation skills of the labourers and the labour contractors. In this system of recruitment, labourers face an uncertainty of employment almost every day and do not get enough work for all the working days of a month.

A labour gang is a group of labourers generally organised in their village by a *muqaddam* or labour contractor who then brings them to the city to work on a specific construction site for a fixed period of time. The labourers are basically contract workers, but without any written contracts. The labour contractor/*muqaddam* estimates the work

and negotiates wages and conditions (shelter, water, etc.) with the contractor/sub-contractor. He makes travel arrangements for the labourers and makes payments to them. Labour gangs may comprise a kin group, with the *muqaddam* being part of the kin group, or they may be a band of workers from different villages, unknown to each other. Labourers who are part of labour gangs get regular work throughout the period they are employed for, but their wages are lower than that of *naka* workers.

There are other labour recruitment pathways, but these are generally not entry points for migrant workers and may develop over time as a result of the migrant going to the *naka* regularly and developing strong contacts with some contractors. For instance, a *naka* worker might get relatively regular work from a contractor for a month or more, during which he is paid less than the usual *naka* rates. In other instances, a *karigar* may get regular work from a contractor for himself and a group of labourers assembled by him, and all of them may go to live on the construction site for the duration of the work. An unskilled worker might also be recruited by the contractor at the *naka* and, after a while, offered regular work and temporary accommodation on-site for the duration of the work. Five of our interviewees have sometimes got work through these other pathways.

Workers may also go to the *naka* intermittently to look for work while being part of a labour gang if their labour is not required daily (like two of our migrant interviewees). Some workers also resort to different recruitment pathways during different times of the year (like one of our migrant interviewees).

Ahmedabad and lived in a private open plot in the Kurnagar area. Lalit-*bhai* joined him there, paying a monthly rent of Rs.20 to the landowner. Some years later, he moved from Kurnagar to the Gurukul area through contacts he had developed with other workers from Banswara. In the Gurukul area, he began to live in a *maidan* (an open plot) known as the University *maidan* and started going to the nearby Gurukul *naka*. During this period, Lalit-*bhai*'s younger brother Mani-*bhai* began migrating to Ahmedabad, living with him in the *maidan*, and going to the Gurukul *naka*. They recalled tying up their belongings every morning into a bundle and leaving it at the nearby rental room of a migrant worker known to them. *Chalis*, which refer to clusters of rental rooms (singular: *chali*), began to increase in the Memnagar area near Gurukul. At some point, the brothers moved from the University *maidan* to one of these *chalis* to live in a room with other single male migrants. Lalit-*bhai* became a skilled worker over the years and when his wife Kanta-*ben* joined him in the migration, they rented a room in Memnagar, generally living in Bhikhabhai ni Chali or the adjacent Ishwarbhai ni Chali both of which had a substantial number of migrants from Banswara.

Paras, Lalit-*bhai*'s eldest son who is now 19 years old, started migrating from their village to the city a few years ago to work as an unskilled worker during his school holidays in Diwali and summer. He came with his father (who migrated by himself or with Kanta-*ben*) or his uncle Mani-*bhai*. Since both Lalit-*bhai* and Mani-*bhai* were living in rental rooms when Paras first migrated to the city, he was introduced directly to informal rental accommodation. This was also the case with Deepak-*bhai*, a 22-year-old unskilled worker from Banswara, who first came to the city 2–3 years ago. He came to the city through his network of male relatives who shared a rental room in a *chali* in Memnagar and went to the Gurukul *naka*; as a result, he too secured a spot in a shared rental room in a *chali* and started going to this *naka*.

As these examples illustrate, the pathways through which migrant *naka* workers first entered the construction labour market, migrated to the city, and secured a place to live in are intricately interlinked. The location of their kin's residence in the city and the knowledge and support their kin can offer crucially determine these pathways and, thereby, a migrant *naka* worker's housing.

Living among kin or others from their migration source area was of great significance to almost all the migrant *naka* workers. Take the example of Vinod-*bhai* who lives among some 250 migrant households in a squatter settlement known as Sewage Basti. His shack, like that of the others, is made of plastic sheets, jute bags, and plywood. There is no provision of water, sanitation, or electricity in the settlement. Vinod-*bhai* is a skilled mason from Dahod district; his wife is an unskilled worker or 'helper'. They earn Rs.20,000–25,000 per month when they work as a *jodi* (couple), although, given the time that they spend in the village for farming in the year, their average monthly earnings in the city would be around Rs.15,000.³

The first time we asked Vinod-*bhai* whether he would consider moving into rental accommodation so as to access better-quality housing, he pointed out that in Sewage Basti, he was surrounded by people he knows; so, at the end of a long day at work, he could spend a few hours talking to them and sharing problems and information. As we further probed his willingness to spend a part of his earnings on rent, he added that as a *skilled mason*, he may be able to afford renting a room, provided he found work regularly; however, many of his kin who also lived in Sewage Basti were unskilled labourers and could not afford rental accommodation.

In a follow-up interview with him, we asked him again if he would consider moving into rental

3 Vinod-*bhai* has good contacts at the Juhapura *naka*, so he gets 20–25 days of work in a month. As a *jodi*, he and his wife earn Rs.1,000 per day (Rs.700 is paid to Vinod-*bhai* and Rs.300 to his wife), thus earning Rs.20,000–25,000 monthly. However, they spend 2–2.5 months of the year in the village for farming and to celebrate festivals. Vinod-*bhai*'s wife also lives in the village during the monsoon for farming and he makes more back-and-forth farming-related trips during this time. Thus, their monthly city earnings in the monsoon are Rs.12,600–14,000 if he gets 18–20 days of work in a month. Sometimes, they also do 'regular work' for a contractor, but this entails lower wages for Vinod-*bhai* (Rs.600 per day instead of Rs.700) and, at times, lower wages for his wife too (Rs.250 per day instead of Rs.300). Their average monthly earnings have been estimated based on these factors.

accommodation: he reiterated that he was willing to spend money to live in a better house in the city, but he and his wife got a lot of support from her relatives who lived around them, so he would not consider moving to a rental house unless their kin were also able to rent a place nearby.

The case of Lalit-*bhai*, who is also a skilled mason and whose household earnings are similar to that of Vinod-*bhai*, is another good example of the significance accorded to living amongst kin or others from the migration source area. However, in his case, he is willing to spend more than he thinks he can afford to, to live among people from Banswara district (which is where he is from). Since many years, Lalit-*bhai* and his wife have been living in rental accommodation in one of two *chalis* in Memnagar because migrants from in and around their village are also living there. The rent levels and housing quality varies widely in these two *chalis*: rooms with a monthly rent of Rs.2,000–2,500 are in dismal conditions; one has to fill water from a common tap and resort to open defecation. At the other extreme are rooms costing Rs.4,500 per month that are in a two-storeyed building—here, each room has running water facility and access to shared toilets. Over the years, Lalit-*bhai* and his wife have lived in rooms of different rent rates.

