

A Place to Live: Incremental Building and its Logics in Informal Settlements of Cape Town and Delhi

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30 January 2020

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Abstract

Many, if not most, houses in southern cities are self-built. Whether formal or informal, these houses are both built, and often, expanded incrementally. Through an in-depth exploratory method of 'homestead biographies', in this research I explored the multi-dimensional and relational nature of incremental building in the informal settlements of Kosovo in Cape Town and Gayatri Colony in Delhi. The juxtaposition of Gayatri Colony and Kosovo shows rich parallel stories of people's housing struggles and aspirations, on one hand, and highlights the varied ways in which residents have built over the years, on the other. Starting from finding one's own place, incremental building is a multi-dimensional process, which revolves around securing space, sourcing building materials, building household assets, and linking to infrastructure. I argue not only incremental building is a story of agency and how ordinary people build their houses, neighbourhood and city, it is equally a story of a critical set of relationalities that play out at multiple scales. Places to live, for instance, are built incrementally through social connections; they are built in response to crises; and lastly, they are built in relation to the state. These relationalities drive the practices of incremental building in informal settlements: 'in the meanwhile' in Kosovo, Cape Town and 'as a gamble' in Gayatri Colony, Delhi.

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A Place to Live: Incremental Building and its Logics in Informal Settlements of Cape Town and Delhi

Introduction

'We thought of settling in first, requirement of plan comes later; there should be some place to live first, then we can keep building over time'¹.

Sitting in his neighbour's house in Gayatri Colony, HK offered this explanation when I asked him how he and his family came up with the plan for their house. When I was being trained in spatial planning, HK's logics and process were not something we deliberated upon as part of our city planning curriculum. In contrast, master plans and building byelaws dictated how we thought about housing and planning. However, as I started working as a planner, I realised that plans and byelaws are not the starting point for majority of the households in cities of the global south, and even when they are, only a miniscule proportion of houses in our cities are built in one go. Whether formal or informal, a large majority of housing in southern cities is self-produced, built incrementally over time. What drives this process of incrementalism in practice; what factors shape the incremental building of places to live in, especially in informal settlements where there are no plot markers or 'rules' to begin with? This curiosity inspired this research, which tracks incremental building and its logics in informal settlements of Cape Town and Delhi.

There is a rich body of literature that documents how planning has failed in cities of the global south, resulting in a massive housing crisis, which people manage themselves through self-built housing, mostly referred to as informal (Bhan, 2016; Huchzermeyer, 2011). In some cities of the global south, there are more people in informal settlements and informal housing in general, compared to those living in formal housing. Caldeira (2017) calls this mode of production peripheral urbanization, at the heart of which lie processes of autoconstruction. She argues that autoconstruction produces heterogeneity within and across cities. This meta argument frames my interest in understanding incremental building and its logics, and the varied forms it takes across cities, in particular in my case, in Cape Town and Delhi. My interest, however, lies at a more micro scale, focused on everyday practices of house building over time.

¹ Personal interview with HK, 12 February 2019. All respondents' names have been changed to maintain their anonymity.

I build here on a parallel literature on the micro-practices of house building, which is critical for tracking incremental building. Lee's idea of homestead biographies (2005), for instance, documents the ways in which residents in a state-built housing project incrementally improve their houses. She tracks the logics and contexts in which residents renovated their housing to suit their needs and requirements. Through 'homestead biographies' (Lee, 2005), she offers a methodology for "understanding the interaction between built environment and shifting social and economic norms and practices" (p. 613). I build on this approach in this research, situating individual houses within the history of their own home making, and in their neighbourhood context, to explore the multi-dimensional relational nature of incremental building.

My research is based in two informal settlements, one in Cape Town and one in Delhi, which were not laid out as plots at the time of occupation. Through in-depth interviews that produced homestead biographies, the juxtaposition of Kosovo and Gayatri Colony shows rich parallel stories of people's housing struggles and aspirations on one hand, and highlights the varied ways in which residents have built over the years, on the other. Starting from securing one's own place, incremental building is a multi-dimensional process, which revolves first around finding and securing a space, second in sourcing building materials, third in building household assets and, finally, often at a later stage, linking to infrastructure. I argue that, on one hand, incremental building is a story of agency, demonstrating how ordinary people build their houses, neighbourhood and city; on the other, it is equally a story of relationalities that play out at multiple scales. Places to live are built incrementally through social connections; they are built in response to crises; and lastly, they are built in relation to the state. These relationalities drive the particular practices of incremental building in informal settlements, in these cases 'in the meanwhile' in Kosovo, Cape Town and 'as a gamble' in Gayatri Colony, Delhi.

The dissertation is structured into five chapters. Chapter one lays out the existing body of literature on housing, informality and people-led development, that helps in understanding the place of incremental building in southern cities. Chapter two presents the two settlements that were selected for this study – Kosovo in Cape Town and Gayatri Colony in Delhi. It also outlines the methods adopted to carry out the research, centered around the idea of homestead biographies. Chapter three and four present the findings from Cape Town and Delhi respectively, tracing in detail the processes, logics and outcomes of incremental building in the two settlements. The final chapter juxtaposes the findings from two case studies, bringing them in conversation with the existing literature, and highlighting the multi-dimensional and relational nature of incremental building. The dissertation concludes with a brief discussion on how does my research link to the theory, policy, and practice of incrementalism.

Chapter 1: Understanding the Place of Incremental Building in Southern Cities

Diverse, yet interconnected, bodies of work around housing, informality, and development 'by the poor' form the entry point for my research. They offer a set of arguments through which I contextualise incremental building, a thematic that is, more-often-than-not, implicit in the literature.

1.1 Parallel Failures of Planning and Persistence of Informal Housing in Global South

There is a rich literature on how, on one hand, planning and housing policies have failed or, rather, fallen short in delivering adequate affordable housing in southern cities, a trend which has resulted in massive housing deficits. On the other hand, and in consequence, people have made their own arrangements for housing, what is typically referred to as 'informal'. Slums, for example, constitute a large proportion of informal settlements, and almost 25 per cent of world's urban population lives in slums (UN-Habitat, 2015). Informal settlements house more than half the population in many cities (Wakely and Riley, 2011). Informal housing, however, is not restricted to slums and squatters or even informal settlements. Many planned, so-called formal settlements also have informal housing, as a way of either augmenting the supply or catering to households' needs. As Roy (2005) argues, informality should be seen as a mode of metropolitan urbanization, and not just a dynamic associated with poor squatter settlements. Urban informality, whether in work or housing, is in fact now understood as a defining feature of cities in the global south (Kudva, 2009), and considered a constitutive form of practice in the urban (McFarlane, 2012). Benjamin's notion of 'occupancy urbanism' helps conceptualise and reinforces the fact that master planning is not the sole defining reference for spatial outcomes in southern cities, which get formed by a varied set of everyday practices shaped in a politics of land (Benjamin, 2014).

In India, for instance, the 2011 Census counted 65.4 million slum households, which, due to categorisation issues, represents only a proportion of people living in *bastis*/ informal settlements (Bhan and Jana, 2013). Delhi, the capital city of India, only has a quarter of its population living in planned colonies, with a majority of residents occupying unplanned settlements of one kind or the other (Bhan, 2013; CPR, 2015). Bhan argues that this urban form is not planned but is an outcome of planning (Bhan, 2013). Roy also suggests urban planning in India is about management of land resources through dynamic processes of informality, which she describes as a state of deregulation (Roy, 2009). Bhan, in particular, proposes we move beyond the notion of informality and deploy, instead, the conceptual terrain of legitimacy to

navigate through differences along the spectrum of legal/ illegal or formal/ informal settlements (Bhan, 2013; 2016).

According to the 2011 Census of South Africa, 1.25 million households were living in informal settlements and an additional 700 000 households lived in backyards of formal housing (NUSP, 2015). Comparing and contrasting South Africa and Brazil, Huchzermeyer (2002) traces the production of informal settlements, “developed through the unauthorized invasion of land and construction of shelter” (p. 86) in the two countries since the 19th century, which she argues results from the lack of urban socio-economic integration, and different, yet parallel, processes of division and exclusion, including but not limited to land use planning and regulation. Failures of planning and housing policies in South Africa and perpetuation of informal settlements are extensively examined in her subsequent work and in a larger body of South African literature (see, for instance, Huchzermeyer, 2004; Huchzermeyer and Karam, 2006; Huchzermeyer, 2011).

In relation to state-subsidised housing in South Africa, Charlton (2009) argues there is a mismatch between product and needs, which explains why much of the housing for the urban poor remain outside the purview of the state, in backyards, informal settlements, and abandoned warehouses, for instance. On one hand, the delivery of the houses is lagging; on the other, the houses themselves are not able to meet diverse needs (Charlton, 2009). Therefore, residents have to build their own homes, either from the scratch or on top of what was given to them by the government. Oldfield and Greyling (2015) show how citizens in South Africa resort to different means (from backyards to informal settlements to overcrowded family homes) while they wait for their houses from the government, a dynamic that places such households in a permanent state of temporariness (Yiftachel, 2009).

This literature gives a meta picture of what has been happening in southern cities in terms of planning failures and residents stepping in to address housing deficits through ‘informal’ practices, but it is important to complement this with a deeper understanding of how residents turn into homemakers and city builders.

1.2 Residents as Homemakers and City Builders

In “Geographies of development III: Militancy, insurgency, encroachment and development *by the poor*”, Ballard (2014: 214) examines two overlapping themes of development by the poor: one built on protests, revolutions and social movements; and the other through insurgency, encroachment and everyday life. He demonstrates that people take charge of improving their

lives in multiple ways: through social mobilisation to affect to challenge top-down state policies and actions, and also through actual building and construction practices to enable bottom-up change. In this context, the notion of “people as infrastructure” put forward by Simone (2004) is useful to bring into focus people’s activities in producing the city itself. In the production of space, people are as much the infrastructure as the brick and mortar and the buildings made out of them. Miraftab (2009), in parallel, articulates a notion of insurgent planning as a way to recognise people’s efforts in city building that shifts the locus of control away from planners towards inclusive governance. As a politics, she suggests insurgent planning is counter-hegemonic, transgressive and imaginative. In their everyday form, these practices are fluid. People, sometimes as individuals, many times as a community, move across both “invited” and “invented” spaces of action to make claims on the city (Miraftab, 2009; Mottiar, 2013; Bénit-Gbaffou and Oldfield, 2014). Bayat (2010) refers to these ordinary daily practices as “the quiet encroachment of the ordinary” or “social non-movements”. These practices are often incremental in nature, and the spaces are not produced overnight, they get shaped over a period of time and never feel quite done. What makes the incremental nature of space production, especially housing, unique to southern cities is its sheer scale and pervasiveness. Most southern city housing stock is built bit-by-bit, then services are fought for and received one-by-one. In consequence, neighbourhoods and cities are in a perpetual state of transition. Through a historical tracing, Sheppard (2013) conceptualizes this dynamic as “montage urbanism”. He proposes that incrementalism must be understood to realise its potential and deliver built environments, that are flexible, responsive and just.

An extensive body of work on incrementalism comes from Latin America. For instance, Holston’s work on “autoconstruction of house, self and citizen” helps us understand the practices that shaped urban peripheries of Brazil over decades (Holston, 2008: 263). In one of the most recent works on autoconstruction, Caldeira (2017) conceptualises the notion of “peripheral urbanization”, a set of interrelated processes, a mode of production of space, which she argues is driven by processes of autoconstruction. Over time and space, and across urban geographies, peripheral urbanization produces heterogeneity in and across southern cities. Here, residents are the agents of urbanization involved constantly in incremental processes of space production and transformation. They do so by operating with official logics in transversal ways and generating modes of political engagement, making themselves citizens and political agents (Caldeira, 2017). Bhan (2019) builds on this work, offering a new vocabulary to think about modes of practice in global south. He suggests that peripheral urbanization is produced through processes and practices of the “squat”, “repair” and “consolidate”. The shared

characteristics of these modes of southern urban practice are “incremental, uncertain, temporally fluid, speculative, transversal and rooted” (Bhan, 2019: 14).

Summing up, these articulations of urban practice in the global south draw attention to city building process that are evolving and in perpetual transition, and in which both residents and the state are active contributors. They operate as “transversal logics”, (Caldeira, 2017), and are interdependent. In consequence, the transition and transformation of southern cities are dependent on the ideals and capacities of people (individually, collectively, and at the society scale) as well as the state. Hence, it would be a mistake to suggest that state is absent in notions of peripheral urbanization and its incremental building forms. As Roy suggests, in an earlier argument, the state plays an important role in defining and producing urban informality (Roy, 2005). From this foundation, my research explores the ways in which people’s logics for incremental building operate in relation to not just other residents, but also the state.

1.3 Logics of Home Making and Neighbourhood Building

It is important to analyse and understand incremental building logics and practices at the micro-scale. A number of studies, for example, have looked at incremental development within state-subsidised housing, especially in South Africa. Once starter houses are provided by the government, residents incrementally renovate and expand these to meet their requirements. Literature reveals that a number of factors drive these processes of incremental development. As Charlton (2018: 98) puts it, “peoples’ actions are necessary to enable the housing’s relevance and utility – its ability to perform a practical, social or political function – not just for individual households but as a housing programme”.

Through “homestead biographies”, Lee (2005) offers a methodology which, through her work, provides a detailed account of how households (especially women) turned ‘shells’ given to them by the state into complete houses through reconstruction and renovation over time. Ross (2005), in parallel, explores what people did to enact their conceptualised homes. She shows that housing for poor people is as much about the community and communality as it is about the individual homes and their aesthetics. Using the case of a shantytown in Cape Town, Ross (2005) points to the centrality of privacy and dignity, decency and respectability in people’s articulation of ideal housing. These themes resonate with Lee’s research, which shows the ways privacy, basic comfort and respectability became drivers of a first round of house improvements; and, how savings and more importantly, security of tenure, were essential for making substantial alterations, guided as well by the changing needs for space as women’s

families grew (Lee, 2005). Incrementalism takes diverse forms, however. In a rare case of vertical consolidation in South Africa, in Du Noon in Cape Town, McGaffin et al. (2015) offer an interesting counter perspective (McGaffin et al. 2015). They demonstrate that a majority of housing expansions were carried out to provide rental housing for a growing demand, given the expansion of economic activities around Du noon and the limits of its space on the ground (McGaffin et al. 2015). In a recent study done on incrementality in a resettlement colony in Delhi, Bhan et al. (2018) also observed three phases of incrementality, which began with settling, moved to consolidation, and then expansion.

As opposed to in-depth studies on incremental building in state-subsidised housing, work on incrementalism in informal settlements tends to be more policy oriented, backed by at best what could be called as “policy fix” genre of scholarship (Pieterse, 2013). For instance, much of the literature and debates focus on what kind of enabling environment might be required to promote incremental building and upgrading in informal settlements. There are very few studies that explore the drivers and logics of building in informal settlements, as they exist, i.e. before any external interventions are made. In this small body of literature, Smit’s (2006) work on informal settlements in Cape Town shows that informal settlements may appear to be haphazardly laid out, but in reality, they have complex physical forms, closely aligned to social networks and livelihood activities. For example, households with home-based enterprises are able to locate themselves on main roads; extended families are able to locate themselves next to each other, etc. (Smit, 2006). Lee (2005) also points out that even a shack is made an attractive place to live. Thus, similar to incremental building in state-subsidised housing, informal settlements also have inherent logics in their process of development, which need further research and understanding.

1.4 Situating the Concept of Incremental Building of a Place to Live

A vast majority of people build their own homes incrementally, a process that takes years, if not decades, and many a times, continues forever. Incremental building of houses by occupants themselves is not a new concept. Decades ago, John Turner’s work in the 1960s and 70s highlighted the potential of provision and management of housing by people themselves (Turner, 1972; Turner, 1976). Subsequently, a series of site-and-services projects were implemented in the 1970s and ‘80s, especially by the World Bank. For a number of reasons, including location of such projects, the cost of services, planning norms and standards, early evaluation rendered these projects as a failure, making them out of fashion (Wakely and Riley, 2011). Nonetheless, incremental housing or building houses continues, referred to as a phased

process of building and upgrading a house over time or as housing consolidation, self-help housing, self-built housing or self-construction, for instance (see Wilkinson, 1998; BESSG, 2000; Pugh, 2000; Tipple, 2000; NUSP, 2015; Mehra et al. 2015). In the Latin American context, incremental building is often termed as autoconstruction (Holston, 2008; Caldeira, 2017). Through this body of work and advocacy, scholars and practitioners working with low-income communities have re-made the case for public sector support for incremental housing, calling “informal incremental urban settlement” as one of the most successful ways of building (Wakely and Riley, 2011: ix). It allows families to build, extend and improve their dwellings over time based on their needs and means; it also gives them a chance to be closely involved with building process, thus maintaining their dignity and personal choice in home making (Wakely and Riley, 2011; Mehra et al. 2015).

My research began with the concept of ‘incremental housing’ or ‘building houses incrementally’, but for the purposes of this project, I decided to drop the word ‘housing’, and even ‘house’. I chose ‘incremental building’ instead, because the term ‘house’ is associated with something very specific. In most instances, the residents I interviewed did not think that they were building and occupying a house. According to them they were building a shack, which was at best just a place to live until there is a proper house. In other cases, a structure was considered a house much later in the process of incremental building and remained a place to live in the meanwhile. These observations are discussed in detail in the empirical chapters in the body of this dissertation, as they frame the analytical object of this research – incremental building of place to live, in short, incremental building. I sometimes also use the term incrementalism interchangeably with incremental building.

1.5 Conclusion

Summing up, the pervasiveness of informal settlements must draw our attention to the central role of the residents of informal settlements in home making and city building. Yet, existing work documents and understands people’s housing processes primarily in state-subsidised housing. There is very little known about the processes and outcomes of incremental building in the context of informal settlements, contexts which shape such a large proportion of the housing stock in southern cities. Although policy makers and development agencies see incremental practices as a solution, a precise understanding of how it plays out itself is missing. As Vasudevan (2015) asks,

“How are precarious forms of housing and sociality actually assembled? What kind of work is necessary in order to connect and arrange materials, resources and practices in ways that persist as housing or habitation?” (Vasudevan, 2015: 347)

It is this gap in understanding that I engage with in this research: how do people build places to live in incrementally in informal settlements? I believe this understanding is essential if we want to overcome the challenges associated with informal settlements, which will not suddenly disappear through mass housing programmes. As Charlton (2009) suggests,

“There is a prevailing and persistent conviction that the informality and inadequate living conditions – a major contributor to ‘the backlog’ – can be overcome with a mass roll-out of rational, technical solutions. However, there is still only limited understanding of the underlying reasons for these housing conditions. This affects the extent to which the housing programme can provide recipients with a platform for further life advancement” (Charlton, 2009: 309).

Building on the diverse and extensive literature, my research focuses on people’s logics for building incrementally in informal settlements. Taking inspiration from the larger arguments around autoconstruction, social non-movements, on one hand, and micro studies of homemaking in state-subsidised housing on the other, I attempt to answer the basic question of how residents in informal settlements build their places to live over time. In the process, I am also interested in understanding how they relate to each other and factors external to the settlement, exploring the ways in which incremental building includes but also extends beyond actual house building to involve a broader range of actions done incrementally.

