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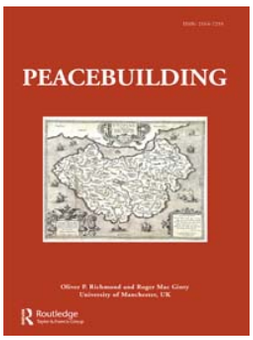

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'These streets are ours': Mumbai's urban form and security in the vernacular

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ABSTRACT

This article contributes to the growing literature on the spatial dynamics of urban violence in the developing world. It highlights the dialectic between urban form, violence and security provision as vernacular in nature, shaped by hyperlocal processes and actors. And yet, this dialectic is dominated by state and military-centred terminology, and continually underpinned by the state's imposition of order to constitute the city as a site for legitimate control. This materialises as the often arbitrary recognition of one area as 'at the margins', and not another, as the recognition of one group of people as 'slum dwellers' or illegal residents, and not others, or as the recognition of some individuals as criminal, and not others. Using detailed case study material from a group of inner-city neighbourhoods in Mumbai, India, the article suggests that urban form in its physical, political and historical characterisations not only influences how vigilante protection operates, but also interacts in a non-benign manner with the mechanics by which the state endeavours to control violence. As such, it shapes who is vulnerable to violence, how vulnerable they are, and why. This speaks directly to the nature of security provision witnessed across the cities of the developing world.

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1. Introduction

The geographies of violence are urbanising.[1] Cities are becoming the locations where a range of criminal violence, homicide in particular, is becoming concentrated.[2] The violence of war also has an increasingly urban dimension, evidenced by the changing nature of contemporary military doctrine, in which cities are viewed as a legitimate 'battlespace',[3] while urban inhabitants are viewed as targets that need to be continually tracked and controlled.[4] Violence against civilians during and after civil wars now occurs predominantly in urban

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[1]Dennis Rodgers, 'Slum Wars of the 21st Century: Gangs, *Mano Dura* and the New Urban Geography of Conflict in Central America', *Development and Change* 40, no. 5 (September 2009): 949–76.

[2]UNDOC, 'Global Study on Homicide 2013: Trends/Context/Data. Research and Trend Analysis Branch (RAB), Division of Policy Analysis and Public Affairs (DPA), UNODC', 2013.

[3]Stephen Graham, 'Cities as Battlespace: The New Military Urbanism', *City* 13, no. 4 (December 2009): 383–402.

[4]Stephen Graham, *Cities under Siege: The New Military Urbanism* (London; New York: Verso, 2011).

areas.[5] Further, even if cities and towns are not the actual locations of war, control over them is often the central objective.[6]

At the same time, security provision in many cities across the developing world is fluid, and involves complex and hybrid arrangements consisting of multiple actors. These range from vigilantes[7] to collective action[8] for example, and involve formal, informal and extra-legal actors alike. At risk groups such as urban youth, even children, are just as involved in providing security as they are vulnerable to the impacts of violence.[9] Lived experiences of violence and insecurity in cities mirror the hybridity of security provision. These are increasingly recognised as formulated out of highly localised processes, that are at times confined to specific spaces, and driven by local actors that operate in those processes and spaces.[10] It is therefore imperative that understandings of security provision in cities privilege the perspectives of the end-users of the security arrangements, and describe security in the 'vernacular'.[11] That is, describe security as a basic entitlement of those who are supposed to be protected, and contrasts with understandings of security as the creation and maintenance of authoritative social orders.

This article argues that the physical nature of urban spaces, including the historical and the political processes that produce and shape them, contributes significantly to the experience of violence as well as the supply and demand for security. The experience of large-scale public violence in the city of Mumbai, India, shows that the built environment can at once become the symbol of an imposed state-centric infrastructural order, and a key enabler for non-state actors. The highly irregular nature of Mumbai's built environment, characteristic of cities across the developing world, arises in part due to the insurgent practices by which city dwellers themselves produce and appropriate spaces,[12] and interacts with state and non-state providers of security differently. Finally, the article makes the case that it is the hyperlocal nature of these interactions that adds to the granularity in security outcomes in cities.

Though state and municipal authorities in Mumbai are only able to actively police certain sections of the city, they continually endeavour to impose 'legibility' on how the entire city is planned and ordered.[13] Intriguingly, both these practices create space for local non-state actors to provide security. On the one hand, piecemeal policing by the state is the more obvious reason for the growing reliance on non-state security providers. On the other hand, however, the manner in which the city enforces its infrastructural regime far too

[5]Clionadh Raleigh, 'Violence against Civilians: A Disaggregated Analysis', *International Interactions* 38, no. 4 (September 2012): 462–81.

[6]J. Beall, T. Goodfellow, and D. Rodgers, 'Cities and Conflict in Fragile States in the Developing World', *Urban Studies* 50, no. 15 (November 1, 2013): 3065–83.

[7]Pratten David and Atryee Sen, *Global Vigilantes.* (Place of publication not identified: Oxford University Press, 2007).

[8]Roy, A. N., A. Jockin, and Ahmad Javed, 'Community police stations in Mumbai's slums', *Environment & Urbanisation* 16, no. 2 (2004): 135–8.

[9]A. Sen, '"Exist, Endure, Erase the City" (Sheher Mein Jiye, Is Ko Sahe, Ya Ise Mitaye?): Child Vigilantes and Micro-Cultures of Urban Violence in a Riot-Affected Hyderabad Slum', *Ethnography* 13, no. 1 (March 1, 2012): 71–86.

[10]J. Gupte, P. Justino, and J.-P. Tranchant, 'Households amid Urban Riots: The Economic Consequences of Civil Violence in India', *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 58, no. 8 (December 1, 2014): 1445–73.

[11]Robin Luckham, 'Whose Security? Building Inclusive and Secure Societies in an Unequal and Insecure World', *IDS Evidence Report* (Brighton: IDS, September 30, 2015); Robin Luckham and Tom Kirk, 'Understanding Security in the Vernacular in Hybrid Political Contexts: A Critical Survey', *Conflict, Security & Development* 13, no. 3 (July 2013): 339–59.

