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*Street Food Vendors in Delhi:
Nomads in the storm of modernity.*

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Stephan Shankar Nath

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Supervisor/Betreuer: **Dr. Simron Jit Singh**

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Epistemic interest

Growing up in India, I have been a true adherent of its street economy. Every new corner of this vast country hosts new surprises, from street food to daily essentials to local handicraft. Well, nearly everything that one needs.

Train rides were culinary excursions into the varied offerings of the country, the *Chai*¹ tasting different at each station and so the flavor of local specialties, *Samosas* and *Vada Pao*² at the platforms or bus-stations. Many times, I was bewildered and impressed by the innovative spirit of those working on the street, their humbleness in terms of price, their hard work in order to survive, and the delicious taste of food that they produced in minimal space. These small enterprises seem innovative and vibrant; and the vendor³, a true entrepreneur, taking care to sustain his own needs without begging from the state. On many occasions, I had seen them being harassed by policemen, due to no obvious reasons, but failing to recognize any pattern I had opted to ignore such happenings. Having seen it so many times there was a familiarity to these scenes. That it never really seemed awkward why they flee rapidly to evade police or bribe them to stay at their location. There is a social acceptance towards this violence that is truly distressing.

Furthermore, I discerned a bias towards people working on the street, perceived by many as poverty that needs eradication, the overpopulation that needs control and the haphazardness of Indian cities that demands to be organized, made bereft of all poverty. Some affluent Indians feel ashamed about their cities and find all gentrification drives laudable, necessary action where the state has to show determination, if necessary through force. This necessary force is generally in reference to all that seems unregulated, illegal, recalcitrant and unproductive. The perceived

¹ Indian Tea preparation

² Samosa and Vada pao are very common Indian snacks.

³ The terms Vendor, Hawker, Rehri wallah, Pheriwallah are used interchangeably.

reality of everyday life in Indian cities leads to the insinuation that it is the unorganized sector that is creating a mess.

As P. Chatterjee, whose works have had seminal influence on this thesis reflects

“There is now a powerful tendency to insist on the legal rights of proper citizens, to impose civic order in public places and institutions, and to treat the messy world of the informal sector and political society⁴ with a degree of intolerance. A vague but powerful feeling seems to prevail among the urban middle classes, that rapid growth will solve all problems of poverty and unequal opportunities” (Chatterjee 2008, 58).

The twenty first century deems many informal professions unfit. Some people will say they are below the dignity of human beings; nobody should have to endure this. Yet how far is the street vendors toil different from other forms of labour that we take for granted without hesitation? Whether it is a cheap construction worker building shopping malls, an underpaid overburdened tailor sewing our designer clothes in dark backyards or a guard who opens and closes doors for clients at a shop six days a week⁵. For myself, I decided that it is better that I use informal services and pay on a fair basis, than just have pity. After all, it is universally known- nobody can live on pity.

I was unaware of the fact that these entrepreneurs were suffering various eradication drives, with various arguments, that they were fighting to survive and clinging on to their livelihood means in a desperate struggle with the state, with the changing wind of globalization.

Slowly but steadily, exacerbated by the onset of market liberalization, the change was happening and signs were becoming visible. Train stations became quite and lamented without the bustle and screams of

⁴ Chatterjee refers to that realm of society that hosts the majority of Indian population and especially the whole informal economy. Political society has the electoral mandate to influence state policies, yet it is civil society, peopled by the affluent, that is hegemonic in shaping actual policies.

⁵ The job of a door opener is very common practice in most shops and restaurants in Delhi.

Chaiwallahs, *Samosawallahs*⁶ and many more. What remained was the solitary stand of some corporate owned tea stall, illuminated but without that charm, selling standardized *Chai* at every station throughout India and needless to elaborate how the same goes for many other products.

One city after another was adopting gentrification through eviction of street and slum dwellers. It is a known fact that globalization is accompanied with standardization or homogenization, leaving little space for varieties and specialties. Authorities preferred bigger companies and franchises over small, unknown enterprises. . Franchises are based on uniformity; they strive to offer exactly the same product or service at numerous locations. Customers should recognize a particular brand and avoid the unknown. Thus, every train station and bus station became similar, with the same two or three shops offering their standardized product.

Once, traveling in a local train, an article in *Punjab Kesari*, a vernacular press, caught my attention. It narrated the story of a *Parantha*⁷ vendor who protested against his forceful eviction, and failing to get any response from the authorities, he threatened to kill himself through self-immolation. Achieving nothing through his protest, he fulfilled his contention; setting himself on fire at the same place, he had toiled for over twenty years. This story, leaving a profound impact on me, made me realize the rising temperature of the struggle for street survival. Thus, this thesis was envisioned.

1.2 Research question and structure of the thesis

Further research revealed that the aforementioned story of a violent protest was by far not a singularity. Innumerable fights are reported taking place on the shallow pavements, that are considered more suitable for parking cars, than for someone to earn his livelihood (Anjaria 2006,

⁶ The suffix *wallah* is often used to describe a vendor selling a particular item, like the *samosawallah* is the one selling *samosas*

⁷ A popular north Indian bread dish

Bhowmik 2000, Bayat 2000). Street food vendors all over India are involved in a deep struggle to survive.

Parallel to this, there is another development taking shape- the entry of fast food chains, expanding fast all over India. Some of these are major Multi National Corporations like Burger King, KFC, Mc Donald's or Domino Pizza. Others are large Indian companies like Bikanervala and Haldiram's. Their growth story is unprecedented, with some of them opening between 60 and 100 outlets annually (Vaish 2010). They target the newly emerging market of middle class customers, tailoring particular dishes for the Indian taste. Most of these outlets are clearly favored and promoted by state governments, not only because they generate income and employment, but also because they are considered more hygienic than their counterparts on the street. Fast food retailers do provide a modern and clean ambience, which is a big attraction for most of their customers, yet their pricing is much higher than conventional restaurants or street food stalls.

This is a fundamental difference between Fast food chains in developed countries and those in developing countries. Contrary to developing nations, where fast food is seen as a cheap and quick food option, in India, they are in the price ranks of expensive restaurants and they address a different segment of society. The ability to dine in these fast food restaurants is considered a status symbol. People line up to reserve tables at Mc Donalds and Pizza Hut in Delhi, where they want to go for fine dining. This would be of ridicule for people in developed countries where they visit Fast-Food restaurants for convenience and affordability.

Fast food chains emerged in America to cater to the growing need of people for quick food on the way to or back from work. Most Fast food chains started as small enterprises on carts or in makeshift stalls (Schlosser 2001, 6). Out of the thousand fast food shops that started independently all over America, only a few have managed to survive, splitting up the market between them (Ibid.). Today, most of these American Fast food chains have become giant Multi National Corporations

(MNC) with presence in the overseas markets. They have changed the shape of American society, influencing agricultural practices, the type of food most people eat, and labor conditions that prevail due to the same (Ibid., 7)⁸.

Ironically, here in India, these MNC fast food chains undermine the existence of small enterprises, quite similar to the food stalls from which they once started out. Not many can compete with their aggressive media campaigning and marketing strategies (Royle & Towers 2002, 5).

There is a symbiotic relationship between street food and labour. It is due to the high pricing that most large fast food chains do not cater to the low-income working class population, or the unorganized sector in India. Street food fulfills this essential role. Tinker (1997) describes street food as the fast food of developing countries. It caters to the same kind of "need for inexpensive, available food. It provides a service for people who cant afford the time or money- and the hard working poor have little of either- for a bit sit down meal" (Ibid).

As becomes apparent from the restrictive environment and ever increasing harassment, Street Food, the way it exists today, is not accepted by the affluent and the powerful. Many feel the unorganized sector should be vanished and metamorphosed into a regulated and organized sector.

The following extract from The Economic Times shows poignantly corporate fantasies of including street food vendors into the new economic regime. It is revealing, and bears testimony to the marketers' perception of the unorganized sector.

"..... The Pheriwalla⁹ denotes three virtues and a singular vice. He provides us with convenience shopping at our doorstep, value deals and recurrent service, but he is low on the quality front. This can be that he is mostly selling unbranded goods or cheap commodities. If a deliberate transition can be made here from the unbranded to the

⁸ Schlosser points out that MNC Fast foods have a lot of might in influencing labour conditions, preventing unionization and keeping wages low.

⁹ A Term for street vendors used commonly in Bombay.

branded platform, this lowly Pheriwallah can become an invincible brand icon....Companies looking for avenues in morph marketing may find an ideal bundle of services here to augment their product with. Can't we have Coke Pheriwallah's in red T-shirts serving us chilled bottles of the real thing right at our doorstep? Even FMCG (Fast Moving Consumer Goods) major, Hindustan Lever has plans to go this way...Such branded services can be very convenient to working couples and others whose leisure time is always at premium. They would not mind paying a bit more for this premium service" (Sinha 2000)

The example illustrates the specific role allotted to them, which would make them acceptable for society. The fact that some consumers (The one's who's time is very valuable) would not mind paying something extra, vehemently ignores the fact that the majority would mind paying some extra (because their inability to pay that extra amount¹⁰). The second assumption asserted on the reader is that, *Pheriwallahs* lack quality, and their shortcoming is due to the sale of unbranded products¹¹. It appears that "branding the persons and products of workers in the informal economy emerges as a way of overcoming underdevelopment and keeping it too".

In this way they can be used as forerunners of the new Indian economy, "...where middle classes need reassurance, that they can move ahead and still retain the privileges of human servitude" (Rajagopal 2002)

There is a dynamic change in the Indian economy, having repercussions in many different systems. So if this food is forbidden, what would be its effect on the social system, and thus, on the Indian economy? The social repercussions of this dynamic change within the food sector is only for

¹⁰ As mentioned later, there are people who like to buy cheap, and there are people who have to buy cheap. An essential differentiation to be made.

¹² Economic development or 'conservation' are often reasons that supersede the livelihood necessities of marginal communities, who are accepted as collateral damage.

future generations to tell. As for now, the struggle for street survival is still going on.

It is fought on an asymmetric realm, where little educated informal workers, many times even unable to reckon the force they are pitted against, helpless in front of state policies and liberal economic theories, hatched in the high rises of affluence, become victims of decisions that do not acknowledge them. They are confronted by a mindset, a mentality, attacking them like a callous despot, unable to understand their essential contribution for society.

It was to discern and comprehend this mindset, in order to offer alternatives, that following thesis seeks to achieve. Using the unorganized food sector of the street food vendors as a focal point, through which current development, globalization and its effects on the urban poor, but also alternatives for an inclusive development can be examined.

The following research questions will be addressed, while the first question will navigate through the multitude of forces affecting the unorganized sector the second seeks to research sustainable solutions to a complex problem.

Researching the first without the second, would make it an exercise in futility. For what use is the knowledge of the effects of globalization on the unorganized sector, if we do not strive to look for alternatives. Nevertheless, more focus has been give to the first question.

What are the effects of globalization on the unorganized food sector in Delhi?

What is a sustainable solution to integrate the unorganized sector

The first chapter investigates the unorganized food sector in general, some policy approaches and the effects of globalization. The next chapter discusses the concept of Informal economy and its relevance in development studies. Chapter 4 and 5 are based on the field research done in Delhi, while chapter 6 combines the gained insights about modern

street food vending with the theory of cultural imperialism and conspicuous consumption. Chapter 7 uses a conflict transformation theory, namely the transcend approach to offer a different way of analyzing the issue and advocating the sustainable integration of food vendors into society.

I want to mirror different perceptions of street vending to discern the mechanisms that are currently affecting this sector. I believe that it could be misleading to look at the sector singularly, disconnected from the whole economy, from the theme of urban poverty, therefore references to the larger canvas are found in many instances. The large canvas is that of a globalizing and modern India, within which the specific field of the street vendors is assessed.

A small study like this cannot pretend to cover the intricacies and complexities of modern Delhi social functioning, but it is an attempt to grasp the underlying and axiomatic red thread that keeps the fabric together.

1.3 Method

Social phenomena's are involved in a dynamic, constantly changing process, in which the reproduction strategies of the collective and the conditions of survival for the members of society change irreversibly. Discerning the underlying dynamic or reconstructing the logic is very essential for any analysis (Froschauer & Lueger 2003,9) .

The perspectives of each interviewed individual are just a starting point that builds up to form or indicate those unstated tacit rules, which govern the on going dynamic. Not only direct interviews but also random conversations with various stakeholders can be integrated in this approach (Ibid.).

For a qualitative analysis, statements made during an interview are seen as a manifestation of social relationships and conditions, the rules of

which become apparent in the subjectivity of the point of view stated. The members of a social system are not only experts on that system but also represent the system and their particular relationship with it (Wadsworth 1998,14).

Following the above-mentioned principles, this thesis combining qualitative methods with literature analysis, is based on 6 months of archival studies, and 3 months of fieldwork in Delhi in the winter of 2009. During this period, 20 brief interviews with vendors, 16 interviews with upper and middle class consumers and 5 group sessions with overall 24 low-income customers were conducted. Fieldwork was crucial in defining the direction of research and analysis of literature. The micro survey augments the general argumentation of the thesis and can be seen more as an effort in action research than a stand alone scientific survey.

Two different questionnaires were used for the two groups of stakeholders: Food vendors and Customers. Customers were further divided into UMIC (Upper and Middle Income Class) and LIC (Low Income Class Customers). This division was necessary, as only then differences in attitude became evident.

The reader might wonder how the interviewees were recognized as belonging to a higher income segment. For this, the very basic method of visual assessment was used, questioning people having luxury cars, expensive mobiles (expensive according to international standards like Iphone, Blackberry and Nokia communicator) and in few cases where the wealth or social standing of a person was known.

Vendors (Representatives of the unorganized food sector) were interviewed individually, sometimes in a separate place and sometimes while working (more through participatory research). Consumers were interviewed in different settings. Most of the UMIC consumers were interviewed in their apartments or in a coffee house, the 5 group meetings with LIC were conducted twice at a food stall and four times in a separate

meeting place. Onsite observation notes were taken during the conversation.

For Vendors, the questions focused more on how they perceive and cope with existing realities, what were the reasons to pursue this activity and what hardship did they face. I was also interested in their strategies to adapt with changing times, and how did they adjust with hostile policy approaches towards them.

On the consumer side, questions focused on perceptions about the unorganized food sector and other notions about this sector. I was interested to know how often they visited a street food vendor, what were their prejudices and opinions about them, whether their attitude towards vendors had changed and what their vision of a modern Delhi was.

A questionnaire was used for both types of participants, although it was soon abandoned for the street vendors, as it was impeding the flow of conversation. Vendors felt uneasy if confronted with a questionnaire, yet would talk about all subjects, if talked to freely.

Bhagirath Palace, Seva Nagar Market and Sarojini Nagar Market were the reas for most fieldwork , since all three host a cluster of street food vendors. Moreover, despite regular efforts to get the street clear, the food vendors are still there. This provided an optimal research milieu that gave many opportunities to observe and study, the method of eviction and the strategies applied to avoid it.

This method falls under participatory action research. I took observations at various stalls during rush hour, as well as during enforcement drives, being involved in the moment. This was a particularly enriching experience (if not depressing) since it required personal involvement beyond an academic realm. Talking with strangers and discussing sensitive issues is only possible after establishing trust. For that I had to share open my own life and story, thus losing some anonymity.

“Participatory action research is aware of its inevitable intervention in the social situations within which it operates and seeks to turn these to consciously-applied effect. Most participatory action research sets

out to explicitly study something in order to change and improve it.”
(Wadsworth, 1998)

Standing and watching demolition drives towards street food vendors changed my perception on Indian democracy. It was motivating to inquire into the reasons for this blatant discrimination meted out to hard working individuals.

1.4 Relevance of research

There is an expanding chasm in society between the urban poor and the appropriated class. While ecological resource conflicts have gained scholarly attention, conflicts in the urban environment often go unnoticed. Noted political ecologist Baviskar (2003) wonders why the predicament of displaced workers in Delhi (or all over the developing world) has not attracted enough sympathy and support of the intelligentsia, while similar struggles of tribals or distant peasants fighting their forceful evictions under the *raison* of a higher goal¹² does. Is it because we perceive urban poor as devoid of any ecological virtue or social virtue that could be of value to the urban environment. In fact, their presence defies projects of improvement- they are illiterate, live in squalor, are uninvited and worst they are unaware of their place (Baviskar 2003,12).

I want to address the existing academic void, showing that the unorganized street food vendors do possess social and ecological virtues worth protection, and their struggle for resources in the urban environment deserves as much attention as the survival of subsistence lifestyles in general.

“In fact, as projects of development and conservation make evident, it often works to systematically exclude the poor from citizenship. Access to a *public* sphere of political debate and action is usually

¹² Economic development or ‘conservation’ are often reasons that supersede the livelihood necessities of marginal communities, who are accepted as collateral damage.

predicated on access to *private* resources. For instance, the urban specialized form of a public sphere, 'the republic of the streets' created by unruly, recalcitrant vendors and itinerant crowds, is marked by great inequality – while the bourgeois citizen can stroll along confidently, others must keep an eye out so that they are not caught in a municipal raid." (Baviskar 2003)

This work studies the cultural politics of development, which is a form of political ecology, concerned with the connection between 'poverty and the unbridled' consumerism of a privileged class (Baviskar 2003).

"It offers a critique of knowledge, especially that which claims the authority of common sense, challenging the self-evident verities of developmentalism and, now, globalization. At the same time, it remains alert to the power relations that produce hegemonic forms of knowledge as well as the entire set of social practices through which inequality is reproduced."

1.5 Personal Remarks

Initially my conversations with street vendors would come to a natural end after an exchange of few sentences, with them losing their interest in my inquisitiveness or me missing a link to continue the conversation. With time, I developed expertise in engaging my subjects in longer conversations and gradually touching topics that were of interest to this theme. The trick was that it had to be a conversation where I would also narrate stories that could be of interest to them, regarding government schemes on street vendors; how vending is practiced in my home state, Himachal Pradesh, or memories of street vendors from other corners of India.

To approach a subject as if a problem hinders an objective scientific analysis, since it presumes many facts, thus disabling us to see clear the functionality of a social system (Froschauer & Lueger 2003, 23). As much

as I tried, it was difficult to shed my personal views, bias and judgment regarding street vendors.

I emphasize on the theoretical sampling within the time and resource limitations that confined the research process. One last point I would like to add here is my personal ambition to enable a conversation between stakeholders that has long been due. Street vendors know little of the reasons why they are targeted and middle class consumers are ignorant to the wider implication of their 'belief system'. On the premises of action research, I attempted to create an understanding on both sides. Even if it is miniscule, I hope that some of the thoughts shared during the interviews will bear fruit and lead to a bit more empathy of the have's towards the have not's.

I am aware that arguing for the survival of an ancient, labour intense and currently inhuman sector of employment cannot be justified without a proper analysis of alternatives and possibilities. It is the belief in a possible dignified form of subsistence for urban poor, within the realities of modern day India that carries this work forward.

Chapter 2: Street Food vendors in shining India

In November 1996, the livelihoods of 100,000 vendors in Calcutta bulldozed with an unannounced eviction, through the police and municipal authorities, to clean up the city for a visit by the UK Prime Minister, John Major. The government of West Bengal also put up banners discouraging consumers to visit street vendors, describing them as nuisance and hindrance in the "clean city drive" (SEWA 1998). This gloomy operation called "Operation Sunshine", is often cited as the archetypal example of gentrification drives or biased development approach. The visiting prime minister of a foreign country symbolizes metaphorically the arrival of international capital, FDI, which is given priority over indigenous forms of wealth. Operations like this are reported from all major Indian cities, and yet they form just the pinnacle of an ongoing systematic discrimination towards those living and surviving on the streets.

Following essay offers an analysis into the topic of street food vendors; the pressures they face; policy approaches towards them; and the arrival of corporate capital.