Chapter 2: A Comparative Study of Incremental Building in Kosovo, Cape Town and Gayatri Colony, Delhi

Working on the questions of peripheral urbanization, Caldeira (2017: 5) draws on the “juxtaposition of dissimilar cases” to build her arguments. Operating with a qualitative logic, juxtaposition, a kind of comparison, explores differential conditions and focusses on variations, instead of looking for representative or typical (Small, 2009; Caldeira, 2017). I find this approach convincing and thus, have built this research through case studies located in two informal settlements, Kosovo in Cape Town, South Africa and Gayatri Colony in Delhi, India. The cities of Cape Town and Delhi were chosen primarily for practical reasons. I was in Cape Town for my masters, as part of which we did some research in the informal settlements of the city, so I had some context and networks to build on. As for Delhi, I have lived in the city for most of my life, worked on its planning issues, and I know Hindi, which is widely spoken there. This research seemed to be a great opportunity to understand my own city and its people better.

Analytically, I started with two hypotheses: i) incremental building is multi-dimensional; and ii) incremental building is relational. Incremental building is not a fixed concept, different people apply different logics and meanings to it. A number of things come together in the process of incremental building, including, but not limited to space, building materials, assets, infrastructure and services. These logics and practices of incremental building do not operate in a vacuum; they work in relation to the immediate and larger socio-economic and political contexts. Thus, the research explored incremental building through interconnected questions of space, materiality and services, situated in the immediate context of neighbourhood and in the larger context of the city and nation. The two-case study approach really spoke to the objectives of the research. Below, I introduce the case studies in Cape Town and Delhi, and lay out the methods used to carry out the research.

2.1 Cape Town’s Informal Settlements and the Case of Kosovo

The City of Cape Town follows the Statistics South Africa definitions of informal settlement² and informal dwelling³ (also referred to as shacks). Informal dwellings in Cape Town fall under two main categories: shack in a backyard (of a formal dwelling) and shack not in a backyard

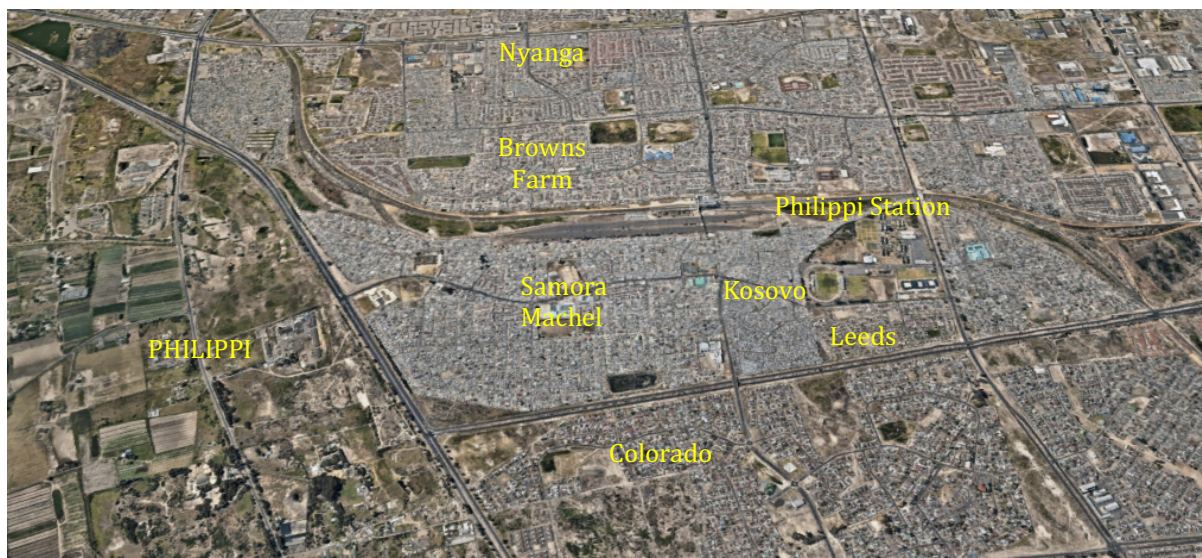
² Informal settlement is defined as “an unplanned settlement on land which has not been surveyed or proclaimed as residential, consisting mainly of informal dwellings (shacks)” (HDA, 2013: 6; after Statistics South Africa)

³ Informal dwelling is “a makeshift structure not approved by a local authority and not intended as a permanent dwelling” (HDA, 2013: 6; after Statistics South Africa)

(informal settlement). According to Census 2011, 13 per cent of households in Cape Town lived in a shack not in a backyard (i.e. informal settlements), and another seven per cent lived in a shack in a backyard (HDA, 2013). The focus of this research is on the shacks in the informal settlements, and not in the backyard of planned settlements. There are 204 recognised informal settlements in the City of Cape Town, accommodating approximately 145,000 households (CoCT, 2013). Spatially, these informal settlements are concentrated in what is generally known as the Cape Flats area.

Kosovo was selected for this study, after discussions with professionals and organisations working in the sector, and reconnaissance visits. A colleague at the African Centre for Cities introduced me to a young resident of Kosovo, who later became my field associate. The main criterion for selection was the age of the settlement; since the research aims to look at incremental house building, it was imperative that I selected a settlement that had been around for a while, giving its residents the time for incremental development. Another important criterion was that the settlement should not be completely upgraded or redeveloped already, because that would have made the recall of the original house building difficult. Kosovo fit these parameters. Occupation started in early 1999 and upgrading and redevelopment of the settlement still exist only in plans. Located in close proximity of Philippi station (Plate 2.1), Kosovo is one of the largest and densest informal settlements in Cape Town; named after the country Kosovo as the inhabitants started coming in here shortly after the Kosovo War, which they heard about on the radio. They compared building shacks to putting up a struggle and fighting for freedom, like people of Kosovo in the war.

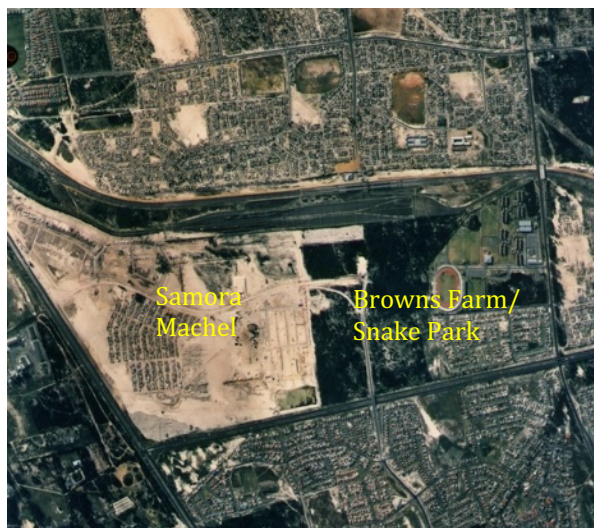
Plate 2.1: Kosovo and its immediate context in Cape Town



Source: Google Earth, 2019.

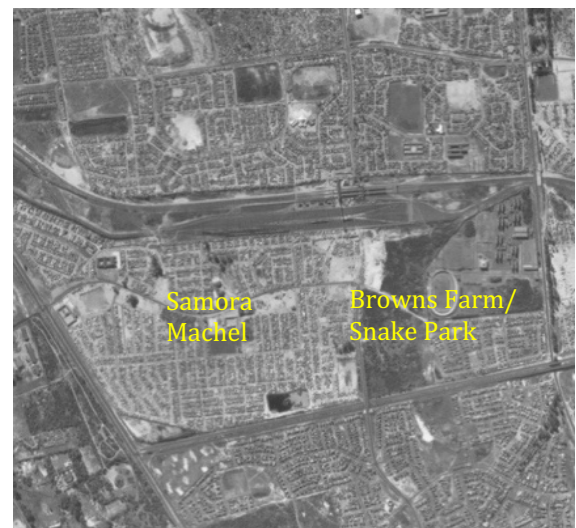
The settlement houses approximately 6,000 households over an area of 28.64 hectares (CoCT et al. 2016). Since occupation of land in 1999⁴, the settlement has seen rapid densification, both in terms of new dwellings and expansion of the old ones, evident in the 2001 and 2019 satellite images (Plate 2.2). While the linkages between Kosovo and Samora Machel will be discussed later, the early images show that construction in Samora Machel, an adjacent settlement, had already started in 1996, and was fully developed in 1999, by the time occupation in Kosovo started. Some of the residents in Kosovo in fact moved from the backyards of Samora Machel.

Plate 2.2: Kosovo in aerial photographs and satellite images over the years



1996 (exact date not known)

Source: National Geo-spatial Information



June 1999



March 2001

Source: Google Earth



July 2019

⁴ Aerial photographs from NGI (Plate 2.2) indicate that the occupation of land in what is now known as Kosovo began after June 1999. This corroborates with findings from the interviews where some of the first residents of Kosovo said that they had moved sometime in August 1999, when it was known by the name of 'Snake Park'.

The initial portion of settled land, was a farm belonging to a private owner that was lying vacant, covered only with trees and bushes when people located and decided to occupy it. A large proportion of the land in Kosovo is currently owned by the City of Cape Town, with some small portions belonging to national government, provincial government, and a private entity. The settlement is divided into three sections: A, B and C. The study households were currently living in Sections B and C.

2.2 Delhi's Informal Settlements and the Case of Gayatri Colony

The term 'unplanned' categorises a diverse range of informal settlements in Delhi. The official category of 'planned' colonies of Delhi housed less than a quarter of Delhi's population in 2000 (CPR, 2015) with more than 75 per cent of Delhi's population residing in 'unplanned' settlements⁵. Within 'unplanned', there are seven categories of settlements⁶. *Jhuggi jhopri basti* and unauthorized colonies are the most relevant for the purposes for this study. *Jhuggi jhopri basti* is a group of structures, considered to be unfit for human habitation⁷. Unauthorized colony is the one that gets developed without the approval of the development authority⁸. While the official definitions do not explicitly touch upon land ownership, practically speaking, the key difference lies in there, which then also informs how the two types of settlements get differential treatment by the government. *Jhuggi jhopri basti* is most often developed through squatting on public or private land; an unauthorized colony, on the other hand, undergoes some form of land transactions before development (Bhan, 2013). Delhi has approximately 760 *jhuggi*

⁵ I decided to use the term 'informal settlements' for both Cape Town and Delhi, even though the term is not officially used in Delhi, for two reasons: i) these settlements are far from being 'unplanned', and therefore, this categorization (which isn't official either) does not work; ii) there are too many overlapping categories in Delhi, the term 'informal' helps to bring them together and somehow maintains their essence.

⁶ These include: *Jhuggi Jhopri Basti*, Slum Designated Areas, Unauthorized Colonies, Resettlement Colonies, Regularised-Unauthorized Colonies, Rural Villages, Urban Villages (DDA, 2010).

⁷ "*jhuggi*" means a structure whether temporary or pucca, of whatever material made, with the following characteristics, namely:- (i) it is built for residential purpose; (ii) its location is not in conformity with the land use of the Delhi Master Plan; (iii) it is not duly authorized by the local authority having jurisdiction; and (iv) it is included in a *jhuggi jhopri basti* declared as such by the Board, by notification" (NCTD, 2010: 2).

"*jhuggi jhopri basti*" means any group of *jhuggis* which the Board may, by notification, declare as a *jhuggi jhopri basti* in accordance with the following factors, namely:-(i) the group of *jhuggis* is unfit for human habitation; (ii) it, by reason of dilapidation, overcrowding, faulty arrangement and design of such *jhuggis*, narrowness or faulty arrangement of streets, lack of ventilation, light or sanitation facilities, or any combination of these factors, is detrimental to safety, health or hygiene; and (iii) it is inhabited at least by fifty households as existing on 31st March, 2002" (NCTD, 2010: 2).

⁸ "unauthorized colony" means a colony/ development comprising of contiguous area, where no permission of concerned agency has been obtained for approval of Layout Plan, and/or building plan" (DDA, 2008: 7).

*jhopri (JJ) basti*⁹, as identified by the Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board (DUSIB). The city also has more than 1,600 unauthorized settlements (Sheikh and Banda, 2014).

From the long lists of *JJ basti* and unauthorized colonies in Delhi, Gayatri Colony was chosen, as in Kosovo, because of the age of settlement and its upgrading and redevelopment status. I was introduced to the settlement and a few residents by a colleague at the Indian Institute for Human Settlements. Located in West Delhi, this area is part of Baljeet Nagar in Delhi (Plate 2.3). It is locally known by multiple names: Gayatri Colony, Punjabi Basti, Nepali Mandir, F Block, and Near Ramjas Ground, for instance. Some residents also call the settlement by the larger neighbourhood name - Baljeet Nagar, although other parts of Baljeet Nagar have slightly different characteristics in terms of built form and access to basic services. I refer here, therefore, to the study settlement as Gayatri Colony¹⁰.

Plate 2.3: Gayatri Colony and its immediate context in Delhi



Source: Google Earth

⁹ http://delhishelterboard.in/main/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/jjc_list_for_website.pdf; http://delhishelterboard.in/main/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/List_of_additional_jj_bastis.pdf. Last accessed on 28 October 2019.

¹⁰ I chose Gayatri 'Colony' compared to Punjabi 'Basti' for instance, because the word '*basti*' is associated with something that is temporary and primarily has shacks; 'colony', on the other hand, has a more permanent and to some extent 'plotted' and 'planned' feel to it. Since that's where residents feel they are headed, or at least desire to head, I decided to refer to it as Gayatri Colony.

While its neighbouring Patel Nagar (Plate 2.3) is a planned colony, other residential areas surrounding Gayatri Colony (Baljeet Nagar and Farid Puri), all developed in an unplanned manner. These were (and often are) called unauthorized colonies, which are now largely regularised. Starting off as a squatter settlement, Gayatri Colony lies on the cusp as a *jhuggi jhopri basti* and unauthorized colony; it is almost impossible to classify it as one or the other. Official definitions and lists do not help clarify its status either. On one hand, part of the settlement (referred to as T-10 Opposite F-block Punjabi Basti Baljeet Nagar) is included in the *JJ basti* list and map, prepared by the Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board (DUSIB), the agency responsible for such settlements in Delhi. It further mentions that the land belongs to the Delhi Development Authority (DDA)¹¹, the agency responsible for the planning and development of Delhi. On the other hand, the colony also features in the long list of 1,642 unauthorized colonies under the jurisdiction of the Government of National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi, which is compiled through application by the residents for the purposes of regularisation. I find it useful to look at Gayatri Colony as a non-serviced settlement instead, in order to differentiate it from the neighbouring settlements of Baljeet Nagar and Farid Puri, which have similar built-form, but unlike Gayatri Colony, they are connected to municipal services like piped water supply and sewerage.

The juxtaposition of house building in these two case settlements proved an opportunity to compare and deepen an understanding of incrementalism. I began my research in Kosovo and then moved on to Gayatri Colony, drawing a mix of methods I share below.

2.3 Tracing Incremental Building through Interviews, Plans and Photographs

Methodologically, the backbone of my research is built on Lee's (2005) "homestead biographies", a method she drew on to track home improvements in apartheid housing. She suggests, "homestead biographies can be helpful in understanding the interaction between the built environment and shifting social and economic norms and practices" (Lee, 2005: 613; after Morton, 2002). My homestead biographies built first on in-depth interviews with residents, which explored the evolution of the places where families stayed and the key moments of change, tracking these housing conditions within the context of residents' own lives.

¹¹ Within Gayatri Colony, there are multiple narratives that explain its land belongs to DDA, which makes it a squatter settlement, classified as *jhuggi jhopri basti* in Delhi. But, in another narrative, this area was leased a few decades ago for stone quarrying and crushing, and therefore, it no longer belongs to the DDA. Evidence to support these multiple claims was not easy or straightforward to find, and detailed investigation was beyond the scope of this study.

I started with Kosovo and spoke to residents from fifteen families over a period of two months. The small sample allowed for an in-depth, detailed approach to the questions of incremental housing. The interviews were conducted with the help of a research associate who was from Kosovo as well. He played a key role in introducing me to different families and translated isiXhosa to English and English to isiXhosa. The conversations were spread over two to three meetings to ensure the length of each conversation was not too long and there was enough opportunity to develop a rapport with respondents. While an attempt was made to interview households with diverse housing conditions (in terms of age, material use, plot size, height, location, ownership status, etc.), the households interviewed may not be representative of the entire settlement. Additional interviews with few leaders and older residents of Kosovo helped contextualise the history of the settlement, community structure and future plans, although this was not the core focus of the research.

In Delhi, after the initial introduction by a colleague at IIHS, I carried out the research myself over a period of one month. I spoke to residents from thirteen families that represented diverse conditions, drawing on a snowballing approach to meet families. All interviews in Gayatri Colony were conducted in Hindi, my mother tongue. A number of informal conversations that happened outside a tea stall¹² also helped me with understanding the history and growth of Gayatri Colony and neighbouring areas.

Except for two, all interviews were audio recorded with respondents' permission, and later transcribed. The other two methods that complemented the interviews to form the homestead biographies were the drawing and discussion of house plans and photographs. The plans were drawn to visualise different aspects of the building of home, to analyse and constitute the homestead biographies. These drawings aimed to document past and present, as well as future aspirations for house building. Sometimes, the respondents themselves made these plans, which also helped to break the ice and make them more comfortable with the research. An attempt was made to make these plans to scale by measuring spaces by foot; measuring tapes were not used to avoid the 'formality' of the process, which may have made the residents uncomfortable. Where the houses were small or it was too intrusive to walk inside, no measurements were carried out and the plans were drawn as rough estimates. Wherever possible, photographs were also taken to complement the house plans and interviews. The next two chapters present findings from the 'homestead biographies' of residents in Kosovo and Gayatri Colony respectively.

¹² My usual hangout place in Gayatri Colony during breaks and while waiting for the respondents.

Chapter 3: From Securing a Space to Building a Decent *Hokkie* in Kosovo, Cape Town

'You call this a house?'¹³ JO asked me as I was explaining my research objectives to him, which made me question my first assumption, calling their place of living in Kosovo a 'house'. JO went on to clarify, 'call this a *hokkie*, shack; there's no brick, no nothing'¹⁴. Except one, all the respondents in Kosovo called their places of living '*hokkie*'¹⁵ (in Afrikaans) or '*ityotyombe*' (in isiXhosa), both of which translate to 'shack' in English. The choice of materials is discussed later in detail, but building material is the key determinant for what the structures are called. A structure made of corrugated steel sheet (locally called as zinc) is a shack, while a structure made of bricks is a house. Personally, I think of them more as places to live or living spaces, however, respecting my respondents' articulation of a house and a shack, I have also used the terms *hokkie* and shack henceforth, as applicable.

This chapter describes 'homestead biographies', going back almost 18-20 years in most cases, of fifteen Kosovo residents and their families, right from the need of finding own space to live to the actual processes of building, re-building, extending and improving. It highlights the various ways in which residents have built their places to live, and also their key drivers. While the chapter is not organised chronologically per se, to a large extent, it does speak to the temporality of the biographies.