[12]James Holston. *Insurgent Citizenship: Disjunctions of Democracy and Modernity in Brazil*, *Of Information Series* (Princeton, NJ; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008).

[13]See James C. Scott, *Seeing like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*, Nachdr. Yale Agrarian Studies (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008).

often criminalises the ever-expanding numbers living or working in informal conditions,[14] thereby also pushing them towards informal providers of security.

The article draws on extensive field research on the city of Mumbai, which experienced one of the worst bouts of rioting in contemporary India, lasting from December 1992 through to January 1993 ('Mumbai Riots' from here on), in which nearly 1000 people were killed and more than 2000 injured.[15] The predominantly Muslim inner-city neighbourhoods of the city experienced a particularly high intensity of violence, and became a battlespace where the city police engaged vigilante groups and mobs in fierce fighting. Although the police had operated through long-standing symbiotic relationships with several vigilante groups to provide security, during the Mumbai riots the nature of these urban spaces became one of the factors that disrupted regular police operations and enabled vigilante activity. Furthermore, specific acts of brutality and violence during the Mumbai Riots were enabled by the physical space in which they were perpetrated, and functioned as markers that legitimated the use of, and reliance on, local providers of security. Muslim vigilante groups were able to wrest control of the inner-city neighbourhoods from the police by cordoning off the narrow restrictive lanes by setting debris ablaze. The areas within this perimeter became a refuge for Muslim families fleeing persecution from the Hindu majority in other neighbourhoods.

Though only lasting a few weeks in the case of Mumbai, these 'vernacular' modalities of violence and security provision have left an indelible mark on the fabric of the city. Families have permanently relocated, while newer infrastructure has been built to circumvent inner-city neighbourhoods. The article concludes that the dialectic between urban form and the mechanics of security provision in Mumbai is emblematic of the processes that are producing security outcomes in cities across the developing world.

2. Theorising the vernacular dynamics of large-scale public violence in the built environment

The city is a 'hybrid place',[16] with a variety of actors ranging from grassroots organizations to policy-makers, urban planners and private developers influencing its production. As a corollary, the built environment is a complex social production,[17] where the ideologies of order not only segregate urban space, along ethnic or class distinctions for example, but such spatial practices connect directly with emergent forms of political mobilisation.[18] We have also seen that when violence becomes endemic, it becomes connected with political negotiations and mediations over the control of power and space in the city.[19] On the one hand, widespread public violence, such as rioting, generally takes place in cities that provide the physical, social and demographic infrastructure for significant mobilisation against

[14]As evidenced globally in Saskia Sassen, *Expulsions: Brutality and Complexity in the Global Economy* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014).
[15]B.N Srikrishna, 'Report of the Srikrishna Commission Appointed for Inquiry Into the Riots at Mumbai During December 1992 and January 1993' (Mumbai: Government of Maharashtra, 1998).
[16]Harold L. Platt, *Building the Urban Environment: Visions of the Organic City in the United States, Europe, and Latin America*, Urban Life, Landscape, and Policy (Philadelphia, PA; Rome; Tokyo: Temple University Press, 2015).
[17]Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991).
[18]Nandini Gooptu, *The Politics of the Urban Poor in Early Twentieth-Century India*, Cambridge Studies in Indian History and Society 8 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
[19]Neil Brenner, 'New State Spaces: Urban Governance and the Rescaling of Statehood', *Repr* (Oxford: Oxford University Print, 2009).

marginalisation or state neglect.[20] And yet, the configurations of urban architecture can themselves become the central 'objectives to be "taken over", marked, destroyed'.[21] Urban violence can therefore create spatial discontinuities by disrupting not only the city's reticulate infrastructure, but also its less visible, but continually active, social structures.[22]

On the other hand, violence can be constructive of and constituted within social[23] and infrastructural[24] processes in the city. The legacies of violence linger as they redefine the accepted parameters of what is adequate, or acceptable, urban living[25] (for example in Beirut in Fawaz 2014, in Mumbai in Hansen 2001, and in Bogota in Moser and McIlwaine 2004). Brena Turam showcases this through the example of Tesvikiye, a neighbourhood in Istanbul that experienced acute Islam-secularist conflict, where contestation in the form of massive vocal protests did not simply connote the bipolar clash between devout Muslims and secularists.[26] Neither was the conflict an obstacle to civility or security. Instead, the conflict fed into more complicated and multipolar struggles over freedoms in urban space, and therefore provided 'a gateway, not a barrier, to political reform and democratization'.[27] In Karachi, the efforts of public and private actors to protect themselves through the widespread use of physical barriers as a form of conflict infrastructure reflects, in part, significant state failures in the realms of security and urban planning. But it is also part-and-parcel of an economically thriving and prosperous city.[28] On a similar note, Filip de Boeck and Sammy Baloji describe how the infrastructural remains of a conflict-ridden city, such as in Kinshasa, can be 'sutures' that congeal the possibilities of collective urban action and serve as crucial entry points for understanding the processes of urban living more broadly.[29]

2.1. Spatiality of violence in urban India

Riots in urban India are persistent and widespread. As per the National Crime Records Bureau, well over six thousand riots took place in cities with over one million residents in 2015.[30] However, such violence is spatially uneven. In India more than half of the urban