2.1 Street Food Vendors

For long, there was a lacuna in the studies of urban street food. Street food was considered as snacks offered by family enterprises to survive and, no further attention was paid. Irene Tinker (1997), was among the first scholars to study urban street food as a survival strategy of the poor, and as an essential economic sector, worth researching. In the recent years scholarly attention like Kishwar (2005) and Bhowmik (2010), has been given to the struggle of street vendors in an increasing hostile environment

The number of street vendors in India has increased sharply over the last decades, estimated around 2, 5 % of the total urban population. All over

India, this sums up to approximately 10 million vendors. There is a paucity of exact data about the number of vendors and how many of these 10 million street vendors are engaged in the food sector.

After a study conducted in seven cities around the world, Tinker (1997) comes up with following conclusions.

“Street foods are ubiquitous and a growing phenomena in urban areas in developing countries; wide variations in the numbers of vendors and their gender roles exist; family and kin support is central to most street food enterprises; stability and profitability characterize a high proportion of the trade, but failure is also frequent; most vendors are micro entrepreneurs, rather than dependent workers, harassment by local officials, not credit, is the major impediment of the trade. Vendors average income is generally higher than the official minimum wage and many vendors even earn as much as schoolteachers or government clerks” (Ibid).

2.1.1 Realities and living conditions

In most countries, street trade is a family enterprise. Even if the women are not visible, they more often than not play an essential role¹³. Most vendors have family members always around, helping them, buying ingredients, preparing the food, cleaning utensils, moving the cart into place, selling and eating the leftovers. Spouses and children mostly work unpaid.

Most street vendors stay in Jhuggies or unauthorized colonies, dirty common rooms, abandoned pavements or even below staircases, in makeshift trolleys or in the open space (Mukherjee & Mukherjee 2000, Tiwari 2000).

¹³ It is unusual for mature women or men in most developing countries to be unmarried; single vendors are generally very young.

The vendors' earnings are very low and vary from trade to trade and from location to location. The average daily income in India is around Rs. 70¹⁴ for men and Rs. 40 for women. The monetary problem intensifies as vendors have a scantiness of resources for their trade and need to get credit for running their enterprises. Many times they obtain money from moneylenders at exorbitant rates, or from wholesalers who provide advance, which is paid, back later with interest rates (Bhowmik 2010, 1-20).

On the legal side, street vendors fall under the purview of two authorities: the traffic police (who deals with the flow and regulation of traffic and safety of the citizens using the road) and the municipal corporation (MC), (which regulates the use of pavements and trade). The Laws governing Indian cities are still those framed during the colonial period¹⁵. This gives an oppressive and imperial character in dire need of reforms (Kishwar 2001).

The municipal and police laws vary among different cities with regard to the legal status of the hawkers. Bhubaneshwar and Imphal are the only two cities with some minimum provisions for street vending¹⁶. Bhowmik (2010) notes the irony that while free trade and de-licensing go on freely on the international level; the poor have to take permission for starting any activity. Apart from the difficulties to obtain license, there is a cap on the issue of number of licenses. For Delhi, this works promoting a system of perpetual corruption, where most vend without licenses and those who acquire one do so under heavy bribes or patronage.

The *Tehbazari*, the license necessary for street vending, is a rare and desired valuable. Not more than 5 % have the *Tehbazari*, mainly due to the cumbersome procedure and the government restrictions for hawking. Owning a *Tehbazari* does not redeem you from routine harassment through authorities

¹⁴ Rates mentioned in the thesis are in Indian Rupees. Standard exchange rate is 1 Euro = 60 Rs (Status November 2009)

¹⁵ The Laws framed during British India restricted the use of streets to circulation only and so street vending began to be considered an illegal activity (Dalwadi 2010, 89)

¹⁶ Time of research Nov. 2009

Necessity of street food

By the 80's, insight had dawned that the urban street food sector was not vanishing with time, as predicted by most modernists. On the contrary, it was becoming increasingly important.

Due to rapid urbanization in developing countries, street food gained societal importance, providing meal to office and industrial workers. This becomes necessary in an era of jobs where workers would travel daily for work and are thus unable to go home for lunch. In addition, children, who constitute a large segment of the street food consumers, take a meal during school hours or after school. In priority, maybe the most essential role played in society, is to provide low cost food for the urban poor. Bhowmik succinctly elaborates this.

“... reason for an increase in hawkers is the growing number of urban poor. These people procure their necessities mainly through hawkers, as the goods sold are inexpensive. Had there been no hawkers in the cities, the plight of the urban poor and lower middle class would have been worse. It would have led to greater social problems and unrest. In this way, one section of urban poor, namely, hawkers, helps another section to survive. Hence, though hawkers are viewed as a problem for urban governance, they are in fact a solution to the problems of the urban poor. By providing cheaper commodities hawkers are subsidizing the urban poor, something which the government ought to do.” (Bhowmik 2000)

In Delhi, many apartments in low-income colonies don't even have kitchens except a provision for boiling water. Many customers interviewed, from the lower income segment, during fieldwork never cooked at all. For them street food fulfills an invaluable service.

Concerning the fact that most of street food found over the world consists of small meals or snacks, tinker has an interesting assumption. She sees snacks as little food for little money, and thus the process of all day

snacking, not one of leisure (as presumed in general), but born out of the need 'eat a bit whenever you have some time and money'.

In a city with a large population of people who still do not possess refrigerator, deal sparsely with electricity, and also cope with the ongoing price inflation, street food often is a much cheaper alternative to cook at home.

According to Tinker, street food has even had an effect on the cuisine served in homes. Certain foods would be cheaper in time and money to acquire in the bazaar rather than cooking them at home. Especially in Asia, dishes procured on the street often complement the food served at home.

Type and functioning

By the EPOC (Equity Policy Centre) definition (Tinker 1997, 157), street food vendors sell ready-to-eat food along the street or from a structure, which does not have permanent walls. There is a visible distinction between mobile and permanent enterprises. Both are not homogenous, further segregated into various degrees of mobility or permanence. Permanent structures include stalls in market areas, shacks erected against walls, free standing kiosks, heavy tables sheltered by canvas tents or a veranda and room in the vendors own house. Any other type of enterprise is mobile: vendors with baskets or shoulder poles, vendors pushing or pedaling carts, vendors squatting behind his spread out goods.

There are also semi-mobile structures, generally elaborate carts that are pushed tediously into one place per day, due to their inability to vacate a place rapidly they are considered among the permanent group. Permanent vendors can be found all over the city, in various densities. Ambulant vendors usually follow a set routine through residential areas.

Permanent street vendors are generally found in vicinities of a "natural market", seldom in the centre of the market, and mostly in small clusters with other vendors. If a street food merchant scouts a new place, soon others follow suit. Many times with their crowd pull, they establish a small

“alternative centre” thus clogging and blocking some other activities taking place in that market.

Food vendors are found in so-called “natural markets” like schools, hospitals, office and residential areas, bus and train terminals, movie halls and around parks.

They vie for customers in crowded streets during the day, around parks, certain neighborhood and important junctions during the night. Sometimes they are along highways interfering with traffic and sometimes they are in the middle of congested pedestrian areas. There are chance locations like traffic jams or roadblocks, which can be good business. It is safe to assume that they operate in residential as well as commercial areas.

Government authorities are concerned mostly on the permanent operations. They are easier to track and control, and most likely to procure a license. Supplying water and electricity becomes easier to permanent enterprises.

Forceful removal, like in Jakarta, was not successful as neither vendors nor customers could afford higher prices (Bhowmik 2010, 20-46). Regulations, licensing and problems vary by type of operation, type of food sold, and location of vending. However, restrictions and regulations they all have.

Vendors Workday

“Own account workers are workers as well as micro-entrepreneurs because both these characteristics merge into one. Their conditions of work are similar to the wage workers e.g. a street vendor or a rickshaw puller (pulling his own vehicle), striving to make a meager income by ‘self exploitation’ through lengthening the working day.” (NCEUS 2008, 9)

All over India, on an average, vendors work very long hours, seven days a week, year round. The type of food each vendor sells- is connected with the time they sell it, how long it takes to prepare. I.e. the *Golgappa wallahs* are one of the hardest working, since it needs 4-5 hours of preparation and then 6-8 hours of vending it¹⁷. There are vendors selling breakfast, lunch and dinner, respectively. Some few also sell all three meals, but most specialize on one meal. The latter, by far in majority, sell items that can be eaten the whole day, no matter what time.

Most vendors take time off for specific reasons, not so much for a day-off. Reasons include religious festivals, family matter or for agricultural activity.

Migration

As in most developing countries, so also in India, the low rate of growth of industrial employment and the high rate of rural-to-urban migration makes for excessive, even explosive urbanization, involving a transition from rural unemployment to excessive urban underemployment and poverty (Mitra 2003). This is manifested in the form of vast stretches of slums in the midst of every big city.

Though it is definitely true that people come to cities for better employment, there are many more reasons why they continue to stay in cities, once they realize that employment opportunities are scarce and require additional capacities. One reason is the defiance of caste oppression in urban settings, another is the possibility of upward income mobility, and another reason could be the desire for a bit more modern life.

As Tinker (1997, 147) shows in her study, street vendors are not predominantly new migrants to the city. The writers on hawking have cited relative ease of entry, and the limited requirement of capital as reasons, for hawking to be the job of the new entrants to the urban labor force.

¹⁷ Personal observation

Nevertheless, resident's associations and citizen's groups have promoted this misconception, claiming that the increased presence of hawkers on Delhi streets is symptomatic of the "flood" of migrants who are ruining the city.

Urban poverty is the sea of people from which the street vendors survive and also derive from. However, urban poverty is not because of migration, migration seems to be, because of poverty (Anjaria 2006, 2142).

2.1.2 The Importance of the NCEUS Report 2009

The "Report on Conditions of Work and Promotion of Livelihoods in the unorganized sector" by the NCEUS (National commission for enterprises in the unorganized sector) is a milestone achievement for the completely unorganized sector in India (NCEUS 2008). It is the first of its kind to study in depth the living and working conditions of the majority of Indian population.

It has a sordid truth to tell. 77% of Indian population has a daily consumption of Rs 20. The Report states that the number of people in vulnerable conditions has increased over the last decades and that there is a serious discrimination towards the poor happening all over the country (NCEUS 2008, 14).

The Commission recognizes that livelihood promotion is the only way to tackle issues like conditions of work, poverty and vulnerability.

An important realization stated by the NCEUS report is that conditions of work for unorganized wage workers is connected with the conditions of the small enterprises (like the unorganized food sector and street vendors in general). Given that the overwhelming majority of Indian work force is working in the unorganized sector, this becomes a pivotal issue, which has not sufficiently "dawned on the popular consciousness" (Sengupta in Sehgal 2007).

The transition from a predominantly informal economy to a predominantly formal one has not yet taken place in India. Moreover, by the look of

things, it shows no promise to take place in near future. The commission's report says that over 394, 9 million workers (86% of the Indian workforce) belong to the unorganized sector and work under "utterly deplorable conditions" with "extremely few livelihood options". These contributes to the fact that approx. 836 million people are in vulnerable conditions (NCEUS 2008,1)¹⁸.

The plight of this vast pool of workers is lost in enthusiasm about the high-speed aggregate growth of Indian economy. Unless attention is given to the conditions of this section of workers, the set objective of inclusive growth and overall and balanced development cannot be reached.

With a warning undertone, the commission recognizes the dangers of further negligence. "The costs of dithering or delay could be socially and politically unacceptable in an electoral democracy of unequal voters".

The commission voices strong support for an enhanced role of the state. It is seen as the basic responsibility of the state to ensure minimum wages, social security and pursue decisive "livelihood promotion" policies. "It is the state that is constitutionally mandated to enforce society-wide regulations and create conditions for the development of the economy" (NCEUS 2008, 16).

2.1.3 Socio economic Profile

I will present here the findings on the socio economic profile of the unorganized workers in India, as mentioned by NCEUS (2008).

- The high incidence of poverty is maybe the most dominant feature prevalent through out the unorganized sector. Throughout India, workers in the unorganized sector had a much higher incidence of poverty (20.5%) than their counterparts in the organized sector (11.3%)¹⁹.
- Limited access to human and physical capital is among the main confinements to have access to better jobs, or growth of self-employed activities. Access to land (i.e. land possessed) is an important asset

¹⁸ "At the end of 2004-05, about 836 million or 77% of the population were living below Rs. 20 a day for consumption" (NCEUS 2008,1)

¹⁹ A detailed analysis with various categories is given in NEUS (2008) but was considered redundant here.

affecting the grade of vulnerability for the worker. It is the essential safety net in a labour market that is not only discriminatory but also irregular in employment. 15.4 % of the non-agricultural workers are landless. Together with the sub-marginal farmers (having up to 0.4 hectare or one acre), they constitute three fourths of the non- agricultural unorganized workers. Thus, the reason to resort to non-farm work is the paucity of viable means of earning a livelihood through farming.

- Limited Educational Profile is another dominant feature within the unorganized sector. The NCEUS computed the average years of schooling for all workers in the unorganized sector to be 6.5 years. There is further a remarkable gender difference of 2-2.6 years in the average years of schooling for women compared to men. Self employed men workers in urban areas have mean years of schooling higher than that of the regular workers in unorganized sector, but still at least two years less than those in the organized sector. This indicates that among men in the urban unorganized sector, the self-employed unorganized workers are the most educated.

Lower level of education among unorganized workers creates vulnerability at two levels. Firstly, it denies access to “good jobs” in the organized sector; secondly, it confines workers to mostly casual manual jobs. This creates a structural divide where people are stuck on one side, unable to break the reinforcing circle of class, level of education, poverty and therefore inability to provide good education to their children.

For India, the majority of street food vendors have some primary education, although illiteracy is also not uncommon. According to fieldwork, the level of education seems to have an influence on the degree of sophistication a food vendor can achieve and therefore defining the income opportunities.

- Limitation occurring due to the socio-religious group or community, a worker comes from. There is no denying the fact that caste and class are predominant in Indian society, affecting one’s socio economic capacities. Socially backward castes and tribes have been neglected for decades, abiding at the bottom of the Indian social pyramid. Although there are provisions in the Constitution that allow for reservation and admission to higher education, many have to rely on the unorganized sector as their

sole recluse for work. Therefore it is not astounding that the majority of workers in the self employed unorganized sector come from schedule and backward castes (NCEUS 2008)

2.1.4 Street vendors policy 2006

Establishing the national urban street vendor's policy (NSVP) is a great feat of success for activists and civil society actors who were involved in the long struggle for rights of street vendors. Its formulation was a venture into new realms for central government policy makers.

After many long years of battle and increasing advocacy by NGO's like SEWA, NASVI, and Manushi; the international declaration of hawker rights in the Belagio declaration, the government of India came up with the National Policy on Street Vendors in 2004²⁰. Due to serious revisions necessary, the NCEUS came up with a revised and altered version, the National Street Vendors policy 2006.

The NSVP acknowledges that the current regulatory climate undermines the livelihoods of a growing number of street vendors. It considers that under prevailing circumstances, police and civic authorities harass over 10 million vendors considering them as illegal encroachers This violates the constitutional duty of the state towards this segment of its society, as it is their basic right to earn their livelihood²¹.

The NSVP presents street vending as a traditional Indian occupation that is beneficial and essential to society. It should protect street vending as a major poverty alleviation initiative.

The main recommendation in the report by the NCEUS (NCEUS 2008, 177) also entail the revised street vendors' policy as mentioned below.

²⁰ For a profound analysis and critique on the NSVP 2004 see Sundaram (2008)

²¹ Sodhan Singh vs NDMC 1989, a landmark judgement given by the supreme court recognizing the right to survive through street vending. The emphasis is made that only if regulated, pavements should be used to pursue your livelihood (Bhowmik 1)

- Provide, promote supportive environment for earning livelihood to urban street vendors
- Restriction of street vending in urban areas to only on the consent of owners
- 3 level monitoring mechanism: Town Vending Committee (TVC) ward level; CEP Municipal Level; Official at state level
 - * Constitution of TVC in each ward of all towns by municipal authorities.
 - * TVC to have greater participation of vendors; RWAs, Market and Trades Association to have no role.
 - * TVC to identify 3 zones- no restriction for hawking, hawking with certain restrictions, no vending zones.
 - * Hawking zones to be city specific.
 - * Regulate space based on space available, previous occupancy, lottery if applicants exceed space to be undertaken by TVC.
 - * Allocation against payment of fee as recommended by TVC.
 - * TVC to collect revenue to ensure prefixed rate only charged.
 - * Registration and issue of Identity card to street vendors by TVC.
 - * Registered street vendors given preference for new shops when licences for new ones issued.
 - * TVC to monitor, provide facilities..
 - * Dissemination of information on credit, linking of street vendors with micro credit agencies by TVC's.
 - * Maintenance of Hygiene and cleanliness by vendors themselves.
 - * Appropriate redress-al mechanism to be maintained by TVC.
 - * Municipal authority to implement decisions by hawkers.
- Amendment of Section 283 IPC and Section 34 Police Act to exempt street vendors from their purview with reasonable restrictions.
- Mechanism for eviction.
- Issue of notice prior to eviction- giving due date and time.
- Imposition of fine if space not cleared within due date.
- Confiscated goods may be obtained by payment of fine and within fixed durations.

- Give incentives to state governments and municipalities to tackle issue of street vendors.
- Formulation of action plan for various levels.
- Application of legislation regarding Social Security and Conditions of Work to address the issues pertaining to the livelihood needs of urban vendors.

Though the NSVP has come a long way in recognizing the contribution of street vendors and helping them to pursue their livelihood, it is indifferent to the plight of food vendors, especially vendors selling fresh cooked food. In this regard they have adopted the hygiene discourse (discussed in chapter 4.2).

2.1.5 Critique of the Street Vending Policy

As becomes apparent from the foregone, many positive amendments have been made to incorporate street vendors. There is a concise effort towards an integration of street vendors that is laudable, but at the same time, many problems persist.

Illustrated amply through the food ban (under the Prevention of Food Adulteration Act (PFA) 1955), there are numerous procedural problems connected in the implementation of laws. As acknowledged in the NCEUS report, the PFA Act by itself is not very complicated piece of legislation, the accompanying rules are. They lack transparency, creating room for exploitation. Food inspectors can act arbitrarily and the license Raj²² breeds corruption.

It does not address the need of the poor, who have neither enough capital nor the educational capacity to deal with setting up an enterprise. They continue to live in perpetual fear of eviction, and thus continue paying protection money to remain on the streets (NCEUS 2008, 177).

The number of laws and stakeholders involved (Municipal committee, Traffic Police, Resident Welfare Association, Market committees, Food

²² License Raj is a term used in India to describe the difficulties of obtaining a license and the corruption it leads to. Literarily it means the colonial rule of license.

inspectors to name few) impedes to further complications in proper implementation of noble policies like the Street vending Act 2006.

Authorities are sluggish in the demarcation of hawking and no hawking zones. Generally, the no hawking zones are demarcated, but the legal hawking zones have still to be delineated. This takes away the credibility of a ruling, in the eyes of the street vendor, who sees it as 'yet another senseless maltreatment' by the authorities. Indeed most vendors interviewed during fieldwork were oblivious to the real reasons behind their evictions and harassment.

A blanket ban like the ban on cooking food on the streets in Delhi, combined with the difficulty of acquiring a license, missing transparency of actual hawking and no hawking zones, lethargy in the systematic implementation of the street vendors act, brings very little benefit to the lives of street vendors. It forces many to live as encroachers, entangled in a vicious circle of degrading living conditions.

“Unless accompanied by suitable executive action, there is a big risk that judicial pronouncements restricting street vending will penalize the poor without affecting the systems that already restrict their livelihood operations while extracting ‘rents’ from them”. (Ibid, 178)

This is seen clearly in the case of Delhi where the ban on street food has merely increased the bribes collected and the ban on street hawking (which was pronounced until the hawking zones are demarcated), was like further punishing the victims while ignoring the culprit sluggish authorities (Kishwar 2001). In fact the report by NCEUS (2008, 178) admits that laws and regulations that have negative effect on the livelihood of the poor unorganized workers have increased over the recent past.

2.1.6 The question of upward mobility

The question of upward mobility is an essential one, since it partially explains the persistence of informal workers. Why do street vendors stay

in the city, that treats them harshly, if they can go back to the village where they are still poor but the conditions of living are not appalling.

They continue to reside in the urban area because even within the informal sector they manage to experience upward income mobility, and are able to reduce the intensity of poverty if not escape it.