3.1 Move to Kosovo: Own Place, but Shacks without Services

'I was living with my brother in Philippi, but my wife and brother were not getting along, they were always fighting. Then I saw this land and went to the community leader in Samora to ask about this land. He said he has just seen the land and doesn't know who the owner is. Then my friends and I, we came and built shacks, and then others started to follow.'¹⁶

AN is one of the community leaders of B section in Kosovo. Sitting on a bench outside his shack, AN gave me a crash course in Kosovo's history. He was one of the first people to move to Kosovo in 1999; he even remembered the month – August. Originally from Eastern Cape, AN moved to

¹³ Personal interview with JO, 24 November 2018. All respondents' names have been changed to maintain their anonymity.

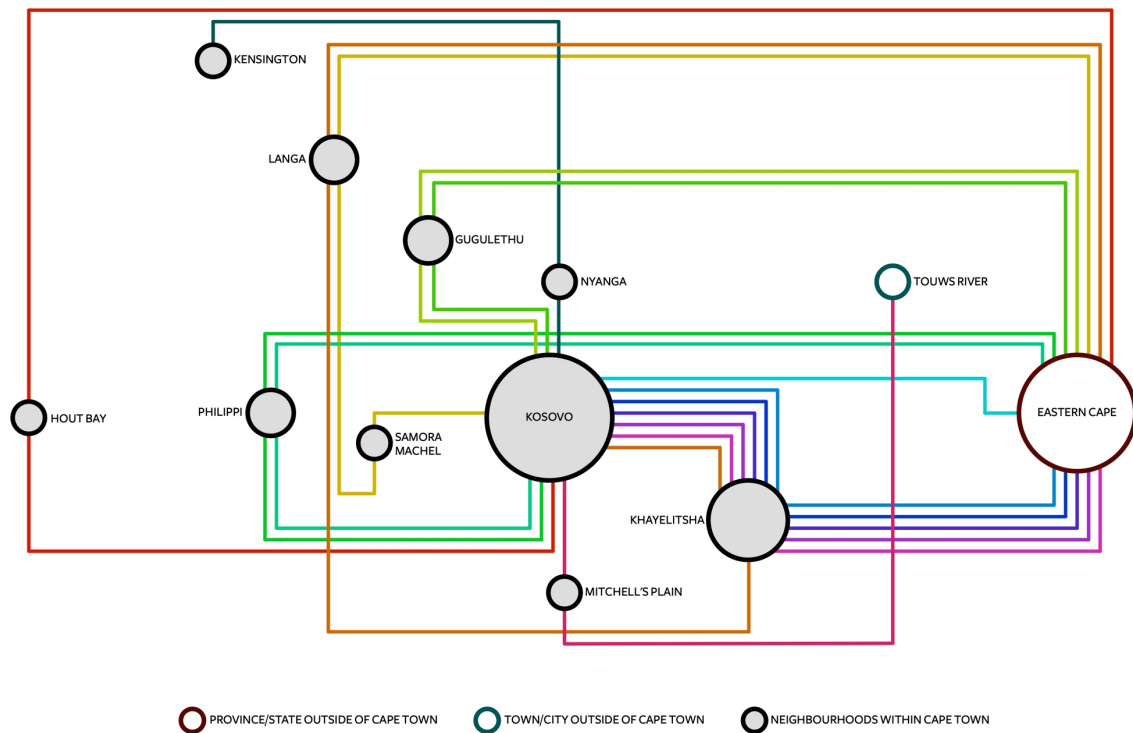
¹⁴ Personal interview with JO, 24 November 2018.

¹⁵ Even though it was predominantly isiXhosa speaking settlement, '*hokkie*' was more commonly used because one, the residents have adopted that word over the years, and two, they thought it would be a simpler term for me to follow compared to its isiXhosa translation, '*ityotyombe*'.

¹⁶ Personal interview with AN, 01 November 2018, translated from isiXhosa.

Cape Town in search of work and was sharing a house with his brother until he found his own place in Kosovo. Almost all the residents I interviewed moved to Kosovo after living in other parts of Cape Town. Plate 3.1 summarises housing movements of main respondents from 15 households I did in-depth interviews with.

Plate 3.1: Housing movements of Kosovo respondents



N = 15. Source: Primary Survey, Author, 2018.

Note: Four respondents also moved places within Kosovo, those details are not presented here.

Thirteen respondents (out of 15) were originally from Eastern Cape, who moved to Cape Town either in search of work or to pursue higher studies. Except for one, whose father was already in Kosovo when she moved from Eastern Cape, none of the respondents directly went to Kosovo upon their arrival in Cape Town. Living with family members or relatives was the most common option available with these new in-migrants to Cape Town. The living conditions of these relatives varied, ranging from having a formal house to living in a shack in a squatter camp or occupying a shack on a serviced plot provided by the government. A few respondents previously lived on rent in backyard shacks of formal townships. Most of the respondents

moved to Kosovo in their mid to late 20s¹⁷ with the desire to have a place of their own. Overcrowding and congestion in family homes, and poor quality of affordable rental accommodation (mostly backyards), combined with the restrictive lifestyle that such housing entail, escalated this desire of living independently.

SA runs a spaza shop in Kosovo, and lives with his wife, son, and brother, who also helps with the shop. When SA moved from Eastern Cape, he lived with his relatives in Khayelitsha as he searched for work. The moment he found work, he and his then girlfriend (now wife), LU, heard about Kosovo from a relative and decided to buy a shack and move to Kosovo in 2000. In his own words,

‘You know Miss, the house is expensive, when you are poor, you can’t buy a house, it’s not easy. So, that’s why I come to make the house here in squatter camp. Because you see, that time I bought this house, it was only six hundred and fifty [Rands]. It was cheaper, because there was no power, there was no water, that’s the only thing.’¹⁸

SA knew what he was getting into, but that’s all he could afford at the time to have a place of their own. By the time he came, he had to buy a shack in Kosovo, which may appear to be ironic for a squatter camp, but four (out of 15) respondents had bought their shacks in Kosovo. Whether bought or occupied, almost everyone came to Kosovo through reference of a friend or relative. Squatter camps (as called by many residents in Kosovo) present an opportunity to have your own place either for free or at an affordable price. Tired of her sister-in-law, JU also moved out of her brother’s place and bought a shack from her co-worker’s boyfriend in Kosovo in 2000, where she lived independently thereafter and raised her three children.

While move to Kosovo was a step forward for all the respondents in terms of having their own place; on several other accounts, it was actually two steps backward compared to their previous homes. Most of the respondents had never lived in a shack before moving to Kosovo, and in fact, none of them had lived in a shack before they moved to Cape Town. Many of them were also coming from settlements that were fully serviced, even though they were living in shacks.

Sixty-five years old JO has seen it all. He was born in Kensington, one of the northern suburbs of Cape Town. When JO was 5-6 years old, they were evicted and forced to move to a township house in Nyanga East (now Gugulethu) under the Apartheid government. From his late 20s to

¹⁷ While the eligible age to qualify for housing subsidy is 18 years, Western Cape Government gives priority to applicants over the age of 40 years for a housing subsidy. You must also be on the housing database for a minimum of 10 years to be able to access this housing subsidy. Available at: <https://www.westerncape.gov.za/service/all-you-need-know-about-housing-subsidies>; accessed on 01 July 2019.

¹⁸ Personal interview with SA, 13 December 2018.

late 30s, JO worked in mines. Upon his return, he went back to the family home in Nyanga East, but it was becoming too crowded. When JO's wife heard about Kosovo from her friend, both of them decided to move to Kosovo and make their own lives with their three children in 1999. Since then, they have been living in Kosovo.

A domestic worker by profession, TZ came to Cape Town in search of work in 1992. She first stayed with her stepfather in a proper house in Langa but found it very hard to share a house with him, that's when she moved in with her cousin in Khayelitsha. As she recalled the initial shock of moving to squatter camps in Cape Town (first Khayelitsha and later Kosovo), TZ said,

'It was for the first time [for me] to see that people can stay in a house like this [made of zincs] because I came from Eastern Cape. It was amazing for me to come to Cape Town and see people living in these shacks. You know, using shack as a home. In Eastern Cape, there are houses with bricks. So, I was shocked. But I had to come, looking for a job.'¹⁹

TZ had no choice but to live in shacks because she needed work in Cape Town.

Originally from Eastern Cape, XS moved to Kosovo from Gugulethu where he had stayed in a couple of backyard shacks. When asked how he would compare the experience of living in these two places, XS said,

'If I compare Gugs and Kosovo, yeah, Gugs is a good place to be. Because, you know, in Gugs, the environment is clean, you hardly get sick. Here in Kosovo, you will find [dirty] water and shit everywhere. The environment is very bad. But compared to Gugs, I feel free here. In Gugs, there is no freedom. Being in a backyard, there is no freedom. I cannot do whatever I want. But here, it is my father's house, I feel free.'²⁰

XS gave up clean environment of Gugulethu for freedom in Kosovo.

As discussed, coming to Kosovo meant, atleast for some, giving up developed/ serviced neighbourhoods in Cape Town for independent living. It was a trade-off that these residents were willing to make to have their own place to live, just like all of them chose work/ studies over the comforts of their native homes when they decided to move to Cape Town and make a life in the city. Once in Kosovo, residents underwent a lot of struggle to build their places to live over time. The rest of the chapter discusses the various aspects of this long and difficult yet thoughtful and enduring journey in detail.

¹⁹ Personal interview with TZ, 24 November 2018

²⁰ Personal interview with XS, 06 November 2018

3.2 Getting Established: Making Space, Affording a Shack, Linking to Community Structures

The early residents of Kosovo did not struggle with the availability of space for building a shack. They, however, had to cut the trees and bushes, level the place, clean it and put up their shacks. The choice of location was determined by availability of land, social networks, and ease of building. Working at a creche in section C of Kosovo, WZ also lives in the same section with her three sons. When she heard about Kosovo from a friend and moved there from Philippi in 2000, WZ was given the choice of two locations to put up her shack, she chose the one which required less work. The other one had water on site, which meant putting in sand, stones, etc. to cover it up, requiring time, money and effort. With the help of her extended family, she made a one-room shack with wooden planks. Explaining the logic of her one-room wooden shack, WZ said,

‘That’s all I could afford to build. I spent R150 to make the one-room *hokkie* with planks at that time. One sheet of zinc was around R60 at the time, for a side of *hokkie*, you needed four zincs, and then *hokkie* has got four sides, so 16 zincs, and then another five for the roof. You can do the total.’²¹

According to WZ, one would need at least 21 zincs to build a one-room *hokkie*, which meant the total material cost of R1,260 at that time. Therefore, WZ went with wood and not zinc in the beginning. The remnants of wooden planks can still be seen in WZ’s shack, which is now primarily built with zinc sheets (Plate 3.2). WZ said that only those who had money were building with zinc at that time.

Plate 3.2: Ensemble of building materials in WZ’s shack in Kosovo



Source: Primary Survey, Author, 2018.

²¹ Personal interview with WZ, 06 November 2018, translated from isiXhosa.

BA said the same thing in a different way, 'those who were working built with zinc'²². BA lives by himself in a two-room place in Kosovo. With the help of his friends, BA had also initially built a one-room wooden shack with plastic roof but had a big yard all around.

Since land was not a constraint for the initial residents, cost of building material was the primary consideration for deciding on how much to build and what to build with. Many of the early residents initially built with wooden planks and covered it with plastic sheet, as it was much cheaper at the time, compared to zinc. Again, a majority of the families I interviewed started with a single room, even when they had larger spaces available to them, for the reasons of costs involved. For NM, however, there was no choice. NM moved to Kosovo in 2001 after living on rent in a backyard shack in Samora Machel. She got introduced to Kosovo by an acquaintance of hers from Eastern Cape, who also lived in Kosovo. The space that NM got was very small and she could only put up a '5 steps by 5 steps bungalow'²³ (wooden shack) there.

While affordability for most, along with space availability for a few, determined initial decisions of building materials and number of rooms at the household level, at the settlement level, committees played a big role in driving where to build, how much to build, and also who could build. For example, JO, who also started off with a one-room shack for a family of five, mentioned that they weren't allowed to build more than one room by the committee. There was a threat that the law enforcement would come and demolish otherwise. WZ also mentioned that they were asked to build shacks by the committee, and not proper houses, which they said will be given eventually.

The committees were set up in Kosovo in as early as 2000, informed AN. It was felt that the shacks were growing at a very fast rate and in a scattered manner. In order to manage the process and the entire area, they decided to divide the settlement into sections and elect leaders/ councillors for each of these sections. In this early period, the committees would patrol every weekend to keep a tab on who is there who is not. If a shack was not occupied for some time, they would take it down, because sometimes they found people would store drugs in these vacant shacks. AM used to live with his cousin in section B of Kosovo when he bought another space for himself nearby. He wanted to 'build it nice first'²⁴ before he started sleeping there; but he could not wait to move in until it was finished, because in his absence, the committee just dismantled his half-built structure. So, he had to 'sit-in' while he built the shack for himself.

²² Personal interview with BA, 10 December 2018.

²³ Personal interview with NM, 01 November 2018.

²⁴ Personal interview with AM, 29 November 2018.

The committees also maintained a register²⁵ to keep a record of everyone in Kosovo. They would number the shacks; and at the time, it costed R50 to get the number and have your name in the register. In the early years, getting number equated to getting recognition as a resident of Kosovo. As JU explained, 'so, I go to the committee. On the book, they did everything, then nobody can take it away. Because everything is now on you [in your name]. Since that time, I stay here.'²⁶ JU legitimised her presence in Kosovo by getting her name on the committee's register. PR also felt the same when she got a number for her shack. In her own words,

'At first, it was planks, I put two rooms there. Then second year, there's a committee. The committee wrote the numbers for the *hokkies*. I think okay, my *hokkies* has number now, I am still working, I must buy the zincs. Because I am afraid of the planks, because the planks so quickly catching the fire. I must buy the zincs.'²⁷

PR raised two important points: one is the importance of linking with the committee and getting a number before you even start thinking about longer term stay and shack building in Kosovo. The other is the risk of fire and how that influenced the material choices residents of Kosovo made. As the next section will show the risk of fire is very real in Kosovo, and even though after so many years, there are still incidences of fire, the whole exposure has greatly impacted how residents build and re-build in Kosovo.

3.3 Coping with the Destruction of Fire: Re-building, Changing to Zinc, Staying Apart

A quick Google search on 'fire in Kosovo, Cape Town' will yield several results. Similar to many other informal settlements in Cape Town, Kosovo is prone to the risk of fire. Starting from 1999, the settlement has been facing incidents of fire almost every year in which hundreds of households lose their homes and then have to rebuild their shacks from scratch. Three families in my sample had experienced fire first-hand, while almost everyone mentioned the risk of it during conversations too. Use of paraffin in cooking and wood in building were cited as main reasons for the starting and spreading of fire in the early days.

Originally from Eastern Cape, NB moved to Kosovo in 1999 after living with her cousin in Philippi for almost eight years. NB's first shack was made of ceiling boards covered with plastic

²⁵ What initially started off as a way to keep record of who's there in Kosovo soon became the means for the promise of a formal house by the government. Having name on the committee's register meant getting included in the government list. It is expected that as and when the government would build houses for Kosovo residents, those whose shacks have numbers will be provided for. At the time of the interviews in 2018-19, community leader AN informed that they were not giving out any more numbers, the register has already gone to the government and the plans for housing Kosovo residents in formal houses are already underway.

²⁶ Personal interview with JU, 25 November 2018.

²⁷ Personal interview with PR, 23 November 2018.

on top; however, it wasn't very long that her shack was caught on fire and burnt to ground. She then received emergency housing kit²⁸ from the City of Cape Town to rebuild her shack. NB had to augment that material to build her shack, but she believed that zinc got introduced in Kosovo because of the fire, followed by government support.

Thus, while the choice of wood was initially driven by cost, adoption of zinc soon became a necessity because of fire incidents in Kosovo. Many others like NM, WZ, BA, EM, PR also changed from wood to zinc because of the risk of fire, even though they had not experienced it first-hand. Zinc is preferred over wood also because it helps prevent the rain from coming inside and cuts the wind. EM mentioned that even though she had wooden walls initially, she had made the roof with zinc so that at least there would be some protection from the rain.

When there is a fire, it is not just the wooden shacks that burn down. JU's zinc shack burnt down about six years ago on Boxing Day. With tears in her eyes, JU remembered, 'nothing remained after the fire, even my money. I lost everything, my new phone, everything'²⁹. While JU was most upset about losing her phone that she had got as a birthday present, she struggled to start all over again after the fire. She also received the basic material with the emergency kit, to which she added more material and re-built her shack.

The incidents of fire not only drive the re-building of individual shacks, and shifting to zinc, they also influence how residents in Kosovo build their shacks in relation to each other. For the most part, no two shacks in Kosovo would be seen wall to wall, there is always an attempt to leave some space between the two shacks. Explaining why and how he earmarked his yard, BA said,

'Look here ma'am, I made the poles here, for my yard. Just the poles, then that's it, this is my plot. I don't want my neighbour building here. You know miss, anytime these *hokkies* burn. The guys they make it close, and then boom [sound and action of *hokkie* catching fire]. I did not want that. So, I had put four poles on the corner.'³⁰

BA wanted to maintain the setback between his shack and the neighbours' because he feared fire. Even after extension, BA has ensured that he has enough open space all around (Plate 3.3). When asked about the space between her shack and neighbour's (Plate 3.3), TZ also said that there must be gap between two shacks, to avoid spreading of fire. Risk of fire remains on everyone's mind in Kosovo, no conversation happened without its mention. It is also one of the

²⁸ The City of Cape Town provides enhanced emergency housing kit to those whose informal residential structures have been completely destroyed. The kit consists of pine poles, galvanised corrugated steel roof sheets, door, window, lock and nails. This material allows for a basic structure of 3mx3m (CoCT, 2014).

²⁹ personal interview with JU, 25 November 2018.

³⁰ personal interview with BA, 10 December 2018.

reasons that a structure made of wood or even zinc does not qualify for a proper house, because more often than not, these structures don't survive fire, which is a continued risk in Kosovo.