In the summer of 2017, they lived in a poor-quality room paying Rs.2,500 as monthly rent. Lalit-*bhai* explained that he could not afford a better room at the moment because they had not worked since the past several months. His wife's pregnancy and following health issues (she had delivered a stillborn baby) and their eldest son's illness thereafter had forced them to stay put in their village. At the time of the follow-up interview, they had been going from the Gurukul *naka* to work in Hebatpur, and they had discovered that better rental accommodation was available for lower rents in many *chalis* in that area. Lalit-*bhai* was therefore contemplating getting a room on rent there, so that they did not have to live

in such dismal conditions. But he explained that he had not made up his mind yet, since the migrants in those *chalis* were from the Dungarpur district of Rajasthan and not from Banswara. He pointed out that although the room they were currently living in was dismal, they knew many of the families living around them—they were from in and around their village. He added that once the monsoon would begin, they would most likely rent one of the rooms costing Rs.4,500 a month, to stay in better-quality housing *and* near the people they knew, even though this rent was not particularly affordable to them at the moment. These examples show how some migrant workers may prioritise living amongst their kin and other migration-source-area-based networks over housing quality (Vinod-*bhai*) or even over affordability (Lalit-*bhai*).

Some of our migrant interviewees had first come to Ahmedabad as part of labour gangs, but they had later become *naka* workers. Kin networks were important in these shifts in various ways. Shankar-*bhai*, an unskilled worker from Dahod district, had migrated with a labour gang to Ahmedabad for a few years. Then, around 8–9 years ago, instead of returning to the village or going on to another site with their muqaddam – as labour gang workers generally do on the completion of work at a construction site – Shankar-*bhai* and his wife joined their kin living in Sundarvan Basti and started going to the Akhbarnagar *naka* like them. Kin networks enabled Shankar-*bhai* to make this shift.

Vinod-*bhai*'s case is very different. He spent his first several years as a construction labourer by getting work and migrating through labour gangs, generally with his parents. After marriage, he and his wife joined her kin in a labour gang and migrated to work on a construction site on the outskirts of Ahmedabad. The labour gang was given a place to live in, in the open on the rooftop of a warehouse that was next to the construction site. When the work got over, Pervez-*bhai*, the contractor on whose

site they had been working, showed them an open plot in the Juhapura area, where he undertook most of his construction projects, and also suggested that he would employ them whenever he could. Vinod-*bhai*, his wife, and many of her kin moved to this plot (some migrants from Madhya Pradesh were already squatting here). They built shacks on this land and started going to the nearby Juhapura *naka* for work. While Pervez-*bhai* enabled the shift by pointing out a potential location to reside in, it was the entire kin group that moved to live there.

These examples reveal the different ways in which kin and migration-source-area-based networks are central to how seasonal migrant *naka* workers access and organise their housing in the city. ♦

PART 5

URBAN GOVERNANCE AND SEASONAL MIGRANT WORKERS' HOUSING

The state and the market fail to provide formal housing options for the urban poor, more so for seasonal migrants (Desai 2017). As a result, the housing typologies that migrant *naka* workers enter—squatter settlements on public/private lands; homeless settlements in public spaces; and, rental accommodation—are largely informal in nature. Subsequently, the politics and practices around urban informality, which include differentiated responses by the state to different types of informality and to different types of migrants (seasonal/permanent, old/new, migrants from different ethnic backgrounds, etc.), go on to shape migrant *naka* workers' housing conditions, experiences, and practices.

Squatter Settlements on Public/Private Lands

The state has framed slum-related legislations and policies over the past several decades to address squatter settlements. Under these, the municipal government extends basic services such as water and sanitation to these settlements, which in turn provide some level of de facto tenure security. However, these interventions are generally restricted to squatter settlements that have been officially recognised as 'slums'. Often, such interventions materialise only after political negotiations have taken place between the residents and local political leaders. In Ahmedabad, official recognition has also been granted through slum surveys by the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC). The last survey was done in 2009 under the Rajiv Awas Yojana (RAY), a programme by the central government. The report prepared for RAY states that "AMC has adopted a 'whole city' approach, to ensure that all slums within

a city will be covered irrespective of size of settlement, land ownership, etc." and that the following definition was used to identify a slum settlement: "A slum is a compact settlement of at least 10 houses that are built mostly of non-durable materials and poor construction, temporary [in] nature, crowded together with inadequate sanitary and drinking water facilities" (AMC 2011a, 2). However, the survey does not capture many settlements housing migrant *naka* workers, although the above definition indicates that they too should have been included.

The AMC does not acknowledge these settlements and, therefore, has not provided any basic services to them. Seasonal migrant workers too do not approach the AMC for basic services due to a combination of reasons: absence of documents bearing their urban residential address; lack of mobilisation to collectively address these issues; and, because they are hard-pressed for time, given their livelihood struggles in both the city and the village. Local politicians do not visit these settlements as seasonal migrants exercise their vote in their village and not in the city. The migrants thus attempt to forge relations with state or non-state actors in the immediate vicinity to access water, rather than try and obtain municipal water provision for their settlement. In Sundarvan Basti, some local residents had managed to get a common water tap many years ago, but it is inadequate, and most of the seasonal migrants—families of Shankar-*bhai*, Pankaj-*bhai*, and Anil-*bhai* included—walk to nearby municipal water distribution stations and/or middle-class societies to fill water.

Figure 3

Sewage Basti (left) and the sewage treatment plant (right) from where residents fill water



Image Courtesy: Renu Desai

In Sewage Basti, which is far from any residential/commercial structures, a few residents have pooled money and installed shallow wells with handpumps, but most, including Vinod-bhai's family, fill water from the adjacent sewage treatment plant (**Figure 3**). Residents of another settlement, located near the Vasna police chowky, fetch water from the nearby middle-class societies or from a private well in an adjacent plot. In return, often, they sweep the house compounds of the middle-class residents or the plot of the well's owner; some also pay the well's owner. Some residents of this settlement had written to their municipal ward office, requesting for water connections, but they received a written reply stating that the AMC could not provide them water connections as they were from "out of town".⁴ Such a written reply is rare, but verbal responses also follow the same pattern as many municipal officials are of the view that these migrants are temporary residents, even though, in many instances, they have been living at the same place for years, during their periods of stay in the city.

Their settlements also lack sanitation. Many resort to open defecation, while some use nearby pay-and-use toilets. Under the Swachh Bharat Mission guidelines, provision of toilets is to be delinked from tenure (MUD 2014). However, in Ahmedabad, we find that migrant settlements on the lands of the Indian Railways and even on the municipal and state government lands are denied individual or community toilets.

In Sundarvan Basti, an NGO working with migrant construction workers advocated for mobile toilets. In response, the AMC provided one mobile toilet with six seats (three each for men and women) at one end of the linear settlement, which is on the Indian Railways' land. The AMC could not place the toilet on this land due to a lack of permission from the Railways; therefore, the AMC placed it across the road, next to a vacant plot (**Figures 4 and 5**).