Mitra (2003, 65), through his study on slum dwellers in Delhi, researches the question of upward mobility. Within his sample, he asks whether significant change with the occupational status of informal workers has taken place or not and what is the role of networks to achieve an upward mobility. This second question has importance for policy makers because if informal mechanisms enhance social welfare, it should not interfere as it might worsen living conditions instead of improving them. He was studying the period of a decade between entering the informal economy and the present occupation. The survey comes up with following result. The change from informal into formal employment is a rare and difficult one²³. However, within the informal sector the possibility of movement from low paid to better-paid jobs does exist.

In general, people consider self-employed food vendors (especially those with a permanent encroached place) at the upper level of informal employment job. . Among those who were in casual wage category, 62% had remained within the same category and 20% held better paid regular jobs. Interestingly among the self-employed, 20% had held formal better jobs and 50% formerly worse positions, while 30% had been in the same category.

Overall, there seems to be an upward shift in terms of employment, if regular salaried jobs are taken as the top ranking. In respect to the type of contacts and networks, it can be said that relatives and co villagers are the most important sources of information and employment facilitation.

²³ Although from his sample of slum dwellers, those who were working in well paid salary jobs, 51% had previously been casual wage employers and 25% were former self employment Yet Mitra (2003) emphasizes that the graduation theory, meaning the gradual absorption of informal workers into formal jobs does not enjoy empirical support. Especially if those rendered informal who had previously enjoyed formal jobs are taken into account.

Yet at a later stage, it is the personal effort that counts for having upward income mobility.

Mitra concludes that there is a substantive improvement in the status of personal wealth over time even if the worker stays within the unorganized sector. Intra occupational upward mobility in terms of income cannot be ruled out. For women, the scope of upward mobility is very limited within the unorganized sector. There is a the ubiquitous discrimination women face acquiring jobs within this sector. It is a big burden to shoulder household responsibility while looking for income possibilities

During personal fieldwork, it was noted that the belief in upward mobility keeps most street vendors going. Every one asked among the street food vendors had stories of other vendors to tell, who had managed the leap, either opening up a legal enterprise like a restaurant or just moving up the ladder from a mobile “out of the basket” vendor to a proper food stall owner.

2.1.7 The Question of Hygiene

Hygiene is a sensitive issue for the unorganized food sector, since shortcomings here, often serves as reason for the abolishment of street food enterprises. In fact, most affluent people consider the unorganized food sector unhygienic.

Vegetable and fruit vendors are subject to visual scrutiny, where a customer just chooses the produce himself. For the vendors cooking and selling street food, it is more difficult to prove their food is hygienic.

Hygiene becomes a relative issue that is a matter of individual definition. Though the cleanliness of a stall is considered a portent of the grade of hygiene, vendors cannot prove the quality of the material they use. Due to cheap price, many products used by them are not up-to standard.

General public opinion considers street food stalls as less hygienic than proper formal enterprises. The hygienic condition of the food offered is connected with the general surrounding. If a street is clean and well maintained, with dustbins and waste disposal systems, it becomes easier

for street food stalls to maintain higher levels of hygiene. On the other hand, if a street is filthy and kept in a dilapidated condition, malfunctioning sewerage and litter lying around, it has a negative influence on the food sold nearby.

Yet street food vendors have a stake in keeping the food sold, as hygienic as possible. They know their trade is entirely based on word of mouth and frequent customers, thus street vendors fear the loss of customers or mob violence²⁴, and therefore emphasize on reducing health risks.

There is an unquestioned belief that street food is unhygienic, while enterprises selling food are hygienic. Not much evidence exists to verify this notion. A study conducted in Kolkata and Pune showed that although street foods contain illegal additive colors, cheap oil and microbiological contamination, it was but the same scenario for organized food. In fact the Pune study showed that on an average more street vendors were serving hygienic food than organized food enterprises (te Lintelo 2009, 67).

Hygiene, no doubt an essential issue, is more often than not used as an argument selectively targeting the unorganized food sector. Chapter 4.2 deals with the issue of hygiene as an instrument of spatial politics. While we should lay emphasis on ensuring proper hygiene through training and education, we actually pursue it negligently through inspection and raids, without tangible results. Breaking and banning food stalls out of hygienic reasons does not create hygienic conditions. We can achieve it through concise efforts in education and involving street vendors. Only hygienic awareness that has been internalized and understood by the people will slowly permeate into society. Hygiene that is enforced through punitive measures will perpetually require punitive measures to maintain it.

²⁴ A phenomenon very common in India is that agitated masses beat up the perceived culprit of some wrong. I.e if people think that a food vendor used contaminated ingredients they use direct violence to convey their anger.

The question of hygiene makes sense when lets say 90 % of our living conditions are hygienic and 10% is contaminated or unhygienic. Here the 10% aberrant conditions can be controlled, changed and slowly assimilated into the hygienic sphere. The scenario is very different when it is the other way round, when the majority of living conditions are unhygienic. If the water people drink, the prevailing sanitary conditions and the general condition of their dwelling is not conducive for a hygienic environment what value does it have to pursue hygiene in food through punitive measures? Only if we raise the general conditions of life to a standard that allows for hygiene, can the question be raised legitimately.

2.1.8 The issue of Urban space

Scientific discourses that dwell with the appropriation of space by the resourceful classes; the production of gentrified space; the politics of space allocation are not dealt explicitly in this work²⁵. Nevertheless, space is essentially connected with the struggle of street vendors, as it is the space they need to pursue their livelihood.

We look upon hawkers and vendors as illegal encroachers on 'public space', generally understood as the taxpayer's space, increasingly appropriated by the affluent classes.

The issue of urban space and planning is a segment, of government machinery under whose responsibility the vending activities fall. Most town planning committees are ignorant towards hawkers²⁶, not providing space for their activity and not allowing for mixed land uses (like natural markets in residential areas for example). Town planning seems to be very biased towards vehicle owners and therefore providing parking spaces and evicting hawkers as encroachers.

"..... even a cursory look at the city's streets and footpaths shows that parked, privately-owned cars are by far the city's greatest encroachers of public space, and the greatest obstruction to the movement of pedestrians" (Anjaria 2006, 2142)

²⁵ For further reference see Baviskar 2003, te Lintelo 2009 and Jacobs 1961

²⁶ With the exceptin of Imphal

Yet for the self-nominated promoter of world cities, like the RWA's (Resident Welfare Association) and TPC (Town Planning Committee) these facts are irrelevant (Chatterjee 2008).

The above mentioned special contestation has created opportunity for corrupt officials, policemen and local musclemen to earn protection money. To continue to operate, the hawkers have to resort to illegal gratification of the demands of these vested interest groups. Yet all of this fails to ensure that corrupt officials, police officers and local musclemen evicting the hawkers or confiscating their goods.

As the adversaries blame street vendors for taking up space that should be used differently, supporting NGO's and activists believe that vendors are entitled to a "right to existential space" (SEWA 1998). Space is without doubt the most contested commodity in urban areas, especially cities like Delhi, with their huge and growing population. Leaning on the term environmental space, which defines the space required by an individual to cover his needs, invariably being bigger for rich than for poor, the term existential space can be used. Existential space is the physical space required by a person to follow economic activities in order to survive; again existential space of affluent citizens is bigger and encroaches on the existential space of the poor. The poor bereft of existential space, that is not affordable for them, encroach on public space for their survival needs. As Renana Jhabvala (2000) points out

"It is no one's case that street vendors may sit wherever they like, at all places all over the city. Rather that if we plan for and accommodate them in the city spaces, they will not obstruct other essential functions such as traffic flows. The reason that vendors now seem such a nuisance is that there is no place for them, and so any place they occupy belongs to some other function. It is therefore necessary to evolve both national and state policies on street vendors that could feed into urban plans and schemes. Intermediary groups

have tried to mainstream this issue and ensure that every urban plan provides space for street vending activities”.

This ‘right to existential space’ in practical application is often in defiance of another essential concept, namely that of natural markets. The ‘right to existential space’ implements through space allocation, choosing a space that offers least competition with other functions or activities, therefore avoids conflict of interests. Yet natural markets are usually in places with multiple functions and external competition, so a conflict of interests is inevitable. For example, bus terminals or railway stations, though ideal natural markets for food vendors, it is especially here that they are banned. Their presence seems to obstruct other functions, which are prioritized. It also appears to infringe Supreme Court jurisprudence declaring that shopkeeper’s livelihoods also have a right to be protected against encroaching vendors (te Lintelo 2010). This shows that there is a need to rethink space allocation, address the conflict of interests instead of avoidance.

As mentioned by Jane Jacobs (1961) street and sidewalks should be understood for how they function in reality and not for how they should function in theory. She argues that contrary to popular belief, it is those streets that seem the most chaotic - for instance, with children playing, old people sitting around, and street food vendors serving food, rickshaw drivers waiting for customers- that are in fact the most functional, safest and livable urban spaces. She mentions that food vendors whose continuous daily street presence makes the street safe, act as “eyes on the street”. Due to their familiarity with the happenings of the street, they are the first to notice if something goes wrong and can provide help. There are two social functions of streets: the instrumental function enabling movement of public and goods, and the expressive function, which includes their use for casual communication, recreation, conversation, entertainment or ritual processions. Thus, connectivity is just one of the functions of street that is given prime importance. In a

capitalist state connectivity with other parts and the transport of goods and people supersedes any other functions. Yet, especially for India, streets are institutions for sociability, sources of entertainment and an extension of living spaces (Dalwadi 2010).

That spaces are actually fulfilling multiple functions is one such notion that one can see all over Indian cities and yet it is not recognized, documented or taken into consideration. Space allocations by the town planning committee often ignore the informal functions of that space and thus add to the conflict.

Many places in Delhi fulfill up-to 3 or 4 different functions in the same physical space, in the morning harboring the breakfast seller, who is replaced by the cloth vendor, who again makes place for the vendor selling dinner. Thus, the same space contributes to the livelihood of three different people. This surmises that street vending (food or not food) should be seen, as one of the essential functions of the street.

Space is a matter of allocation and priority, as intermediaries for street vendors argue. For the last 6 decades of India urban planning have ignored, the natural propensity of vendors on streets, and missed including them in their Plan. The last two decades are witnessing a shift in priority towards the vehicular class. We ought to discuss these issues before the brunt of failed planning is unleashed on the vendors.

Unfortunately, the monopoly for both these issues lies entirely in the hand of the affluent class and its bureaucratic apparatus, who will continue to pursue their idea of a city in terms of allocation, and prioritize cars over people (Chatterjee 2008).

2.2 Shining India and the arrival of corporate capital

“Development promises economic equality for the distant future; what it does now, after more than forty years, is produce devastating inequalities. “ (Lummis 1997, 61)

The year the shining India²⁷ campaign started, and it marked a decade of trade liberalization and free market policies, high growth rate and increase in import export. Yet, as the party promoting the campaign bitterly realized, it had erred in reading the temperature of the country, thus losing the election.

Many people felt ridiculed through the campaign, their dire poverty ignored in euphemisms and thus they voted in defiance. There is no denying the fact that some parts of India are shining, but it has to be accepted that many are still waiting for basic illumination.

The tragedy is that the effervescent parts of shining India share the same physical reality than the non-shining bits, existing next to each other intrinsically related and yet apart. As T. Tejpal coined it in a public speech, modern Delhi has conditions found in Sub Saharan Africa just existing next to the high profile life style of Manhattan²⁸.

The last 20 years have brought a new type of metabolism to India. A new wave of flows- commodities, capital, information - generally termed globalization²⁹ , have changed the socio economic structure of the country profoundly.

Capitalist industrial growth is the leading axiom and no political party, left or right, is in any position to question the dominant paradigm of economic growth. The political debates focus on the quantity, the method or the

²⁷ Shining India was the campaign slogan of the ruling BJP for the elections of 2004. It has since then become a mocking synonym for all that is not functioning in India. Initial intend was to portray the achievements that had been reached yet it ignored the shortfalls that were still existing in abandon.

²⁸ T. Tejpal, chief editor Tehelka magazin, at the IMRC (Indian Muslims Relief and Charity) Santa Clara December 1 2008.

²⁹ Globalization, in this thesis is used in its economic sense, the increasing influence of global market economies on local economies ,affecting the price of food, energy and manufactured goods; and in its cultural sense meaning the impact created on local culture by a new global (consumerist) culture . Globalization in India is connected with market liberalization and the structural adjustment programs.

measures required to achieve growth, never doubting the concept *per se*³⁰.

Three major changes that have happened in post Liberalization India are:

1. Dismantling of the license system
2. Greater entry of foreign capital and goods
3. Opening up of sectors to private capital.

Interestingly all three above-mentioned changes have had an impact on the realm of street food vendors, albeit in direct and indirect ways. The Dismantling of the license system, gives easy access to large companies entering the Market, yet it does not cover the street food vendors³¹.

Greater entry of foreign capital and goods; and the opening up of sectors to private life, inevitably, seems to cause drastic changes within society, that are hostile towards the street food vendors. It is the formation of a corporate capitalist class, now more dominant than the previously powerful landed elite. Politicians that are wooing for the assent of capitalists to attract investment in their own state, which gets translated into votes later. The emergence of a urban middle class that is leading and operating, both socially and ideologically, the autonomous interventionist activities of the developmental state. And not to forget the expanding informal sector (and with it the number of urban poor) caused by the continued effects of primitive accumulation.

Liberalization, some say, has increased the disparity between the rich and the poor. It is an undisputed fact that the whole thrust of the economy caters to the middle and higher income groups that comprise 23% of the population and whose numbers amount to 225 million. As big this number may be, it is still in a minority. Despite high growth, more than three fourths of Indians are poor and

³⁰ 'Operation Sunshine', that evicted over 100 000 street vendors in Kolkatta was done under a communist government. BJP and the Congress, though in opposition to each other, adhere to the neoliberal notions of economic development. Guha (2008, 707) notes that intriguingly the big parties tend to oppose globalization referring to self reliance and sovereignty while in opposition and yet enforce neo liberal policies while in power.

³¹ Further explanations become evident in chapter 4

vulnerable with a level of consumption not more than twice the official poverty line (Sengupta et. al. 2008).

“There is considerable disparity in the consumption expenditure of the poor and vulnerable with that of the middle and high income group and it has been worsening over the years. What is disturbing is the trend that shows a slower rate of growth of consumption of the poor and vulnerable with a smaller average per capita consumption compared to the middle and high-income group with a much higher average consumption that has been growing much faster. This is a clear manifestation of the increasing disparity between the haves and have-nots with different consumption baskets.(Sengupta et. Al. 2008)

This disparity is sometimes termed as the two India, shining and suffering India.

2.2.1 State as a key actor in the process of globalisation

“In particular, it seeks to be a sustained interrogation of the now commonplace notion that economic ‘liberalisation’ means that the economy is released from political control. If the detailed study of India’s economy reveals one thing clearly than another, it is that ‘liberalisation’ means a change in the character of this control, not a release from it. This change owes much, paradoxically, to historical continuities in India’s social structures of accumulation. It is a change that is not as self-evidently beneficial as those who have unleashed liberalisation would have us believe” (Harriss-White 2004)

‘Operation Sunshine’ or the ban on street food in Delhi, exemplifies a deep and ongoing conflict about the direction, purpose, and ultimately about winners and losers of restructuring Indian cities (te Lintelo 2009). Te Lintelo further posits that the state is a key actor in the process of globalization, “as a locus of contestation, and by exercising power in the

development and management of public space". The state decides the priorities, selling public land to the private sector, constructs new and wide roads, parking spaces and flyovers catering to the resourceful elite but at the same time it demolishes slums, removes street vendors and bans begging³².

The politics of urban restructuring are associated with the emergence of a growing and disproportionately dominant middle class.

"In a booming economy, middle-class identities are produced through consumption practices and life styles, reflecting global commodities and preferences" (Fernandes 2004).

Their imagination fed by the urban media and constant referencing of international cities like Tokyo, London, Singapore and Shanghai, the middle class's desire for modernism is crucial in creating these exclusive policies (Ibid.).

The private sector creates consumer's appetites, and these mold development according to the requirements and buoyant purchasing power of the middle classes (de Lintelo 2010). Cities are refurbished around middle- and upper-class values that emphasize cleanliness, purity, order, aesthetics, leisure, (food) safety and health (Baviskar 2003). By promoting a sanitized middle-class vision of urban cities and uniting their interest with the public interest, the state actively co-produces a middle-class identity and thus reshapes the city to suit it (Fernandes 2004).

2.2.2 Corporate capital and non corporate capital

Chatterjee (2009) makes an essential distinction between two forms of capital, that can also be used to define the difference between informal and formal, namely the non-corporate capital and the corporate capital. It is not as if informal sector is alienated from market structures. Its capital also behaves similar to corporate capital in terms of investment and

³² In preparation of the Commonwealth Games 2010 in Delhi many slums have been demolished, and there is a ban on begging and street food cooking .

returns. The key difference is that it provides livelihood and does not strive for profit. Corporate capital strives for profit and further accumulation, while non-corporate capital tries to fulfill livelihood needs.

His concept of two variant economic logics will be used for this thesis thus it becomes necessary to elucidate it.

“The integration with the market has meant that large sections of what used to be called the subsistence economy, which was once the classic description of small peasant agriculture, have now come fully under the sway of capital. This is a key development that must crucially affect our understanding of peasant society in India today. There is now a degree of connectedness between peasant cultivation, trade and credit networks in agricultural commodities, transport networks, petty manufacturing and services in rural markets and small towns, etc, that makes it necessary for us to categorize all of them as part of a single, but stratified, complex. A common description of this is the unorganized or informal sector. Usually, a unit belonging to the informal sector is identified in terms of the small size of the enterprise, the small number of laborers employed, or the relatively unregulated nature of the business.” (Chatterjee 2008)

He further continues to make a central distinction between corporate capital and non-corporate capital. „The fundamental logic that underlies the operations of corporate capital is further accumulation of capital, usually signified by the maximization of profit. For non-corporate capital, while profit is relevant , it is dominated by another logic – that of providing the livelihood needs of those working in the units. This difference is crucial for understanding the so-called informal economy” (Ibid)

In other words, non-corporate capital works predominantly for its own survival while corporate capital is not concerned with its survival and therefore focuses on further accumulation of profit.

As Tinker argues for the case of street food vendors

“Vendors would benefit from improved registration requirements and procedures; an array of credit programs could help them both survive and improve their enterprises. New technologies could help producer vendors both improve their foods and increase their volume. But with all these prescriptions for small entrepreneurs fulfilled, most street foods vendor’s operations would probably still not satisfy the economists standard of growth” (Tinker 1997, 205)

There are fundamentally different values guiding this economic activity: family over individual, cooperation over competition, altruism over selfishness (Ibid.)

An example from the fieldwork should further prove the point. Sewa nagar market, which serves mostly low income population of south Delhi, hosts numerous street food vendors, selling food at very cheap rates. The number of vendors allowed to work per street is regulated informally by the vendors themselves³³ and accommodation of additional vendor is allowed as soon as the subsistence minimum of the existing one’s is covered. This defies natural accumulation logic, which would keep the number of competitors a minimum, in order to maximize profit. The answer given, as to why this system was followed, is *“so that all can earn a minimum, instead of few earning a lot”*.

This concisely explains the logic of non-corporate capital³⁴.

The entrance of corporate retail poses new challenges to street food vendors (especially the vegetable and fruit vendors) who cannot compete with the giants and their price cutting policies³⁵.

³³ Officially they are all illegal due to the ban on street cooking in Delhi, see chapter 4.2

³⁴ This does not mean that non corporate capital does not strive for profit, because it does so very much. Yet it implies that the profit accumulation logic is not the sole axiom. Informal networks are also based on non monetary exchange of goods and services, which adds to the social capital required to toil on the streets. So by adjusting more vendors to also make a living, favors are granted or returned.