[20]Beall, Goodfellow, and Rodgers, 'Cities and Conflict in Fragile States in the Developing World'.
[21]Caroline Humphry, 'Violence and Urban Architechture: Events at the Ensemble of the Odessa Steps in 1904–5', in Locating Urban Conflicts: Ethnicity, Nationalism and the Everyday, ed. Wendy Pullan, Britt Baillie and Lefkos Kyriacou (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 39.
[22]Wendy Pullan, 'Spatial Discontinuities: Conflict Infrastructures in Contested Cities', in Locating Urban Conflicts: Ethnicity, Nationalism and the Everyday, ed. Wendy Pullan, Britt Baillie and Lefkos Kyriacou (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).
[23]Rodgers, 'Critique of Urban Violence'.
[24]Gautam Bhan, In the Public's Interest: Evictions, Citizenship, and Inequality in Contemporary Delhi (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2016).
[25]Mona Fawaz, 'The Politics of Property in Planning: Hezbollah's Reconstruction of Haret Hreik (Beirut, Lebanon) as Case Study: Hezbollah's Reconstruction of Haret Hreik in Beirut', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 38, no. 3 (May 2014): 922–34; Caroline O. N. Moser and Cathy McIlwaine, *Encounters with Violence in Latin America: Urban Poor Perceptions from Colombia and Guatemala* (New York: Routledge, 2004); Hansen, Thomas Blom, 'Governance and myths of state in Mumbai.' In *The Everyday State and Society in Modern India*, eds. C. J. Fuller and Veronique Benei (London: Hurst, 2001), 31–40. See Fawaz for studies in Beirut; Moser and McIlwaine for studies in Bogota; and Hansen for studies in Mumbai).
[26]Berna Turam, 'The Primacy of Space in Politics: Bargaining Rights, Freedom and Power in an İstanbul Neighborhood: Neighborhood Space and Politics of Freedom in İstanbul', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 37, no. 2 (March 2013): 409–29.
[27]Ibid, 411.
[28]Ahmed Noman et al., 'Public and Private Control and Contestation of Public Space amid Violent Conflict in Karachi', *IIED Working Paper*, November 2015, http://pubs.iied.org/pdfs/10752IIED.pdf.
[29]Filip de Boeck and Sammy Baloji, *Suturing the City: Living Together in Congo's Urban Worlds* (London: Autograph: ABP, 2016).
[30]Crime in India. 2016. National Crime Records Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.

riots last year occurred in only ten cities, and these riots almost never engulfed the cities entirely. Some cities, such as Pune, Thiruvananthapuram and Bengaluru, have experienced at least 300 riots per year for the past five or more years. Mumbai experienced on average 40 riots per month in 2016.[31]

Riots are also spatially uneven within cities. They occur endemically in some neighbourhoods, occasionally in others, while most urban areas do not experience such violence. Roma Chatterji and Deepak Mehta document this unevenness during the Mumbai Riots, while Ward Berenschot locates violence in particular neighbourhoods during the intense 2002 riots in Ahmedabad.[32] My colleagues and I find that this is also true over time as we were able to locate riots since 2004 in the western Indian state of Maharashtra in a handful of districts, with some neighbourhoods within these districts being particularly at risk.[33] Erica Field et. al. take this further by demonstrating that rioting is more likely to occur in poorer parts of the city where residents are more dependent on a range of external actors to provide political mediation with state institutions, and therefore, are more susceptible to networks and patronage channels that mobilise violence.[34] This implies that a lack of the legitimate institutions and governance needed to provide security, justice, and socio-economic support, contributes to cycles of violence, and therefore has the potential to further marginalise poorer neighbourhoods.[35] Other explanations of the variability in the incidence of urban riots in India include the instrumental perpetration of violence,[36] the instrumental use of policing interventions,[37] links with political ideologies and imagery,[38] crowd behaviour,[39] or the violence mitigating properties of inter-group civic association.[40]

Though violent spaces may be understood as those that are left ungoverned by weak, partisan or absent legal frameworks,[41] in contemporary urban conflict, the deployment of political violence against and through everyday urban infrastructure by both states and non-state actors seamlessly fuses state-centric 'battlefield' imaginations of popular, urban and material culture.[42] During the Mumbai Riots, local musclemen and vigilantes became 'Generals' or 'Commanders' who directed efforts from 'the front lines'. And yet, the dialectic between urban form and violence was continually underpinned by the state's imposition of 'order and to constitute [the city] as a site for legitimate control by establishing clear-cut boundaries between the legal and non-legal'.[43] By defining these boundaries, the state distinguishes between urban citizens, who are seen as legitimately possessing rights to which

[31]Mumbai Police. 2016. "Statistics Records From Year 2006 to 2016 (Monthwise)". Home Ministry, Government of Maharashtra.
[32]Roma Chatterji and Deepak Mehta, *Living with Violence: An Anthropology of Events and Everyday Life*, Critical Asian Studies (New Delhi: Routledge India, 2007); Ward Berenschot, 'The Spatial Distribution of Riots: Patronage and the Instigation of Communal Violence in Gujarat, India', *World Development* 39, no. 2 (February 2011): 221–30.
[33]Gupte, Justino, and Tranchant, 'Households amid Urban Riots'.
[34]Erica Field et al., 'The Economics of Religious Conflict in an Indian City', *The American Economic Review* 98, no. 2 (May 2008): 505–10.
[35]UN-Habitat, The Challenge of Slums: Global Report on Human Settlements (London: Earthscan, 2003), 183.
[36]Brass, Paul R. *Theft of an Idol: Text and Context in the Representation of Collective Violence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).
[37]As in Steven I. Wilkinson, *Votes and Violence: Electoral Competition and Ethnic Riots in India*, Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).
[38]Christophe Jaffrelot, *Religion Caste and Politics in India.* (Place of publication not identified: Oxford University Press, 2011).
[39]Stanley J. Tambiah, *Leveling Crowds: Ethnonationalist Conflicts and Collective Violence in South Asia*, Comparative Studies in Religion and Society 10 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).
[40]Ashutosh Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life: Hindus and Muslims in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002).
[41]Donald Black, *The Behavior of Law* (New York: Academia Press, 1976).
[42]Stephen Graham, 'Cities as Battlespace: The New Military Urbanism', *City* 13, no. 4 (December 2009): 383–402.
[43]Chatterji and Mehta, *Living with Violence*,129.

the state is accountable, and the 'population'[44] which is a vague and heterogeneous grouping without legitimate claims on state provision. This may materialise as the recognition of one area as 'at the margins',[45] and not another, as the recognition of one group of people as 'slum dwellers' or illegal residents, and not others, or most poignantly, as the recognition of some individuals as criminal, and not others.