Plate 3.3: Keeping distance between shacks to Prevent spreading of fire in Kosovo

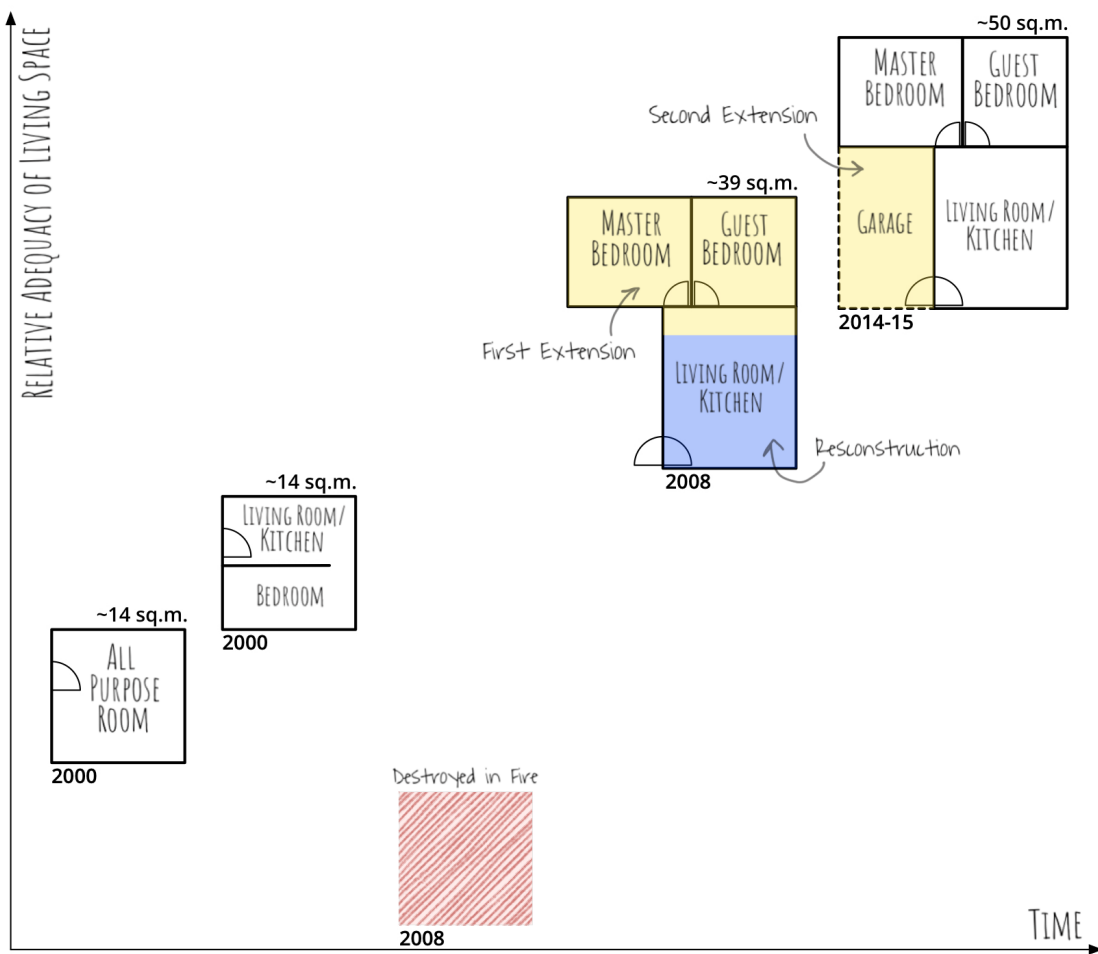


Source: Primary Survey, Author, 2018.

Even in the wake of fire and association of the meaning of house with bricks, families in Kosovo do not build brick houses for a number of reasons, the most critical being that they are waiting for a 'proper' house from the government. Linked to that expectation is also the awareness that it is not their land and if they build brick houses, government will come and evict them, and they will not receive a house from them either. In such a situation, everyone is going by the general rule of building shacks and not houses. This mode of practice in Kosovo is further unpacked and discussed in Chapter 5.

Thus, residents stick to 'temporary' materials in Kosovo and their experience of incremental building in Kosovo is not always an upward movement. It gets disrupted by the incidences of fire as seen in the case of NB and JU, and also SA and LU. SA and LU were living in a zinc and plastic shack when it was caught on fire in 2007-08. The couple did not only completely re-build the existing shack with zinc after the fire, but also used it as an opportunity to extend their shack. They added a guest room as well to accommodate family members who visit from Eastern Cape every now and then, and later, on buying a car, they added a garage space, thus, making it relatively more adequate as per their changing needs. SA and LU were also the only ones who called their place of living in Kosovo a 'house' or 'home' and not 'shack'.

Plate 3.4: The ups and downs of house building in Kosovo for SA and LU



Source: Primary Survey, Author, 2018. Drawn approximately to scale.

Fire is a real threat in Kosovo and the personal experience of it takes one back in their housing trajectory; however, the residents transcend that fear and continue to move forward in their attempts to re-build and improve their places to live, even though the primary building material remains zinc.

3.4 Extending and Reconfiguring Living Spaces: Privacy, Work, Growing Families

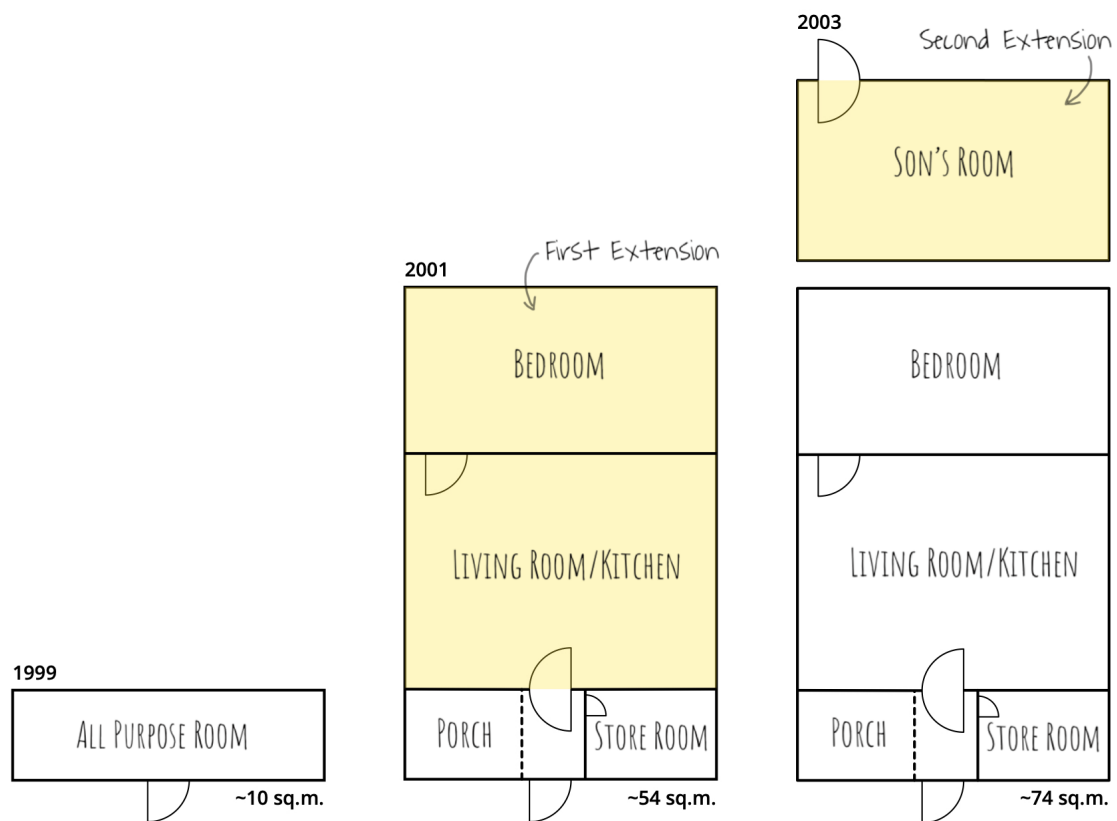
As time went on and residents started to settle in, they all started to extend their places based on their needs and means. Even those who had bought their shacks, used those as a starting point, but soon modified and retrofitted based on their needs. At the time of interviews, the built-up area of respondents' shacks in Kosovo ranged from 10 to 75 sq.m, with average being 30 sq.m. Those who still had vacant space/ yard, their plot sizes varied from 20 to 90 sq.m, with average being 45 sq.m.

Privacy is the one of the most important drivers of building in Kosovo, and JO was very vocal about it. Sitting on his porch, JO explained why and how he had extended his place in 2001.

‘This was like a carriage, train carriage, one room. It was long, my bed was here, children were there in front, in the middle cooking area. They did not allow us to make big, so many rooms back then. We had no privacy. In the long run, I decided, no, this is bullshit. I must now extend this fucking shit. So, I bought material again to extend and go backwards. We have big space now. You go in there, you will see. There’s a bedroom there now, there’s a sitting room here with a kitchen, together with this [porch and storeroom].’³¹

JO had moved to Kosovo for an independent place, to him, privacy matters the most. He later added another room at the back to accommodate his son (Plate 3.5). JO has not extended his shack since 2003, just made changes to the flooring and furnishings inside, as discussed later in this chapter.

Plate 3.5: Extensions to JO’s shack in Kosovo between 1999 and 2003



Source: Primary Survey, Author, 2018. Drawn approximately to scale.

The need for privacy was articulated by almost all the respondents in one way or the other. Even BA, who lives by himself in Kosovo, added a second room last year. When asked what made him do so, BA said, ‘because of the guys, they come here to watch the TV, so my bed must

³¹ Personal interview with JO, 24 November 2018

be there [in the other room]³². When SA and LU had bought their shack, it was just one room, they almost immediately inserted a divider so that even if there are friends/ guests in the other rooms, they could still have their privacy. LU specifically mentioned that she needed privacy for having bath, and she couldn't expect the house to be always empty at that time.

TZ and her younger son occupied their current place of living in 2016 when her older son passed away. It was a one-room then; within a few months, she added another room so that her son can have his own space. Luckily for them, the space next to the shack was empty, she consulted the neighbours and the committee, and they gave her the go ahead. While TZ managed to secure a private room for her son, she still yearns to have a dedicated bedroom for herself by having a separate kitchen at some point in time.

Privacy is not always achieved by adding a room or a wall, sometimes just closing a door and opening another one is enough, as seen in the case of XS. After his return from initiation school in the mountains of Eastern Cape, XS insisted on a private entry/ exit to his room. The entry from inside the shack was closed and a door was added to enter the room from the yard. In his own words,

'In 2015, I went to Eastern Cape for initiation school. It was a big step for me, I was going to be a man. And for a man, I can't be with my mother and my father and the children. I needed my own privacy. Then they allowed me to close, and then they were left with three rooms.'³³

XS could not imagine not having his personal space after his initiation.

A number of respondents also reconfigured their places in order to carry out economic activities such as opening a spaza shop, a workshop, and a creche, for instance (Plate 3.6). While on one hand, this meant reducing the living space for the family for some; on the other, diversifying use of the space ensured livelihood security for these households. EM moved to her father's place in Kosovo (later passed on to her) in 1999. After looking for a job for almost a decade, EM decided to start her own business. She started with fruits and vegetables, but now has a spaza shop. EM initially had just one large room, which was partitioned into two in 2009, one was turned into shop with shelves and counter, and the other, smaller room, is used for everything else (sleeping, cooking, bathing). EM has a husband and two daughters, but the young girls are no longer able to sleep with them because there is just not enough space, they sleep at EM's brother's place, which is in Kosovo as well.

³² Personal interview with BA, 10 December 2018

³³ Personal interview with XS, 06 November 2018.

BU used to sell food and drinks at the taxi rank in the Town, but every now and then, the City of Cape Town would come and evict them with force, and in the process, she would lose her items. Finally, in 2007, she decided to sell beers from her shack. That's when she added a second room. During the Football World Cup 2010, when the business started doing well, BU expanded the two rooms: one room to sell beers, and also function as kitchen, and the other room for sleeping.

Plate 3.6: Doubling up place of living as place of work in Kosovo



Source: Primary Survey, Author, 2018.

In addition to setting up workspace/ business, other life events like birth, marriage, shifting of children also play an important role in extension of the living space. AN built his own shack in Kosovo in 2001; it was a one-room shack until 2013, when he added another room. When I asked what made him add another room after so many years, AN said,

'Yeah. Because I am alone that time. I go to work; whole day, it's closed. I don't have friends, you see. I come back, take water, close the door and wash. By the time friends come, I finish washing. It's right when I am alone. But that time, when I have wife, must have a [separate] room.'³⁴

As AN was getting married in 2014, the need for building another room became urgent. While this again links to the need for privacy, but in AN's case, it was realised when his wife was about to join him, not as much when he was living alone.

Starting with a one room wooden shack in 2001, extending to two rooms of zinc in 2006, NM recently expanded her shack to four-rooms (Plate 3.7). In between these extensions, she also made minor structural changes within the shack to run a creche out of there for a period of one year, after which she bought another shack in Section C to run it. At the time of the recent

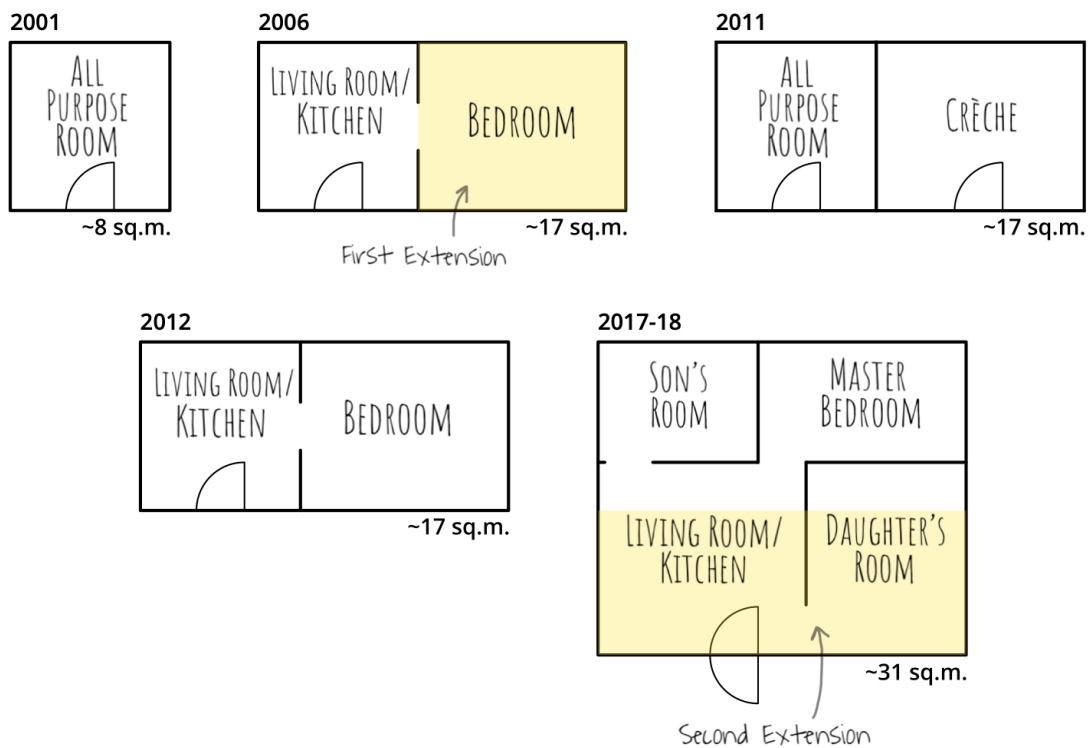
³⁴ Personal interview with AN, 29 November 2018.

renovation, NM levelled a ditch in front of her shack make room for extension. NM explained why she expanded her shack.

'Because it was small, and it was very ugly. It was not nice. And my daughter now is big, and even my son is also big, and they are sleeping on only one bed. And my daughter now is pregnant with this boy. So, I have to do something. So that is why we did renovate.'³⁵

When NM's daughter was expecting, she added two rooms to make it a four-room shack. Now, one room is for her husband and herself, one for her daughter and grandchild, one for son, and one for sitting and kitchen. The family had to move to NM's creche for three months when all this renovation was happening.

Plate 3.7: External and Internal Changes to NM's Place of Living in Kosovo between 2001 and 2018



Source: Primary Survey, Author, 2018. Drawn approximately to scale.

³⁵ Personal interview with NM, 30 November 2018.

Now that everyone has their own room, NM feels happy. However, there are still so many things she wants to do on the inside. When asked, what she wants to do next, NM said,

'You see I have the name of the Principal now, so I feel like I [should] have everything man. I feel like I can then feel free when someone is coming in my shack, you see. Even the couch, I don't like this couch. There's those small couches there, I feel I can buy them so that it can, and my stand, you see, look nice.'³⁶

While NM felt she has done the best she could with the layout and exterior of the shack, she still had the opportunity to furnish the inside in a way that matched with her image and position as Principal of the creche. In lieu of brick houses and fancy exteriors, this is how a majority of the residents improve their places to live – by focussing on the interiors.

3.5 Building Inside: Investing in Assets, Reinforcing Building Materials

Waiting for a house from the government, residents in Kosovo do not build with bricks and even though from the outside, Kosovo may look like a collection of plain and painted zinc shacks, but the real beauty (and value) unveils when you step inside these shacks (Plate 3.8). In some senses, residents try to compensate for what they can't do outside (because it's visible to everyone) by investing on the inside. More investment goes towards the assets, such as sofa, cupboards, refrigerator, washing machine, etc. compared to the structures themselves, that usually cost a few thousand Rands at the moment. For instance, TZ spent similar amount of money on buying a set of cupboards as she spent on building an entire room for her son. Since shacks are considered temporary, the bias towards assets comes from the fact that they can be transported to wherever the family would move next when they get a proper house.

Plate 3.8: Outside vs. inside in Kosovo



³⁶ Personal interview with NM, 30 November 2018.

Plate 3.8: Outside vs. inside in Kosovo



Source: Primary Survey, Author, 2018.

These household assets then also determine the spatial configuration within a shack and sometimes between shacks as well. For example, PO's shack is very close to the neighbour's, there is not even a metre's gap between the two. Contrary to usual imagination of incremental building, PO actually wants to move one of the walls inwards so that there is at least a metre gap between the shacks, and neighbour's refrigerator can go for repair. Another case in point is recent renovation at XS' place. When the family had bought the place, there was a shop in there. Now the size of that room was okay for a shop but very small for anything else. It was not being used effectively and was becoming like a dumping space for extra things. Last year, the family decided to take some portion of the yard and living room to make that room bigger so that a double bed can fit in there, which meant extra sleeping space for the family. EM also kept her yard of a certain size so that her car could fit in and be secured, SA, on the other hand, went all the way and requested his neighbours to swap and move their shack to his earlier yard so that he could make a yard in their place and bring his car inside with ease. To think of it, this kind of flexibility would not have been possible if there were brick houses in Kosovo.

Even though the material journey in Kosovo seems to end at zinc on the outside, residents do retrofit and reinforce their shacks from the inside in search of protection from extreme weather like cold and rain. After the zinc, many families have added a layer of ceiling boards on the inside of their walls to prevent the shack from getting too hot in summers and too cold in winters. A number of them plan to do the same for their roofs. When asked if they have to make any changes during any time of the year, most of them said that during rains, they need to put out pots, pans, buckets everywhere to collect the rainwater that comes in through the roof. It is hoped that the ceiling boards would help prevent that. Few households have also tiled their floors because the mats and carpets do not last long. As JO pointed out, 'we used to buy carpets every six months'³⁷. LU also said that since Kosovo has so much sand and stones, the carpets used to tear all the time. Both JO and LU now have tiled floors.