³⁵ See chapter 4.1

Chapter 3: Informal Economy: The Bane of Development

“The informal economy is not a clearly defined sector or set of sectors. Neither is the informal economy a fixed set of activities undertaken solely for survival. Instead, the shape of the informal economy changes according to the opportunities created and constraints imposed by the formal economy.” (Sassen 1994, 2292)

There are many inconsistencies and contradictions within the study of the informal sector, either through all the existing synonyms or through the varied definitions used. This chapter intends to offer a comprehensive view on the informal economy or the unorganized sector. The focus of this thesis is towards the self-employed informal workers, street food vendors, nonetheless for a profound understanding on the workings of the informal sector it is imperative to commence with a theoretical understanding on the origin of the term, its evolution over the last decades, its inner diversity and its present avatar. The story of the informal sector mirrors revealingly prevailing schools of development thought.

3.1 One with many names

The term Informal economy generally awakes a myriad of notions, the most common ones will be survival and struggle, slums and illegality, or poverty and underemployment.

Many definitions exist as synonym for the term informal sector: Informal economy, economy of the poor, secteur non-structure, second economy, gray economy, unregulated economy, shadow economy and subsistence economy just to name the most prominent ones in usage³⁶.

³⁶ Terms like underground economy, or the Indian equivalent black market, suggest the illegal and semi-legal side of the informal economy which consists of prostitution, drug dealing, forgery etc.

All these terms stand for different notions of the same phenomena, the existence of economic activities outside the realm of state control. This automatically implies that there is no regulated relation of capital and labour, thus no social protection or rights.

The term unorganized sector refers to the same, but more common in usage within the Indian context³⁷. It was introduced by Ornati in 1955 when he divided Indian industrial employment in "organized" vs. the "unorganized" labour, where the unorganized labour rights were not covered by the then prevailing factories act, that guaranteed some minimum rights to workers (Ornati 1955, 64)³⁸. The term was soon after adapted by the Indian labour commission, but with a different nuance attached to the word "unorganized". They included non-industrial labour and unprotected work in cities (Breman, 1995, 3).

The term, as will be used in this thesis, shall comprise only activities that are, not per se, illegal. "informal" or "unorganized" stands for lacking official consent and rules, thus "informal economy" implies the non criminal production of goods and services that uses unorganized workers at wages fixed in the market without state intervention. "Informal sector"³⁹ consists not only of the informal economy, but also nestles all the social interactions and exchange mechanism that enable the informal economy, it includes the required space for living and the social networks necessary for survival.

Despite its heterogeneity, those we can group those who work in the informal economy into some basic categories according to their employment.

³⁷ Although it is misleading, because the sector it refers to is highly organized, it will be used due to its popularity within the Indian discourse on informality, and as a critique to itself. For Baviskar (2003, 10) there is nothing informal about the systematic exploitation that they face. He argues that the term unorganized sector is much better than informal, because "it is that which defines their conditions of work and limits the possibility of collective resistance and transformation".

³⁹ Some scholars denounce the term sector because "the formal and informal economies are so interlinked that it is misleading to think of two distinct sectors of the economy." (Chen & Jhabvala 2001, 4)

Informal Employer	Self Employed	Wage Workers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Owner of informal enterprises • Operators of informal enterprises 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Own account workers • Heads of family businesses • Unpaid family workers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees of informal enterprises • Casual workers without a fixed employer • Home workers (also industrial outworkers) • Domestic workers (servants) • Temporary and part-time workers • Unregistered workers

Informal incomes globally tend to decline as one moves through following categories: from self-employed to informal and casual waged worker to industrial outworker (Sassen 1994, 2292).

The informal economy, whichever definition is adapted, has essentially two components: non-wage employment (so-called independent workers) and wage employment (dependent workers)⁴⁰. The essential distinction to be made is whether policies and regulations on informal sector are meant for the self employed or the wage workers, since effects can be quite contrary, harming one while helping the other and vice versa.

This distinction becomes important in measuring state policies biased towards removing self-employed informal workers and yet promoting informal wage work.

3.2 A History of Informality

If you live in a developing nation than the informal economy (which mostly is much bigger than the formal economy) seems more natural compared to the formal economy. In fact as Altvater (2002, 7) laments,

⁴⁰ The boundary within is porous and workers can be categorized into several more categories simplification suffices here.

“Life under the conditions of insecurity has been more common than a life in regulated environs of society, politics, private and public spheres”

Keith Hardt (Hardt 1973) introduced the term during his fieldwork on markets in Ghana. Looking at a poor suburb in Accra he pointed out various occupations followed by the unemployed people living there. He observed that there is a parallel and much bigger economy happening in the streets that follows its own dynamic⁴¹, but helps people to make ends meet. Many rural migrants were working in the *Bazaar*, selling daily essentials or hiring their services as cheap laborers. The activities were undertaken without legal contracts or formal agreements like licenses, rendering the people as unprotected laborers. Due to an absence of customary categories, to describe the dichotomy of a developing nation urban labour market, he discerned it as the informal sector, existing parallel to the formal sector, and providing livelihood to people where the state failed. This led to the coining of the term informal sector, as opposed to the organized or formal sector, where employees have legal agreements and some sort of social security.

He differentiated an employment with proper wage contracts in the modern business or government sector, from the independent autonomous forms of employment that lack security and access to resources. The second category was further divided into unregulated activities and illegal occupations. Unregulated activities comprised of trade (street vendors), production (crafts and art) and service activities (coiffeur, tailor, shoemaker etc) (Stacher 1997, 154), while illegal activities were criminal activities.

Subsequently the term was taken by the ILO (International Labour Organization) and then following suit by most other scholars of development. While Hardt referred to the whole economy of marginalized people including legal and illegal activities, the ILO confined it to legal

⁴¹ The concept of the “informal sector” did not originate from Hardt and the ILO Kenya mission. African researchers, from the institute of development studies Nairobi, had been studying the sector prior to the ILO mission and the Hardt study (Chen et al 2001), yet it is Hardt attributed with coining the term.

unregulated activities, mainly small entrepreneurial activities. Their criteria for categorization was as follows : the use of work intensive technology, non-bureaucratic approach, no formal education required, little capital needed to start, using local resources, lacking any state regulation or unions and a variant spectrum of enterprises (Ibid).

According to the prevalent notions of development in that period, the authors believed that the informal economy was a result of underdevelopment. In lieu there of, they commented that primitive work-intensive segment that has an inherent potential for development. However, the same will become redundant on the long run. This belief in the "graduation theory" that informal sector will vanish or be absorbed by the formal sector, although refuted by most scholars hitherto, proved to be very resilient⁴².

There are various, historically important, schools of thought discussing the nascence of informal economy, seeking to explain the origin of this specific form of work and the essential function these activities hold for the economy in general. They are internally divided, and lack concordance but can be summed up to provide an overview. It is necessary to understand their basic premises, since residues are still to be found on many levels, be it politics or public belief.

They provide a picture of various myths of development believed during different times, and so a review of the various historical perceptions on informality is a jaunt into bygone fallacies in development studies.

3.2.1 The concepts of modernisation and dependency theory

The reigning development theory post World War II is referred to as modernization theory, because of its axiomatic belief in catch up development and in the inevitable onset of modernity, given that certain

⁴² As noticed during field work in Delhi, many people talk about the temporality of informal sector and are staunch believers that it will vanish with modernity.

economic models are followed⁴³. Modernization theory saw the reasons for underdevelopment lying within the country, harbored in its internal institutions (Komlosy et al 1997, 13). A certain set of market interventions would emancipate the impeding structures and the country could “take off” into inevitable modernity.

Soon after Hardt and the ILO coined the phenomena of informal economy, developmental economists started theorizing about it. Most believed that the traditional economy will be substituted by a modern capitalist economy offering proper employment and social security.

A central problem of underdeveloped countries was perceived to be the economic and social duality that existed within them. The formal sector is defined as the one that is developed, modern, and which offers good employment, generating social security, whereas informal is that which is lagging behind, traditional, subsistence based, low income generating, full of perpetual insecurity and an inherent low productivity. The formal sector is reputed as occupied by employed and employing people, industrialists and entrepreneurs, traders and merchants, lawyers and doctors, engineers and so on. The informal mainly houses the working class, ranging from beggars, servants, factory workers, wage labourer, own account workers and many more.

Modernization theorists saw no connection between these two sectors, which seemed to exist parallel but not interconnected⁴⁴. This parallel existence, often termed dual economy, was perceived as the main impediment for development, sometimes even as a cause for underdevelopment.

A possible therapy would be to gradually pushback traditional modes and institutions, substituting them with formal ones. The remedy required for such a treatment was integration into the international division of labour and the capitalist system. What followed was a monetarization of different

⁴³ This belief was strengthened due to the success stories of rebuilding post war Japan and Europe.

⁴⁴ Modernists showed a similar amnesia towards including colonialism or slavery in their analysis of the whole “under developed” world, which seemed to them, independent of the developed world.

sectors, introduction of modern technologies, and substitution of traditional institutions by modern ones and application of modern organisational methods (Komlosy et al. 1997, 14).

Several decades of development based on these premises didn't yield the expected results; to the contrary, they have led towards strengthening and widening of the informal sector.

In strong opposition to the modernization theory, was the dependency theory. For them dependency was a central variable defining underdevelopment. The dependency of "third world" countries from the developed nations was responsible for underdevelopment. They also believed in the dual concept of two separately existing sectors, but the reason was seen in the unjust integration into a hierarchical international economic system. The discrepancy of the two sectors, rich and poor, formal and informal, is not a transient phenomena. On the contrary, it is a symptom showing the dependency of one from the other. Thus promoting modern development would just engrave the problem and reinforce existing "structural heterogeneity" (Ibid).

The only real way out was a global change in the economic system, redeeming oneself from capitalist exploitation. Dependency theory was not concerned with the functional role binding the two sectors (like keeping wages low for the formal sector), but more towards the global relationships between developed and underdeveloped nations that caused this divide

This approach, though in a diluted form, went into the official policies of developing countries, even the ILO gradually recognised the futility of modernisation theory (Bangasser 2000,4). In its Kenya Mission to study employment opportunities for poor, the ILO recognised the Informal sector for its social and economic potential, its inherent labour absorption capacity and its function as a driving motor for entrepreneurship. Though it was still seen as a primitive and unproductive sector it was recommended to integrate it into official economic strategies (ILO 1972).

In other words the ILO recommended states not to ignore this sector, as the formal sector was still incapable of absorbing all the labour. Yet this

effort was limited in its scope and understanding (Bangasser 2000,4). Slowly and gradually the informal should become formal, was the new belief, instead of assuming as hitherto that the informal sector would vanish and dissolve through forceful modernisation (Komlosy et al. 1997, 15).

What is remarkable is that already then states were encouraged to further research the informal economy, make credit available, introduce a licensing system, and discouraged to attack squatter communities (Bangasser 2000,S2-6). Topics that still hold relevance today⁴⁵.

The Informal sector was seen as an outcome of the reigning disproportion between new migration⁴⁶ into cities, generating a large pool of labour and the inability of formal economy to absorb it. Poor people are forced to go into informal work arrangements in order to survive.

Employment in the formal economy was determined through the logic of capital accumulation and the mechanisms of the market while in the informal economy it was determined on the logic of survival and reproduction. These were the two distinguishing modes of production defining both economies. They presumed that informal workforce belongs to a separate market than the formal workforce (PREALC 1990, 7-9).

This approach does not address issues raised by dependency theory regarding the unequal nature of exchange between the developing and the developed countries, furthermore it forgets to investigate relations between the formal and the informal economy. It still regards informality as a concomitant phenomenon in the transition from a rural-agricultural economy to a urban-industrialised economy (Komlosy et al 1997, 16)

3.2.2 Worldsystem theory and structuralist view of the informal sector

History proved modernization theory wrong, wide of the mark, not only was the informal sector not shrinking it was growing and expanding, even

⁴⁵ The most influential concept on the politics of employment generation was the PREALC (*programa de empleo para America Latina y el Caribe*) developed by the ILO for Latin America. It contained essential debates on common development theory and dependency theory which had a high emulation in many other developing countries (Ibid S 6-10).

⁴⁶ New migrants created by the effects of primitive accumulation (explained later)

in hitherto unknown spaces. Leaning on the dependency theory, world system theory challenges the neoliberal concept of development thoroughly. The well being of a minority of world population (the global north) was only possible due to the marginalization of the majority. The majority living in the developing world were forced to leave their subsistence lifestyles⁴⁷ and enter the capitalist system at the lowest level of hierarchy.

Furthermore the structuralism point of view, shifts attention to the indwelling mechanism of exploitation that are imminent in every aspect of the informal sector. This is Premised on the assumption, that there is an economic coherence between present day labour conditions or local economic situations and the global economic mechanisms that are not visible directly.

In this perspective, there is an axiomatic structure of exploitation that causes unfair and asymmetric working conditions, where the accumulator is earning on the toil of the exploited⁴⁸. The informal economy is a product, a result and an element of unequal development. It is therefore not to be seen as an independent sector of economic activity worth promoting and nor is it the residue of pre capitalist time that will vanish eventually. It is an ever-evolving system of exploitation that resurfaces in different guises at different places, and with different structures.

3.2.3 The neoliberal concept of informality

The radical approach of the neoliberal concept turned around conventional conceptions and claims about underdevelopment. Free and unobstructed trade, without state meddling was the way to attain development⁴⁹.

⁴⁷ This is still an ongoing process, also referred to as the "effects of primitive accumulation" .

⁴⁸ This is referred to as "structural violence against the poor" in chapter 6, it exists between the global north and the global south as well as within a nation state, in the form of informal and formal economy

⁴⁹ For a detailed discussion on neo liberal development theory refer to Raffer & Singer (2002)

The same applies to informal economy; it is not a consequence of marginality and poverty but underdevelopment. Born out of over-regulation, unnecessary bureaucracy and state interference. Informal economy originates as a response to the legal system prevailing in most developing nations⁵⁰. It is nothing negative and does not need to be abolished. The aim was complete deregulation and freedom to individual entrepreneurship.

In this context, a study done by Hernando de Soto gained international fame. He calls the prevailing economies in developing and developed countries as mercantilist with many unnecessary legal hassles to pursue business. This system would grant privilege to firms in the modern formal sector.

De Soto recommends simplifying state regulations, decentralizing them and eventually disposing them. This is the only way “informals” can evolve their inherent potential and evade poverty (De Soto 1992, 18-23, 43-50).

De Soto’s work became an immediate success among neoliberal economists, international actors and NGO’s.

De Soto has to be credited for recognizing informal workers as innovative small entrepreneurs and looking at the informal sector as a way to promote development⁵¹.

Neoliberals and De Soto miss to see the inherent link between formal and informal sector. Industrial informal workers are not entrepreneurs but rather slaves. This concept was more used to dismantle the formal economy instead of dismantling the informal economy. The argument of dismounting “monopolistic privileges” was used to attack vested rights, social rights and wage guarantees achieved by worker unions globally.

3.2.4 Anthropological concepts

Anthropological approach looks at the Informal sector from a different perspective. Informal sector was the realm of the traditional, where pre modernism was nestled. Its focus was more towards the inner forms of

⁵⁰ Markets as the supreme self regulating power stand at the centre of neo liberal theories

⁵¹ The importance of de Soto’s work will be discussed subsequently

self-organisation, the social networks and social relationships, informal (non-monetary) exchange mechanisms etc. They inquired into the mechanisms that run the informal sector. How does it comply or deviate from a lifestyle in the formal sector.

Most anthropological research has the premise that social contacts are responsible for the creation and functioning of the informal sector. Social networks compensate the absence of government regulation and lack of any social security⁵².

“The interconnectedness of social and economic forces leads us to a paradox. Informality seems to be in accordance with pure market dynamics without outer interference, but on the other hand due to its social embeddedness it is organised to, quite an extent, on a non market basis” (Komlosy et al. 1997, 18) ⁵³

Larissa Lomnitz says that survival of slum dwellers and other informal sector dwellers is given through a social form of organisation in which economic and social security is achieved through diverse informal exchange mechanisms. For example allotment of space for business, credit to acquire resources, and shelter to stay are all achieved informally. Social relationships are the biggest advantage in competition between formal and informal shops (Lomnitz 1977).

It was the anthropological approach of “survival strategies”⁵⁴ that highlighted the subsistence basis of informal work. The idea of informal economy as a safety net for disenfranchised, those who could not make it otherwise.

⁵² The concept of state social security, as understood in the West, is alien to India. Here caste and family relationships ensure some minimum security.

⁵³ This implies to the social capital (networks and informal forms of exchange) necessary to survive within it.

⁵⁴ It surmises that the poor don't sit in idleness accepting their fate but are active in ensuring their survival.

3.3 The annihilator or promoter of poverty

Whether the informal economy has the potential to overcome economic problems or not is a pertinent question, though with ambiguous response among development scholars. The opinions vary among them, but can be assembled to two different groups.

The first, being influenced by neoliberal notions, believe in complete deregulation of national economy, removing all constraining norms and allowing free access to market for everyone. We can reach development through an complete informal approach. This belief has not yet been proven true. Many deregulatory initiatives have had the adverse effect, namely helping already established classes on the cost of poor and powerless informal workers (Rajagopal 2002). Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that regulation, of a legal sort, has added substantially to the difficulties faced by the self-employed informal workers, as it enables corruption and exploitation through police and municipality.

The second group sets more hope on the growth potential of the informal economy. They follow a strategy of promoting the dynamic segments of this sector and visioning the gradual integration into formal conditions. The informal economy is seen as a solution to eradicate poverty and generate employment. In the end it can be used even for national economic growth. Recommended measures consist of aid for resources, micro credit programs, proper vocational training etc. In short the informal economy is believed to have not only a potential that can disburden a strained national economy, but also contain lessons which can help the formal economy deal with the pressures of development.

3.4 Renaissance of the informal economy in industrialized countries

The Informal economy is not anymore (if it ever was) a sole "third world" phenomena, but has spread deep into the realms of industrialized developed nations. Proponents of Structuralism would argue that it was always a part of developed nations but now it can be encountered even

within the geographical boundaries of the global north shedding a new light on the structure and functioning of informality.

The existence of unpaid and unregulated work in countries like Japan or the tiger states proves that export oriented industrialisation, economic growth and state supervision does not stop the expansion of the informal sector (Parnreiter 1997).

Looking at Vienna, capital of Austria, I have encountered informal work conditions in many guises. Even though Austria belongs to one of the richest countries in the world, one can find informality in the newspaper delivery system that uses illegal migrants from South Asia, in the rose selling business harbouring Egyptians, and so on. In every kitchen or hospital there will be cleaning personnel from Eastern Europe, and polish labourers run nearly all construction sites. The same scenario persists in most developed European nations.

This could lead us to the misconception that immigration causes informality. Migrants surely seize every employment opportunity but they are not the ones creating the opportunity. To the contrary, it is most notably the opportunities that pull migration, and these are a "structured outcome of the composition of advanced economies" (Sassen 1994, 2289).

If conditions in the economy are pivotal to the creation of informal sector, as Sassen argues, policy makers should stop treating it like an anomaly, and rather approach it as a necessary outgrowth of advanced capitalism.

Looking historically at the relationship between capital and labour, informality was not the exception but the rule. The structuralist argumentation says informal economy is an integral part of the capitalist working. It was only after the first crisis of capitalism that worker unions achieved some kind of compromise between capital and labour. The welfare state was this compromise, it made the capitalist enterprise share some of their accumulated wealth with the workers, who received wages higher than the one imminently required for reproduction, having better working hours and some form of social security (Ibid).

This system did not last for long- its backlash was inevitable. The surge for higher profits left little space for productivity gains, which was starting to translate itself into slow growth. Furthermore, the emergence of new competition, mainly by Southeast Asian economies, made regulated work conditions look like a hindrance for growth, and profit.

States and enterprises reorganised their production system and reconfigured prevailing work-conditions, using trans-national production, supply and marketing structures. Existing capacities were reduced and substituted by new production sites offering tax exemption, less stringent labour laws and lenient environmental laws, mostly in developing countries. Thus, a new wave of deregulation started even in the industrialised countries (Parnreiter 1997, 206)⁵⁵.

As Parnreiter poignantly puts it, informalization in industrialised countries serves as an *Ersatz* for outsourcing capital or labour intensive productions into countries of the periphery (Ibid., 206).