This article's focus on the layout and composition of the neighbourhoods that experience intense and public violence draws on a growing literature on the spatial dynamics of riots in the developing world. Ward Berenschot finds that 'research on collective violence has increasingly focused on the spatial spread of violence as a means to further our understanding of how and why such violence takes place'.[46] In the Indian context, Christophe Jaffrelot describes how riots usually occur when a religious or political rally changes its planned route through a built-up space, causing friction between adversarial groups.[47] In his description, the route a rally takes is dependent on the layout and composition of neighbourhoods it passes through, while the presence or absence of the state's correctional, punitive or judicial institutions in monitoring such rallies is also of crucial importance. In another study, Ward Berenschot documents the politicization of neighbourhood-level institutions (schools, clinics, shops) and services (repair of street-lighting for example) as key determinants of civil violence in the Gujarat, India.[48]

3. The complex social production of inner-city Mumbai

The arguments made in this article are based on case study material on the neighbourhoods of Nagpada, and the immediately contiguous areas of Madanpura, Agripada, Kamathipura, Dongri and Phydhonie in inner-city Mumbai. These neighbourhoods are some of the oldest in the city.[49] And though they are situated in the inner-city, in many ways these neighbourhoods are today at the 'margins'.[50] There is an equal mix of residential and commercial buildings, but residents are predominantly Muslim.[51] There are a variety of businesses based in the localities, ranging from heavy metal and frame works, to tile shops, tailoring and leather works. The area is also home to Mumbai's longest standing red-light district.[52] The neighbourhoods are dominated by concretized housing blocks (known locally as *chawls*), typically made of substandard design and materials, some of which are inhabited by a mixed population of Hindus and Muslims. These 'mixed' *chawls* tend to be the most sensitive areas and have seen frequent instances of

[44]As characterised by Partha Chatterjee, *The Politics of the Governed: Reflections on Popular Politics in Most of the World*, Leonard Hastings Schoff Memorial Lectures (New York; Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2004).

[45]Rob Shields, *Places on the Margin: Alternative Geographies of Modernity*, International Library of Sociology (London: Routledge, 1991).

[46]Berenschot, 'The Spatial Distribution of Riots', 221.

[47]Jaffrelot, *Religion Caste and Politics in India*, 343–75.

[48]Berenschot, 'The Spatial Distribution of Riots'.

[49]See for example Monica Chadha, 'Inside Mumbai's Dilapidated Sprawl', *BBC News*, August 23, 2005, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/4176738.stm.

[50]At one level, these neighbourhoods appear to be economically connected with the city through the variety of trades and services located in them. But at a socio-political level, they are also segregated and increasingly homogenised. This bears a resemblance to Perlman's depiction of the various dimensions of marginality in the favelas in Rio mutual, reinforcing and yet differentiated. See Perlman, Janice, *Favela: four decades of living on the edge in Rio de Janeiro* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

[51]Census of India. 2001. 'City wise Total Population and Slum Population in Million Plus Cities (Municipal Corporations).' Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner.

[52]S. P. Shah, 'Producing The Spectacle of Kamathipura: The Politics of Red Light Visibility in Mumbai', *Cultural Dynamics* 18, no. 3 (November 1, 2006): 269–92.

public violence such as rioting and arson. Under the banner of an area somehow 'unified by Muslims', as one official in the Greater Mumbai Municipal Corporation chose to homogenise these neighbourhoods, facts and myths serve to glorify and stigmatise alike. Inasmuch as the bazaar and street-food vendors along Mohammad Ali road are venerated for their uniqueness, the back-street *chawls* and dense residential areas of Nagpada are stigmatized as being backward and disconnected from the more affluent, and Hindu, neighbourhoods in the vicinity.

These neighbourhoods have experienced prodigious urban transformation. In the early twentieth-century Mumbai, there were paddy fields and buffalo grazing grounds within a few miles of expensive real estate, while some sections of the city were completely crammed with buildings. The diversity in the various loci of power and authority at the local level flourished greatly in the near complete absence of any consistent, sustained and citywide urban planning. In 1901, Nagpada was 'a ground area of 75,000 square yards [that] was occupied by 168 separate properties'.[53] This neighbourhood stood in the immediate vicinity of the Mumbai cotton mills and was already one of the severely overcrowded central wards of the city,[54] and by 1921, had a building density of over 15 buildings per acre.[55]

As Rajanaryan Chandavarkar discusses, it was popularly believed that it was within the legal rights of the *Fazindar* (freeholder) to demand at any time that buildings were razed and the land returned.[56] The influence of uncertainty and anxiety is evidenced in the production of this space in two ways – firstly, builders and landlords alike preferred a multi-faceted strategy of renting to an assortment of tenants to maximise rent extraction. Thus, the lower floors in narrow lanes were often split into several shallow-fronted spaces and rented out as small shops, while the surrounding rooms were split up to create one or two-room residential units. Such practices created extremely dense urban blocks in which rooms rented out as residential space were often left with no windows, ventilation, or sunlight, and commercial space was often devoid of adequate infrastructural provision such as plumbing for drinking water, drainage or direct electricity connections. Builders also crammed in as many tenants into a single space as possible in order to cover their costs. By the 1930s, 30 to 40 per cent of residents in these neighbourhoods lived in single rooms inhabited by more than six people, while in the inner city neighbourhoods this went up to 99 and 88 per cent, respectively.[57]

In the longer term, these practices also had a deep impact upon the social make-up of the communities that inhabited the crowded *chawls*. As the Rent Enquiry Committee of 1939[58] found, self-selection was fast creating segregated ghettos. The cramped living arrangements caused there to be a reluctance of 'the respectable to live with the rough, the skilled to live with the unskilled, the jobbers to live with ordinary workers and various castes to live with each other'.[59] By the late 1950s, overcrowding had reached a maximum point while land rents continued to rise. This caused builders to opt for the cheapest building materials and often disregarded building regulations. For example, cheap timber frames were used for multi-storied structures, and inadequate waterproofing meant that these

[53]Rajnarayan Chandavarkar, *The Origins of Industrial Capitalism in India: Business Strategies and the Working Classes in Bombay, 1900–1940*, Cambridge South Asian Studies 51 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 176.
[54]Sandip Hazareesingh, 'Colonial Modernism and the Flawed Paradigms of Urban Renewal: Uneven Development in Bombay, 1900–25', *Urban History* 28, no. 02 (August 2001): 244.
[55]Census of India. 1921. 'Cities' Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner: ii–vi.
[56]Chandavarkar, *The Origins of Industrial Capitalism in India*.
[57]G.R Pradhan, 'The Untouchable Workers of Bombay City' (University of Bombay, 1989): 12–4.
[58]Report of the Rent Enquiry Committee, Government of Bombay, 1939, Volumes I, II & III.
[59]Rajnarayan Chandavarkar, 'Workers' Politics and the Mill Districts in Bombay between the Wars', *Modern Asian Studies* 15, no. 3 (1981): 603–47.