The renovations and modifications in Kosovo are not only driven by external risk factors like fire, extreme heat and rainfall, etc. or personal housing ideals, desires and needs, they are also driven by how the settlement itself has changed over the years, as discussed in the next section.

3.6 Responding to Changing Context: Building Up, Fencing Yards, Securing Shacks

At the settlement level, Kosovo has become really dense, both in terms of built-up area and number of people. The yards have either reduced, or completely disappeared in some cases. The space between shacks has reduced considerably. As a matter of fact, there is hardly any space on ground now, neither to expand nor to add new shacks. Many residents mentioned the plan of building up now, since there is no more space to build out. While this is unusual in Kosovo (and other informal settlements in Cape Town), there were a few shacks with two storeys at the time of this research.

Although he was afraid of heights, PO was adding a second storey to his shack when I first met him (Plate 3.9). PO and his wife NW moved to Kosovo in 2009, by when the settlement was already quite dense. They managed to get a small area on ground and built a shack there. But now since their 18 plus year old son has joined them from Eastern Cape, PO felt it was necessary to build a separate room for him. However, there was no space on ground to expand the shack, PO decided to build a second storey on top of his existing shack. Building all by himself over weekends, it took PO few months to finish the second storey. While I could not capture the final output of PO's hard work, the couple has since moved upstairs with the small children, one

³⁷ Personal interview with JO, 10 December 2018.

room on ground floor has been given to the son and the other room continues to serve as the kitchen and living room.

Plate 3.9: Under construction double storey of PO's shack in Kosovo



Source: Primary Survey, Author, 2018.

Another change that residents pointed out was the closing off of yards. In the beginning, residents did not invest in doing up their yards. They would either put four poles to fence and demarcate or simply knew where their plot ended, and neighbour's plot started. But as people started to expand and more and more people started to come in Kosovo, some of them started stealing other people's lands. For instance, BU had only done her front yard in the beginning, and her backyard was taken by someone else to put up their shack in due course without consulting her. LU and her neighbour said people started to build on other people's lands after the fire, since the plot markers were gone. Thereafter, residents felt the need to protect their plots. WZ made the yard when she saw a neighbour trying to expand into her space. She is glad that she did that, otherwise she would not have had space for the bucket toilet.

Another issue that almost everyone mentioned was that the incidents of thefts have considerably increased in Kosovo. Security is a big concern for the families in Kosovo, and that drives the choice of doors and gates in Kosovo. All the families I interviewed have two doors in front, one wooden and one iron door, which is commonly called 'burglar' by the residents (Plate 3.10). These burglar gates have been installed to enhance the security of the house, so that the thieves, robbers cannot come in easily. Since SA has a car, he has also added wire on his entry gate to the yard so that nobody comes in and steals the stereo of the car.

Plate 3.10: Gates and fences in Kosovo



Source: Primary Survey, Author, 2018.

In addition to the built-up context, infrastructure and services context has also changed in Kosovo over the last two decades. This has improved lives of residents on some accounts, but there is still a long way to go as highlighted in the next section.

3.7 Accessing Basic Services: From Neighbouring Townships to within Kosovo and Individual Shacks

Over the last two decades, residents' access to basic services like water, sanitation and electricity have improved. In the beginning, Kosovo had no services, they depended on neighbouring settlements for everything. Remembering her initial years in Kosovo, EM said,

'It was too much bad. Because there is no water during that time. There is no water, no toilet, there is no electricity. So, we are going to Samora, where you buy water, electricity. Each and everything depended on Samora.'³⁸

EM had to rely on Samora for everything, since there were no services in Kosovo.

For the initial few years, residents depended on Samora (sometimes Leeds) for water, electricity and sanitation. They would buy water from houses in Samora, some of them would pay them to use their toilets as well while others would defecate in the open. After the initial phase of using paraffin, electricity was also pulled from Samora by many households. From services standpoint, Kosovo would not have been sustained without Samora. Maybe it's not a coincidence that land occupation in Kosovo started after Samora was developed.

Slowly, services started coming into Kosovo. Many residents said that they had to do protest to get these services. The exact order and years are hard to confirm but it appears that water came first (sometime in 2001), closely followed by electricity, then bucket toilets and lastly flush toilets. Some of the main roads were tarred around 2008-09. Except for electricity, all the other services are provided by the government on communal basis. However, over the years, many households have worked out ways to either individualise these services or share it with limited families (Plate 3.11). Putting pipes and taps to bring water to the yard or shack is all about convenience but locking toilets and sharing with one or two families comes more for the hygiene perspective. Flush toilets are preferred over bucket toilets for the same reason. Many of the respondents said that they would rather go out in the open than use bucket toilets. Those who were using bucket toilets had no choice because they could not manage to secure access to flush toilets and going by the road is risky and dangerous, especially for women.

As evident from the photos (Plate 3.11), there are still no inner streets and drainage system in Kosovo, residents throw their bath water, kitchen water on the main roads. Since I conducted interviews in the beginning of summer when it doesn't rain in Cape Town, the issues of

³⁸ Personal interview with EM, 23 November 2018.

waterlogging did not come up as much, but it is a big concern in Kosovo. The settlement experiences waterlogging almost every time it rains hard.

Plate 3.11: Infrastructure and services in Kosovo



Source: Primary Survey, Author, 2018.

Summing up, Kosovo brought out a number of important points that are useful to reiterate here as we move into the discussion on Gayatri Colony in the next chapter. Keeping a low profile and building within their means, residents built small wooden shacks in the beginning, and depended on Samora Machel for water, sanitation and electricity. The wooden planks were soon

replaced by zinc, either having experienced the fire first-hand or simply recognising the risk of catching fire. Individual electricity, and community toilets and taps from the government were fought for and received in the due course. Twenty years on, sticking to zinc as their primary building material, residents are still waiting for a formal house from the government, but in the meanwhile, all of them have expanded their shacks and made the interiors relatively stronger and more beautiful to ease the waiting period.

Chapter 4: From *Jhuggi* to *Makaan* in Gayatri Colony, Delhi

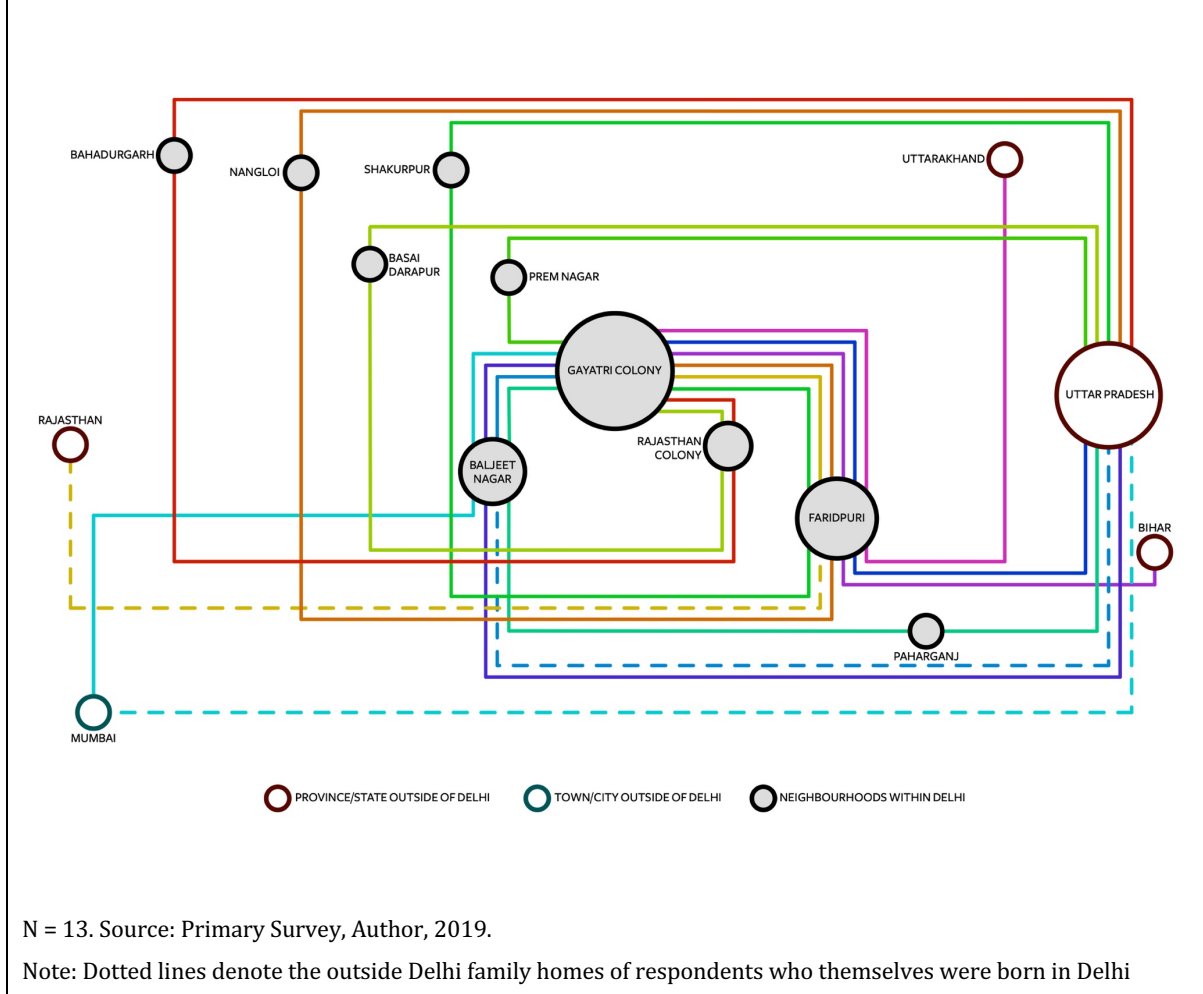
Gayatri Colony has transformed beyond recognition in the last two decades, as recalled by a number of residents. Broadly speaking, there have been three stages of incremental building in Gayatri Colony. The first one was just about passing time by building or living in a *jhuggi* (shack) made of mud/ stones covered with plastic sheet on top. Second level was transitioning to a more liveable *jhuggi* by making brick walls and cement sheet roof or by just adding a toilet. The third one, that's ongoing, involves putting a permanent roof by casting a slab, built-in with a possibility of vertical extension. Once a roof is casted, a structure becomes a *makaan*, and no longer remains a *jhuggi*. This transformation is by no means simple and straightforward.

This chapter traces the incremental building in Gayatri Colony, the enablers and disablers, and the experience of residents. Except a couple, a majority of the respondents and their families moved to Gayatri Colony between 2009 and 2012; thus, we are primarily looking at the 'homestead biographies' of ten years or so.

4.1 Move to Gayatri Colony: For Freedom, but Not for Free

Plate 4.1 summarises the housing movements of primary respondents from thirteen households. Ten (out of 13) respondents moved from Indian states (provinces) of Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Bihar to Delhi, primarily in search of work. One was born in Mumbai, but her village is in Uttar Pradesh. The remaining two were born in Delhi, but their parents had moved to Delhi from Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan. Within Delhi, a majority of the households (9 out of 13) previously lived on rent in the nearby areas of Farid Puri and Baljeet Nagar. Two respondents (PD and JK) said that they were earlier living with their families in Farid Puri, but when the families had split, they took their share and moved to Gayatri Colony. One of the respondents, KD, had to sell her earlier house in Baljeet Nagar to cover expenses of her daughters' weddings, after which she came to occupy a piece of land in Gayatri Colony when she saw others doing it. SD, on the other hand, lived in Baljeet Nagar in a small house that she inherited from her in-laws. She bought a place in Gayatri Colony to provide for the growing family in future.

Plate 4.1: Housing movements of Gayatri Colony respondents



A desire of their own place, fuelled by the inadequacy of rental accommodations, was the primary reason for most to move into Gayatri Colony. Originally from Basti District (Uttar Pradesh), ID is a homemaker who moved to Delhi about 13 years back to join her husband who was already working in Delhi at the time. Before moving to Gayatri Colony, ID had lived on rent in serviced areas of Baljeet Nagar. When asked why the family decided to move, ID said, ‘house owner used to keep saying don’t create nuisance, don’t dirty the house’³⁹. Tired of living on rent, ID bought the 33 sq.m plot (partially built) for 180,000 Indian Rupees⁴⁰ in 2012.

It is important to note here that none of the respondents explicitly complained about the money they were paying towards rent; they were more disturbed by how they were treated by the owners and how there was no freedom in the rental accommodations. Coming from Baliya district of Uttar Pradesh, CS has been living in Delhi since 1995-96. CS and his family were living

³⁹ Personal interview with ID, 15 February 2019, translated from Hindi. Henceforth, all excerpts presented in this chapter are translated from Hindi. All respondents’ names have been changed to maintain their anonymity.
⁴⁰ Five Indian Rupees equal one Rand (based on average exchange rate at the time of study).

on rent until he bought the place in Gayatri Colony together with his friend and current neighbour, HK, in late 2010 and shifted to Gayatri Colony in January 2011. When asked about the move to Gayatri Colony, CS said,

‘This is the first time I have bought a place [in Delhi]. My children insisted that I bought a place. The larger family was against the idea of buying *jhuggi jhopri*, said it would adversely impact the children. But I thought it is alright, entire world is living in such places. Today it is a *jhuggi*, tomorrow it can become a palace as well. That is why we decided to come here. When we were on rent, the owners were always cursing. When we moved here, I was so happy that I did not go to work for four days, just rested at home in peace.’⁴¹

The joy of having own place was visible on CS’ face. He had bought the place along with HK at the total value of 120,000 Indian Rupees, so each contributed 60,000.

Another important point here is that even though Gayatri Colony might have started off as a *JJ basti*/ squatter settlement, like ID, CS and HK above, a majority of the current residents have bought the places they occupy. In my research, 11 out of 13 respondents had bought the plot/*jhuggi* before occupation. KP did not explicitly mentioned about buying the place, but they did pay 15,000 Indian Rupees to the person who helped them with the land occupation. KD is the only one who did not pay anything and occupied a piece of land in 2005. There is a fully functional real estate market in Gayatri Colony. Like any other residential area, prices are mainly dependent on the plot size and location. Potential buyers scout for locations before making a decision. For example, ID had seen another place in Gayatri Colony as well but did not take it as it was smaller and was next to a drain. MC and MD, who run a convenience store in Gayatri Colony decided to buy a place on the main road so that access is not a problem. ‘The other place that we had seen was in a pit, and since there was no water supply at that time, carrying water there would have been a big problem’⁴², said MC. The family was earlier living on rent in Prem Nagar, which was also initially like how Gayatri Colony is now, but by the time MC decided to buy in 2009, Prem Nagar became unaffordable to buy, and Gayatri Colony was where they could still afford.

RD came to Delhi from Bihar about 14-15 years back to join her husband. After living on rent in Farid Puri for almost eight years, they bought the place in Gayatri Colony for 62,000 Indian Rupees in 2012 from their current neighbours. RD was very particular in making sure that I made a note of the fact that she had bought the place and was not an encroacher. She further

⁴¹ Personal interview with CS, 12 February 2019.

⁴² Personal interview with MC, 12 February 2019.

mentioned that, 'those who had encroached the land and were just sitting here have all left, the ones who live here now are all buyers, we have all paid money for our houses.'⁴³ This was echoed by a number of respondents; claim that 90 per cent are buyers was most prevalent. It appears that the land encroachment in what is now called Gayatri Colony started in late 1990s or early 2000s; the squatters used to occupy the land, build low mud walls and cover it with plastic. Over the years, these land parcels were further sub-divided and sold to multiple people. Families have paid amounts ranging from 60,000 to 400,000 Indian Rupees, with average being close to 140,000 to buy their places in Gayatri Colony, based on plot area, location and time of purchase. The smallest plot in my sample measured 12 sq.m and the largest one was about 65 sq.m. Most of the plots were close to 25 sq.m.

All the buyers in Gayatri Colony possess a document in the form of general power of attorney (GPA), giving details of the plot in terms of address, size, etc. amount paid, and seller/ buyer details. Sale through 'illegal' sub-division of plots, and GPAs is typical of unauthorized colonies in Delhi; legally, it does not give the residents ownership rights and they cannot transfer the land or property (CPR, 2014). In many of the residents' view, the settlement has transitioned from being a typical *JJ basti*, to more like an unauthorized colony, because all of them have got GPAs now, and a majority of the residents did buy their plots in Gayatri Colony and are not exactly the encroachers.

A number of older residents recalled that the surrounding areas of Baljeet Nagar and Farid Puri also being once like Gayatri Colony - *jhuggi jhopri*, temporary, non-serviced. However, over the years, houses in these areas have become permanent, water pipelines and sewers have been laid, drains and roads have been built, and so on. For many, Gayatri Colony is also on the same trajectory. They moved here to have a place of their own with most of them having bought the places they live in. Non-serviced areas like Gayatri Colony are one of the limited affordable options that poor residents of Delhi have if they want a place of their own. They then work hard to make these areas liveable. The next section discusses how residents have been turning the undeveloped land of Gayatri Colony into their place of living.

4.2 Initial Challenges: Dealing with Authorities, Difficult Terrain, a Dirty Place

'Let me tell you how it used to be. At first, we did not make any rooms or anything. We would just build a 1-1.5 feet [\sim 0.5 metres] high boundary wall of mud, stone and half bricks and cover it with thatch, leaves, etc. Then the police would come and instruct not to build

⁴³ Personal interview with RD, 15 February 2019.

anything as senior officials were on rounds. A month or two would go like that, then we would add another layer of 1-1.5 feet to the boundary wall. After that they would say don't build permanent structure. What we used to do was to just lay the bricks without any mortar and ask the policemen to make them fall and at night, we would lay them again. Another year was passed like that. Then slowly we built the house, gave ten thousand to police, gave ten thousand to DDA [Delhi Development Authority].'⁴⁴

Born in the larger neighbourhood of Farid Puri and Baljeet Nagar in 1963, PD moved to Gayatri Colony in 1999 after the joint family split up. It took PD almost two years to build a place that was liveable. It was a single room with walls made of bricks and stones and cement sheet as the roof. Fortunately for PD, his mother's house was in the neighbouring settlement of Farid Puri and therefore, his family could live there while he and sometimes his wife could get the place up and running. The family moved into Gayatri Colony in 2001. It was a single room with walls made of stones and brick bats, and cement sheet as roof, that was all the family could afford at the time. They lived like that for six years and made first set of changes in 2007.

In the early days of settlement in Gayatri Colony, building incrementally was the norm and not necessarily a choice. There is of course the affordability side to the incrementalism as seen in PD's case but dealing with police and DDA and how they operated was the first part of the process. It appears that they had some sort of fixed rates for the brick walls, permanent roof, and so on.