Once an informal system exists, even those firms that are not dependent on it to survive will utilise it, in order to increase the profit margin and enhance flexibility.⁵⁶

3.4.1 Persistence and expansion of the informal economy

In his classic paper on a theoretical model of economic development, W. Arthur Lewis (1954) assumed that there is an unlimited supply of labour in most developing countries and eventually, the ever-expanding modern industrial sector would observe this pool. This belief was accepted widely in economic circles back then, but history proved it wrong, since informality exists now more than ever before (Chen & jhabvala 2001, 4).

The recent expansion of informal economy, in developing as well as developed countries, can not be blamed entirely on the inability of the

⁵⁵ This happened before most developing countries could develop the notion of welfare state, social security, workers rights or reap any other fruits of unionization

⁵⁶ Thus abolishing informal sector in one country while it exists in neighbor countries is a futile and misleading approach. Workers rights or environmental laws have to be enforced globally, if to be effective.

formal economy to absorb labour, it is much more also the willingness to engage informal work that is exacerbating the trend.

Three dimensions of recent industrialisation are contributing to the expansion of informal work globally.

- a. Capital intensification leads to reduction of work force or “downsizing”. Many retrenched workers can find only jobs in the informal economy.
- b. Decentralisation or “flexible specialisation” leads to smaller units along large production chains.
- c. In order to increase efficiency, profit and global competitiveness, large companies restructure “production and distribution in many key industries is characterised by outsourcing or subcontracting through global commodity chains” (Chen et al 2001)

It has been observed that informal economy persists in countries experiencing economic growth and also in countries having practically no economic growth. The reason for this is that many countries have “jobless” growth or others have a high tech growth, creating jobs only for a certain segment of qualified workers. In countries with economic recession or restructuring, the informal economy expands because retrenched workers seek refuge in it. It is also because households need to supplement formal sector incomes with informal earning in response to cutbacks and downsizing.

3.5 Informal economy and globalization

Globalization has put immense pressure on low skilled workers and petty producers, by weakening their bargaining power and subjecting them to increasing competition⁵⁷.

There are many linkages between workers and producers in the informal economy with the global economy. A large share of global production from

⁵⁷ This is to say unfair competition.

garments, shoes to electronics takes place through informal employment arrangements either in export processing zones or from households.

World economy consists of many “global commodity chains”, which comprise of a network linking different individuals and units of production and distribution with each other. More often than not, they are operating under both formal and informal arrangements, informal being the unskilled production labours while the formal taking cares of distribution and retail. These vast networks have had diverse effects on the informal economy.

Sometimes beneficial, when a large MNC decides to set up a new production unit, thus generating many informal jobs, or harmful if because of global competitiveness processing zones are dislocated from one country into another⁵⁸.

Small entrepreneurs like street vendors face increased competition from large chains that have an advantage of scale⁵⁹. Trade liberalisation could have advantages for street vendors, but mostly they are not able to cash on it, as they lack the required credit, training, and technology and market information that is required to be accepted into the modern economy.

This points towards a structural shift within the informal sector in the influence of globalization. While informal wage work is not abolished, mostly even promoted, informal self-employed work is discouraged with punitive measures. One could argue that the logic of accumulation is the essential distinction between the two, while the self-employed informal worker accumulates forhimself, the wage worker is working in the chain of accumulation for someone else, the capitalist.

Globalization, settings benchmarks for various products accompanies the concomitant standardisation, thus preventing informal enterprises, those

⁵⁸ In South Asia, for example garment export production created many jobs that employed people with low skill, but they were also the first to lose the jobs in times of recession

⁵⁹ This is discussed further in chapter 4

not associated with any big company, to become globally competitive⁶⁰. Many African vendors suffer due to cheap imports from Asian countries and vice versa, many Indian vendors suffer due to influx of cheap Chinese products⁶¹. Food vendors can compete with global enterprises, because their pricing is very little, yet since they cannot adhere to the hygiene standards, they fall out.

We will discuss the effects of a cultural imperialism facilitated through in chapter 6.

3.6 Hernando De Soto and Informality as a resource

Among all the scholars writing about the informal economy, de Soto needs special mention. His visions and ideas have transcended academic realms reaching politicians and economists alike, thus, a brief analysis is called for.

His seminal books "The Mystery of Capitalism" (2002) and "The Other Path" (1992) popularised his notions on the informal economies inner potential and possibilities.

He recognises the faults of capitalism, admits that it is not the best system, but consoles that it is the only solution to the problems of the present. He radically turns around the reasons for the creation of informal activities and blames the government with its bureaucratic apparatus. Migrants opt for informality because of the difficulties involved in staying formal. They enter an extra legal realm that is governed by rules "selectively borrowed from the official legal system, ad hoc improvisation and customs brought from their place of origin or locally devised "(de Soto 2002, 28).

The poor are not lingering in idleness; they work hard and rigorously save what ever is possible. He calls informal workers as heroic entrepreneurs

⁶⁰ i.e. Nike, Adidas and H&M all use informal production units, but those units could not work on their own globally,

⁶¹ Yet interestingly these cheap Chinese products are produced informally in China and also sold by informal vendors in India.

and sees them as the solution to eradicate global poverty, not as the problem.

Most people could not afford legal status due to the cost in time and money needed for applying authorization or licenses etc. He argues that standing in queues applying for registration would take away essential time needed for economic activity (de Soto 1992, 44-50).

This situation of "legal apartheid" affects more the rural immigrants, who don't have much experience with legal matters. Bureaucratic constraints in applying for proper housing create squatter. Authorization is too cumbersome and thus enterprises avoid it. Furthermore, de Soto argues that informal economy is neither chaotic nor anarchistic, but follows its own "extra legal" norms. Most insecure activities strive towards legalization, which they will reach eventually given the government leaves them alone. Informality bears many risks and reduces profit since they have to stay small in order to stay informal, pay bribes and lack any legal guarantees in case of fraud.

His main hypothesis is that most of the world cannot reap the fruits of capitalism because of their inability to produce capital. They have trillions of dollars in dead capital, lying unused while their nation is begging for aid.

According to him the poor possess the assets required to get a dignified life, the problem is that their assets are embodied in a defective form. This shoddy manifestation does not allow transfer of assets into capital. The houses cannot be mortgaged for capital and their enterprises cannot expand (missing documents, illegal encroachments) thus bidding them to be informal.

De Soto argues that Europe has succeeded (reached development) because of its capacity to inject life into dead assets and make capital out of it. The west is sitting on the conversion process, which transforms invisible capital into visible capital. According to him it is this disparity that lies at the heart of the global north-south divide, yet the west is unconscious of this process, it has taken it for granted (Ibid,29).

Further de Soto argues that present day development policy followed by the west is futile, as it is blind towards reality. It will only serve in widening the gap. The conversion of potential inane asset into capital needs the concept of property (Ibid., 44-60)

A formal property system is necessary for producing and fixing capital. For de Soto the assets owned by the poor are like a lake, having a potential to generate electricity but placidly wasting away in oblivion. Further it is important to have an integrated property system with all information connected to each other⁶², this will facilitate trade.

Trading with these informal assets needs formalised people and only then accountability can be achieved. Property and the possibility of forfeiture must back commitment.. Fungibility of assets, to be able to represent them in other forms than the actual physical form, makes it more flexible. Once the people are accountable, assets have become fungible, the owners become active economic agents able to work in a network of similar agents and thus can endorse in trade.

3.6.1 Critique of de Soto's argumentation

De Soto's premises are legitimately subject of fierce debate between structuralist and neoliberal economists. What can be taken without remorse is his analysis of the indwelling potential in the informal sector. Showing it's strive and providing essential service, though being caught in an antiquated and regulative environment. He shows that capital is not only wealth but also what we do with wealth.

A major flaw in De Soto's argumentation is his belief in infinite wealth for all, without any redistribution. The reason why his ideas have gained immense popularity among affluent countries could be his denial, that something may be wrong, with the way, present globalization is utilising the informal sector for its own gain.

⁶² According to De Soto the integrated property system in the west, not older than 150 years, serves as a base for its success. The USA had more than 800 separate property jurisdictions which were replaced and unified into one system. Interestingly the one integrated system that emerged was made of the informal property rules created by millions of immigrants and squatters. (De Soto 2002, 53)

“de Soto nowhere betrays any awareness that if all of the assets he describes as readily capitalizable in the Third World were capitalised, and nothing more, they would all be owned with newly formalised certainty by agencies of the First World in less than a decade. To every extent, the resources of the Third World are made monetary and exchangeable for money; the First World will yet have much more money and a much greater capacity to create money and can thus buy them all and own them as formally as you please. It is as if de Soto has chosen to ignore the extent to which money is begot of money, and would advocate a host of Third World leaders join with him to offer up that, which has been somewhat insulated from the leverages of capital” (Reeves 2001).

He forgets mentioning all the exploitative forms of informal employment that are not connected with excessive state regulations. People who have legal places to stay, and work for legal companies, but have to be content with illegal manufacturing job. For example, the construction labourer's who posses no assets, because they dwell in their current working site and are vacated when the job is done.

His recommendations of acquiring credit out of poor people's assets can prove to be hazardous. Given the precarious nature of market functioning, it will only increase the vulnerability of poor people. Encroached properties being suddenly formalised can lead to a rat race for the most valuable piece of land, which the strong and powerful will win, thus annihilating most of the benefits.

“People don't need to rely on neighbourhood relationships or make local arrangements to protect their rights and assets. Freed from primitive economic activities and burdensome parochial constraints, they could explore how to generate surplus value from their own assets.” (De Soto 2002, 54).

Complete monetization of informal survival techniques (exchange system or social relations) as quoted above, will bring in a capitalist valuation to every deed and thus undermine the social networks that are essential for survival.

While De Soto has understood the potential, innovativeness, entrepreneurship and hard work of informal sector, he oversees the difference of logic. The informal sector is characterised by its subsistence logic, and the formal sector is ruled by the axiom of profit accumulation. It can be agreed that even informal employers want to accumulate profit once they are in a position to do so, till then they rely on non monetized institutions⁶³ and networks.

Changing this logic through monetization can have adverse effects; the informal institutions making such a cheap life possible vanish, while the vulnerability pertains.

An important critique, succinctly phrased by Reeves, shows that formalisation is not enough for solving all the problems of informality.

"A semi-organised group of citizens with a modicum of technical skills among them can achieve a formalisation of property rights. A system of economic capitalism, however, if it is to be productive rather than destructive, if it is to enhance the welfare of a nation, rather than contort its soul, infect its vision and bleed it dry, requires a multitude of carefully crafted and assiduously maintained social institutions to guide the raw and oftentimes abusive or destructive processes of capital formation and use. These cannot satisfactorily be established merely through formalisation." (Reeves 2001)

⁶³ With institutions I mean social practices, rules and norms as defined by Arild Vatn (2009).

3.7 Commentary

This chapter dealt with the large canvas of the informal economy within which lies the subject of this thesis, the unorganized food sector of Delhi, in a period of rabid globalization.

It is necessary to see the connection, between the self-employed unorganized food sector and the informal economy in which it is nestled. They are intrinsically connected, working and calling for each other.

Summing up, it can be said that informal work-conditions are not an arbitrary incidence in developing nations; neither are they residues of pre modern economic systems, but an integral and structural occurrence of capitalist economy. Addressing them through modernist theories is an exercise in futility and yet it is still a common approach. Neoliberal deregulation, although reckoning one impediment, the legal wall that informal workers are inept of crossing, still fails to bridge other gaps that further aggravate the conditions of informal sector.

If we define informalization as the dismantling of existing regulations between capital and labour, and look through its differing disguises, there is no doubt that unregulated, underpaid and insecure working-conditions are spreading rapidly all over the world. The decline of mass production and subsequently the rise of the service sector lead to a change in many social arrangements, in particular a weakening of the larger institutional framework that shaped employment relations in the developed nations.

Globalization is affecting the unorganized sector, but instead of effacing it from the modern world, it is restructuring and reproducing it in a transformed version. Self-employed informal work is fighting a turf war to survive yet the informal sector that produces those who become own enterprise workers, and also those who need this kind of service, is spreading relentlessly.

In other words customers, dependent on street vendors are predominantly those from the informal economy, if the informal economy is expanding, the need persists for cheap and low cost services, thus

banishing those services without a general increase in the purchasing power of informal people is not only a unavailing exercise, but also a callous one.

Chapter 4: The unorganized food sector in Delhi

The state of Delhi was formed in 1992, its urban areas comprise of Delhi and New Delhi. The total population of the state, in 2001, was 13.85 million, whereas at present (2009) it is considered around 20 Million including the new urban satellite towns of Noida and Gurgaon. It is considered to be the fastest growing city in the country, with a growth of 47.02 % within a decade (1991 - 2001), adding up to 1500 persons per day to the population of the city. It has the highest density of population in the country at 6,352 persons per Sq. Km (Singh & Shukla 2005).

This shows that there is an enormous pull towards the city from all over northern India. Given the vast population that still exists in poverty, spread over north India, one can assume that this growth is not going to stop anytime soon⁶⁴. Historically speaking, Delhi was already inundated by a large flux of migrants after the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947, with the arrival of approx. 4 million refugees changing the city demographics over night (Kaur 2007, 6). This was definitely a good exercise to deal with large populations, and the urban street food vendors deserve credit for this success. Many stories prove the zeal of the new arrivals, who all came with not more than the bare essentials and are now living in suitable conditions.

The last two decades of liberalization, have left its marks ostentatiously, making it a modern and yet pre modern city at the same time. Conditions of abject poverty surviving next to conditions of utmost luxury have become a signature mark of its urban image (Dasgupta 2009). If more than 20 gigantic shopping malls, similar to their kin in the west have sprung up, there are still those *bastis* (slums) where buffaloes and cows are tied in front of the house, where cooking is done with dried cow dung

⁶⁴ Programs like the NREGA (National rural employment guarantee act) are intended to stop migration towards the mega cities, yet its effects are still considered neglectable.

cakes⁶⁵ and where on an average 2000 people have to share one toilet (Baviskar 2003).

Most of Delhi's population lives informally. Government programs and town planning initiatives sparsely affect them. The *Bhagidari* scheme- which is a government citizen partnership program, could have been an excellent tool to involve the informal population segment, yet, unfortunately it misses to involve the urban poor since its focus is only on legal residents, or proper citizens. The urban poor do not get even infrastructural developments, water and electricity provision.

"..... 40 per cent urban poor in Delhi use bicycles for which the dozens of flyovers are of no use. The infrastructure development for augmenting water supply of the city will obviously not ensure improved infrastructure and services in informal and underserved areas. Neither the privatization of electricity, water and garbage disposal, nor the golf club and water sports complex at Bhalaswa or multi-complexes and malls built on environmentally sensitive areas like southern ridge nor the Yamuna bed for urban development will benefit the informal settlements of the urban poor in peripheral wards of the city. These few examples, out of many, clearly reveal where the most of states' resources are flowing and what state led urban development and management mean for the 70 per cent population of the city living in informal and underserved areas." (Singh & shukla 2005)

Delhi, with its innate dichotomy of rich and poor, mirrors the realities of a modern India.

"As the city spreads, giving rise to entire new cities (like Gurgaon and Noida) -devoted almost entirely to economic growth - high rises and malls and residential colonies are mushrooming everywhere.

⁶⁵ Dried cow dung as a fuel is very common in the poor parts of rural India. It is considered a very low form of energy and generally houses that are using it belong to the lowest levels of indigence.

Some residents are left with their jaws hanging in disbelief, while others worship furiously at the altar of capitalist expansion" (deBryun 2008).

Unprecedented growth is omnipresent, with twenty-four hour construction sites on all edges and corners. The government of Delhi envisions a new metropolis, "world city Delhi", and to achieve which no means are considered unholy. In a pugnacious mood, many new laws and regulations are passed on a daily basis, which intend to alter not only its landscape but also its socio-economic composition. Resettlement of slums, eviction of hawkers and informal workers, ban on cooking food on the street of Delhi are just some examples of policies adopted.

It can be argued that partially this development is an organic process a city is involved in during its leap towards modernity, but it is no doubt also a mapped out initiative preparing the city for its expected role in the *2010 Common Wealth Games*. Beyond that there is the sinister sounding "Delhi master plan 2021" which is intending to reinvent the capital- by violent means if necessary- into a better organized, sans poverty, freed of those horrendous traffic jams and smart as a western city. Making it obvious that there is no space (physical or emotional) left for the street economy, the targeting of the self employed unorganized sector has become severe ever since (Indianground, 2007). This mobilization of resources for a modern city is seen as laudable by some and discriminatory by others (Dasgupta 2009).

Delhi's world city fantasies are a tasteless joke on its poor says Ghanshyam Halder, vice chairperson of the market committee Sewa Nagar, during a conversation on street vendors of Delhi. Renana Jhabvala has similar feelings while stating "It has become a boringly predictable reality that, when a country prepares to host a high profile international event, the country and its local government authorities prepare to create "world class cities" of a particular type... " (Jhabvala 2010).

In the case of Delhi, the Commonwealth Games 2010 have unleashed this world city fantasy. Affluent classes, big but still smaller in number, consisting of middle and upper income class English educated people define the world city of Delhi. This envisioned world city will attract foreign investment, have modern up to date infrastructure, have no visible signs of urban decay, have smooth traffic flows, visibly devoid of poor people and social problems⁶⁶.

It is a dreamt city where the poor do not exist, they have vanished or been transformed into middle class. Reality defies this, all flyovers and multiplexes being constructed in Delhi are built by the poor, working and camping at the same place; every slightly affluent house hold in Delhi has unregistered servants and maids who sleep daily on the floor of their masters house. It is maybe one of the most brutal dreams that are feared by them, who are feeling its brunt everyday.

4.1 Delhi and the survival of street food

It is assumed that there are anything between 16 000 and 70 000 street food vendors toiling on the street of Delhi, this is generally excluding the unprocessed food vendors⁶⁷ like vegetable and fruit vendors, including them the number goes up to 300 000 (te Linteloo 2009, 64).

Those areas with clusters of street food vendors in nearest proximity are without exception⁶⁸, the low-income localities of the city⁶⁸.

4.1.1 Clandestine and effervescent Food producers

Walking through the lanes of Delhi, the informal sector is always palpable. Sometimes in an obvious form and sometime more clandestine, but it is there.

⁶⁶ These views were present during all my conversations with better income groups.

⁶⁷ Unprocessed food vendors are those selling ready to eat food like vegetables, fruits, packaged sandwiches etc.

⁶⁸ In spite of the ban there are still many street food clusters surviving, mainly because they are in the narrow alley of low income colonies, where even the police fear to go.

Food and vegetable vendors, catering throughout the day, surround most lanes of Old Delhi. During rush hour, they are flocked on all sides by hungry customers waiting for their turn. Eastern Delhi still hosts many weekly Bazaars, similar to the ones in villages, where mobile and street vendors of all kinds offer their produce. Many natural markets are cleared continuously, like the bigger train and bus stations, and main road, but as soon as the prying eyes of state regulation move away, they remerge with stout persistence.

Going further South into the more affluent districts with its lush green covered and vast boulevards, there is a paucity of vendors selling on the street. But on looking closer one soon finds, *chai* shops hidden behind rain shelters, food caterers serving from a hidden spot behind the railing, not visible from the street, food sellers carrying food in buckets selling it during rush hours and then vanishing again, *chaiwallahs* hiding their small stove and counted glasses under a bench and many more.

Fieldwork showed that rich localities like *Defence Colony*⁶⁹ also have an unorganized food market that is serving more affordable food for all the drivers and servants who come along with the main clients. Their contribution is hidden, or in other words curtailed from the general eye⁷⁰. Any place that is slightly clandestine and yet centrally located is a good place for vending eatable produce.

4.1.2 Economics of street food trade

Food vendors selling complete meals, like rice and *Daal*, *Puri Sabji* or *Anda Parantha*, sell the same dish throughout the year. Agricultural cycles account for influx from rural areas of vendors who often specialize in seasonal foods such as corn or sweet potatoes. Full-time vendors switch merchandise seasonally, like fruit juice in summer and sweet potatoes in

⁶⁹ Residential colony in South Delhi.