rotted at an alarming rate. Critically, builders also attempted to lower initial building costs by constructing on poorly built foundations and unstable plinths. As Ila Klein describes, this also had a knock-on effect on the drainage systems, which could not be cleaned due to congestion of houses and quickly became wholly non-functional.[60] So many buildings were built on inadequate foundations that excavation of the pavements to fix the drainage below would almost certainly have caused the buildings to crumble, and Nagpada was left to become one of the many 'cesspools' in the city where sewage from broken or clogged drains seeped into the sub-soil.[61] This was also the time when the Rent Act, an enactment meant to protect the interests of the low-rent tenants by maintaining subsidized rent levels, inadvertently put residents in a situation of greater risk and uncertainty.

4. Methodology

I draw on a set of 41 in-depth interviews with residents of inner-city Mumbai.[62] As I was interested in tracing specific acts of violence and security provision during the Mumbai riots, I relied on a non-random purposive snowballing technique to recruit interviewees.[63] Respondents were chosen according to their residential status between December 1992 and January 1993, the months of the Mumbai riots, and only those who lived in, worked in, or were born into households that lived or worked in the case study neighbourhoods, were selected. Each interview was guided by three questions (alternatives in brackets) – 'What is the meaning of security to you? (Who in your opinion needs security?)'; 'Who provides security (do you provide security) in this neighbourhood?'; and 'How is security provided?'[64] These questions were used as entry points for respondents to begin their narrations, which then went on to recount their experiences of the riots. This not only enabled an articulation of their present day insecurities, but also situated these articulations in relation with the historical trajectory of violence in the neighbourhood.

I also draw upon the detailed official accounts of the 1992–93 riots, including official depositions made before the courts during the subsequent investigations into the riots, to triangulate and locate specific acts of violence and brutality within the neighbourhoods. In addition, I have relied on several interviews with Mumbai Police personnel of various ranks, including with police officers, inspectors and constables who were either posted to stations in the neighbourhoods under study, or had direct knowledge of events during the 1992–1993 riots with specific reference to the case study neighbourhoods.

[60]Klien, 'Urban Development and Death: Bombay City, 1870–914'.

[61]Ibid., 742.

[62]The data for this paper has been collected in three phases: the majority of in-depth interviews were conducted in 2011. Stakeholder interviews, including with the police were conducted in 2013. Further stakeholder and in-depth interviews were conducted in 2015–16.

[63]The initial 5 interviewees are not included in the data-set to maintain adequate degrees of separation between the interviewer and interviewees. Also see for example Heckathorn, 'Respondent-Driven Sampling: A New Approach to the Study of Hidden Populations.'; Heckathorn, 'Respondent-Driven Sampling II: Deriving Valid Estimates from Chain-Referral Samples of Hidden Populations.'; Patton, *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*; Salganik and Heckathorn, 'Sampling and Estimation in Hidden Populations Using Respondent-Driven Sampling'.

[64]No monetary incentive was provided for partaking in the interview process. Some respondents, particularly those dependent on a day-wage, could only find time for the interview at night. Prospective respondents were first given a verbal explanation of the research project, and explained that the outcome of the research would result in academic research, and given the opportunity to opt out at any stage of the interview. Because their names had been suggested, in most cases the prospective respondents would make an effort themselves to make contact and fix an interview time. While each interview began by obtaining the informed verbal consent from the respondent, because no direct incentives were provided for participation, as well as the fact that the respondents came of their own accord to the interview site, their attendance was also seen as their consent to participation.

5. The dialectic between urban form and violence

The characteristics of these urban spaces directly influenced the nature and extent of vulnerabilities faced by local residents during the Mumbai Riots. Not only was their ability to congregate, strategise and mobilise shaped by their physical environment, the flexibility inherent in informal and extralegal living arrangements also enabled the most accessible and credible forms of security. In the following paragraphs, I describe the multiple and often competing ways this occurred.

In the weeks leading up to the Mumbai Riots, local residents described a sense of threat from a growing presence of hard-line Hindu activists in Mumbai as well as an impending threat to the Babri Masjid. In response, the Students' Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) and the Bombay Muslim Committee organised several meetings to mobilise Muslim efforts.[65] It is apparent that the manner in which these meetings took place in the inner-city neighbourhoods was distinctly shaped by the confines of densely populated built space. While on the one hand groups found it easy to leaflet large numbers of tenement blocks in a relatively short space of time and put up public hoardings in easy line-of-sight, on the other, space inside the neighbourhood *chawls* proved too small to hold impromptu meetings involving any significant numbers of people, with any degree of privacy. As has been described in some detail in the official accounts of the Mumbai Riots, where meetings could take place, the organizers had to take added precaution to keep strategy meetings private.[66] However, as a senior Police Inspector noted, one such meeting in Nagpada was hardly a secret one, as the doors and windows of the room where the meeting was taking place remained open and pedestrians in the narrow lanes could easily listen in.

Around this time, belligerent sections of right-wing Hindu groups had taken to organising a series of *Ghanta Aartis* (a ritual where the bell in a Hindu temple is rung continuously) to coincide with the exact time of the start of the demolition of the Babri mosque by the *kar sevak* in Ayodhya. Though this ritual is not common, conservative Hindu groups have often argued that it should be viewed as the Hindu equivalent of the *Azan*, the Muslim call for prayer, and therefore be treated no differently. A resident described the continuous ringing of the bells in December 1992 'at times amplified by loud speakers, [as reverberating] through the narrow lanes … it created a feeling of restlessness. I remember having to shout to the yoghurt seller when he came to my door'. It was a show of strength and a way to 'bring Ayodhya to Mumbai'.