4 This letter was shown to one of the authors in 2014.

Hansa-*ben*, a migrant from Dahod, lives further down the length of the settlement, opposite a middle-class housing society. She and a few others explained that the AMC had not placed the mobile toilet near their shacks because the middle-class residents had raised an objection. Some of the migrants did share a good rapport with the middle-class residents—some residents allowed the migrants to keep their belongings on their rooftops for free when they returned to their villages for a long period. However, they had opposed the installation of a mobile toilet along the road outside their

society. As a result, Hansa-*ben* and others living in this area continued to defecate along the adjacent railway tracks. She pointed out that ever since multistorey buildings had come up in the vicinity, anyone from the buildings could see them if they went to the tracks to defecate in daylight. In most of the settlements, makeshift structures made of cloth and plastic sheets are erected for bathing; these structures do not always offer enough privacy. As there is no drainage or paving, it is common for the settlements to get waterlogged during monsoon.

Figure 4

Location of mobile toilet opposite Sundarvan Basti



Source: Map prepared by Shaurya Patel

Figure 5

Mobile toilet (on the left) opposite Sundarvan Basti



Image Courtesy: Renu Desai

These unrecognised settlements also face lower tenure security. While the AMC has often provided resettlement housing to those who have been evicted from recognised slums (albeit, usually after there is pressure from the grass roots and the judiciary), seasonal migrants face the additional challenge of proving their eligibility for resettlement in the absence of proof-of-urban-residence documents. Sundarvan Basti is on the Railways' land, but a part of this land was reportedly sold to a builder some years ago; the AMC/Railways then tried to evict the residents in 2015 without offering them any resettlement option. Through an NGO's intervention, the residents got a stay order on the eviction from the court and then filed a public interest litigation for resettlement. There is no court judgement on the matter yet, but the issue of proving eligibility for resettlement will remain complicated for the seasonal migrants who make up about half the settlement's population.

The Fatehwadi Canal Basti which was on municipal land—this is where Vinod-*bhai* and Prakash-*bhai* lived—faced an eviction order in 2015 as the land was required for the Metro project. This was a precedent case, in which around 40 evicted families were given resettlement housing despite being seasonal migrants and not having any official proof-of-urban-residence documents. This was due to both persistent efforts of an NGO and the liberal resettlement and rehabilitation policy of the Metro project (RITES 2014). Albeit, the authorities tried to avoid implementing the policy until they were pressurised to do so. Under the liberal policy, those who had been evicted were given housing at Jay Prakash Nagar, a public housing site, as well as monetary compensation. But several families, including that of Vinod-*bhai*, were left out, because they were absent when the authorities had come to collect the documents and photographs of beneficiaries. Vinod-*bhai*'s family and other such families moved to live in the nearby Sewage Basti.

Many squatter settlements of seasonal migrants are located on lands owned by the Indian Railways, which carries out evictions routinely to dissuade people from erecting more permanent shelters. The Arjun Ashram Basti is demolished almost every year in this fashion; its residents, who are seasonal migrants from Dahod district, must rebuild their huts every time. The settlement near the Vasna police chowky, which is located on municipal land, also faced an eviction in 2013, after which its residents—a mix of permanent migrants and seasonal migrants from different districts of Gujarat and Rajasthan—gradually rebuilt their huts, even though the AMC had erected a compound wall around the land.

Homeless Settlements in Public Spaces

Many seasonal migrant workers live in the open on roadsides, on footpaths, and under flyovers, although some do build flimsy structures in these spaces, especially in the monsoon. The residents of these settlements are part of the city's homeless population.⁵ The AMC has not collected any data on the city's homeless.⁶

The Census 2011 enumerates the homeless, putting this figure for Ahmedabad at 3,606 households comprising 12,318 persons. It is likely that the population is underestimated, since the enumeration is done over a few consecutive nights.

Over the past several years, the AMC has built night shelters for the homeless, in response to the Supreme Court's orders.⁷ However, these shelters remained underutilised due to numerous reasons. Many were mismanaged by the private agencies to which the management of the shelters was contracted out. Being night shelters, daily-wage labourers like construction workers found it difficult to store their belongings there or return to them in the daytime if they did not find work. There was also no way for them to cook at the premises, although some shelters happened to have an open space nearby which was then used for cooking. The shelters were also not designed for families and required men and women to sleep in separate halls. As a result, families of migrant construction workers can be found sleeping on footpaths or under flyovers, sometimes within a stone's throw from a night shelter.

Figure 6

Settlement under Shreyas flyover where migrants leave their belongings packed into a bundle while they are out at work in the daytime



Image Courtesy: Manthan Mevada

⁵ We use the term 'homeless' as it is widely used in policy; however, the more accurate term would be 'houseless' or 'shelterless' as many migrants do create a sense of home in the open.

⁶ In 2018, a survey of the homeless population was begun in many of Gujarat's cities, including Ahmedabad, under the SUH scheme. The survey's findings are not yet in the public domain.

⁷ See Desai 2017 for a longer discussion on the night shelters.

Residents of these settlements organise informal means of accessing water. The 25–30 migrant families from Dahod district living on the footpath near Bima Nagar—which we shall refer to as Bima Nagar Footpath Basti—fill water from the nearby police chowky, night shelter, or hospital. The 50–60 families from Dahod district which live under the Shreyas flyover (**Figure 6**) fetch water from a road-side temple or a tap belonging to a nearby shop.

Access to sanitation is particularly difficult. There is a pay-and-use toilet near both settlements, which charges Rs.5 for using the toilet and Rs.10 for bathing. The migrant families find these charges unaffordable and most resort to open defecation regularly or intermittently, along the nearby railway tracks (as in the case of those living under the Shreyas flyover) or in a nearby vacant plot (as in the case of those from the Bima Nagar Footpath Basti). The migrants also bathed along the railway tracks or in the vacant plot. At Shreyas flyover, a resident explained that the water they sourced from the nearby temple or shop was often insufficient for bathing properly; sometimes, four people had to bathe using only one bucket of water. Therefore, whenever possible, they would bathe at their worksite.

Some homeless settlements, especially those on footpaths and roadsides, face harassment of various kinds frequently. The Bima Nagar Footpath Basti used to face an eviction every few months whenever an important political leader or bureaucrat travelled along that road. The AMC would often take away the residents' belongings, forcing them to buy utensils and other essentials again. Around 2016, the AMC narrowed the footpath from 2–3 metres to one metre in width, so that the migrants would not live there; the open plot into which the migrants subsequently spilled over was also converted into a garden later. So, many moved to live under the nearby Shivranjani flyover, while some continued to live on the narrow footpath, now spilling on to the road. The AMC has rarely evicted people from under the Shreyas flyover, but local goons sometimes bully them and extort money.

Generally, migrants living in the open are families, but we also find single male migrants living in the open. In the Paldi area, a group of around 30 men from the Dahod district sleep on the verandah of a shop; they cook in the open on the roadside, some distance away from the shops, and wait there till the shops close for the night. A group of 30–35 men from Kherwada district of Rajasthan sleep on the rooftop of a public building that they access by climbing a tree and a compound wall. Many of them fill water at their worksites and use a nearby pay-and-use toilet. Some men explained that single male migrants from their villages have been living on the building's rooftop like this since 20 years.