⁷⁰ Drivers bringing clients to Defence Colony market or any other up market place, have to go a long way to get a decent lunch at affordable rates, tea and snacks is easier available.

winter. Vendors specializing on schools often take to other sources of income or go back to work in the fields, during school vacations.

Capital to start the enterprise typically came from the family or from personal savings; the skills come from apprenticing. By nature of the trade- that is selling food openly, in a hot climate without refrigeration-the business strategy is adapted. Food is produced on a daily basis, calculated for the sale of the day; leftovers are eaten or fed to animals.

Expansion is difficult due to lack of credit and small amount of savings. It was observed, that expansion does take place in a "amoeba like manner", like a sibling taking the skills learned and replicating the same enterprise in another corner. It can happen through addition of a spouse or sibling, thus diversifying a little or increasing the quantity of sale (Tinker 1997, 166)

Main expenses are food costs, varying according to availability, quality and source; bribes and protection money; fuel for cooking and transportation⁷¹. Food pricing was seldom competitive: rows of vendors would sell the same food at the same rate⁷².

In maintaining a consistent price, as ingredients were fluctuating, vendors would often reduce their own profit margin or alter the proportion of that ingredient. This was amply demonstrated during fieldwork, where India is experiencing a sharp rise of food prices, but yet food vendors would raise their prices very slowly. One vendor serving Poha⁷³ said *"if i see that I am having a loss I try to increase my rates gradually. Never more than two rupees a week until I reach the desired rate"*.

Regular customers generally receive larger helping and complementary second helpings. This is a method used to keep customers, but the customers also expect it. Fieldwork demonstrated that people mostly asked for a second complementary helping from a street food vendor, but obviously never in a restaurant.

⁷¹ Fuel usage has increased costs all over India; the high price of fuel was often a deciding factor in motivating customers to eat out rather than cook for themselves

⁷² In Sewa Nagar market all vendors serving the same item, i.e *Anda-Parantha* , had the exact same low price of 12 Rs. though it can become unviable, since food prices had risen sharply.

⁷³ a West Indian breakfast

Income from the vending enterprise was either the sole or the major income of the family for most vendors.

Illness and unaffordability of rising operational costs (bribes & food prices or illegality) are the main reason of temporary or permanent cessation of single operator enterprises (Ibid, 16)

4.1.3 Starting a business

To become a successful street vendor is often not so easy. Even if capital investment is small, it is more than 20 % poorest can afford “who are unlikely to have either the savings or the self confidence to become micro entrepreneurs.” (Grant et al 1989 in Tinker 1997, 167)

Skills of production and management for starting an enterprise are required. They are learned either in the family or as an apprentice some where else. Many enter through kinship connections and so learn about the supply chains and other strategies necessary to work the trade⁷⁴.

Apprentice ship accounts for the low pay most employees receive, often consisting of just some food and a place to sleep⁷⁵.

They use their personal saving or take an informal credit to start the business.

The saving strategies and alternative sources of support vary from person to person. Some use a rotating saving system, called *Kameeti*, others borrow from private lenders.

4.1.4 Income and profit

Most street food vendors observed would not keep written records, but had “good memories” of their income situation. The profits and the income for women vendors is lower than that of men, since they work shorter hours shouldering also household responsibilities, or they don't get paid if they are running the stall together with their husband⁷⁶.

In Delhi average income was bit more than minimum day wage though among those interviewed some earned very small amounts while others were making salaries much higher than the minimum wage.

74 Not only supply chains for protracting the ingredients but also the bribe mechanisms, the strategies of evading them etc have to be learned in order to sustain

75 “Such discrimination mirrors the general society, where unequal pay is legal” and socially accepted (Tinker 1997,169).

76 This is connected to the still patriarchal character of Indian society

4.1.5 License Raj

During a survey in Delhi in 2001, Kishwar found that the monthly extortion rates for pavement sellers were ranging between Rs. 500 and Rs. 3000 a month. Most of the vendors pay 1000 -1500 Rs per month to the MCD (Municipal Corporation of Delhi) or to the police, and in some places even to local goons as "protection money". Personal fieldwork showed that this situation is still prevailing and the rates have increased in the last years. Those few vendors who have the official license to vend are not devoid of their obligation to bribe, they just have to pay less.

Bribes are paid to stay on the pavement, yet they don't secure one from harassment, which can still continue. It is just a token to maintain the status quo. Often the police confiscate the goods sold by the vendor, it can be recovered only after paying a fine. Calculated at a modest average of Rs. 500 per person per month and approximately 500 000 street vendors⁷⁷ in the city of Delhi, Kishwar arrives at a sum of 480 crore Rupees that are being paid as bribes every year (Kishwar 2001). These bribes flow into the various covert alleys of the bureaucratic state, lubricating the insidious corruption apparatus.

Apart from this, many food vendors also lose produce, which they have to give as offerings to the authorities, or goods are destroyed during evacuation raids, which are never replaced (Ibid.). Most vendors have come to accept this financial squeeze as inevitable and so in most cases they do not bother staging protest against it.

The vicissitudes of this trade are influenced by the tidal shifts of generally hostile government policies, as harassment by the law and its enforcers, was reported by every single vendor.

4.1.6 Bias of Judiciary

Looking at the judicial pronouncements, many scholars have pointed towards the partial and biased approach that is adopted (Kishwar 2005, Sengupta 2008 , and Chatterjee 2008). During the 1980's, there were several path breaking judgments from the courts that still worked for

⁷⁷ This is counting all street vendors.

establishing a socialist, secular and democratic republic, yet they have been bypassed or overruled by new pronouncements that are authoritarian, fascist and biased towards certain segment of population (Bhushan 2009, 33).

“In the last five years of jurisprudence in India, particularly in the Delhi High Court and the Supreme Court, courts have created an artificial and very disturbing conflict between various degrees of human rights. For example, there are a series of judgments where the right to a safe environment is being seen as more important than the right to housing or livelihood. These judgments are not only placing poor communities in a very difficult position but also are going one-step further and criminalizing the poor. They are actually saying that if you are living in a slum and you don't have security of tenure and you don't have rights, you are illegal — and if you are illegal you don't deserve anything.” (Narain 2007)

The judicial pronouncements affect the livelihood of hundreds of thousands of hawkers all over India. The framework of policy for dealing with this sector has to recognize its vast heterogeneity, which was missed consequently and to grave effects, by all policy approaches adopted till today. It needs to develop the “unrealized productive potential of the poor and help enhance social harmony by making policies supportive of the poor and at the same time beneficial to the rest of the society” (Mitra 2003).

Intermediary groups encourage vendors to form their own association that would provide a mechanism for vendors to interact and negotiate with the government; help in providing services like legal advice or health care.

4.1.7 Cultural importance of street food

There is a cultural dimension to street food that ought not to be forgotten. Though street foods in modern big cities have the predominant role of feeding poor people, a culture has developed out of it. The various kinds

of foods offer an incredible culinary tradition that is rarely documented. The different variations in preparation, the types of food offered and the environment where it is served makes it a cultural experience.

Since street food addresses the need of working class⁷⁸ people, it also caters to their particular taste. This is not a sudden development, but it evolves out of a trial and error method. Slowly and gradually street food vendors developed particular dishes that resonated on the streets. The nature of this trade, to serve pedestrians and other commuters, provided immediate feedback. Some vendors were successful and others had to look for other work.

Dishes that were popular were adopted and modified by other entrepreneurs. Sometimes migrants from particular areas brought with them their own food specialties, adding to the culinary variety available on the streets. Nearly every Indian city portrays this process vividly. You can find some street food dishes everywhere while others only enjoy local popularity. Maybe this is the reason why most dishes could never be patented, since its creators remained unknown.

The debate, on the ban on cooking food in Delhi, which was held in middle class living rooms and the English media, generally featured this dimension more than the livelihood dimension (Sanghvi 2007). People apparently feared more the removal of street food, as it would extinguish a century's old, Delhi street food tradition, rather than express empathy towards the urban poor, affected by it.

The blog EOiD shows small groups of urban Delhites who meet together and search for interesting food snacks offered on the road. Their findings are documented⁷⁹ and promoted through the internet. Additionally they encourage people to try out the culinary street delicacies of Delhi (www.eoid.org).

Apart from the variety there is also a cultural experience of eating on the streets.

⁷⁸ Throughout this thesis the term "working class" is referred in its colloquial sense, defining the lower income strata of the working population.

⁷⁹ They brought to notice the existence of old dishes in the lanes of Delhi, being served on the streets, that had vanished from the rest of India, so to say, culinary relics of a past era.

As one member explained the reasons for his pursuit, this cultural dimension was tangible “ *...eating at a street joint is not exclusive like a restaurant, which mainly caters to one socio economic segment, but much more inclusive because you meet, even though sparsely, with people from a very different strata of society. For me, it has made me aware of the inequalities in this country*” (Personal communication with Anup B). Apart from the diversity of food that is bound to recede due to such restrictions, a loss of essential social interaction space, will also take place. If in a society like India, those places are taken away that enable an interaction between various classes, it will inevitably lead to the promotion of more discrimination and alienation of the poor by the rich. It stratifies society to a degree that different classes interact only on the predefined hierarchical lines, without challenging them.

4.1.8 Street food vendors make a place dirty?

One commonly perceived notion, that is present not only in the general perception about street vendors, but also in the policy papers of the concerning authorities, is that street vendors are dirty. They litter around their place, wherever they vend there is garbage lying around, they do not care for public space and so on.

Observations showed that street food vendors are not dirtier or uncaring than anybody else. Everyone mistreats Indian public spaces as open garbage dumps. The street vendor throws his wastage on the floor, but so do the customer, the proper shop owner, the police and the MCD cleaning raiders⁸⁰.

This is not to excuse littering but to focus on the factual problem, which is missing dustbins, the underpaid cleaning personal, and most prevailing the Indian attitude of polluting public space with impunity, followed by everyone.

⁸⁰ One example was noted in CR Park, where the aftermaths of a eviction raid, caused a lot of garbage and dump. The debris were lying around for nearly 5 months, before they were cleared up. This clearly takes the credibility of the MCD that they are interested in clean public spaces.

The permanent food vendors generally would take care of their place of work, but since they have no guarantee on that space their attitude is as careless as any other pedestrian. So the missing security also leads to negligence.

Food vendors could be actually used as examples for promoting cleaner Indian public spaces, if they have dustbins and are given the charge for their immediate surrounding. They could warn and educate the customers and other public, if those do not comply.

4.2 The Ban on Street Food and the veil of Hygiene promotion

“Sadly, such decisions (like the food ban) often come from wealthy politicians who have never even been into the heart of the old city and have little idea how much a part of daily Delhi life the roadside food stalls really are. So, not only is Delhi hurtling into the future, but it remains a symbol of many of the challenges faced by India in its bid to catch up with the West.” (de Bryun 2008)

On 17 May 2007, a new municipal policy was launched by the Supreme Court of India banning all cooking and sale of food on the streets of Delhi (Supreme Court of India, 2007). Although Justice B.P. Singh did not elaborate on the decision to accept the policy, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) argued that the ban would address a growing concern about the risks of poor hygiene of street food and reasoned that food vendors must obey the law (Ramesh, 2007). It gave directions to the MCD to make “clear and categorical that cooking of any food shall not be permitted at all, but cooked food properly packed may be sold by the allottees” (Bhuwania A, 2007). This was a sequel to a similar judgment passed for Mumbai in December 2003. It gave a new face to the ongoing battle between street food vendors and the government, bringing additional burden onto the shoulders of the already beleaguered urban subsistence economy. This decision once implemented will have large scale social effects for the poor in particular and the whole society in general.

4.2.1 Outcry

National and international media sources noted the ban's threat to the centuries-old food culture of Delhi (Dhariwal, 2007; Sengupta, 2007), though many disagreed with its hygiene or security argument (Singhvi 2007). It also caused outcry from passionate street food lovers who organized various rally's and signature campaigns (Tehelka 2007), but in vain as the ban still lasts. Once completely endorsed it will effect up to 70 000 food vendors directly and 350 000 indirectly⁸¹ (Dharival 2007). Street reality is still defying this ban, yet it translates into higher bribes to authorities by the vendor and thus engraves his situation dramatically⁸².

The ban is on cooking next to the road and not on selling cooked food, presumed to be more hygienic by the MCD and the Supreme Court. This has infuriated many for its blatant discrimination towards the small-scale entrepreneur and his main consumers.

The aesthetic at display at a food hawker's place "...facilitate more direct sensory interaction with the producer, seller of the goods, and offers the consumer more access to a fuller experience of the product or service being offered. During production of food, everything is transparent to the outside, the utensils, the vendors' personal hygiene, the production material and the process. There are hardly any restaurants where one can follow every phase in the production of the dish that minutely." (Rajagopal 2002, 69)

It is to this form of informal scrutiny or aesthetic that the main customers of street food adhere.

Reactions like Thakur (2007) show the incomprehensibility of the Supreme Court ruling for many.

⁸¹ It has been estimated that one street food vendor provides livelihood to 5 family members and thus the number 350 000 is derived.

⁸² It is indeed surprising for many visitors that there is a complete ban on street food cooking in delhi, sice one can still see so many street vendors working along the pavements.

“On the contrary, in its blind obsession with the corporation’s (MCD) gutter sense of beauty, it has insulted all manner of good sense — social, economic, civic. Its ban, mind you, is on cooking food on the streets, not on selling cooked food on the streets. That makes complete nonsense of all sense. You can cart a whole load of stale, disease- ridden food to the high street and spread pestilence at a profit. legal, according to our highest court. You cannot offer a freshly-cooked snack by the roadside. That’s illegal, injurious to Delhi’s beauty. *Kebab, Bread-anda, Bread Pakora, Chana-bhatura. Litti-chokha*⁸³. They are about the freshest (not to speak of the tastiest) food you can get at a fair clip and fairer price. Cooked in front of you, at temperatures that would take care of more bacteria than most biologists know. But no. The Supreme Court would rather you had stale patty and soggy *Samosa*, the new, innovative urban beauty- tip. Try it. At your own peril.” (Thakur 2007)

Or as Bhowmik depicts it:

“It will not only deprive a section of the urban population from gainful employment but will increase the cost of living for the poor. This, in turn, will lead to an increase in crime affecting public safety. At the same time, one cannot dispute that hawkers do create problems for pedestrians and commuters. However, the solution lies not in banning or curbing hawking but in regulation. This can only be achieved once the municipal authorities stop treating hawkers as antisocial elements. Hawking can be regulated only if it is legalized.” (Bhowmik 2000)

Fresh cooked food is still available in Delhi, as well as in most other Indian cities. Generally, people selling it are not even aware that such a ban exists.

⁸³ All are classic street food dishes available in Delhi.

These actions from the government have made scholars accuse the state of being exclusive and elitist in its approach.

“Freshly cooked food is nutritious and uncontaminated. The court is now simply asking people with lower incomes and the lower middle class, who thrive on street food, to eat contaminated, cold, pre-cooked food.” (Kishwar as quoted in Bhuwania 2007)

“Of course no brown *sahib* or his *memsahiba* or their descendants can ever express legitimate concerns about the conditions under which a hotdog, hamburger or fish ‘n’ chips are dished out to the hungry without any health hang-ups. Those who are agitated about the dangers of piping hot street foods drool mindlessly while devouring a New Zealand lamb chop carved out of a carcass frozen six months ago.” (Pant in Tehelka 2007)

There is evidence that behind the veil of hygiene promotion lies hidden a far more powerful and concerned objective, that of urban spatial politics (te Lintelo 2009).

4.2.2 The politics of hygiene

In his analysis of the content and implementation of food hygiene regulations for small-scale enterprises, operating in public and private spaces, te Lintelo concludes that the ban is much more about urban spatial politics than food hygiene.

He sees it as an outcome of the intense contestation for urban space between the surging middle classes and the poor against a backdrop of a restructuring retail sector and a liberalizing economy (te Lintelo 2009).

Following essay will go with Lintelo’s (Ibid) argumentation and discern the motifs behind the ban. These illustrate vividly the motives behind the nation wide policy assault on urban street food vendors. Hygiene becomes just a suitable variable to carry forth the new management and restructuring of urban space.

The MCD has proposed food courts as a modern and hygienic substitute for archaic street foods, following the Singapore & Kuala Lumpur model. The sudden resolve to promote cooked, pre packaged foods instead of freshly cooked foods reversed the Health Departments long established praxis of considering the latter more hygienic (MCD Official in conversation with te Lintelo, in te Lintelo 2009). It is a matter of ridicule for many that food cooked in front of their eyes is supposed to be more contaminated than food cooked and packaged somewhere else⁸⁴. The MCD Health Department (MCDHD) targets hygiene, but it does so without conducting studies and research. It does not have the facilities (laboratory) and skills for such an undertaking. There is a dearth of information as to what proper hygiene means. The department makes no distinction between clean and not so clean street food vendors. Licensing and inspection are the only tools used to manage food hygiene risks⁸⁵. Yet these powers are biased towards street food vendors and as described later only tend to increase the violence, but fail miserably to ensure hygiene.

“Health Department officials are suspicious of food vendors, whose living conditions (in poverty) and working space (roadside) are deemed to irretrievably result in poor hygiene” (te Lintelo 2009, 69)

Licenses privilege large-scale enterprises, as it is easier to monitor them. Most of the licenses issued for street vendors selling food, are for big franchise companies like Nestle, Pepsi and Ice cream companies like Vadilal.

The proper procedure to be recognized as a street food vendor requires having two different licenses, the *Tehbazari* and a health trade license. Yet, even if a food vendor manages to acquire a Tehbazari, exclusive licensing conditions prevent the further acquisition of a health trade

⁸⁴ Especially in a country like India, where people have great distrust in the state to be peculiar about health and sanitary issues.

⁸⁵ Which in itself is insufficient

license. The *Tehbazari* forbids any addition to the structure of the vending place, whereas health trade license conditions specify minimum structural requirements, including concrete walls, water and electricity connections⁸⁶. Consequently, licensing rules and policy decisions regarding *Tehbazari* heavily restrict legal access to public space. This obscure situation renders all food hawkers illegal. For approximately 70000 street food vendors in Delhi, there are about 500 licenses, which as a number speaks for itself.

“.... not only the great majority of food vendors but also the bulk of food retail establishments operating on private land lack a health trade license, precluding potential positive interventions towards food hygiene” (Ibid 70)

Street vendors are not the only ones without license, because in fact most restaurants, eating joints etc. don't have a health license (Ibid.).

Te Lintelo points at the ironic situation regarding most regulations in Delhi, be it health certificates, building laws or purpose of use. They are endemically violated in commercial as well as residential buildings. Nearly 60 - 70% of residential buildings, do not comply with land use or building regulations (Ibid). Post hoc amnesties to fixed premises have been granted on several occasions⁸⁷, showing that selective exceptions to the rule⁸⁸ are made instead of amending the rule.

The ban fails to improve food hygiene in any manner, since large number of organized and established enterprises don't comply with the hygiene rules, yet continue to strive undisturbed. Its role seems to be more a

⁸⁶ It is the same story with the acquisition of water and electricity. If you are not registered you don't get water and electricity, forcing you to steal it. Yet if you don't have water and electricity you cannot get registered (te Lintelo 2009, 69).

⁸⁷ In 1988, 1994, 2000 and 2004

⁸⁸ Reversal of the effects of primitive accumulation.

judicial instrument to prevent permanent encroachments of public space⁸⁹.

4.2.3 Raids and eviction as instruments of promoting Hygiene

The power (of an HD inspector) to remove and dispose goods or wares exhibited on public space, applies for unorganized as well as organized retail. Yet this power is rarely used against formal enterprises, while for street food vendors it becomes a tyranny. The looming eviction is a Damocles sword pertaining above the vendor's existence.

HD raids occur daily in every zone affecting up to 15 food vendors per zone, which amounts to 150 evictions daily. Every eviction, apart from the humiliation, entails an economic downfall that is difficult for many to digest. Some need months to start again while others are on work the very next day⁹⁰.

The property rights of vendors are routinely violated, as their food ingredients, cooking utensils and carts are confiscated or destroyed.