It was in this charged atmosphere that serious incidents of public disorder began to occur from early morning of 7 December 1992: Maulana Azad Road, the main thoroughfare cutting through Nagpada, was blocked with debris, stones and tires by a group of Muslim youth. The roadblocks were placed primarily to deter the police, who were carrying out swift-searches of the area, from entering the neighbourhood. Their efforts were successful as according to police reports, on several occasions on the morning of December 7, patrols had to be stopped in order to clear debris from the road. At the same time, local accounts describe the same group of youths setting up their own patrols through all inner lanes as well as along the larger roads around the perimeter of neighbourhoods like Nagpada,

[65]As described by Justice S. M. Daud and Justice H. Suresh, 'The People's Verdict: An Enquiry into the December 1992 and January 1993 Riots in Bombay.' (Mumbai: Indian People's Human Rights Tribunal, Indian Human Rights Commission, 1993), 33; and Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India*, 458.

[66]Srikrishna, 'Report of the Srikrishna Commission Appointed for Inquiry Into the Riots at Mumbai During December 1992 and January 1993', 22.5–23.3.

Madanpura, and neighbouring Kamathipura. This group stopped and questioned anyone they did not recognise as a local resident, and also confiscated items they thought were dubious. Through most of that morning, the police managed to keep Maulana Azad Road clear from the roadblocks thrown in by prowling groups who would then disappear into the back streets. Late in the day however, once tires and other debris were set alight, the police could no longer keep the road clear, and central Nagpada, including Madanpura and a few adjoining streets of Kamathipura, came to be almost totally inaccessible form the outside.

These groups created perimeters around the neighbourhood, and often saw themselves as 'Generals' or 'commanders' of 'commando units', fitting into the structure and order of a 'riot production system'.[67] Militarisation was underscored by the vocabulary used by respondents when they described the 'road blockades', comprising of burning tires and other rubble, as the deployment of a purposeful and strategic 'tactic'. In much the same vein, research on Dharavi, another area in Mumbai that was severely affected by the riots, reveals a similar use of militarised terminology, such as 'Line of Control' (referring to the de facto border between India and Pakistan) being used to denote roads between Hindu, Dalit and Muslim colonies in Dharavi.[68]

Soon after, a mob of approximately five to six hundred Muslim men had gathered outside the Suleiman *chowky* (police booth) on Undria Road, and according to police reports, attacked and ransacked the *chowky* without provocation. However, according to one respondent, the gathering was first peaceful, 'but the surrounding tensions were very high; at some point there was a rumour that the police were about to open fire, and the people felt trapped in the small lanes … and turned violent'. The mob then allegedly ransacked the *chowky* trapping a Hindu police constable inside, who was attacked with swords and choppers resulting in serious injuries. While police records claim that the constable was saved due to police control firing, which cleared a passage to safety for him, several eyewitnesses interviewed recalled that it was instead the Muslim residents from the neighbouring building who managed to pull him out of the crowd and also took in the other officers from the *chowky* (also see eyewitness interviews regarding the Suleiman chowky incident in Swami 1998). The news about the police firing and mob violence drew out a crowd of approximately four to five thousand on the much wider Maulana Shaukat Ali Road, who then proceeded to vandalize neighbouring by-lanes. The police in response increased their control fire, which resulted in seven deaths and two injuries, all of whom were Muslim. Less than a kilometre due west on Belasis Road, another group of around 500 Muslim men set alight some busses and pelted stones at the Bombay Central Bus Depot. This carried on for nearly five hours, during which time the violence got increasingly brutal and concentrated along Maratha Mandir Road. Here too, the police resorted to control fire to disperse the crowd, which resulted in the deaths of three Muslim men and seven Hindu men.

By the early evening, close to 3,000 Hindu men from the neighbouring areas like Tardeo had congregated behind the BIT *chawl*, on the south-western front of Nagpada. The mob soon turned violent, ransacking and looting Muslim shops and other establishments on Foras Road (now know as R. S. Nimkar Marg). The Srikrishna Committee, set up to investigate police handling of the riots, reported that the mob 'systematically attacked Muslim establishments … [they] attacked Good Luck restaurant … and set on fire five/six shops

[67] As theorised by Paul R Brass, *The Production of Hindu-Muslim Violence in Contemporary India* (New Delhi; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).
[68] Chatterji and Mehta, *Living with Violence*, 69–75.

belonging to Muslims. The fire spread to an adjacent bakery resulting in the death of one Gangaram Sitaram Nayee [a Hindu] who was burnt in the fire'.[69] Around the same time, 4,000 to 5,000 Muslim men gathered in Madanpura, in the northern section of Nagpada, and began looting shops on Maulana Azad Marg (formerly known as Duncan Road) and Mirza Ghalib Marg (formerly known as Clare Road). Some of the worst hit shops in the looting belonged to Marwaris (Hindus from Rajasthan) who, very soon after the riots, sold off their shops to Muslim traders and moved out of Nagpada. The mob also attacked two Hindu temples in the area – one on 4th Peerkhan Street, where the idols were smashed and the adjoining residence of the priest ransacked, and the other in nava Nagpada, where they attempted to set the temple, and consequently a nearby building, on fire. The police reportedly fired approximately 60 rounds of control fire, but by this stage were beginning to be over-powered by the size and spread of the mob. Notwithstanding the proximity of this mob to the Nagpada Police Station and the Byculla Jail, the by-lanes leading off Mirza Ghalib Marg into the barricaded and debris-strewn Maulana Azad Road were proving increasingly difficult for the police to access or control.

5.1. Collateral damage and vigilantism

Official records provide detailed accounts of innocent bystanders, standing mostly in the tenement balconies above the streets, being shot by police bullets. For example, on the afternoon of 8th December, an Inspector at the Nagpada Police Station fired at a group of 100–20 riotous people who, purportedly, were stone pelting the Bohri (Muslim) chawl, but instead injured a two-year-old Muslim child standing in a balcony above.[70] Several other such instances continued to occur in Nagpada throughout 7th and 8th December where police response was questionable, either because of the excessive use of force, the apparent partisan nature of the response, or the questionable nature of evidence and pro forma paperwork provided. When asked about these shootings, a key informant in the Mumbai Police highlighted to me that 'the [constabulary] receive next to no urban specific training. How to control riots in the city is different from how it is dealt with in rural areas … for one you can not shoot warning shots upwards, there are people up above as well! Same issue with tear gas in small lanes, where is there space to shoot? Can you shoot around corners? Control fire is meaningless when the mob cannot see the injured or distinguish the sounds of fire [due to the echo]. In 1992, the situation was also very different, the police were also feeling trapped'.