Rental Accommodation

Many seasonal migrants live in informal rental housing in *chalis*, which are clusters of rental rooms. The landlords of these *chalis* are often Rabaris, a cattle-rearing nomadic community. In some areas, these landlords squatted on a large land parcel (perhaps because they had captured that space to rear cattle when they had first squatted) and later built rental rooms next to their own houses there.

In other cases, such as in many *chalis* in the Memnagar area, the landlords are quasi-formal landowners. This area, in the 1960s and 1970s, was on the city's fringe and was agricultural land. Some of these agricultural land parcels lay within the municipal limits, but were part of the green belt in the city's Development Plan, while others fell outside the municipal limits. During this period, many farmer-landowners informally sold their agricultural land to Rabaris using stamp papers to seal the deal rather than register the sales deeds. Only the latter transactions are reflected in the official land records.⁸ In many cases, one parcel of agricultural land was divided by the farmer-landowner into several plots; each plot was then informally sold off to a different Rabari buyer.

⁸ In any case, registered sales would not have been allowed unless the buyer was also a farmer.

Many of the Rabaris initially used this land for their cattle. From the 1980s onwards, many began to build rental rooms on this land, although it came under the green belt and/or was zoned for agriculture. This added another layer of informality—that of informal development—to the already informal landownership. These *chalis* did not conform to any of the development or building bye-laws.⁹ The rooms were of poor quality, although in the last decade, many landlords have rebuilt these using reinforced cement concrete (RCC) and brick into two-storeyed structures, where the rents are higher than that of the semi-pukka, single-storeyed rental rooms (Figure 7). These new structures also often violate the development and building bye-laws.¹⁰

Many migrants, both permanent and seasonal, who work as construction labourers, domestic workers, vegetable/fruit vendors, etc. live in these *chalis*. Some rooms are rented by families, but among seasonal construction workers, only families with skilled workers or more earning members can usually afford to do so. In the case of unskilled workers, generally, single male migrants share a rented room. Lalit-bhai, a migrant construction worker from Rajasthan who we have referred to earlier, has been living in the Memnagar area for more than a decade; according to him, he and many other seasonal migrants used to live in the open, on vacant lands in the area, tying up their belongings into a bundle when they left for the day's work.

Figure 7

Rental *chalis* on both sides of the lane in the Memnagar area



Image Courtesy: Renu Desai

9 Conversion of the land use to Non-Agriculture (NA) was not done and the construction did not follow the General Development Control Regulations (GDCR), which are the bye-laws.

10 A few years ago, the Gujarat government decided to prepare town planning schemes (TPS) for the area under the green belt in order to open it up for development. The TPS has been prepared for the green belt in the Memnagar area and is awaiting sanction by the Gujarat government. Ballaney et al. (2013) pointed out that until the TPS is completed, private landowners are permitted to develop their land subject to the condition that 50 per cent of their land must be surrendered to the planning agency. Out of this, 20 per cent is considered potentially marketable, with 30 per cent being allocated for roads and public services. We will have to wait and watch what happens to the *chalis* when the implementation of the TPS begins in the Memnagar area.

His brother Mani-*bhai* joined him to live in the open. Some seasonal migrants paid a Rabari a monthly amount for living in this manner. Thereafter, as the Rabaris constructed rental rooms and the vacant lands began to be enclosed within compound walls, Lalit-*bhai*, Mani-*bhai*, and other seasonal migrants began to move into the rental rooms. Both the brothers pointed out that male migrants who sleep in the open in the Memnagar area now are often harassed by the police at night. This also reveals how shifts in migrant workers' housing—from living in homeless situations to rental accommodation—may have been driven not simply by migrants' choices, but also by urban development processes that have narrowed their options of living in the city in more economically viable ways.

The provision of basic services was poor in the *chalis* of Memnagar for many years due to a combination of informal development, which was not fully recognised by the local government, and the resource constraints of the nagar panchayat/nagar *palika*.¹¹ In the last several years, the AMC has gradually provided better water and built gutters and RCC roads in the lanes of Memnagar.

It has also provided water and sewerage connections to most of the private plots. While the situation has improved in comparison to the past, the AMC plays no role in regulating conditions inside the private plots. It is up to the landlords as to how they want to provide water to their tenants; whether to provide toilets/baths and, if yes, how many; whether to pave the lanes and lay drainage lines inside the private plot; etc.

Where rents are higher, such as Rs.3,500–4,000 per month, more toilets are provided, whereas rooms with lower rents, in the range of Rs.2,000 per month, may have 1–2 toilets between a dozen or more rooms. In Ishwarbhai ni Chali, where Mani-*bhai* generally rents a room, the rooms costing Rs.2,000 a month have no toilets and no paving or drainage in the lanes, which therefore get severely waterlogged in the monsoon (**Figure 8**). Most residents resort to open defecation. Lalit-*bhai* generally rents a room in the adjacent Bhikhabhai ni Chali, where the landlord has built a two-storeyed building with rental rooms. Here, rents are Rs.3,500–4,000, and there is water connection inside the room and 3–4 toilets are shared between a dozen or so rooms.

Figure 8

Ishwarbhai ni Chali, Memnagar area



Image Courtesy: Manthan Mevada

¹¹ This is the form of local government that was prevalent in the area prior to it being included within the municipal limits.

In some of the other *chalis* in Memnagar, some migrants use a pay-and-use toilet in the absence of or in the case of insufficient toilets. One of these toilets charges Rs.5 for men and Rs.2 for women. Some landlords provide electricity connections, while others do not. The electricity charges are often collected over and above the monthly rent. In some instances, the landlord has an electricity meter installed for the entire *chali*, but he divides the bill amount among the tenants at his discretion. There are also instances where the landlord controls the electricity usage, either by pressuring the tenants not to use the lights late into the night or by providing them electricity for only a few hours in the evening. The tenants have little say in these matters. Rental rooms are in high demand, so if they complain, they are told to find a room elsewhere. ♦

PART 6

TRANSLOCAL LIVES AND MIGRANTS' HABITATIONS OF THE CITY

For many migrants who come from the tribal regions of Gujarat, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh to work as construction labourers in Ahmedabad, rural-urban migration is not only an important livelihood decision to cope with declining subsistence agriculture and debt, but, as Mosse et al. (2005) have pointed out, it is also a strategy for reproducing agricultural livelihoods and valued aspects of agrarian lifestyles. We found that the village offers the possibility of producing food that meets household needs to a greater or lesser degree; it is the space where important aspects of migrants' social lives are reproduced; and, it still offers them a more secure place to stay in than the city does. This gives the village a certain primacy in their lives and even makes it a place to invest in for a sense of security. Migration to the city to forge an urban livelihood is essential in making this possible through remittances to the village from urban incomes, but, at the same time, migration patterns and urban livelihoods must accommodate the dynamics of their agricultural livelihoods and social obligations in the village.