The Municipal commissioner has emergency powers to immediately act and prevent the outbreak of contagious diseases. This emergency power is invoked annually, with seasonal bans on the open sale of cut fruits, sugar cane juice and other pre cooked foods during the summer and monsoon season.

The South Delhi zonal office in 2006 confiscated 2000-2500 pushcarts per year. The extrapolation of this number to all zones makes it an astounding 30,000 pushcarts that are confiscated annually (Ibid.).

The raids are conducted in a rash and intense manner, since officials don't want to risk the formation of a hostile crowd. This effaces the possibility of a balanced approach and creates a lot of resentment among street vendors. The raid enforcers indiscriminately confiscate foods sold on the

⁸⁹ However telIntelto (2009,71) reasons that this is also unlikely to enforce the envisioned special purification.

⁹⁰ This depends on the size and sophistication of the enterprise as well as the monetary capacity left after the eviction.

roadside, without even checking whether the vendor has licenses or not. Most raid enforcers presuppose that anyway, no street food vendors have a license, and so they don't need to ask⁹¹.

Lack of assessment of hygienic conditions further undermines the credibility of the HD and the health inspectors. Common sense cannot deny that many restaurants and proper enterprises have maybe dirtier conditions in their hidden kitchens, than the street vendors who display their goods and the process, open to public scrutiny.

⁹¹ The health inspectors know the difficulty or impossibility of obtaining licenses and they don't have the time to ask. Yet this leaves a very callous impression on the street food vendors, who are unable to understand any logic behind this kind of health inspection.

4.2.4 Consequences

The food ban shows, that orders like this will only exacerbate the amount of bribes that food vendors are forced to give to the police and the MCD. It has indeed been proven since then, that food vendors pay thrice the amount of bribe that other street vendors have to pay.

No doubt there is need to improve the safety of freshly prepared food, but it has to be conducted for all food sellers and without the use of discriminatory blanket bans.

The fore mentioned situation has a consequence that honest and well meaning hygiene promotion is neglected, and the unhygienic conditions prevail. There are no educational efforts to promote good handling, storage and ensuring complete hygiene, which would be a more effective method.

A breach with ongoing practices is necessary to provide access to cheap and hygienic food for the urban poor. Mumbai and Kolkata have similar ban and general regulatory environment, but street food vendors managed to gain some political leverage. This mitigates the effects of these bans, albeit the law stands unchanged. In contrast Delhi vendors suffer due to missing unionization, but still stand up in defiance against the ruling, as they continue resisting the ban and its raids with resilience.

4.3 Corporate capital in the unorganized food sector of Delhi

Corporate retail is trusted to self regulate itself, and the quality of its food and supply chains are often assumed healthy, without any scientific evidence. For small scale food retail the state continues to define its regulatory character. Roadside trolleys branded with Coca Cola, Pepsi, Nestle etc. were untouched by the arbitrary brunt of the raiding team. It was obviously assumed that these trolleys were franchise and thus in possession of a proper license. Branding and corporate affiliation therefore seems to also entail impunity

Using the distinction between corporate versus non-corporate capital (Chatterjee 2008) various effects on the unorganized food sector can be observed.

4.3.1 Corporate retail vs unorganized retail.

The arrival of corporate retail is a worldwide phenomenon, connected with the rise of powerful retailers in international trade. America's Wal-Mart, France's Carre Four, and Britain's Tesco are some names in the arena expanding their influence globally. In addition to this many Indian corporate like Indian Tobacco Company, Tata and Reliance have already entered the Indian retail segment.

The 30 largest firms already control more than one third of the world's retail business, with countries of the south being particularly attractive since they have booming economies, increased urban infrastructure and the last trade barriers currently being removed (Egger 2007).

In 2006 the Economist wrote of the retail revolution in India, a "gold rush" for those who can seize the opportunity and be part of the "supermarket fever". India's retail business, estimated to be around \$350 billion, has just a meek share of only 8 \$ billion coming from organized retail accounts. Domestic retailers like Reliance Fresh have entered the market and are expanding quickly, while foreign chains like Wal-Mart have stepped in and are exploring ways to deepen their involvement (The Economist, 2 Nov 2006). While more than 300 million consumers are a lucrative pull for any corporate house, it is the rest 700 million that are often overseen in the process⁹².

From February 2007 the first large retail chains started opening up in Delhi. Reliance planed to open more than 100 retail chains in the capital

⁹² Rajagopal calls them the peeping toms of consumption because marketers don't focus on their demographic. They witness the consumption of the affluent in television and reality, without being part of it and adversely being affected by it (Rajagopal 2005, 1)

with a target of \$ 25 Billion in sales by 2010⁹³. The slogan popularized by Reliance is "...a whole new way to live".

There has also been an opening up for FDI in the retail trade, which was closed until now, allowing foreign companies to enter the market in collaboration with Indian companies. Undoubtedly this will unleash a new force in the retail economy of India which has until now been occupied by small "pop and mom" stores or the unorganized sector.

The company intends to pursue two goals, firstly it would offer products for far less prices than its competitors would and secondly it would make Indian food system more efficient, as currently, over 40% get wasted in transport (Egger 2007). The companies are quick to reassure the public that they will generate new employment to compensate for the losses in the traditional sector.

Reliance claims that it will create 500 000 jobs but NGO's and Traders organizations are skeptical, claiming that for each 1.000 jobs created 15.000 will lose their place in the unorganized sector (Ibid). It is the natural predicament of capitalist profit making enterprises to strive for profit, thus moving towards more technology intense instead of labor intense forms of production.

Experience from other Asian countries has shown that state governments did little to set up an appropriate and sound regulatory framework, before unleashing liberalization. Malaysia and Thailand have ousted serious concerns about the effects happening in the retail sector due to International competition (Ibid). Indian government still has some reservations towards international retailers, although removed successively, and the complete opening up of Indian retail trade is inevitable (Posten 2006).

Many metros in South East Asia follow the "Singaporean model" of integrating street vendors through relocating them in commercial complexes like a Multiplex. Where street food is a desired item, catering more to the tastes of the masses, efforts are made to capitalize on this

⁹³ Data was unavailable, whether they have achieved their goal or not.

sector (Reardon & Gulati 2008, 26). This can be seen as an integration of street food sector into the working of corporate capital.

The economics of this shift has not been studied sufficiently but it indicates that these centers are offering tough competition to American fast food chains.

Yet this shift generally changes the logic of accumulation, because the vendor becomes an employ for some corporate company, using his skills but in a standardized company conform manner.

4.3.2 Supermarkets and vegetable vendors

Supermarkets are a very new phenomena to India, and yet within the last 5 years, they have become ostensibly present in major cities. The aesthetic difference between the two modes of selling food, are striking and revealing, illustrating the specific role of a vendor in the Bazaar and an vendor in a super market⁹⁴.

I have made the following points, referring to vegetable and fruit vendors and the difference to supermarkets.

- Customers scrutinize the vegetables but they cannot bargain if the quality is not satisfactory. From a *Rehriwallah*⁹⁵ they can ask for reduction in price if a certain product does not match their criteria.
- Retail stores will not give free extras like chili and coriander which people expect from street vendors
- Street vendors offer the service of selling produce to the customer directly in front of his house
- With vegetable vendors coming everyday there is no need to buy for a whole week. We perceive food to be fresher from the street Vendor.
- Retail-chains offer a much larger variety of produce

⁹⁴ They are in strange way miniature representatives of the north south divide. Supermarkets with their clean floors, product placement strategies, affluence of product varieties, and standardized prices calculated through barcodes. The bazaar is the exact opposite, chaotic lanes with the vendors selling independently, price negotiable according to quality, free extras to secure customers. This is not to say that Bazaars don't have rules or even exploitation. The point here is the difference of atmosphere.

⁹⁵ Common term for a street vendor used in Delhi.

- An argument heard very common is that of efficiency. Forty Percent of vegetables rot on transport thus refrigerated trucks can be more efficient in reducing wastage and increasing availability of products. Yet it is not clear if refrigeration is used more for hoarding vegetables in order to get a higher price later. Whether wastage is truly reduced has not been proven because supermarkets also cause wastage. There is ample evidence from western supermarkets that a lot of unnecessary wastage is produced due to over stockage and the need to offer a large palate of goods⁹⁶.

There is a balance between efficiencies achieved by a centralized supply chain and a decentralized supply chain. A *Sabjiwallah* has assessed his market and knows how much produce he or she can procure avoiding wastage. The alleged 40% wastage of goods while transport, is due to no fault of theirs.

It is safe to assume that street vendors, especially street food vendors, are more environmental in their production. This stems from the fact that they are a work intense enterprise using manual labor, instead of fossil power. They hardly use electricity and are careful with energy usage, because of its price. Refrigeration and cold storage chains are also more energy intensive than decentralized supply chains. Street food vendors contribute to less commuting, since they work also in residential areas. Given the fact that real estate prices are soaring, it will not be viable for small retailers to sell vegetables and fruit, only corporate retail chains will afford prime market space, which will mostly be located in ample distances from each other. This can lead to additional traveling for acquiring basic goods (Tiwari 2000).

4.3.3 The effect on street food vendors

Amidst street food there is also a similar effort to tap the market with ITC Ltd, Nestle, Fresh n Healthy being just some, among many other brands, that are entering the arena. The corporate chains are interested in a wide market spread, so they will appropriate the system of street vendors,

⁹⁶ <http://greengarbageproject.adammathiasdesign.com/>

albeit in a metamorphosed manner. The existing fast food chains also show interest in further expansion of their market shares.

There are major shifts that will happen if street food vendors are slowly ousted and taken over by recognized fast food chains. Some of these structural shifts are mentioned below.

The fast food industry is widely criticized for undermining worker rights, low payments and sub standard working conditions.

“The key to the success of fast food revolves around limited menu’s and highly standardized product offerings, which permit the use of low skilled and easily replaceable.” (Royle & Towers 2002, 16)

MNC fast food chains all over the world employ migrant labors and teenagers for minimum salary. They have played an important role in developing the growth of part-time, insecure and low paid employment. Fast food companies are also vigorous in denying employees their rights to form unions. Furthermore they exert pressure on supplier companies to lower their price; this also aggravates the conditions of labor in those companies.

Routinization of work is essential to run an industry with a workforce dominated by young, unskilled and inexperienced part time workers. Standardization has benefits for the employer, who does not have to hire skilled labor, cutting the cost of wages and making workers replaceable. This in turn leaves little space for negotiation on the part of the employer. MNC’s have the might of instigating massive advertisement campaigns, promising customers a particular standard of food and service and therefore a predictable experience. To ensure the uniformity of products over a large network of franchises is achieved through precise instructions specifying every detail of food preparation and customer service. These instructions have to be followed assiduously by every franchise.

“The level of detail in specifying work routines is remarkable: atMc Donalds, for instance, workers are instructed in the precise arm motion to use when salting a batch of fries.” (Royle & Towers 2002, 18)

Their appearance, words and facial expression is also subject to managerial scrutiny. Ensuring company standards are met, the workers are not only constantly observed but also made to work continuously. Technology is an essential aid in the routinizing and mechanization of their work. Through buzzers, LED signals and computerized inventories, workers have to think as less as possible (Ibid.)

Another big difference between centralized fast food chains and decentralized street food vendors is the effect it creates on the agricultural system. While street food uses what is available, large fast food chains influence the availability of certain products. This can gradually define the agricultural output of a certain area where the product is grown (Schlosser 2001, 8).

One new product, offspring of the emerging corporate street food sector, that has achieved immediate widespread success was *Masala Corn*. It illustrates the difference between organized street food and unorganized street food succinctly. Masala Corn is made up of boiled corn that is mixed with Indian spices and lemon juice. The remarkable aspect of this product was the immediate adoption by Indian consumers, who enjoy the notoriety of being very selective when it comes to food.

Many food chains jumped on the bandwagon producing the spicy corn dish and soon it could be found in every mall and Bazaar. Every chain made slight variations to the recipe and patented the name for their particular recipe. The vending stall is placated with the name of the franchise and is built much more sophisticated than the street stalls which sell food. It is equipped with a corn boiler and electricity.

The vendor selling it is an employee of the producing company, who like a worker in McDonald's has no influence in preparing the dish, which is done according to assiduously set rules. The corn is an imported American variety which comes in large packages. The price range is between 30 and 50 Rs⁹⁷ which is clearly more than most dishes offered on the road.

⁹⁷ Average street food prices range between 5 and 30 Rs, depending on the portion.

Corporate food stalls are allowed to vend at natural markets, while the unorganized are banned from there. These profitable locations are auctioned to the highest paying bidder. Non-registered stalls (meaning all unorganized), even if they have been vending at that location for over a decade, cannot take part in the bidding and thus are structurally discriminated in competition(Personal communication with a shop keeper in Kashmiri Gate bus stand).

Thus their (non registered stalls) chances are constricted due to missing capital, licenses and education, the same reasons which had rendered them into this situation earlier. The continuous deprivation of access to natural markets lessens their chances of economic success, furthermore condemning them to stagnate in their vulnerable economic state.

Chapter 5: Exploring the Unorganized Food Sector

Following essay is an idiosyncratic compilation of perceptions and experiences while researching the unorganized food sector.

5.1 Sample Description

The Difference between UMIC (Upper middle income Class) and LIC (Lower income class) was made according to monthly expenditure. LIC consists of consumers who had monthly expenditure up to 8000 Rs. and UMIC consists of all people who have a monthly expenditure higher than that⁹⁸.

Sample size and composition:

	Female	Male	Total No. of Respondents
Upper and Middle Income Class	9	8	16
Lower Income Class	0	24	24
Vendors	3	17	20
Total	11	49	60

A concise effort was made to have equal number of female and male respondents. This proved to be impossible. Except in the UMIC, it was difficult to meet female representatives. In Delhi, street vending is a nearly exclusive male domain, since it is considered too risky for women to engage in it.

⁹⁸ Both categories are very broad but further distinction was considered redundant in this case. LIC consists of people with monthly expenditure of 8000 Rs., which is 267 Rs. per day. This sum is still very high, as for most people present, the average budget per day (to cover food and transport) was 90 Rs.

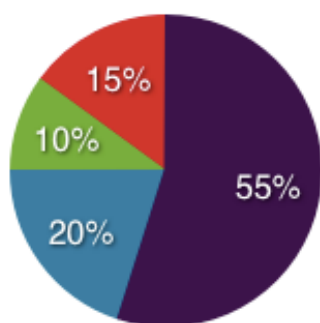
5.2 Findings from the Unorganized Food Producers

The vendors were represented in all the facets of the trade, mobile and permanent, and serving processed and unprocessed food⁹⁹. No concrete distinction of socio economic status was made between food vendors, though generally the mobile vendors are poorer than the one's with permanent place.

Mobile Vendors	8
Permanent Vendors	12

Processed Food Vendor	13
Unprocessed Food Vendor	7

● Primary school ● Secondary school ● Graduate ● Illiterate



⁹⁹ Processed food refers to cooked food (either by the vendor or the family) and unprocessed refers to Vegetables and fruits sold raw.

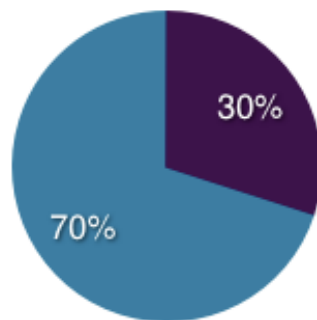
Migratory status of Vendors:

In the city since max. 7 years	5
In the city more than 7 years	12
Born in the city	3

Landholding:

14 Vendors owned land up to the size of 0.5 Acres and the rest 6 were

● More than 0.5 Acr. ● Less than 0.5 Acr.



above. All of them had the land together with their family and utilized it for agricultural.

Household Size: The average household size of the sample of vendors was 4.5, and ranges from 2 to 16 family members. Each vendor had at least one member of his close family (spouse, offspring or sibling) not residing with him. In general they would be at the native place of origin.

All of them complained of diminishing returns in the last three years, mainly caused by the price rise.

All vendors reported that they are subject to bargaining¹⁰⁰. All of them had regular customers and irregular customers¹⁰¹. Not surprising, the regular customers were mostly from lower income class (servants, drivers, wage workers). They had various strategies to keep their regular customers, either through complementary serving or lower price.

All of them had experienced police harassment, eviction drives or confiscation of their shop. Interestingly 4 out of 20, could only come up with reasons for the actions, the rest believed it was blatant harassment. On asking whether they know the reason for eviction and raid, one young man poignantly put it *"We are like nomads in a sand storm. We don't ask for the reasons or from where the storm is coming. We pack our things and run."* (Male, 17, Poha vendor)

Vendors reported that between 60-80% of their income was spent on covering basic needs, although most of them mentioned that they could make some savings which would be sent home.

Fruit and vegetable vendors:

Fruit and vegetable vendors are part of the unorganized food sector, yet they are differentiated by the virtue of their produce. Street food vendors come under the ban on cooking food while vegetable vendors not. They are in fact still promoted by many, also by the UMIC because of the practicality of their service.

¹⁰⁰ There is a latent belief among middle class India that if one does not bargain with local vendors one is cheated. Furthermore it is seen as audacious if a street vendor increases his rates, so they often bargain them down again.

¹⁰¹ s

Specially those vegetable vendors who had been allowed to enter affluent colonies selling their goods from door to door, enjoyed patronage¹⁰². This did not save them from random police harassment, but it was felt to be much less than what others have to endure.

Vegetable and fruit vendors were without exception customers of street side food stalls. They complained of the rising difficulties in procuring a meal during working hours. This reflects the general notion reemerging in this thesis that the working poor are adversely affected by a ban on unorganized food.

The fruit and vegetable vendors questioned had all reported no big effects due to the arrival of supermarkets. In fact some (3 out of 7) reported a benefit arising due to some extra products they could sell for better profit. The others had recognized a threat to their business and thus had adopted counter strategies. They would send their children everyday to a supermarket and get the prices, so they can sell a little bit below that. They would adapt to their customers needs and procure special products if favored by someone. They increased the free gifts while selling the vegetables.

5.2.1 In their words

One vendor in Old Delhi said *"What is this ban about, i have been doing this work now for four years, I am paying the police properly. They¹⁰³ also come and have food here. Sometimes they come and say that they have been ordered to vacate us, so we vacate for some days. But they can't have us completely removed because even they earn on us."* (Male, 20 yrs., Fry chicken vendor)

"If Delhi has been voted one of the most polluted cities in the world, it is not because of street vendors or rickshaw drivers. So why are we being

¹⁰² Most affluent colonies nowadays have become gated residential colonies with restricted access. Most colonies although, have allowed few chosen vendors to remain and provide their services. These vendors are generally quite satisfied with their conditions.

¹⁰³ They always referred to multiple actors, being the MCD, the Police, the RWA's, which were mostly considered as one and the same.

removed? We are the color of this city not its dirt and dust.”(Male, 32 yrs., Rice and Daal vendor)

“They can do whatever they want, but I will not go away. They take away my cart, then I sell in a basket, if they take that away I will buy another basket. The only way I will go away is if they give me a good job.”(Male, 34 yrs, Cut fruit vendor)

“What ban, the whole police department comes here, regularly. They know that we need this for survival. If they throw us out, they take the karma of killing us.”(Male, 45 yrs., Biryani Ghosh¹⁰⁴t vendor)

“I have been working for 15 years and I have always seen this. I don’t remember any time not paying bribes. Yet the bribes would be in relation to our profit. Nowadays not only food prices have increased, so has the bribes for the police and MCD. They have mobiles and cars, which all cost a lot, so we have to toll. Sometimes I make deficit for 4 months in a row, but still manage to survive.”(Male, 60 yrs, Puri Sabji vendor)

¹⁰⁴ A Rice Meat dish

5.2.2 Stories of struggle and survival

There is a *Puri Sabji* cycle just at the entry point of Sarojni Nagar market. It is surrounded by a large number of customers ordering and consuming food. The cycle constantly changes its position, so as to be invisible for the committee who raids the market and yet be visible for potential customers. There is an air of routine to this procedure, visible in the ease with which the two vendors keep maneuvering the cycle, which is loaded with a large pot full of *Sabji* and two small pots with other eatables, through the populous and rough parking area. Under a tree, well hidden by the constant crowd is the production centre, consisting of two women, one making the *Sabji* and the other much younger one rolling the dough for the bread. The vendor has a regular flow of customers, mostly drivers. This picture symbolizes the archetypical street food vendors, with his number of Low Income Customers (Referred to as LIC), the constant looming threat and the family members producing the product in the background. The main customers here were drivers and servants, discernible through their mode of dressing. While observing the cycle in a time span of fifteen minutes, it had changed its location five times, in a radius of approx. 150 sq. Mt.