In contrast, local vigilante groups found they were able to traverse the lanes and by-lanes with enough ease to continue their patrols. Several respondents recounted the feeling of security this provided to local residents – they felt protected from the 'marauding Hindu mobs' as well as the partisan police. Nevertheless, the interviewees who referred to this group did not actually name the members, although it was apparent that the proximal way of neighbourhood life implied everyone knew who they were. One respondent described their actions as 'questionable certainly, many of the guys [who were patrolling the neighbourhood] were known to all of us as delinquents, but equally, there was no question of

[69]Srikrishna, 'Report of the Srikrishna Commission Appointed for Inquiry Into the Riots at Mumbai During December 1992 and January 1993', 22.12.
[70]Ibid: 22.14–22.17.

them picking up a wrong person, everyone knows everyone here, so at least we felt safe that they will definitely catch an outsider. And once all the streets were blocked, no one could get in'. Another respondent, a Muslim woman in her thirties, went further and described the group as 'young Muslim men, some merely boys, but I felt they were the true protectors of our *quam* (community)'.

The loss of formal control as the riots took hold of the inner city neighbourhoods gave way to a sharp increase in extralegal and criminal activity during the latter half of the riots. In late-December and January 1993, the Nagpada Police Station recorded 18 'riot related offences', and 7 'deaths due to stabbing'.[71] In one incident, described in detail by the Srikrishna Commission, several eyewitnesses saw a Hindu mob throw stones and empty soda bottles at a building, Dalal Estate, in which nearly all residents were Hindu. Most eyewitnesses agree that the Hindu mob had targeted Dalal Estate as they suspected a Muslim family owned one of the flats in the building. The particular flat in question was ransacked and looted by the mob, but because the Muslim family could not be located, the mob proceeded to lock down the entire building under the assumption that the family was being sheltered in another flat. After locking all the doors from the outside, the mob proceeded to pour petrol in the passageways of the building and throw firebombs into windows 'in order to flush out the [Muslim] family'. One of the Hindu residents of Dalal Estate, who testified before Justice Srikrishna, managed to break open his front door and let out most of the other trapped residents, as they were on a lower floor. However, an elderly Zoroastrian couple on one of the upper floors could not make it out in time and were burnt alive. Eyewitnesses described that this incident was carried out in the full knowledge of the police, and some of the respondents who had witnessed the Dalal Estate incident often referred to it as an example of how the police function in the inner-city by 'letting the situation settle itself'.

Around the same time, local police took notice of a sudden and dramatic increase in neighbourhood residents carrying country-made '*katta*' pistols.[72] The prevalence of these pistols was so alarming that the Nagpada police later admitted to the Srikrishna Commission that 'the entire Madanpura Road along Maulana Azad Road was [left] totally un-policed because the police were afraid of their life'.[73] Such an increase in the number of pistols would generally be evidence of organised criminal networks, however this was not the case as it was later established that the pistols were most likely crafted haphazardly using local blacksmith's kilns with scraps (like the steering rods from trucks) from local ironmongers. While none of the respondents in this study claimed to have personally had possession of a *katta*, one respondent, acknowledged that they were 'being given out for our protection, how else could we protect ourselves?' He went on to praise the guns for having 'saved our life', while describing the act of handing out *katta* revolvers as the most legitimate and tangible form of security received. He said, 'the *kattas* were like the night … coming over all of us to protect us from a really bad day … the first two days I remember were really bad, so many dead. But after that, I remember thinking, these streets are ours'. He had left Behrampada, in

[71]Srikrishna, 'Report of the Srikrishna Commission Appointed for Inquiry Into the Riots at Mumbai During December 1992 and January 1993', 22.18.

[72]Also known as a *Tamancha* in Northern India, such country-made guns were the preferred weapon of choice for most Mumbai gangs. They were cheap, costing the manufacturer roughly Rs. 250 (approximately £2.50) and were sold to the end user for approximately Rs. 1000. They were also easy to produce, experienced craftsmen take under six hours to manufacture a *katta.* Pande, Mrinal. 2008. 'Uttar Pradesh: the land of la tamancha.' In *Livemint and The Wall Street Journal*. Mumbai. The Other Side.

[73]Srikrishna, 'Report of the Srikrishna Commission Appointed for Inquiry Into the Riots at Mumbai During December 1992 and January 1993', 22.26.

Bandra (East), a suburb of Mumbai, with his wife and daughter to take shelter in Nagpada during the riots. He became visibly emotional when narrating the details of how and why he moved his family into the tiny living quarters of his relative in Nagpada, and recalled how the tenement had now become their home, and it was from there that he got his daughter married. 'We felt safe in these lanes … my daughter was to get married the year before, but that fell through, then we moved, so she got married very late. But these things happen … at least by the grace of Allah we were protected here, I had a relative here … I came here because I came to know about this gracious protection'.

As the riots continued, there was a spurt of extortion attempts and protection rackets run by local thugs. Several reports from across the city, including Nagpada and the neighbouring areas of Pydhonie, Agripada, Dagri Chawl, Mohammad Ali Road and Nul Bazaar, pointed out that shopkeepers, residents and other local businesses were being forced to pay significant amounts in order to ensure their security through the days of the riots. While extortion and protection rackets are usually carried out by political entities, by members of organised gangs and by police personnel in a well-established system known as *hafta*,[74] during the Mumbai riots, various other agents, working privately, entered the fray. For example, local branch leaders of the Shiv Sena (a local right-wing political party known to use violence and intimidation as tactics) complained that 'for every Shiv Sainik involved [in rioting and providing protection] there were also 20 anti-social elements involved'.[75] These private operators were able to keep close watch on shops and street corners either from their own flats above, or through quick patrolling of the lanes.