When KD moved to Gayatri Colony in 2005, she remembers the area being like a forest, where people used to come and defecate in the open. When asked what she had to do to make a place for living, KD said,

'We had to do everything. First, we removed all the latrine; then we cleaned the area, and started cooking there using cow dung cakes. We had a tarpaulin, which we used to cover ourselves while sleeping on an iron bed at night. In the morning, we would open it again. We used to get all drenched in rain, could not even cook on those days and had to sleep on empty stomach. Now atleast there's this *jhuggi*, I thank God that there's roof on our heads now.'⁴⁵

KD's first shelter in Gayatri Colony was just a bed and a plastic sheet. After few months, she fixed four poles on four corners, wrapped sarees around the poles as walls and used tarpaulin again for roof. After another couple of years, she used the sarees as cladding to discreetly build the mud walls with some stones and bricks to enhance the stability. The roof was still tarpaulin.

⁴⁴ Personal interview with PD, 10 February 2019.

⁴⁵ Personal interview with KD, 12 February 2019.

KD got to building proper brick walls and adding a fibre sheet roof in 2015. When asked why she couldn't build all these years, KD said that police and DDA did not let her build, they used to keep breaking, and she did not have enough money to bribe them. Authorities were not the only ones who posed difficulty to the residents. As discussed before, the area was a stone quarry, so the topography was very undulating. And as KD mentioned, it was a very dirty place, people used to defecate here.

KP runs a tea and snacks shop on the main road in Gayatri Colony, back of the shop is where the family lives. She moved here around 2009 after living on rent in Farid Puri. KP remembers the area being filled with human faeces and the terrain being up and down with lots of ditches. They had to do a lot of cleaning and filling of pits to make the land suitable for building. A lot of construction waste was dumped to fill up the area in order to level the land for building. Similar to KD, KP also had four poles at four corners to cover the perimeter and build mud and stone walls inside that to avoid attention. She repeated the process twice, and both times the structure was demolished by a bulldozer, KP incurred a total loss of roughly 50,000 Indian Rupees. Discussed in detail in the next section, demolitions resulted in major disruption in housing journeys of families forcing them back to ground zero.

Those who bought their plots with built structures had low height mud/ brick walls and plastic/ fibre sheet roofs as their starting point; difference in material comes from when the place was bought. Those who bought before 2011 got mud walls, and those who bought after 2011 mostly got brick walls, owing primarily to the change in building strategy due to demolition in 2011. Even those who got brick walls made some initial repairs and alterations to make the structures more liveable. Earlier living on rent in Farid Puri, BD moved into a place in Gayatri Colony in 2012, which was initially bought and occupied by her in-laws. At that time, the walls were not very high and were made of mud and stones, and there was fibre sheet on top. As soon as BD's family moved in, they did two things: first, they increased the height of the walls by adding bricks on top so that they can hang a fan, and second, they built a toilet. Building a toilet was the first step for almost all the respondents who moved in after 2011, including RD, ID, and JK. All of them had to bribe police and DDA to make these changes in their places.

Residents, who had bought their structures before 2011, like CS, HK, MC, started living in these places as is; in the hindsight, they feel slightly relieved that they had not invested in building them in the beginning because these relatively older residents were the ones who faced demolition(s) in Gayatri Colony, as briefly mentioned above, and as discussed in detail in the next section.

4.3 Major Setbacks: Demolitions in Gayatri Colony

'It was demolished in 2011, no?'⁴⁶ was the first thing CS said to me, even before I asked anything. Demolition(s) have been central to many homestead biographies in Gayatri Colony. In the memory of residents, the settlement has been through two demolition drives: one in 2009 and another one in 2011 at a comparatively much bigger. The demolitions here refer to organised drives by the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) in an attempt to erase the entire settlement using bulldozers; it is different from regular breaking of individual structures by the police/ DDA, which almost all the residents had to face at some point or the other. Out of 13 families interviewed, four had experienced demolitions twice (in 2009 and 2011), four had experienced demolition once, and five families had not experienced demolition in Gayatri Colony so far (i.e. they moved in after March 2011).

The first demolition took place in 2009; however, it was a contained one. According to PD, whose house was demolished in 2009, about 20-25 houses on the main road were demolished in 2009. It appears that a short notice was given to the residents in 2009, so they were able to take out their things from their houses. What left a deep scar in everyone's minds was the large-scale demolition in 2011. Almost 1000 *jhuggis* were demolished over two days, from 23rd to 24th March 2011 (Feruglio and Chaudhry, 2011).

For CS, HK, and their families, the demolition was a big shock. They had moved to Gayatri Colony in January 2011 in a *jhuggi* made of mud and covered with polythene, and faced massive demolition in March 2011, just after two months of being there. They had not even made any changes to the *jhuggi* yet, though in hindsight, both CS and HK felt that it was a good thing, because otherwise all their money would have gone down the drain. Having previously lived on rent in other parts of Delhi, CS had no clue that something like this could happen. Sharing his experience of demolition, CS said,

'At first, I started thinking about finding a room on rent. It did not hit me much initially, but when I used to come back from work and see my children out in the open, I used to feel very bad. What if it rains, where will we go, what will we do? I spent many days under the sky; children and wife stayed at friends' houses for few days. After that we started building again and made one room to atleast have a roof over our heads.'⁴⁷

CS was in tears when he shared his experience of demolition.

⁴⁶ Personal interview with CS, 12 February 2019.

⁴⁷ Personal interview with CS, 12 February 2019.

Demolition was a horrifying experience for everyone, nothing remained in Gayatri Colony, except for the debris (Plate 4.2). No notice was given by the authorities, nobody could retrieve any of their personal belongings. All structures were razed to the ground; SD and her grandchildren aptly put it, 'our *jhuggi* was turned into a dipping sauce'⁴⁸. Residents spent almost a month in the open. School going children were the worst affected because their final exams were going on. Most of the children lost their books and other study materials during the demolition, many failed in their exams and had to repeat the year.

Plate 4.2: Photographs from demolition drive in Gayatri Colony, 2011



Source: Feruglio and Chaudhry, 2011

MC and MD lost their daughter after the demolition. While MC couldn't explain the exact cause of her death and did not want to blame anyone, it appears that while living in the open amidst all the mud after the demolition, young daughter of theirs started eating that mud and that probably caused some infection and ultimately led to her death. Remembering her daughter, with tears in his eyes, MC said, 'by the way, our daughter was very beautiful'⁴⁹.

PD and his family moved back to his mother's house in Farid Puri after the second demolition, in which they not only lost the house but also all their belongings. In PD's words,

'We were able to rescue our things in 2009, but not in 2011. When all our things got buried in the demolition, I lost the courage to carry on living there. My neighbours tell me to come and live there, but I decided to rent a floor from my mother. I made the house there, but I am still scared. So, I take the rent from that house and give it to my mother here.'⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Personal interview with SD, 18 February 2019.

⁴⁹ Personal interview with MC, 12 February 2019.

⁵⁰ Personal interview with PD, 10 February 2019.

After facing two major demolitions in a span of two years, PD lost the courage to continue living in Gayatri Colony. He was in fact the only one in my sample who had a house of brick and mortar before the demolition. He bore a loss of almost 800,000 Indian Rupees in the two demolitions combined. He did build the house again later on, but for rental purposes and not for personal use. While PD had the option of moving out, for most of households, such alternatives did not exist. It was either braving living in Gayatri Colony or going back to those inadequate, non-welcoming rental places. I am unsure how many moved out after demolition, but those who remained slowly started building again. There has been no demolition after 2011, and many families have transitioned from temporary houses to permanent ones in the last eight years or so, as discussed in the next section.

4.4 From Temporary to Permanent: Changing the Image, Securing the Future, Taking Chances

After the initial period of having no place to live post demolition, residents built their places all over again. However, unlike earlier times, this time most of them started the process with bricks itself. The demolition was challenged in the High Court of Delhi, and a stay order on further demolitions was passed almost immediately. The Court further said that the status quo had to be achieved in Gayatri Colony (Feruglio and Chaudhry, 2011). This gave devastated residents the confidence to build again. An NGO that was working in the settlement during and after the demolition supported them with court matters, provided relief during the interim period, and also guided them in re-building their houses and lives.

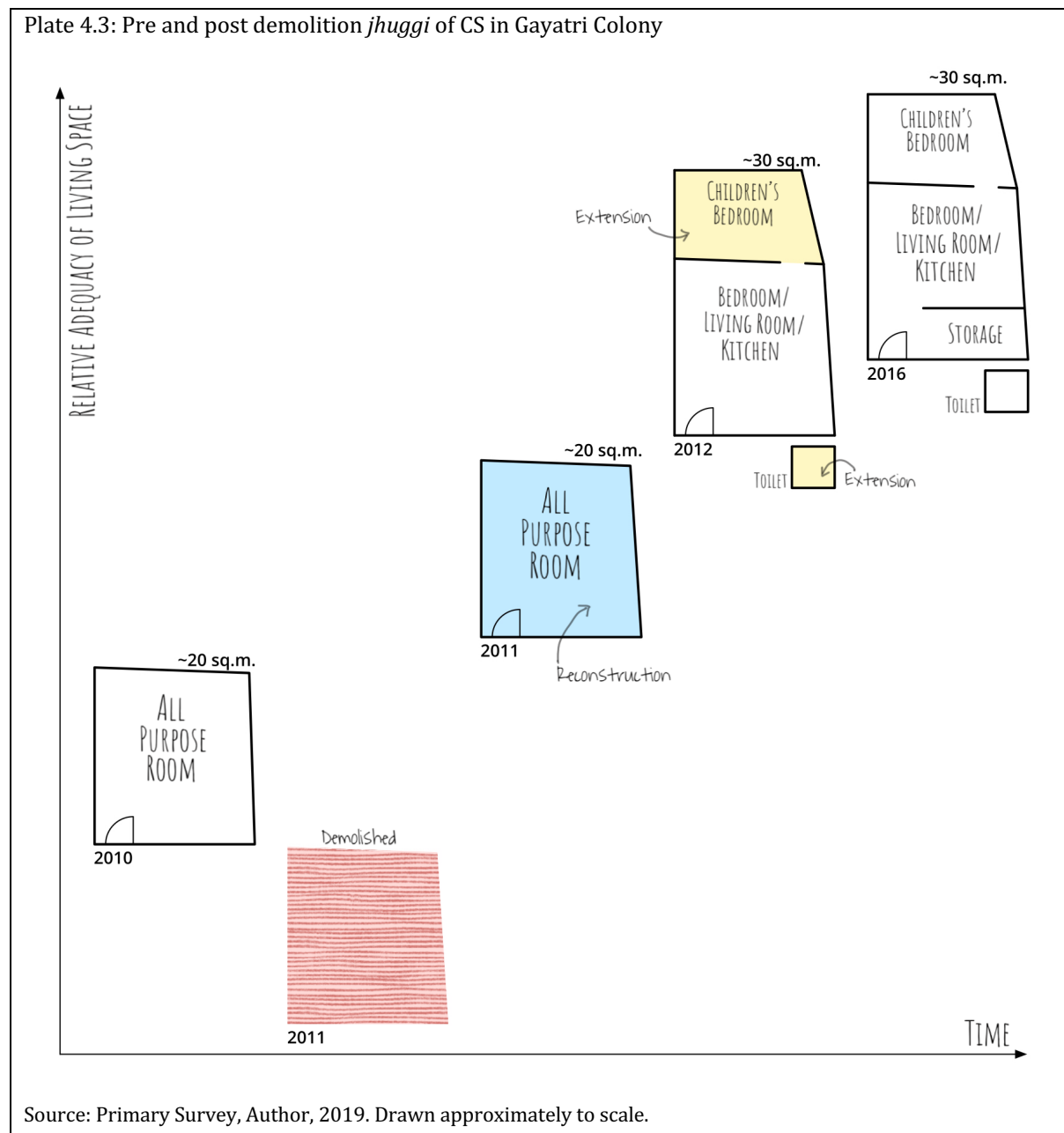
As HK mentioned, 'we got the paper from the High Court, and that's when we built one one room with bricks and [fibre] sheet on top'⁵¹. MC, on the other hand, started off by building mud walls after the demolition but soon changed to bricks because the NGO recommended so. CS said something similar for his choice of roofing material; he said that the NGO had specifically asked not to use plastic on top, but have fibre sheet instead, which is what CS did then. It was not just the NGO that was giving such advice. CS and HK both recalled a DDA officer coming and saying, 'if you settle in, it [Gayatri Colony] will become permanent; if you don't settle in, then you will be evicted with force'⁵². The underlying message behind all these communications was that residents needed to project an image of Gayatri Colony, which was more permanent. At this stage, few of the respondents also added another room by building on the entire plot. For

⁵¹ Personal interview with HK, 12 February 2019.

⁵² Personal interview with CS and HK, 12 February 2019.

example, both HK and CS added rooms in their *jhuggis* in 2012, so that their children could have a separate room to sleep (Plate 4.3).

Plate 4.3: Pre and post demolition *jhuggi* of CS in Gayatri Colony



Source: Primary Survey, Author, 2019. Drawn approximately to scale.

Post 2011-12, a few years were spent in these semi-permanent houses (bricks walls and fibre sheet roofs); even those who had bought the already built structures after 2011 made basic alterations in their houses and lived in them for next few years. The investments in this round were of the order of tens of thousands of Indian rupees. It's different for different people, but the next level of change, which is still ongoing in Gayatri Colony, and many have not reached there yet, started about three to four years back. At this stage, residents break down their old structures, dig deeper foundations covering the entire plot, add columns, and cast permanent

roof; some have already built a second storey, some plan to do that later; but the foundation is laid for upward expansion. There are a few anomalies to this where residents have not added columns but a thicker (nine inch) brick wall and casted stone slab on top, but the trend is generally towards columns. The investments in this round have been of the order of hundreds of thousands of Indian rupees, roughly ten times the cost of previous round.

Everyone has their own reason of building the way they are building. ID re-built and extended her house in 2015-16. She has now covered her entire plot, added columns, stone slab roof, and a staircase that leads up to her terrace. When asked why you built the house with columns, ID said, ‘foundation of the house gets laid only once, can’t do it again and again. Since we plan to live here now, whatever we do [build], we should do it properly.’⁵³ Even though ID has only a toilet on first floor and no other rooms, she has built the frame structure keeping the future in mind. Exposed reinforcement (steel bars) can be found sticking out on ID’s terrace (Plate 4.4), as commonly seen in bulk of the houses in Gayatri Colony—a symbol of ‘house in making’.

Plate 4.4: ID’s current terrace in Gayatri Colony with toilet and potential for adding more floors

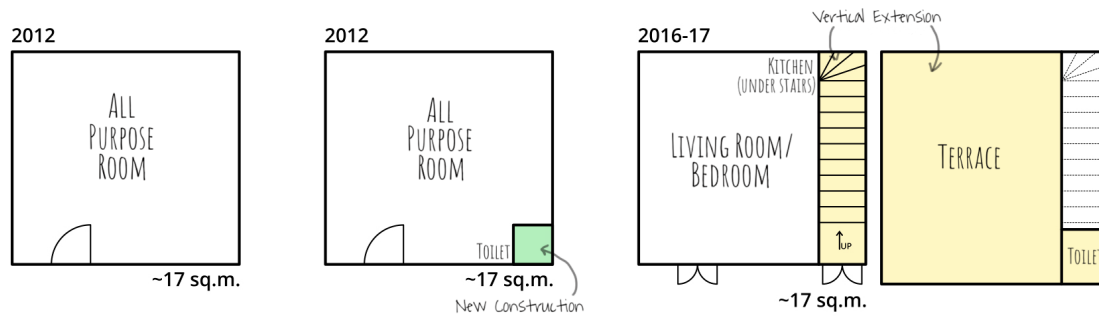


Source: Primary Survey, Author, 2019.

When BD renovated her house couple of years back, she also just built toilet and terrace on top, and could not add more rooms, but thought that it would be good to have columns and staircase, so that as and when possible, upstairs could be built (Plate 4.5).

⁵³ Personal interview with ID, 15 February 2019.

Plate 4.5: Transition from temporary to permanent house in BD's case in Gayatri Colony



Source: Primary Survey, Author, 2019. Drawn approximately to scale.

On changing the roof to stone slabs, ID said that fibre sheet roof used to leak during rains and used to get very hot in summers. Also, it was much easier for the thieves to lift the sheet and get inside while we used to be away in the village. Security and protection from extreme weather are other reasons for the ID's choice of structure and material. JK moved to Gayatri Colony in 2012 in an already built structure; it used to leak in rains, the place used to get filled with water and the overflow used to reach the streets, at which point neighbours used to fight. When things got out of control, in 2016-17, he got the nine inch brick walls made and casted the stone slab on top to avoid seepage of water.

A number of respondents have also built houses with columns and added rooms upstairs for rental purposes. When RD re-built her house in 2016, she also built rooms on the first floor to put them on rent. She has double staircase leading up to the terrace on second floor. Even though PD doesn't live in Gayatri Colony now, he also built two floors in 2015, and now has multiple tenants occupying different rooms. SD also built room upstairs and gave on rent, but unfortunately, she had to get them vacated very soon because she thought that their pit latrine was going to get filled up.

Since almost all structures in Gayatri Colony have brick walls now (in my sample, everyone had brick walls), roofing material determines whether a structure is a *jhuggi* (shack) or a *makaan* (house). If the roof is fibre sheet or plastic, then it's a *jhuggi*; if the roof is RCC or stone slabs, then it's a *makaan*. At the time of interviews, eight (out of 13) families called their places of living '*makaan*' because they had casted the roof with permanent materials (Plate 4.6). Five families still called their places of living '*jhuggi*' because even though they had brick walls, the roof for all of them were still fibre sheets (Plate 4.7).

Plate 4.6: *Makaan* (houses) in Gayatri Colony, 2019



Source: Primary Survey, Author, 2019.

Plate 4.7: *Jhuggi* (shacks) in Gayatri Colony, 2019



Source: Primary Survey, Author, 2019.

The ability, rather courage, to cast permanent roofs and extend houses in the last few years has primarily come from the change in ruling party in Delhi, Aam Admi Party, which has had its roots in the anti-corruption movement in India. Therefore, the police and DDA officials are very unlikely to trouble the residents anymore, and the water supply provision has also improved. Another thing at play here is the power of numbers. A majority of the residents said that everyone is building, we are also building. When asked how you found the courage to build, SD responded very simply,

'We get courage seeing each other. Look this side, our neighbours have also built. We say if we are going down, everyone will go down together; if we are staying on, everyone will stay on. That's it, end of story.'⁵⁴

While the fear of demolition is not gone, seeing each other, residents are gathering courage and gaining confidence to build their houses. A number of respondents compared building houses in Gayatri Colony to 'gambling'. JK said,

'It is a matter of fear, this is somebody else's land, not ours; even though we have paid for the place, this is a big gamble. We thought well and good if it stays, otherwise we will go to the village.'⁵⁵

JK was uncertain about his future in Gayatri Colony, but still took the risk of buying a place here. AD said something similar, 'it's like gambling here, if we win, our lifetime could be spent here'⁵⁶. CS gave a detailed account of his fears and reasons for risk taking.