Furthermore, migrant workers are generally part of multilocal households, with some members of the household migrating to the city and others staying back in the village. Given the multilocality of the household, the stages of the household's life cycle such as youth, marriage, birth of children, old age, and death—among other factors—influence decisions pertaining to who migrates and their patterns of migration. Here, we examine the dynamics of migrants' multilocal livelihoods, the nature of their multilocal households, and the resultant migration cycles and sense of home; we subsequently explore how these contribute to the ways in which migrant workers/households inhabit the city.

Agricultural livelihoods are shaped crucially by a household's landholding size, fertility of the land, and the availability of irrigation. Observers have pointed out that landholding sizes in the region are decreasing due to the fragmentation of land with every generation (Mosse et al. 2005; Coffey et al. 2015). Our migrant interviewees' narratives around land also reflect this decrease; today, cultivable landholding size amongst all but one of our interviewees' households was in the range of 2–5 bigha (0.8–2 acre). Nonetheless, they continue to cultivate the land. There are three crop seasons in this semi-arid region of eastern Gujarat, southern Rajasthan and western Madhya Pradesh: monsoon (roughly from July to September/October), winter (November to March), and summer (April to June). The main crop is grown in the monsoon; our interviewees' households chiefly grow maize (*makai*) and paddy (*dangar*), although some also grow soybean and/or pigeon peas (*tuver*). Yield varies from year to year, depending on the monsoon. Sparse rainfall destroys the crop; heavy rain—such as the monsoon during our research in 2016—also damages the crop. Most households also grow a winter crop like maize, wheat, chickpeas (*chana*), green peas (*vatana*), and paddy. Yield of the winter crop depends on the availability of irrigation, which in turn depends on how good the monsoon has been.¹² Few households grow a summer crop as the season is too hot and dry; even where water is available for irrigation during winter, it is generally unavailable in summer. Only one of our interviewees grows a summer crop as he has a deep well on his land.

12 Our interviewees explained that where irrigation is carried out through a canal, release of water into the canal by the government is contingent on the reservoir's catchment area getting enough rainfall; meanwhile, in places where irrigation depends on wells, a good monsoon means better water availability in the wells in winter. One interviewee also explained that regardless of irrigation availability, while a heavy monsoon can destroy the monsoon crop, it also leads to the soil retaining more moisture during winter, which can in turn lead to a better winter crop.

All but two of our interviewees use the agricultural yield for household consumption alone, having no surplus to sell. Prakash-*bhai* sells soybean and pigeon peas, while Deepak-*bhai* sells wheat from the monsoon crop—this brings in some cash. The agricultural earnings are insufficient for Prakash-*bhai*'s large family (his wife, five daughters, and one son, with the eldest child being 15 years old), but the agricultural income is adequate (for the time being) for Deepak-*bhai*'s small, young family (his wife and two children, both below the age of 5 years). For a few like Anil-*bhai*, if the yield is good, it is adequate to meet the grain needs of the household (five adults and two young children) for almost the entire year, contributing to self-sustenance in terms of food. For most, however, depending on their landholding size, household size, etc., farming only meets a part of the household's grain needs, so they also need to buy grain from the market. Nonetheless, all our interviewees perceived farming to be an important contributor to their self-sustenance. Some of our interviewees also have separate vegetable patches, which adds to their self-sustenance. Many carry some of the grain/flour with them when they migrate, supporting their food requirements and controlling their cash expenses in the city. All of them remit a portion of their earnings from construction labour in the city to the village for agricultural inputs.

Labour is crucial for forging their agricultural livelihood. Given the economic conditions of our migrant interviewees, this labour comes almost entirely from household members. In some households, adult migrants are crucial contributors of agricultural labour, while in other households, they are not—the division of labour depends on the nature of the multilocal household. The temporality of agricultural activities that a household must attend to and the nature of the multilocal household lead to migrant households having partly differing migration cycles and spells.

Three main types of households were found amongst our migrant interviewees, in terms of the contribution of the migrating members to agricultural labour, thus creating three main types of migration cycles:

In the first type of households (Vinod-*bhai*, Prakash-*bhai*, Lalit-*bhai*, Shankar-*bhai*, and Pankaj-*bhai*), almost all adults considered capable of hard labour migrate to the city, not leaving behind anyone who can attend to agricultural activities entirely on their own. In such cases, these adult migrants are crucial to the agricultural labour required during the various stages of the crop cycle. Thus, while they work in the city during each of the three seasons (winter, summer, and monsoon), they return to the village after the first rains to sow the monsoon crop, then during Diwali when they also harvest the monsoon crop and sow the winter crop, and finally for Holi when they also harvest the winter crop and (if irrigation is available) sow a summer crop. Usually, the months post Holi constitute the marriage season; sometimes, the migrants return to the city after a month or two as marriages are not only occasions for celebration, but also involve fulfilling social obligations—this is essential, according to Vinod-*bhai*, “so that they can live in the community”. In short, they spend 15 days to a month or more in the village between each of the seasons for sowing and/or harvesting and/or celebrating festivals like Diwali and Holi and attending marriages. On an average, they spend 9–10 months of the year in the city.

They also visit the village in the middle of the crop cycle. Prakash-*bhai* rarely makes any long trips between the sowing and harvesting stages of the winter crop, for his mother who lives in the village is able to take care of most of the farming activities in the middle of the winter crop cycle. She also has the help of two of Prakash-*bhai*'s older children, his 15-year-old daughter, and 12-year-old son. If necessary, Prakash-*bhai*'s wife goes to the village to help, visit their children, as well as address family matters. Prakash-*bhai* himself makes only short trips during

this period, generally when a family matter requires his immediate attention. On the other hand, Vinod-*bhai* and his wife together return to the village to help his mother with the winter farming and visit their two older children who stay in the village with her; but, these visits do not extend beyond a few days. Lalit-*bhai* and his wife also usually undertake only

short trips in the middle of the winter crop cycle as their older children who stay in the village (their 19-year-old son, 16-year-old daughter, 14-year-old son, and 13-year-old daughter) are able to attend to farming activities with the help of Mani-*bhai*, one of Lalit-*bhai*'s brothers (who is a short-term migrant and constitutes a separate household).

Figure 9

Houses of Shankar-*bhai* and Pankaj-*bhai* in Vanbhor village (Dahod district)



Image Courtesy: Renu Desai

The migration pattern during the middle of the winter crop cycle is different for Shankar-*bhai* and Pankaj-*bhai*. The two brothers take turns in returning to their village for up to 10 days in the midst of the crop cycle because—unlike in the case of Vinod-*bhai* and Prakash-*bhai*—irrigation facility is available; this means that they have the additional task of watering their fields. Pankaj-*bhai* explained it thus:

“The farming work can even take 10 days. And it is not just the farming work that is time-consuming, but walking to the fields, which are 3 km. away. Farming work includes watering the fields and also spraying various pesticides and fertilisers. First 6–8 days are spent in watering the fields. You may get some water today [from the canal]; the next day, someone else has to be allowed to use the water.... Then, it takes two days to spray the pesticide, and one day for the fertiliser.”¹³

13 Water from the canal is provided in turns to the fields/farmers, i.e., it is not supplied on a daily basis to each field/farmer; as a result, after receiving water from the canal once, each farmer would have to remain in the village and await his/her turn to get a supply of canal water again.