The legacy of these intense weeks of violent rioting is both 'ephemeral',[76] and yet evident even today. A local *maulvi* (teacher at an Islamic school) drew on Quranic scripture to refer to the vigilante groups that patrolled the inner-city during the riots as the '*khadem-ul-quam akhirhuum*', implying they were the last of the 'real men' doing service to the community. This sense of ownership over the provision of security was also echoed more than a decade after the riots by nearly 40 per cent of respondents, who claimed they were, in one way or another, involved in providing security for the neighbourhood. This echoes Thomas Blom Hansen's findings that while musclemen in Mumbai's inner city neighbourhoods derive their social standing through an ephemeral association with gangs, their position is nevertheless valued since '[w]e have to respect [them] in times of crisis who else will fight for us in the street? There the nice advocate or doctor is no good … but that does not mean that we trust them, that is something else'.[77] Not only does this point to an understanding of 'security' that is extremely localised, extending to a multiplicity of actors and meanings,[78] and one that can be represented as a collectively owned but nevertheless excludable 'commodity',[79] it also serves as a reaffirmation that the nature of urban form deeply impacts social structures that form within it.[80]

[74] Jonathan Shapiro Anjaria, 'Ordinary States: Everyday Corruption and the Politics of Space in Mumbai', *American Ethnologist* 38, no. 1 (February 2011): 58–72.
[75] Srikrishna, 'Report of the Srikrishna Commission Appointed for Inquiry Into the Riots at Mumbai During December 1992 and January 1993', 4.2 [*sic* 3.2].
[76] Thomas Blom Hansen, *Violence in Urban India: Identity Politics, 'mumbai', and the Postcolonial City* (Princeton, NJ; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005).
[77] Thomas Blom Hansen, 'Predicaments of Secularism: Muslim Identities and Politics in Mumbai', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 6, no. 2 (March 31, 2003): 266–7.
[78] Emma Rothschild, 'What Is Security?', *Daedalus* 124, no. 3 (Summer 1995): 53–98.
[79] Loader, 'Consumer Culture and the Commodification of Policing and Security'.
[80] Oscar Newman, *Defensible Space: People and Design in the Violent City* (London: Architectural Press, 1973).

An elevated viaduct that runs above the entire length of the Mohammad Ali Road was completed in 2002, allowing thoroughfare traffic an uninterrupted run to the affluent neighbourhoods in Fort and onwards to Colaba in South Mumbai, by-passing nearly all inner-city neighbourhoods. At the time of its construction, the flyover was heralded not only as an ingenious solution to Mumbai's traffic, but also celebrated as a symbol of urban ingenuity as it stood to be the longest viaduct in India. The viaduct may also be recognised as ossifying the ghettoisation of the inner-city neighbourhoods that now fall in the viaducts shadow. In one interview, an Assistant Commissioner of Police in attempt to convince me of his expertise on Nagpada told me 'I visit the area daily, I live in the eastern suburbs so have to take the Flyover everyday to get to the Commissioner's Office [at Crawford Market, at the Southern end of the flyover]'. The implication was that just by looking down on these neighbourhoods from the flyover it was possible to understand these 'social black holes'.[81]

6. Conclusion

There are two key findings from the case study of inner-city Mumbai. First, the actions of the mob, the police, as well as a wide variety of vigilante actors during the Mumbai riots together present complex arrangements of security provision. Highly localised, time-sensitive and spatial characteristics, like for example which street or even which floor of a building you reside in, are the vernacular characteristics of violent urban spaces that challenge our broader understanding of urban safety. They dismantle state-centric characterisations of urban security as a uni-directional relationship between the state as the provider, and urban citizens as the beneficiaries, and yet, are dominated by state and military-centred terminology.

Second, the nature of urban form – whether the streets are crowded, dense or sparse, for example, as well as the socio-political and historical processes that engender these spaces – is closely related to how security is delivered. We see that vigilante activity can thrive even in spaces where the state imposes its order, but also that the relationship between urban form and insecurity is not singular. Residents of a concretized multi-floor building are just as likely to be victims of riots as are residents of non-permanent shanties. This can often happen in subtle ways and through long chains of events, which go unnoticed until they suddenly come into focus during moments of extreme public disorder, like the Mumbai Riots. Alternatively, the nature of space can interact more overtly with the mechanics of security provision in such a way that certain strategies (like police swift-searches) are rendered unsuccessful, while other strategies (like blocking off streets with burning debris) are realised. Critically, this has an impact not only on *who is* secure or insecure, but it also shapes local perceptions of *who needs* security. Here, notions of criminality, illegality or even whether a person or household is poor appear to have little impact. Instead, the nature of the relationship with the built environment, significantly determines hyperlocal notions of security, and this can reinforce structural segregation of the city over the long-run. Just as uncertainty and insecurity determined the form of inner-city Mumbai in the early 20th century, the extreme violence of the Mumbai Riots continues to dictate how these neighbourhoods are shaped and relate to the rest of the city.

[81] A. Appadurai, 'Spectral Housing and Urban Cleansing: Notes on Millennial Mumbai', *Public Culture* 12, no. 3 (October 1, 2000): 627–51.

This speaks directly to the nature of security provision witnessed across the cities of the developing world where the interplay between the legibility of urban spaces, and their ideological and cultural representations, is producing vernacular dialectics between urban form, violence and how security is provided. It is imperative that such dialectics shape our analysis of developmental outcomes in cities, and more broadly, the positionality of urban spaces as drivers of sustained peace. Following Martin et al, it is inaccurate to assume a particular type of urban form, multi-storied tenement blocks as opposed to shacks for example, is inherently more or less secure.[82] Urban spaces are far from static. Various state, non-state, legal, illegal and extralegal actors continually contest for control over the built environment, thereby changing their nature and form. That is, how a person or group interact with the built environment is not only a function of their own actions and choices, but also of the social, economic and political processes of mediation that shape the built environment. These interactions not only determine who is vulnerable to violence, but also how vulnerable they are, and why.

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[82]Deborah Martin, Eugene McCann, and Mark Purcell, 'Space, Scale, Governance, and Representation: Contemporary Geographical Perspectives on Urban Politics and Policy', *Journal of Urban Affairs* 25, no. 2 (May 2003): 113–21.