'There's always a fear. There's no guarantee when our jhuggi will be demolished, we don't have registry for this land. And government has demolished even older settlements than this. This is DDA's land, I had enquired about it when I was buying the place and I had also seen a board here. My friend had warned me that I would be in trouble, that it could get demolished anytime. But I thought it's a matter of 60,000 [Indian Rupees], even if we are able to live here for 2-4 years, we will recover the rent we would have paid otherwise. Look ma'am, we have already been living here for nine years now. We will see when it gets demolished, God will provide for us somewhere.'⁵⁷

Even after facing one demolition, CS is happy that he made the decision to come to Gayatri Colony. Like many others, CS also took a calculated risk by buying a place in Gayatri Colony. Here, complete tenurial security is traded off with having an own place at an affordable price. The risk is also taken after seeing other neighbouring areas of Farid Puri, Baljeet Nagar, Prem Nagar, etc. getting developed in the same manner. Comparatively affordable, house building in Gayatri Colony requires lot of investment, which residents try to secure from multiple sources, and many are still trying for that, as discussed in the next section.

4.5 Financing the House: Savings, Loans, Balancing Other Expenses

Even with enabling socio-political environment, availability of finance is a crucial determinant of family's ability to build a house, especially with columns and permanent materials. Where the houses have been made permanent, the extent of built-up depends on the money available with

⁵⁴ Personal interview with SD, 18 February 2019.

⁵⁵ Personal interview with JK, 18 February 2019.

⁵⁶ Personal interview with AD, 17 February 2019.

⁵⁷ Personal interview with CS, 12 February 2019.

the families. For example, a number of respondents, like ID, BD KP, JK have casted a permanent roof and added a staircase but have not built any rooms upstairs because they ran out of money. The choice of permanent roofing material is also cost dependent. Even though AD preferred RCC roof, she decided to go with stone slabs, because it is comparatively cheaper. A number of families have done the same. Sometimes lower quality bricks are used to reduce the costs. There are also families that have not been able to cast permanent roofs yet because they don't have enough money.

The families access finance to build houses through a range of source including personal savings, loans, savings as part of self-help groups, etc. Some help from NGOs, etc. is also sought. For example, KD's toilet was built through an NGO. BD managed to build her house by cutting down daily expenses and saving, getting loan from their village and someone in Delhi. AD and SD have been making savings in small groups, and every time it's their turn to receive the money, they invest it back in the house.

While household earnings play an important role in family's ability to save and invest in their house, another key element here is balancing other household expenses along with building expenses. KP has been slowly and steadily making changes to her place. She has one room where the family lives and the other one where she runs her tea and snacks shop. Living room roof has been made permanent while on the shop, all base work is complete, but final installation has to be done. KP said that they couldn't build in one go. Their daughter also got married recently, almost 500,000 Indian Rupees were spent in the wedding. MC, on the other hand, feels that even though their house is not permanent, it's still serving the purpose, he would rather spend his hard-earned money on his children's education.

Since house building is so precious for everyone in Gayatri Colony, and they invest every extra penny they have in their house, they try to maximise the usable spaces through design, as discussed in the next section.

4.6 Designing the House: Separating Spaces, Making Every Inch Count

'We thought of settling in first, requirement of plan comes later.'⁵⁸ When asked about how did the family come up with the design, HK bluntly said it was all about settling in first. They were struggling to somehow stay in the basic structures. However, over the years, when residents

⁵⁸ Personal interview with HK, 12 February 2019.

started extending, re-building and renovating their places, they started to think about how best to make use of the available space. HK himself added another room so that his children have a separate room to study and sleep.

Few of the other respondents also mentioned the need for separate rooms for the family. ID, for example, has recently built two separate rooms: one for herself, husband and children, and second one for the brother-in-law. They have a separate space for kitchen too. KD also made a second room when her daughters got married, so that when they come to visit, the married couples could have a separate room to themselves. Except for BS and BD, all the others have now made two rooms. BS has a yard which she will convert into a room soon, BD only has the option of building another room upstairs because the space on ground is very limited. Those who are located on the main road have converted the road-facing room into a shop, with whole family still continuing to live in a single room.

Those who have tenants also like to keep different sections of the house separate. RD's house has three entry gates/doors now, first one for the space for shop (currently used for sleeping), second one for the main room and kitchen, and last one for the staircase for tenants to access their rooms on first floor. There is another door in the living room for family to access the toilet, which was also moved upstairs so that it can be shared with the tenants without them having to come to RD's floor.

Since the plot sizes in Gayatri Colony are not very big, residents are always striving to maximise the use of space available to them. When re-building the house, BD shifted the toilet upstairs so that the ground floor room can become slightly bigger. Upstairs as well, space availability is enhanced by cantilevering the stone slabs. Building toilets in the cantilevered space upstairs is very common in Gayatri Colony. It was observed in the houses of BD, ID, RD and SD. Using space under the staircase is also very common. SD has built her ground floor toilet under the stairs while ID has made a space for gas filling business, which the family does at times to earn some extra cash. BD has set up her kitchens under the staircase. Seeing her, RD in fact redid her staircase after a year or two and made it steeper, so that her kitchen could also fit under that. BS, on the other hand, has made kitchen shelves in the walls of their single room house itself, while she keeps the cooking stove on the floor. She is also renting the space outside her house to a juice shack. Those who have casted permanent roofs, their terraces become another important space for the family, for instance, for building a toilet, for water storage tanks, for drying clothes, for storing other extra items, and even for sleeping when the weather is conducive. These different innovations around space utilisation are presented in Plate 4.8.

Plate 4.8: Maximising space utilisation inside, outside and above one-room houses in Gayatri Colony



Source: Primary Survey, Author, 2019.

Toilets are built at the outer edge of the house or upstairs for the reasons of smell and hygiene as well. It is also thought that when the sewer lines will be laid in the settlement, it will be easier to connect the toilet if it is located at the outer edge. While everyone has made a basic toilet now, there are still a number of services that the settlement is lacking and residents struggle on a daily basis in their absence. Changes in residents' access to basic services are discussed in the next section.

4.7 Accessing Basic Services: Public, Private and In-between

While the built-form of Gayatri Colony has considerably changed in the last ten years, basic services like road, water supply, drainage, safe sanitation, have not developed as much. Electricity is the only service that is now suitably supplied to the residents, that also started happening about 5-6 years back. Before that, residents used to illegally pull electricity from the neighbouring areas.

From the beginning, the water supply has been through government tankers. However, initially very few tankers used to come, which residents used to use for drinking water; for all other purposes, residents used to go to Patel Nagar to queue up and bring water from public stand posts in cans. Since AAP has come in power, most of the families get one tanker each on weekly basis. They no longer need to bring water from other areas. There is still differential access within the neighbourhood, some families do not get their own tankers and buy water from other residents. Even though the tanker water supply is for free, residents pay the driver so that he comes on time and on a regular basis. Drums, bottles, cans for water storage are part of the streetscape in Gayatri Colony. With increased water supply and permanent roofs, residents are now getting overhead tanks (OHTs). Even though the settlement doesn't have piped water, within the houses, residents have already invested in the internal plumbing.

With regard to sanitation as well, after initial reliance on open defecation and then public toilet, everyone has built a toilet within their houses. These are latrines with underground soak-pits. Unfortunately, these are not built in a scientific way. The pits are made very deep so that they last long; they are also sealed from top so that there's no smell. As a result, there is a risk of groundwater contamination and there is no space left for emptying the pits as and when they get filled up. SD in fact had to get her rooms vacated by the tenants because she feared that the soak pit of their toilet was almost full and that it couldn't take any more load. The rooms are lying vacant since then, and the family is losing out on rental money because of infrastructural constraints.

Plate 4.9: Water supply infrastructure at the settlement and household level in Gayatri Colony



Source: Primary Survey, Author, 2019.

Even though households have pits for their toilets, since there are no sewer lines, greywater (that comes from washing, bathing, kitchen) disposal is considered the biggest problem in Gayatri Colony. Residents have built shallow open pits in the front to collect this water, which is expected to get seeped into the ground over time. However, with increased densities and built-up area, the soaking capacity of the land has reduced. This is aggravated by the increased water consumption in the area since the access to water has become relatively easier. While residents are ready to wait for the piped water supply and sewer lines, greywater drainage is becoming a serious issue. There is always water on the streets. BD was in fact a little disappointed that the residents themselves are not coming together to build these drains.

There are no storm water drains and proper roads in Gayatri Colony either, except for the one access road, which was also in bad shape at the time of study. The inside streets are developing as the houses are getting built, as when a house is made, the family also lays out the part of the street in front of their house. As a result of this organic building of streets, at many places, houses are at a lower level than the street (Plate 4.10), which experience flooding during rains.

Plate 4.10: Entry to some of the houses that are now below street level in Gayatri Colony



Source: Primary Survey, Author, 2019.

It is observed that Gayatri Colony's inclusion in service provision is much slower than the residents' progress with house building. Residents only invest in their individual infrastructure and services; laying down water supply lines, drains, roads, sewers, etc. is expected from the government. In some ways, this represents limits to incremental building in Gayatri Colony, where unless government provides certain services, full potential of the area cannot be realised.

Summing up, unlike Kosovo that stands out as an informal settlement amongst its formal counterparts, Gayatri Colony has developed almost as an extension to the earlier unauthorized, now regularised and serviced colonies of Baljeet Nagar and Farid Puri. The settlement currently lies at the cusp of *jhuggi jhopri basti* and unauthorized colony. A large proportion of the current residents have bought their places in Gayatri Colony. Initially, residents built small shacks with

mud and plastic first; bribing police and development authority officials before building anything was the norm in Gayatri Colony. The settlement faced a major demolition in 2011, that devastated the lives of almost thousand families. Post demolition, the built landscape of Gayatri Colony has rapidly changed. At first, residents started building with bricks to change the '*jhuggi jhopri*' image of the area, and over the last 3-4 years, the trend has been towards casting permanent roofs and extending upwards.

Chapter 5: Juxtaposing Incremental Building in Kosovo and Gayatri Colony

Kosovo and Gayatri Colony each tell fascinating stories of building places to live and in turn neighbourhoods incrementally. Putting the two cases together, however, brings out certain aspects of incremental building that would not have surfaced so well with just one case. Juxtaposition of Gayatri Colony and Kosovo shares parallel stories of people's housing struggles and aspirations, and the genesis of incremental building therein. It also highlights the different trajectories that people take to realise some of these aspirations, which gave rise to diverse physical forms that differentiate the two settlements. In this chapter, I discuss the why, what and how of incremental building in the two settlements, reflecting on the common motivation for building an independent place to live in both settlements. I then discuss the varied ways in which residents have built over the years, examining what it took to build in each settlement. In the last section, I explore the conditions that have shaped different approaches to incremental building in Kosovo and Gayatri Colony, and through that I discuss the challenges and limitations of incremental building.

5.1 Incremental Building: A Mix of Space, Materiality and Infrastructure

Incremental building is not a fixed concept, different people apply different logics and meanings to it. This section outlines how a number of things come together in the process of incremental building, including, but not limited to securing space, sourcing building materials and household assets, and eventually linking to infrastructure and services.

Securing and Establishing a Place of One's Own: Agency Found in Informal Settlements

As evident in the literature (see Huchzermeyer, 2002; Oldfield and Greyling, 2015; Bhan, 2016, for instance), it is clear that occupation in both Kosovo and Gayatri Colony is primarily in response to the housing deficits in cities that governments have failed to address, as well as the failure of the private sector to bridge that gap through provision of desirable, yet affordable, rental options for the urban poor. In response to this crisis, Kosovo and Gayatri Colony represent parallel struggles of residents to find an affordable place to live in the cities of Cape Town and Delhi. In both settlements, inhabitants moved in with the desire of having an independent place of their own. Many of them had never lived in an informal settlement or a shack before. Nonetheless, they preferred independence in an informal settlement over renting or sharing a house with family members in the formal or serviced areas. Family homes were overcrowded and congested with higher risks of inter-personal conflicts and little to no

freedom. Due to cost constraints, rental options were limited to living in the same premises as owners in the backyard shacks in Cape Town or in single rooms in partially to fully serviced unauthorized colonies in Delhi. In these contexts, tenants continued to remain at the mercy of the owners who could evict them at any point if they made too much noise or spill the water or did almost anything that owner did not like. Therefore, when an opportunity arose, individuals and families decided to move to informal settlements to have their own place. This decision was not purely financial. It was driven most often in response to problematic treatment as tenants. In the case of almost everyone in Gayatri Colony, and a few in Kosovo, many residents actually purchased their places in these settlements; plots and access to land did not come for free.

In these contexts, having your own place – and the concomitant possibility of freedom, independence and self-respect – is considered progress in an individual or family’s never-ending housing journey. Through securing land and building their own places to live, families assert their agency and reclaim their dignity, articulated in a home (Neuwirth, 2004; Ross, 2005). This move to informal settlements is complicated and costly in other forms, for instance in access to services and to building materials. The materiality of homes in Kosovo and Gayatri colony is important, it shapes resident’s understanding of their structures. The notion of whether a structure is a house or simply a shack is closely linked to its material form. A house is made of bricks and cement, and that is what everyone desires; a shack, in contrast, is a temporary structure made of wood and zinc or mud. The preference for a place of one’s own over-rides these clear ideas of what constitutes a house and knowledge of what is and is not possible in living conditions (housing material, size and shape) in informal settlements, at least in the beginning. Rather than being stuck in a house with others and in adverse relationships, people are willing to undergo the struggle to make their homes and neighbourhoods from scratch in informal settlements, because that’s where they can afford to be able to live freely. Thus, informal settlements not just provide a temporary (often permanent) solution to housing shortage in cities, they also present an opportunity (De Boeck, 2011; Ballard, 2014; Simone and Pieterse, 2017) for building and living an independent life the way one desires. It is these aspirations and imaginations, along with the strategies which make them happen, that become visible in the way residents build and improve their places to live over time. This is the focus of the discussion in the next section.

Zincs and Outwards in Kosovo; Bricks and Upwards in Gayatri Colony

Once in the settlements, residents become the “agents of urbanisation” (Caldeira, 2017) who build their places to live over time. In the very concept of informal settlements’ occupation and

incremental building, there is an element of temporality (Caldeira, 2017; Lombard, 2013); places to live are not built overnight. In fact, they do not seem to be ever finished (Ngwane, 2003), yet there are moments and ways through which residents try to come closer to their ideal housing (Ross, 2005). Residents of Kosovo, for instance, started with small wooden shacks and have extended now to large zinc shacks; on the other hand, Gayatri Colony residents started with mud and stone walls and sheet roof shacks and now have built single and multiple storeyed brick houses. It is clear that incremental building can yield completely different outcomes in terms of built form across these two settlements located in such different contexts. This aligns with Caldeira’s argument that peripheral urbanization “varies considerably from one city to the another” (Caldeira, 2017: 4).

A glimpse into the two settlements is enough to realise how different Kosovo and Gayatri Colony are in terms of their built-form (Plate 5.1): single storey zinc shacks in Kosovo compared to multiple storeys brick houses in Gayatri Colony, even though both are roughly twenty-year old incrementally built informal settlements. In some ways, both are representative of other informal settlements in their contexts: settlements that are low-rise, medium to high-density in Cape Town, and medium-rise, high-density in Delhi.

Plate 5.1: Built-form in Kosovo (left) and Gayatri Colony (right)



Source: Primary Survey, Author, 2018-19.

In Gayatri Colony, small plots with brick houses predominate, on top of which residents are now increasingly casting permanent roofs and adding floors. A lot of attention has been paid to the exteriors of housing in Gayatri Colony. In Kosovo, in contrast, plot sizes are relatively bigger, but the living structures are still shacks made of zinc; and double storey structures are few and far between. This observation does not mean that families in Kosovo have not invested in their places, however. Once you enter some of these shacks, you may actually forget that you are in a zinc structure. Most have added ceiling boards inside to reduce the effect of wind and cold. The

insides of shacks are also often made beautiful by painting them with vibrant colours. They are kept well organised, and have a number of furniture items like a sofa, beds, kitchen cabinets, and so on. Residents attempt to make the interior look as close to their desired home as possible. The exteriors are shaped by a different logic. They do not want to build with bricks for very clear reasons of not taking a chance with the government while they wait for a house from them. While explaining the reasons for extending, primarily horizontally, and for particular house designs, the need for privacy was very strongly articulated in Kosovo. This finding resonates with work on Cape Town. Both Lee (2005) and Ross (2005), for instance, demonstrate the association of ideal housing with privacy, dignity and respectability. In Gayatri Colony, however, residents desire privacy from the outside world, and are not so concerned at this stage with the house interior. Only a few made a reference to need for a separate room, primarily in cases where there were more than one married couple in the house. Many of them have built the extra room(s) and opened a shop or rented the room out, with families continuing to live in single rooms.

This heterogeneity is not just across settlements but within settlements as well. Prima facie, an entire settlement may appear the same from the outside, but incrementalism is not homogeneous within a settlement. Its varied forms are shaped by the time of arriving in the settlement. For example, early residents of Kosovo did not have to pay for the land they occupied, and they could occupy therefore larger plots; however, as the years went by, people arriving later had to buy shacks and the plot sizes kept reducing. On the other hand, early residents of Gayatri Colony faced multiple demolitions and incurred losses, while those who came after March 2011 have not faced a demolition yet. Even with the same starting point, different families have varied needs and aspirations for their places to live, and different abilities (financial and otherwise) to build, as well as different priorities in life in general. These dynamics guide their homestead biographies. For example, even though all families desire to have a permanent house in Gayatri Colony, they are all at different levels, literally and figuratively. Based on the available means and their courage, some have built the ground floor but are waiting to cast the permanent roof; some have casted the roof but not built upstairs; some have built upstairs but have not plastered the walls; and so on. In Kosovo too, every shack is different; even though the exteriors look more or less the same, the interiors are personalised based on changing needs, priorities and possibilities. In terms of infrastructure as well, there are inter-settlement and intra-settlement differences, discussed in detail in the next section.

Linking to Infrastructure through Neighbouring Areas, City Government, and Self

Access to infrastructure and services has also been incrementally achieved in both Kosovo and Gayatri Colony. Both settlements now have metered electricity supply; water is supplied through tankers in Gayatri Colony, Kosovo has public taps and some residents have installed taps in their premises; households have built their own pit toilets in Gayatri Colony while Kosovo has shared flush toilets and bucket toilets built and provided by the government; and drainage and internal roads are lacking in both settlements. Residents, moreover, have differential access to services within each settlement as well. Establishing the exact mechanics of household infrastructure access was beyond the scope of this study, but it appeared that it was a product of social relations within the settlement. For example, some families in Kosovo had keys to the flush toilet while others did not. Similarly, some families in Gayatri Colony had access to their own weekly water tanker while others had to buy water from their neighbours.

During the process of incremental building, the residents focus primarily on their individual place or at most on adding or bringing services to their places. No effort or investment was made towards community infrastructure, which in both contexts, residents expected government to provide. In the case of Gayatri Colony, for example, even though residents have built or are building permanent houses of multiple storeys with individual pit toilets and water storage tanks, there is no piped water supply or piped sewer system in the area. With increased densities, residents are feeling the constraints of operating in a non-serviced area even more. In Kosovo, residents have not even started building their houses with bricks, let alone investing in infrastructure. Whatever infrastructure exists in Kosovo is provided by government, including toilets, and community taps. While many families have put in their own pipes to pull water from there and have a tap on their premises now, but in the absence of internal drains, wastewater is let out onto the main road, which is a problematic from a public health perspective.