Figure 10

Anil-bhai's house (right of centre) in Tarvadia Bhau village (Dahod district)



Image Courtesy: Renu Desai

The monsoon crop cycle demands more labour as it is the main crop; it also requires more regular weeding due to the rains. The nature of the migrating household and/or migration spell, therefore, changes for this period; although, there are variations linked to the household life cycle. Vinod-*bhai's* wife stays back with his mother in the village for the entire monsoon to attend to farming activities; during this time, he is a single male migrant in the city. Prakash-*bhai's* wife migrates to the city during the monsoon, but for short spells, spending more time in the village to attend to farmwork with his mother. Shankar-*bhai* and Pankaj-*bhai* and their respective wives used to spend most of the monsoon in the city, with one of the brothers returning when necessary to help their parents; however, with their father's recent demise, they expected that Shankar-*bhai's* wife would have to stay back in the village for the monsoon. But Shankar-*bhai's* eldest daughter is

now 17 years old: while she has started migrating with them to the city to work as a construction labourer, it is possible that they may ask her to stay back in the village during the monsoon, instead of Shankar-*bhai's* wife. By contrast, the children of Vinod-*bhai* and Prakash-*bhai* are too young to take care of the house in the village and help much with farming. The younger brothers of both Vinod-*bhai* and Prakash-*bhai* also migrate; therefore, their wives are the ones who stay back (or spend more time in the village) during the monsoon. Lalit-*bhai's* wife, though, does not spend much time in the village even in the monsoon because, like in winter, the couple's older children are able to attend to the farming activities with help from Lalit-*bhai's* brother. In the summer season, as there is usually no farming activity, the migrating household makes visits to the village only if they have to attend marriages or address family matters.

In the second type of households, the migrating members do not crucially contribute to agricultural labour in their village, since one or more adults of the household do not migrate (or migrate for short spells) and are capable of attending to the farmwork entirely on their own. Take the case of *Anil-bhai*: His 19-year-old brother, who does not migrate, looks after the farming activities, along with the support of their father who used to be a long-term seasonal migrant like *Anil-bhai*. But now, he migrates for shorter spells and even takes up some cattle-herding wage-labour in the village whenever possible. While *Anil-bhai* and his wife visit the village between each of the seasons, they do so largely to celebrate festivals and attend marriages—although, they may contribute a little to agricultural labour while they are in the village. During Diwali, they spend 15–20 days in the village; during Holi, they spend a month or more,

depending on whether there are weddings to attend thereafter. They rarely make visits to the village at other times, unless some family matter has to be taken care of or if someone in the family is ill. *Mukesh-bhai*'s migration cycle and spell are similar to those of *Anil-bhai*. He is the eldest of seven brothers and has been migrating since he was 11 or 12 years old. Today, he and his family, one married brother, and three unmarried brothers migrate to Ahmedabad for most of the year, even as two other married brothers manage the farmwork, migrating to Ahmedabad occasionally for short spells. *Mukesh-bhai* never contributes to any agricultural labour and returns to the village with his family for about 3 weeks in Diwali and 15 days in Holi, only to celebrate the festivals. Sometimes, he makes trips to the village in the midst of the season to visit two of his four children who stay in the village with his parents.

Figure 11

Mani-bhai's house in Bharjodia village (Banswara district)



Image Courtesy: Renu Desai

The third type of households comprise nuclear families, where the man of the house migrates for one or two seasons, and sometimes only for short spells. Mani-*bhai* has been migrating to Ahmedabad as a single male migrant since almost 10 years; however, he does not migrate during all three seasons. He is in the village the entire monsoon for farming. Sometimes, as in 2016, he migrates to the city for a week or two just before Diwali to get work at the *naka* and earn some cash for the festival. He often spends some part of the winter and/or summer in the city, going to the *naka* to find work. At times, he has been able to connect with a labour contractor at the *naka*, thus taking up regular work and living at a construction site. If he does not find work through the *naka* for more than a few days, he simply returns to his village to avoid incurring expenses in the city.

Deepak-*bhai*, also a single male migrant who goes to the *naka*, has been migrating to Ahmedabad since 2–3 years, but never for more than a total of three months in a year. He generally migrates to earn some cash for festival expenses or for contributing towards his siblings' school/college fees. In 2016, he was in the city for a month prior to Holi (February–March), back in the village for the next 5–6 months (summer and most of monsoon), and then he returned to the city for about three weeks in the period between Raksha Bandhan (August) and Diwali (October). Both Mani-*bhai* and Deepak-*bhai* have small families with very young children, and Deepak-*bhai* also earns some income from the sale of his agricultural output. Therefore, neither are required—as yet—to earn more by migrating for long periods to the city for livelihood.

Figure 12

Post-harvest scene near Deepak-*bhai*'s home in Dodhiya village (Banswara district)



Image Courtesy: Renu Desai

So, as discussed above, the migration cycles and spells are often dictated by the changes in a household's life cycle. Further, the translocal nature of migrants' lives also means that for all the three household types, migration cycles/spells may change in a particular year/season in the event of a family member's illness, often leading them to spend more time in the village. Four of our interviewees did not return to the city in the winter of 2016—although they had expected to do so—due to a family member's ill health. Lalit-*bhai* was to return to the city in December, while his wife stayed back in the village as she was pregnant; but he too did not return, for his wife began having health issues during her pregnancy which ultimately led to her delivering a stillborn baby. Just as her health recovered, their 18-year-old son fell severely ill. Lalit-*bhai* and his wife were able to return to the city only in mid-May the following year. Shankar-*bhai* and his brother Pankaj-*bhai*, who live in separate houses in the village as well as in the city, did not return to Ahmedabad during winter because of their father's critical illness and subsequent demise.

On the other hand, migration cycles/spells may change in a particular year/season in a manner that entails spending more time in the city than usual, and non-migrating members may also join the labour migration for a while. This may happen in the event of crises such as drought (which led Prakash-*bhai*'s parents to migrate for two years) or burgeoning debt due to marriage-related expenses in the family (due to which Mukesh-*bhai*'s parents have been migrating to the city since a few years).

How are these translocal lives and households, and the migration cycles and spells forged to sustain them, related to how seasonal migrant workers/households inhabit the city?

One finding, contrary to what we had anticipated, is that different migration cycles and spells do not seem to be leading to the habitation of different

housing typologies. In other words, all three types of households, with their different migration cycles, are found in squatter settlements, in the open, as well as in rental housing. We had anticipated that the third household type—short-term migrants who come to the city for only one or two seasons—would be less likely to be living in a squatter settlement as they would not be able to hold on to a shack, given their migration cycle. However, we did find short-term migrants staying in squatter settlements, where their kin live for longer periods: in such cases, they usually keep their belongings in the huts of their kin, sleeping nearby in the open themselves.