Summing up, incremental building can be perceived as a liberating idea that gives agency and power to residents to build houses at their own pace and according to their own needs and means. Yet, there are challenges and limits to the potential of incremental building by residents in informal settlements as discussed above. These challenges are critical and contextual, and elaborated in the next section.

5.2 The Always Relational Nature of Incremental Building

It would be tempting to end my analysis of incremental building in the discussion above, as an important argument for the powerful ways ordinary people, against all odds, find a place in the city and build a home. Incremental building could, in other words, be a story of agency, a story of making do, a story of ordinary people building the city. But incremental building does not happen in a vacuum. Incremental building is always relational, and this relationality plays out at multiple scales and in challenges that shape the limits of incremental building and informal settlement living. In this section, I discuss the ways in which places to live are built through social connections, in response to crises that shape settlements, and lastly, they are built in particular relationship to the state. As Simone and Pieterse (2017: 36) argue, “living in a permanent state of adaptation and makeshift is complex and demanding and involves enormous social effort”. Complex city and social contexts situate and shape the limits of, and the forms that incremental building take.

Building through Connections and Social Networks

While families move to informal settlements in search of an independent place, the whole process of incremental building is far from being independent. There is a high dependency on each other, neighbouring settlements, and larger social networks for incrementalism to work. A majority of the current residents in Kosovo, for instance, moved there through an introduction by a friend or a family member, or an acquaintance from same village. The ability to build itself is dependent on family and social networks. In both Kosovo and Gayatri Colony, a number of respondents depended on their family members to help them build the shack or house. Family members and extended social networks also played an important role in making finance available for house building, especially in Gayatri Colony.

The neighbourhood committees played a big role in legitimising residents’ stay in Kosovo by allocating numbers to shacks, which later became a resource for preparing list of families eligible for government housing when Kosovo would undergo redevelopment. Residents also go to these committees for daily intra-settlement issues, such as to also resolve their issues around plot boundaries, shack extensions, the buying and selling of shacks, and ways to get on the city housing database, for example. While a number of innovations can be seen in individual houses that set them apart from others’, broadly speaking, residents stick to what majority is doing on the outside. In Kosovo, there is a common understanding in Kosovo that one should not stand out from the rest, and everyone should be at more or less at the same level in terms of how their

shacks look, atleast from the outside. As TZ said, ‘if you build with bricks while others build their houses with zincs and planks, it will cause a conflict’⁵⁹. In Gayatri Colony too, everyone is more or less on the same path of ultimately building a permanent house; the majority of the residents said that seeing others build gave them the confidence to build. ‘We are all in this together’ is a general feeling across Kosovo and Gayatri Colony. While this has not been an issue in the last few years after Aam Admi Party (AAP), driven by the agenda of anti-corruption, came to power in Delhi, in the initial days of Gayatri Colony, building activities were closely tied to negotiations with police and development authority officials. Everything happened under their watch and after paying bribes to them.

Lastly, both informal settlements depended on adjacent neighbouring formal or semi-formal and serviced settlements to access basic services like water, sanitation, and electricity. It may not be a coincidence that land occupation in Kosovo started after the formal township of Samora Machel was built and allotted. ‘Everything depended on Samora’ was the first thing that all residents said when I asked them about how they accessed services in the past. Similarly, occupation in Gayatri Colony would not have happened at this scale unless there were nearby serviced areas to sustain the residents, such as Baljeet Nagar and Farid Puri. Provision of different services to these settlements by the government over the years has also contributed to and enabled the sustenance of incremental building in these informal settlements. Thus, incrementalism does not happen in isolation, it is embedded in social and community networks, and relies on other people, institutions (often government) and other settlements to sustain itself. As Shepard (2013: 231) points out, “Informal settlements are also inextricably connected – in economic, infrastructural, and legal terms – to their surrounding or adjacent urban system”. The social connections and interactions become the social and political infrastructure needed to provide for and sustain lives in these areas (Simone, 2004).

(Re)built and (Re)formed in Response to Crises

Whether it was burning of *hokkies* in Kosovo or demolition of *jhuggies* in Gayatri Colony, incremental building in both cases has been disrupted by serious crises. Some of these disruptions were devastating, levelling homes and pushing affected families back to ground zero, or below, as they lost all the investments they made and assets they bought. There is always a risk of fire in Kosovo, for instance. Three of my respondents had lost their shacks to fire in Kosovo and had to re-build them. Eight of the respondents in Gayatri Colony had faced

⁵⁹ Personal interview with TZ, 24 November 2019.

demolitions (some of them even twice), instances in which their shacks were razed to ground. They also had to rebuild their living structures all over again. Many urban scholars reflect on these forms of brutality, a reality in everyday southern city life (see Simone and Pieterse, 2017; Ballard, 2014; De Boeck, 2011; Simone, 2010).

While instances like fire and demolition are extreme disruptions that work entirely in opposition to incrementalism, it is not just such extreme events that disrupt incremental building. Sometimes changes in families' needs and priorities also impact the housing journey, reshaping the flow and trajectory of building and household life. In other words, incremental building is not a seamless positive trajectory. A times, building can be incremental on one front but decremental on the other, it can lead to a splintering of households. For example, when EM reconfigured her shack to open a spaza shop, it enhanced the family's ability to earn a living, but their living space was reduced so much so that her children had to move to sleep in her brother's shack.

At the settlement level too, things are always changing, which might act as a step forward for some but disruptive for others. For example, somebody stole BU's land to make a shack for themselves. This act reduced BU's plot size for future expansion. The increased densities in Kosovo over the years mean that many more people have their own place to live, but there is a recognition that shacks are too close to each other, increasing the risk of fire spreading faster (even though residents have moved on to zinc). There is a perceived increase in the incidences of theft also, which has resulted in the closing off of yards and the adding of burglar gates to building and yards. In Gayatri Colony too, while increased densities give courage and confidence to residents through power in numbers; at the same time, there is a lot more water logging on the streets compared to before. Some residents are building outside their plot lines, further narrowing the street and public space. HK, for instance, used to bring his chowmein cart inside earlier, but now he has to keep it on the main road, because it doesn't fit anymore.

Implicit in these disruptions and challenges in incremental building is its deep relation to and dependence on the state. Even while lying 'outside' the planned city framework of the state, informal settlements are shaped by it, as discussed in the next section.

Shaped by the State

As discussed in the literature and seen in the case of Kosovo and Gayatri Colony, the origins of informal settlements like these lie in larger housing struggles of the poor in cities, and the

inability of the state to provide adequate and affordable housing for the poor. The state, however, not only drives the presence of informality in cities (Roy 2005), but also shapes the form it takes. Kosovo residents, for instance, have stuck to materials like corrugated steel sheets, ceiling boards, that look informal. They have done so despite, 20 years of inhabiting the settlement, the experience of multiple fires, and the powerful material notion that a formal house should be made of bricks. Occupying an informal settlement in Cape Town, residents sounded absolutely certain that if they had built in any other way, they would have faced demolition by the state and would have also lost the chance of receiving state-subsidised housing in future. On the other hand, Gayatri Colony residents moved to bricks and cement fairly early on in their building journeys in the settlement even after facing two big demolitions and multiple small ones. On first glance, the choice of building materials may seem like a banal decision to make, and in these two cases, counterintuitive. This research demonstrates that it is not. It is linked to the need of looking 'permanent' and 'formal' in the case of Gayatri Colony, and the potential of staying 'informal' in Kosovo, perceptions that are driven by the policies and practices of the state, as discussed below.

Housing is a constitutional right in South Africa; the government is expected to provide housing to the citizens when they are not able to access it themselves. Over the last few decades, government has provided subsidised housing in the form of what is commonly known as a 'RDP house', but there is a long waiting list. Nonetheless, even in light of the huge backlog of state-subsidised housing, there is an expectation that the government will provide houses to those residing in informal settlements. Residents in Kosovo also expect houses from the government, and therefore, only build with zinc and ceiling boards to retain their image as informal, as by definition, informal dwelling in South Africa is not intended to be a permanent one (HDA, 2013; after Stats SA). There is some sort of trust that is still placed in government, linked to these housing promises and rights, but also from seeing other people getting RDP houses in surrounding areas in the city. There is a common understanding in Kosovo, therefore, that one cannot build with bricks. Even though residents have almost saturated the ground by expanding their shacks and are now beginning to build or consider building a second floor, none of them have ventured into building with bricks. The brick houses are not built not just because it would be a waste of money when they will finally receive their government houses and their current ones will be demolished, but also because a brick house may actually instigate the government to demolish their houses and evict them from Kosovo, and in the process, also exclude them from the provisioning of subsidised housing. These perspectives are firmly held, even though none of the residents have faced a forced eviction or demolition in Kosovo, except where space was needed for infrastructure and services, and the households were shifted within Kosovo.

This shapes these perceptions, and the common sense that as long as they don't build with bricks, they are safe. A couple of respondents mentioned that if they ever build with bricks in Kosovo, they would still cover it with zinc from the outside to maintain the appearance of the shack and avoid any risk of forced demolition.

In many senses, this material dynamic presents the limit of incremental building in Kosovo, where the site and living places in it are understood as only temporary by both residents and the state. Residing and building in an informal settlement context is considered as perhaps a steppingstone to that brick house, either provided by the government at some point in time or bought somewhere else when a family secures enough money. Even though many residents have been living in Kosovo since 1999 and have not received a house from the government, they are still not willing to upgrade to bricks. The recurrent promises made from as early as 2001 by the government and the local committees perpetuate this hope of receiving a house. Almost two decades have passed, and residents do not place much weight in these promises anymore. Nonetheless, building shacks is still seen as an interim thing one does while waiting for a house because that's how it happens elsewhere as well. Thus, incremental building in Kosovo takes the form of something you do 'in the meanwhile'. In their work, Oldfield and Greyling (2015) also highlight the politics and modalities of "waiting" for house in South Africa, and the everyday struggle to access housing "in the meanwhile". In this case, waiting is both legitimate and contentious, and defines residents' actions and their encounters with the state (Oldfield and Greyling, 2015). Spending two decades in a zinc shack in Kosovo with still no end date in sight can be compared to what Yiftachel calls "permanent temporariness" (2009). This understanding of temporariness as a key status shapes the choice of building materials used, even if residents aspire to better, more formal building materials in the future. These choices respond instead to the uncertainty of housing situation which residents experience. Kosovo provides them with a decent 'temporary' place to live, in the meanwhile, and also gives them enough flexibility in case their government house comes through.

In the context of Delhi (and India), housing is not an explicit right under the Constitution of India but is implicit under the 'Right to Life'. Government has not been proactively building houses for poor citizens, in fact, on the whole, a miniscule portion of the Indian population live in government provided plots or houses. A large majority of people build for themselves in varied types of informal settlements, including unauthorized colonies and *JJ basti*. Government action is seen more in provision of services in these unauthorized colonies and *JJ basti*, and also in resettlement of some of these *JJ basti*. Government is understood and read as a threat to these areas, because they do not fall in line with the legal regime. While there is not exactly an

expectation of a house from the government, there is a hope for the status of 'legitimate' self-built house. This status would mean that the house will not be demolished and provision of services to the house and neighbourhood might be approved by government, a key possibility for a better quality of life. Large proportions of Delhi have developed in this way. Gayatri Colony is also on a similar trajectory, although whether or not it will succeed is uncertain. A conceptual and political struggle for legitimacy, as proposed by Bhan (2016), is at play in this context, rather than waiting for a house as in Cape Town.

Having faced multiple demolitions and having seen other areas demolished, many of the residents compared making houses in Gayatri Colony to 'gambling'. If they play it right and win, they will be legitimate and receive services from the government; if they lose, they will be evicted. The strategy on when and how to take this risk and play the game is influenced by a number of factors. Firstly, residents follow what they see around them; the now serviced areas around Gayatri Colony, such as Baljeet Nagar and Farid Puri, were also once unauthorized, had shacks and received no services from the government. Seeing them developed in the past decades has given residents the evidence that this is a possible way forward. A number of government actors and NGOs have also advised the residents on what to do and when. In the initial stages, building in Gayatri Colony was impossible without bribing the police and the DDA. Informally officials and actors also gave instructions on the appropriate time to build and the appropriate materials to use. A resident welfare association (RWA), which is not very active anymore, was essentially formed to put in an application to be considered for regularisation (under the unauthorized colonies list), even though technically Gayatri Colony may not be eligible for regularisation since it is officially on public land. Post demolitions also, representatives of the DDA and an NGO advised residents to start building with bricks so that they did not appear to be a temporary area. The underlying assumption has been that the more permanent an area appears, the harder it will be for the government to demolish it. The High Court judgment, that passed a stay order on the demolitions in Gayatri Colony in 2011 and further ruled that the status quo had to be achieved (Feruglio and Chaudhry, 2011), also supported this shift to permanent materials.

The political landscape of Delhi has also changed in this time. Arvind Kejriwal, leader of the Aam Admi Party, that emerged from the anti-corruption movement in India during 2011 and 2012, is the current Chief Minister of Delhi. According to all the respondents, corruption has reduced since Kejriwal has come in power. The majority of house extensions and shifts to permanent roofs have been carried out in this period, without the need to pay a bribe to either the police or DDA. Moreover, a number of respondents who had to pay for their earlier structures, were not

asked to pay nor hassled by anyone when they extended or re-built under the AAP government. With AAP in power, people feel more confident to take the risk of building with permanent materials and adding more floors to their houses. Thus, incrementalism takes a very different form when it is seen as a gamble to avoid demolition, a strategy to receive legitimacy, and eventually, as a way to be included in service provision through regularisation. However, if we expand on Oldfield and Greyling (2015), we could understand this gamble to stay and to build further in Gayatri Colony as similar to waiting for house in Kosovo. The gamble to remain in Gayatri Colony, like waiting in Kosovo, is both legitimate and contentious at the same time, shaping residents' past and present encounters with the state.

In both cases, residents can be understood as “agents of urbanisation”, who engage “transversally with official logics” (Caldeira, 2017). Residents in Kosovo occupied the land but built only with temporary materials while they wait for the proper houses from the government. On the other hand, Gayatri Colony residents have started building with permanent materials to expedite the process of legitimacy and regularisation from the government. Thus, the state is present in big and small choices that residents make in their building choices and logics, as well as in their everyday lives. As Bayat (2010: 54) rightly points out, “state does matter, and one needs to take that into account when discussing the potential of urban subaltern activism”, in this case, incremental building. As seen in Kosovo and Gayatri Colony, residents build incrementally in a way to project a particular sort of image that they believe would not jeopardise their relationship with the state, and in fact would help them actualise their state expectations. In Kosovo, it takes the form of shacks, a practice of ‘incremental building in the meanwhile’; in Gayatri Colony, in contrast, building produces permanent houses, a form of ‘incremental building as a gamble’.

Conclusion: In the Meanwhile or as a Gamble

Building incrementally, and many times repeatedly, is a reality in informal settlements in the cities of global south. However, the everyday lived experiences of residents in this incremental building process is not well documented. While concepts like autoconstruction and incrementalism are useful, in the existing literature, they are discussed largely as meta-level theoretical terms or as policy imperatives. My research in Kosovo (Cape Town) and Gayatri Colony (Delhi), in contrast, is a small step towards understanding actual incremental building practices and experiences on the ground in informal settlements.

The comparative element of this research has been key. While it initially sounded like an ambitious plan for a master's dissertation, the juxtaposition of dissimilar cases in Cape Town and Delhi became the highlight of the research. Carrying out research in two different sites allowed me to pay attention to certain key aspects of incremental building, which would have remained invisible in one site alone. In the juxtaposition of Gayatri Colony and Kosovo are rich parallel stories of people's housing struggles and aspirations, on one hand, and the varied ways in which residents have built over the years, on the other. Informal settlements are not just a temporary (or permanent) solution to city housing crises, they also present an opportunity for residents to build and live a life of one's desires and dreams. They are much more than sites of precarity; they are places of aspiration, innovation, and re-imagination (De Boeck, 2011; Ballard, 2014; Simone and Pieterse, 2017). It is these aspirations and imaginations, and the incremental strategies which make them happen, that allow residents to build and to improve their places over time.

Starting from securing a place, incremental building is a multi-dimensional process, which revolves around space, building materials, assets and infrastructure. Incremental building in both contexts shows residents' agency, the ways in which ordinary people find spaces and build houses, and in turn, the neighbourhood and city. Incrementalism is equally a story of relationalities that play out at multiple scales. Places to live are secured and built incrementally through social connections; they are built in response to crises; and lastly, they are built in fundamental ways in relation to the state. It is these relationalities that drive practices of the incremental building of shacks 'in the meanwhile' in Kosovo; and, permanent houses 'as a gamble' in Gayatri Colony.

The varied forms of incremental building and its logics should shape, ideally, policy engagements that seek to improve the living conditions in informal settlements. Clearly, the

needs of Gayatri Colony are very different from the needs of residents in Kosovo. Since most of Gayatri Colony is already built with permanent materials, a minimally disruptive plan for service provision (water supply, roads, drainage, sewerage) might be the way forward, along with regularisation. In the case of Kosovo, in contrast, there is the possibility for earmarking plots and laying out services first, with the construction of permanent houses thereafter. However, what is needed to enable this change is the proactive involvement of the government in granting tenure rights to residents. In this intervention, the state could encourage and support the residents themselves to build houses through the provision of subsidies or through a state-led built housing.

The juxtaposition of empirical studies in Cape Town and Delhi also provides evidence that allows us to theorise incremental building from the ground. In doing so, I build on Caldeira's argument that auto construction and transversal logics drive peripheral urbanisation, producing heterogeneity (Caldeira, 2017). This work also extends Bhan's argument for engaging with southern practice, particularly the work of "squat", "repair" and "consolidate" (Bhan, 2019). Through this close empirical and comparative research, the work offers a more nuanced vocabulary that shows different ways in which 'squatting' is enacted, and contextualises 'repair' and 'consolidation' work in their complex relational and temporal logics. These dynamics play out in parallel, yet different, ways in Delhi and Cape Town. In Delhi, consolidation at the household level happens through use of permanent materials, and vertical extension; in contrast, in Cape Town, residents extend primarily horizontally, continuing to build with temporary materials. The focus of consolidation in Kosovo is actually inside the shack, through investment in movable household assets like a fridge, a TV, and a kitchen cabinet. This nuanced analysis helps illuminate different logics of incremental building and varied aspirations in the long term, rooted in the legal and policy frameworks of specific cities.

Autoconstruction and its incremental building practices are never purely individual, or even about a house, a plot, or a family. Incremental building is calculated, builders read the context, the city, and forms of city and state authority. This understanding of development by people is more precise and useful than a romantic general notion of agency. Rather than simply inserting a family in a city space, it shows a nuanced form of building, which is responsive to crises. It is always limited by hard, precarious circumstances, but sussed, demonstrating a careful calculation of the city, of what and how to build and consolidate, when and with what look and materiality.

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