We found that different migration cycles shape not only migrants' sense of home in the city, but also their aspirations for the future. Anil-*bhai* and his wife, who do not contribute to agricultural labour and spend lesser time in the village (i.e., mainly during festivals and to attend to family matters), have developed a much stronger sense of home in the city. He explained that he prefers the city and feels at home there more than he does in his village. Even when the agricultural land is divided between him and his two brothers, he has decided that he will ask his brothers to farm his land as well, since he prefers living in the city. By contrast, for Mani-*bhai* and Deepak-*bhai*, who are in the city only during one or two seasons, the village is their primary home; they feel no attachment to the city.

While this also implies that Anil-*bhai* would be more willing to invest in a better home in the city than Mani-*bhai* or Deepak-*bhai* would, being part of a multilocal household and having responsibilities such as contributing to the cost of agricultural inputs during the farming season affects Anil-*bhai*'s ability to do so. Mukesh-*bhai*, whose migration cycle is similar to that of Anil-*bhai*, also has children back in the village; thus, spending money to improve living conditions in the village currently takes precedence over doing the same for himself in the city.

This will change only if they get a secure enough foothold in the city to bring their children with them and send them to school in the city. Many of our migrant interviewees had also availed of a subsidy under the Indira Awaas Yojana, the central

government's rural housing programme, to build a pukka house in the village. Such government-led programmes require them to hold on to their village documents and not give them up in favour of obtaining city documents. ♦

Figure 13

Lalit-bhai's house in Bharjodia village (Banswara district), which is being built with a subsidy received under the Indira Awaas Yojana and remittances from the city



Image Courtesy: Renu Desai

PART 7

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Seasonal migration is the dominant form of economic mobility for the poor, especially the lower castes and tribes. Scholars have observed that migration for the poor is mainly seasonal/circular, not only due to the desire to keep a foothold in their hometowns/villages during the agriculture season, but also the lack of social security and the barriers to settling more permanently in urban areas (Deshingkar et al. 2008). They have also noted that seasonal/circular migration is likely to continue either until the developmental inequalities between different regions narrow down or the conditions in their source region become so unsustainable that populations have to move out altogether (Deshingkar & Akter 2009). It is therefore crucial that planners and policymakers evolve ways of improving housing and basic services for this greatly marginalised and invisible group of urban poor and create ways to give them a political voice in the city. In order to do this, planners and policymakers will have to better understand the dynamics at play in the lives of these migrants that shape how they currently inhabit the city. This paper has sought to contribute to this understanding.

First, the paper reveals the central role of kin and migration-source-area-based networks in how migrants (who find work at *nakas*) access and organise their housing. Second, it illuminates some of the key ways in which urban governance with respect to three informal typologies—squatter settlements on public/private lands, homeless settlements in public spaces, and informal rentals—shapes migrants' housing conditions and everyday experiences and practices. And third, the paper provides insights into how the translocal and multilocal lives of these migrants—forged through multilocal livelihoods

and multilocal households, and with their villages remaining the main venue for social events, networks, and obligations as well as for recovering from ill health—shape their habitation of the city in vital ways.

These findings present three dynamics that shape seasonal migrants' habitation of the city, which urban policies, planning, and governance must appreciate and address while building inclusive cities in the future. At present, urban policies exclude seasonal migrants almost entirely.¹⁴ One reason is that current urban housing policies are focused on permanent residents of the city. Access to housing programmes for the urban poor generally use eligibility criteria that include the submission of documents (such as a ration card, election card, or Aadhaar card¹⁵) bearing their residential address in the city. Often, municipal governments also base the eligibility for these housing programmes on a certain 'cut-off' date, which requires a person to be living in the city or even in a particular settlement since before a certain date, thus tying entitlement to public housing in the city to the duration of stay in the city. Since these documents of seasonal migrants generally bear their village address, they are deemed ineligible for these housing programmes. The Gujarat Construction Workers' Welfare Board (GCWWB), a state-level government agency, gives a housing subsidy to construction workers who are registered with GCWWB if they are allotted a house under a government urban housing programme. However, since seasonal migrants are ineligible for these programmes, they are unable to avail of this subsidy. Only those construction workers who are permanent residents of the city are able to avail of the subsidy.

14 See Desai 2017 for a more detailed study and discussion on current urban policies vis-à-vis seasonal migrant construction workers.

15 The ration card, a document issued by the government to households, links them to the Public Distribution System by allowing them to purchase certain subsidised commodities at fair price shops. The Aadhaar card is a biometrics-based document issued by the government to every Indian citizen.

Moreover, over the past several decades, urban housing programmes have solely focused on home-ownership, ignoring those who may not want to undertake the investment that ownership requires or those who cannot afford ownership even in the context of subsidised public housing. The emphasis on home-ownership has been consolidated even further under the Indian government's housing programme, the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY). Given that migrant construction workers get irregular work through the *nakas* and that they may not necessarily aspire towards home-ownership in the city or they may be constrained in making this investment due to their translocal and multilocal lives, rental housing could be an important housing option for them. However, this option continues to remain less explored in urban housing policies in India. The Indian government's rental housing policy remains in draft form (MHUPA 2015). In this scenario, many migrants will continue to have no option but to squat on the most insecure lands in the city or live in public spaces. While a substantial number of migrants do approach the informal rental housing market, given that this is an unregulated sector, access to basic services and housing quality is often poor (except where rents are quite high). Moreover, not many families of seasonal migrant construction workers can afford the rents unless one of the family members earns higher daily wages as a skilled worker or the family has more than 1–2 earning members. Housing-ownership programmes, such as PMAY's in situ slum redevelopment programme that demolishes informal settlements to construct multistorey apartments, threaten to further reduce this relatively affordable informal rental housing stock, as it ignores the landlordism and tenancy existing in informal settlements.

The only currently operational programme that envisions reaching out to this migrant group is the Shelter for Urban Homeless (SUH) scheme under the National Urban Livelihoods Mission (NULM), which was launched in 2013. As already discussed,

many night shelters created in Ahmedabad as per the Supreme Court's orders were inadequate in number, poorly managed, and not designed for families, thus reducing the potential to reach out to a large number of migrants. This has been the case in other cities as well (Desai 2017). The SUH is an important development in translating the Supreme Court's orders into policy. The SUH guidelines recommend permanent 24-hour shelters with basic facilities like water supply, sanitation, electricity, kitchen/cooking space, common recreation space, safety, and security (MHUPA 2013b). They also state that special family shelters or special family sections within shelters could be created. Collection of nominal charges as rent is suggested, depending on the income levels of the homeless, at rates ranging from 1/10th to 1/20th of their income. The rent is meant to create a fund for the maintenance of the facilities.

The NULM Mission Document (MHUPA 2013a) and the SUH guidelines (MHUPA 2013b) also emphasise that linkages should be established with entitlements. Thus, the shelter is to have "linkages with other programmes which cover the right of the urban homeless to food, healthcare, education, etc. and ensure access for homeless populations to various entitlements, including to social security pensions, Public Distribution System (PDS), Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), feeding programmes, drinking water, sanitation, identity, financial inclusion, school admission, etc., and to affordable housing" (MHUPA 2013a, 9). The Mission Document also states that homeless persons in shelters should be given priority under various schemes because "the homeless are unable to access many services due to lack of documentary proof such as address and birth proof, etc." (MHUPA 2013a, 22). The Mission Document and the guidelines have opened up considerable potential for providing better access to shelter, basic services, and security to seasonal migrants in the city. However, more than four years later, it is still neither clear as to how many shelters in Indian cities are designed

and managed as per the expansive vision and guidelines of the NULM and the SUH respectively, nor how many actually reach out to seasonal migrants.

In Ahmedabad, no new shelters have been constructed and the funds have been used to renovate some of the older rundown shelters. None of the shelters are designed for families, although, as of June 2018, four shelters were being used by migrant families as their caretakers did not insist on men and women sleeping in the shelters' separate halls; this probably worked out because most of these families were from the same district (Dahod in Gujarat) and many were also part of a single kin group (Desai & Sanghvi 2019). A few shelters were being used by single male migrants. Usually, the migrants cook in the open space of these shelters' compounds, but this is not possible during monsoons. The shelters under the SUH guidelines are supposed to have cooking facilities, but, as of June 2018, the shelters in Ahmedabad had not been upgraded yet to provide this. Thus, while a few of the shelters in Ahmedabad have made a good beginning in reaching out to seasonal migrants, there is a long way to go in terms of the number of shelters built, their location, their design and management, and their links to welfare entitlements. The SUH should also be integrated into the city's planning as adequate land needs to be allocated for the construction of shelters. Budgetary considerations also need to be looked into if the SUH scheme is to be scaled up.

The state-level construction workers' welfare boards could also play a role in financing the construction and maintenance of some special shelters for seasonal migrant construction workers, especially those who migrate as families, since the boards collect a considerable amount of cess from builders which is meant to be used for workers' welfare. More broadly, dialogue and co-ordination between the state-level construction workers' welfare board, municipal government, urban development authority, and the state-level housing department are

required for charting out a future direction for creating rental housing and shelters as well as accessible home-ownership schemes for seasonal migrants desiring to settle in the city. The importance of kin relations in shaping the way migrants inhabit the city and the relationship of housing locations to the *nakas* must also be reflected upon in this context so as to make any future intervention truly viable for the migrants.

Along with creating a future plan for building housing in the city for seasonal migrants, the crucial and immediate intervention required of governments at the central, state, and municipal levels is a radical shift in stance towards informal housing and the homeless in the city. As discussed in this paper, seasonal migrants have come to inhabit certain kinds of informal settlements through particular pathways of looking for work through kin and other migration-source-area-based networks. Although these settlements often lack adequate basic services, they offer a sense of community to seasonal migrants in the city, thus accommodating their translocal and multilocal lives. Governments should stop viewing informal settlements as eyesores that need to be removed and replaced with formal housing; instead, they should invest in upgrading basic services, except in places where this is untenable due to hazardous conditions. Even if upgrading the settlements is not possible, until viable alternatives are given to the residents, municipal governments should explore ways of providing water and sanitation to them. It is also imperative that municipal governments recognise homeless populations living alongside streets and under flyovers and systematically explore ways of providing water and sanitation to them.

Mobile toilets are an important step in this direction in Ahmedabad; however, attention needs to be paid to aspects such as how many toilets are required, their design, and where and how they should be placed and managed (particularly to give women users a sense of safe access to sanitation). Pay-and-

use toilets can also meet the sanitation needs of migrants, especially those who are homeless or where hazardous or tenurial issues do not allow for the construction of toilets on the land occupied by the settlement. However, at present, using a pay-and-use toilet is an expensive affair for migrants. If a couple working as unskilled construction labour through a *naka* uses this facility once a day for bathing and uses the toilet twice a day, it would cost them Rs.1,200 per month, which is 1/9th to 1/15th of their monthly wage. One way to make these sanitation facilities more affordable could be by providing monthly passes to individuals or families. Moreover, eligibility for a monthly pass should not be tied to furnishing a document with the city's residential address as this would continue to exclude these migrants. Tenurial issues such as ownership of lands by central government authorities (like the Indian Railways) must be resolved at the central government level, so that informal settlements that have developed on these lands are not denied basic services by municipal governments.

A final area of intervention would comprise the labour *nakas* where migrant as well as local construction workers spend their mornings looking for daily-wage work. Municipal governments do not seem to have any systematic data on these *nakas*, even though these are crucial urban spaces for livelihood opportunities. The GCWWB has made a list of the *nakas* in Ahmedabad, and it is likely that the boards in other states have also made such a list pertaining to some of their cities. In 2017, the GCWWB updated this list for Ahmedabad in order to facilitate the implementation of the state govern-

ment's Shramik Annapurna Yojana, a scheme to provide construction workers in the unorganised sector with inexpensive hot meals. The food stalls under this scheme were set up at the *nakas* based on some discussions between the GCWWB and the AMC. This is a welcome step, but a more thorough mapping of the *nakas* as crucial spaces of livelihood access in the mornings could be an important step in helping municipal governments design these spaces to provide better facilities such as shaded places to stand and sit under, drinking water, and sanitation for the labourers.

Construction is an important industry and it is only expected to grow in the coming years. With seasonal and circular migrants being a predominant part of the labour force, it is imperative that urban planning, policies, and governance in India appreciate their presence in cities, and engage with their specific needs by understanding the dynamics of their work, migration, and translocal lives. It is also essential that urban planning, policies, and governance better understand the spaces that these migrants currently inhabit and call home while they are in the city, rather than ignore them or dismiss them as inadequate and therefore fit only for erasure. While these spaces are often inadequate with respect to tenure security, shelter quality, and basic services, migrants have occupied them in ways that accommodate their economic and social lives. An understanding and appreciation of this will be necessary to help evolve creative and workable approaches. Ultimately, building inclusive cities will hinge on substantively realising the right of labour migrants to live a decent and dignified life in the city. ♦

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We thank Prayas Centre for Labour Research and Action and Aajeevika Bureau, two NGOs working on migrant labour issues, for discussions and facilitating field trips in Ahmedabad during the initial stages of research. We also thank Kanhaiya Choudhury, CEO of NM Sadguru Water and Development Foundation, for organising a discussion on rural livelihoods and development with the NGO's staff at their Dahod district office, and facilitating a field trip to a nearby village. We are indebted to the migrants who gave us their valuable time for interviews and conversations. Moreover, during our visits to Dahod district (Gujarat) and Banswara district (Rajasthan) in November 2016, some of the migrants generously volunteered to pick us up from a considerable distance, hosted us at their homes, and shared their meals with us. All migrants' names have been changed in the paper to preserve anonymity and confidentiality.

Author Bio

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MIGRANT CONSTRUCTION WORKERS' HOUSING IN AHMEDABAD

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