Bhagirath palace near *Chandni chowk* is a wholesale market for electronic goods and surgical tools. Its narrow lanes are constantly crowded and in a permanent traffic jam. Most of the corners are hosting food vendors selling a varied amount of eatables. Each vendor specializes on one type of food, be it *Dal Chawal*¹⁰⁵, the more elaborate *Paneer Kulcha*¹⁰⁶, *Sabji Roti*¹⁰⁷ or different types of raw fruits and fruits juices. All together they form a diverse offering of foods for very little money. Vendors clustering next to each other often sell products that can be combined to form a good meal, thus avoiding competition with one's immediate neighbor. For

¹⁰⁵ simple rice and dal

¹⁰⁶ bread filled with cheese

¹⁰⁷ vegetables and bread

example three vendors next to each other will typically be specialized on one serving fruits, the second selling cooked food and the third selling a sweet dish that can go as dessert. In Bhagirath palace vendors do face harassment from the municipality department and police. Given the fact that space is very limited, they are perceived as major obstruction and at fault for causing traffic jams. Workers within Bhagirath palace are in favor of street food vendors, since there are no other restaurants in the immediate vicinity. Most of the customers (eight out of ten) are working class people who come on a regular basis.



The *Anda* Bread vendor goes around with his cycle and delivers bread and eggs to those houses who ask him to cater to him. He can be considered as an example for an ambulant vendor. He covers two colonies which are allotted on an informal basis. New entrants are not allowed into this sector, thus currently it is mostly vendors who were pursuing this profession before 2007. When a new tenant moves into the colony, the ambulant vendor contacts him, asking whether he is interested in daily delivery of certain essentials (milk, eggs & bread). If an agreement is reached, the new tenant will receive his ration daily at a fixed time. Since the vendor price and the shop price are the same, the daily delivery becomes a complementary service for the customer.

One *Anda* bread vendor questioned in Anand Lok¹⁰⁸ could also sell other products like milk, sugar, butter and yet he chose to leave it for another ambulant vendor to do so. This is an example of non corporate logic.



The Sweet Potato vendors have a seasonal occupation. In winter they work as sweet potato sellers and in summer they work as juice makers. They have to deal with increasing traffic while pushing their cart through the streets. Many times they face abuses for obstructing the streets and thus they have started taking much longer and elaborate routes.

The sweet potato seller narrated how his enterprise was confiscated and thrown away, many times. Just one day afterwards he would be standing

¹⁰⁸ A residential locality in south Delhi

at his place again because he couldn't risk losing the right of location¹⁰⁹ to sell his material.



The Momo vendor on Sarojni Nagar market tries to keep his mini shop simple. He says that it's not worth investing much since the committee comes and confiscates everything which can only be released after a hefty fine is paid. He has approximately three Momo steamers lying in the committee depot, just bringing them back when his present one is confiscated. On the question whether he knows why his shop is being confiscated he seriously believes that the only motive is to procure money through fines. He had a mixed group of customers, working class people who were taking a lunch break and more affluent customers who were just taking a snack in midst of a shopping stroll.

Kommentar [S1]: Try explaining what are "MOMOS"

It seemed that he also functioned as an informal bank, giving small credit (10-50 Rs.) to destitute and casual wage workers. Beggars would safe keep their money with him, which he would write down in a book.

This worked on the basis of trust, because the vendor was aware who his main customers were. He could not risk betraying their trust, since this would call for social sanctioning within that market area. To an extent that he would lose most of his customers.



Sewa Nagar proves that vendors are necessary and therefore tolerated in low income population localities. Being a lower middle class colony with adjacent slums, the market is filled with an uncountable number of street vendors selling food or various other goods. It is an unusual sight for more uppity south Delhi to have a whole market area full of vendors, small alleys with even more vendors and uncountable people running between them, all this functioning in its own harmony. Though Sewa Nagar faces the same problems of eviction like anywhere else, the absurdity becomes more apparent, due to the large number of customers

¹⁰⁹ This is an informal right to location, that is respected by the other vendors.

each vendor serves. This is presumably the cheapest food one can acquire in whole Delhi. A generous portion of bread filled with omelets and three side dishes costs a mere 12 Rs.



The Momo vendor in front of Gargi College dared to raise his prices slowly, after initial protest the customers accepted it. Now he is serving at a rate of 25 Rs for vegetable momos and 35 Rs.non vegetable. His neighbor, a bread and vegetable seller provides a small meal for 15 rupees. A too quick price rise is never accepted by the customers. Since bargaining is very common, many refuse to pay the new price.

Both have to pay bribe to the police which are calculated according to their perceived sale by the police. The momo vendor complained that food prices have gone up constantly, but he cannot raise his prices, thus suffering a loss. Apart from them there is no other food stall offering cheap food, making these two the only option for low income population who are hungry. During meal times there is a rush of people lining up for food.



The fruit vendor on Kasturba Gandhi Hospital Road comes from a village in U.P and has been working in Delhi for 15 years. Judging from his looks, he must have started working as a teenager. He sells fruits served on small plates in two different price ranges, small pineapple plate for five rupees and bigger plate for 10 rupees. His margin for profit is between five and ten percent. The police come regularly to destroy his shop or ask for bribes. He said they have threatened him, abused him and beaten him but he refused to leave.

"Humko dusri naukri nahi de sakte to je nahi chodenge." (If they cant give us another job then we will not leave this).

It is his persistence that has made him survive. Except for solidarity with other vendors he has no union or interest group representing him. He goes back to his village every year for two or three months, since he does not like living in Delhi. He can save up some money which he takes back. He has some land which he shares with his family. Every day he goes to

the fruit market to procure fruits which he peels and cuts up into small cubes, serving them in small plates made out of leaves. His customers comprise of a varied bunch including office going *sahibs*, as well as working class people.



Sarojni Nagar market is surrounded by street food vendors, again serving a variety of low cost dishes. The price range is typically between 10 and 30 rupees. There are no restaurants offering food in this range other than the street vendors. Every possible niche has been used as a space for work. There is a diversification of food, similar to the one in Bhagirath palace. It seems as if there is a tacit understanding that vendors with the same product will search a niche for themselves.



The Chaiwallah, works just behind a tree in Sarojni Nagar market. He hides his materials, like sugar and milk with another shopkeeper, just refilling his tea pot every time he makes a new serve. He can't remember the number of times his tiny shop has been confiscated; neither does he know the reasons why? He believes it is some routine harassment that the powerful exercise on the weak, and he has to endure it with endless patience.

His neighbor is a man who brings three buckets of food everyday and sells them on a pathway, hidden behind a car. Local people know that they are there, and they squat around that place having their meal and chai. In Sarojni Nagar clearly all vendors cater to the less income segment of visitors, mainly drivers and servants working around the market.



A vegetable vendor working in Anand Lok, seemed very contempt with his life. He was allowed to service that colony and did not face too much hassle. He said that he has not been affected by recent arrival of supermarkets.

"People go there or here for produce. But with us they can bargain, they don't bargain with the supermarket people, so in the long run we are

cheaper. Strangely people buy expensive things in supermarkets without hesitating yet with me they bargain for as low as five rupees."

"Maybe sometimes the supermarket has very cheap produce which we cannot sell that cheap, but buying a whole range of items becomes more expensive. The supermarket has to get its rent and pay electricity bills etc, we are rehriwallah's so we don't have those expenses. I just look towards making 150- 300 Rs a day and then I am happy. I can't get a proper job with my skills which will fetch me anything similar to this. For jobs where I can make more than 10 000 Rs I have to possess more education"

Further he stated that produce has become more diverse, thus enabling him to sell a larger variety and therefore also earn more. He sells fruits coming from Australia, Africa or South India, which means some fruits are available now for twelve months a year which were earlier just available for some months¹¹⁰.

All the above mentioned narratives have one transient quality, the resilience of the food vendors to endure and adapt to a hostile environment. Their fight is what Bayat (2000) calls the silent encroachment of the ordinary.

5.3 Consumer Results

The astounding fact, that inspired the argumentation of this thesis, becomes apparent in the following comparisons. The void of perception and acceptance of the street food sector, among LIC and UMIC, is present in nearly every answer.

How often in a month do you go for street food?

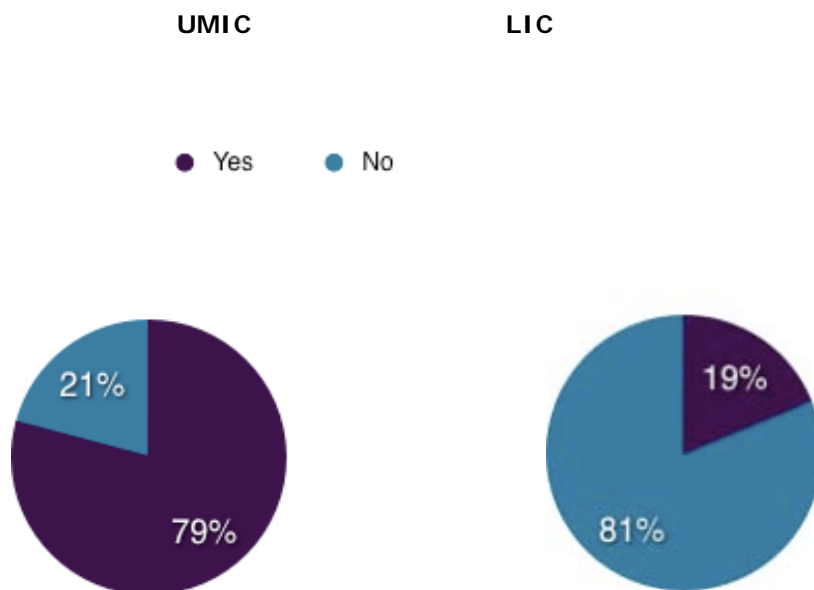
¹¹⁰ Asking him whether poor people also come to his establishment he answered in a derisive way" *The poor can nowadays only eat the peels of what is left, they cant afford fruits. Maybe apples at the most."*

	UMIC	LIC
Rarely	7	-
Approx. once a month	2	3
2-3 times a month	3	4
Many times a week	4	17

As becomes apparent from the table depicted above, frequency of visiting a food vendor was variant among the two broad categories. Nevertheless, the divide between LIC and UMIC still comes through. Respondents from LIC used to frequent food stalls much more than the respondents from UMIC.

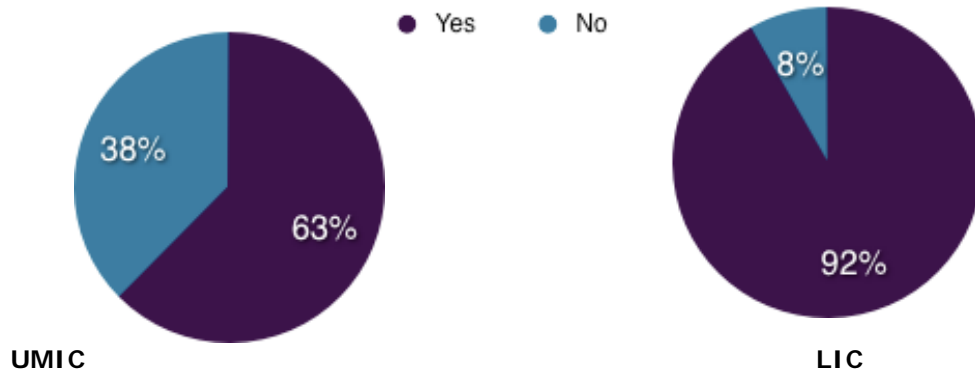
Do you think Street food is Hygienic ?

Only 3 out of 16 from the UMIC thought that street food was hygienic. Yet 19 out of 24 in the LIC thought that street food was hygienic.



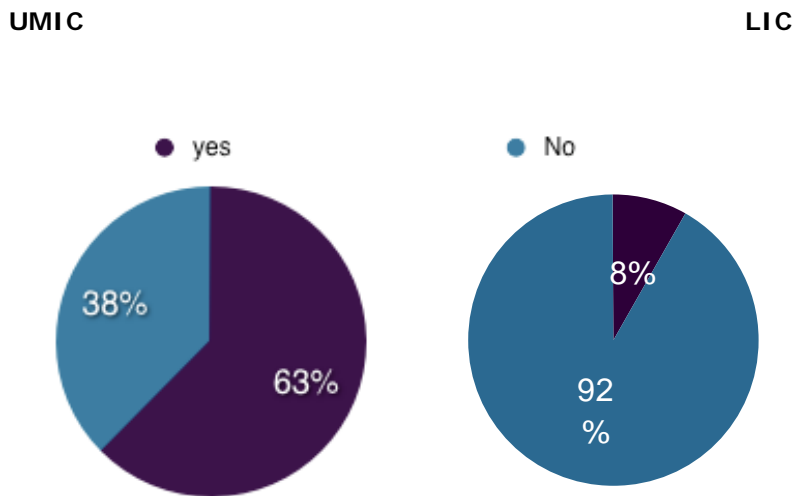
Is there a necessity to protect street food ?

6 out of 16 from the UMIC and 22 out of 24 from the LIC felt that there was a necessity to protect street food.



Are you in favor of the Ban on street cooking?

In response to this question 10 out of 16 from the UMIC were clearly in favor of the ban, while only 2 out of 24 from the LIC agreed with it.



The majority in LIC are against the Ban.

The Ban was perceived, by those in favor of it, as a measure by the state for public safety. Delhi has had a history of epidemics and though there was no proof of it, street food had been blamed.

A gentleman from the upper income segment felt it was right that hawkers are being removed for the sake of gentrification.

*"This has been due for many years and had to be pursued with an iron hand", "These people come from everywhere flocking into the city and creating nuisance. The city will be much cleaner without them."*¹¹¹. (, Male 47, UMIC)

A regular customer from the LIC sample had a deviant perspective.

"They want us to eat packaged food, which they think is safer than the one being prepared in front of our eyes. I trust my own judgment more than that of some ministry, so i want to have a choice whether I eat this (street) food or not. The rich in this city can go to any restaurant but I cannot afford that. I really hope the ban is not implicated" (Male 37,yrs.,LIC).

He continues his lament *"This man serving food for 20 rupees offers us a different dish every day, I don't think we will have this variety of hot food if the ban is pursued. We will be forced to eat cold sandwiches everyday"*

"I can only go to street food stalls since my income ¹¹² does not allow for more. Sometimes me, my wife and child come here on a holiday and we don't want to cook dinner." (Male, 37 yrs., LIC) says a person at Sewa Nagar market.

Similar to this office going worker from a low income segment said *"I have just half an hour lunch break where I can buy a fresh juice and a small meal for 40 Rs. This will not be possible if these people (street food vendors) go away. we will be forced to drink packaged juices and packaged food, nobody can tell me this is for my safety."* If the government is bothered about our safety then give these people access to water and other infrastructure, they will produce better food than restaurants, here in front of us."(Male, 38 yrs, LIC)

¹¹¹ On the reasons why he doesn't pay his servants more, so they can also afford to go shopping in malls and supermarkets he answered that "it will destroy the market rate, one cannot do that".

¹¹² The Hindi word used here was *Hasiyat* which means capacity and also economic status

Do you like street food?

The majority of the people liked street food. From the UMIC some respondents declared their fondness for SF (5 out of 16). From the LIC there were many who said that they did not particularly like street food, it was just very convenient and affordable (9 out of 24).

Those who did not like street food had moved to other alternatives, always in a pricier bracket. Some from the UMIC said they ordered now more pizza and Chinese from restaurants for their lunch, than go for street food.

Necessity of street food sector?

Maybe this question was the most revealing of all. None of the UMIC could come up with significance to this sector while all from the LIC saw many useful functions of street food.

Upon reminding that fresh fruit juices and vegetable vendors bringing supplies directly home also comprised the unorganized food sector, some (7 out of 16), admitted that there could be functionality to the sector. No one came up with the suggestion that its significance could be for the poor of the city. In general not much thought had been given towards this. All from the UMIC mentioned the convenience that the unorganized food sector provides¹¹³.

For respondents from the LIC, the picture was much more diverse. They knew of the diversity of foods, what all they can get in a certain price range, that there are clean and hygienic vendors and those who are not. One man counted that he could choose among up to 10 different types of food for his daily meals.

¹¹³ The convenience of hawkers and food stalls was highly internalized into normalcy, as people had to be reminded to realize how many times they had actually frequented such a place. People remembered stories from travel and work, situations when they had frequented unlit food stalls in unnamed streets, experienced another side of their own country.

The fact that they can purchase cut fruits and vegetables served like salad, instead of having to buy them in bulk, was appreciated by many. This was seen as a cheap way to enhance their nutrition¹¹⁴.

What do you not like about street food or the street food vendors?

10 respondents from the UMIC said that it was just “oily and unhealthy”¹¹⁵ food. The street food vendors take up illegal space and encroach it. They did not trust the materials used since *“many times they use cheap inferior products to have more profit and that can make you quite sick”*. (Male, 52 years, UMIC)

*“We don’t want food stalls in our colony, because they attract many other people, especially working class people. This makes our colony unsafe, I don’t want my daughter to come back home if the street are full of those rouge people”*¹¹⁶.” (Male, 45 yrs., UMIC)

While the main concern ousted by UMIC was that of hygiene and public space, nutritional value was not mentioned at all.

Contrary to this, the main concern of LIC was that of nutritional value to the food they ate. They knew that vendors have to often substitute expensive ingredients with inferior ingredients, yet their seemed to be an understanding about this. The reasons for this could be that all respondents from LIC were aware of the rocketing food prices, while for UMIC it was something they had read in the news about, but not really felt it.

The reason of LIC to buy branded food was more for the perceived superiority of nutritional value. There was a feeling of inferiority among some respondents who were not proud that they go everyday for street food.

¹¹⁴ The words mentioned in this regard were “vitamin vaghera bhi milta hai..” which means “it is a good source of all those vitamins etc”.

¹¹⁵ “Oily and unhealthy” was a term that seems to have seeped into middle class consciousness, since it emerged frequently.

¹¹⁶ Shockingly, the word used was “Gande Log” which means actually dirty people.

Would you buy your vegetables from a street vendor or from a super market? Why?

This question provoked interesting reactions from respondents. While the UMIC would go for both, according to convenience, respondents from LIC would only go for street vendors.

The UMIC respondents preferred supermarkets (13 out of 16) because of many reasons. Supermarkets were air conditioned, one could purchase a variation of products and some products were cheaper. Yet all of them would buy vegetables also from a *Rheriwalla*, because of the convenience of home delivery¹¹⁷.

Most of the LIC (20 out of 24) had only been once inside a supermarket, out of curiosity. The reasons given for this were more social than economic. Supermarkets represented a realm they did not feel very comfortable about.

For example one man answered on the question whether he goes to super markets or street vegetable sellers.

"I buy from the rehriwallah because I can chose and bargain. I can talk with the vendor; in a super market I don't feel good. There mostly English is spoken, boards are written which I cannot read and I cannot bargain. I would like to go there shopping but I don't feel good about it, so I don't go." (Male, 60 yrs., LIC)

5.4 Perceptions on the unorganized Food sector in general.

Again a deviance can be seen between the two types of customers interviewed and their reactions.

UMIC had in general a modernist approach, unorganized work would vanish, they evade taxes, encroach public space. Most of the respondents (14 out of 16) favored the government harsh stand against this sector. It was seen imperative, if India was to ever reach modernity. Only one

¹¹⁷ This was a curious point, because most of them favored supermarkets yet admitted to buying vegetables from an ambulant vendor, most days of the week. This implies that though they would like to buy in supermarkets, it is much more convenient to buy from a vendor in front of the door.

respondent saw a connection between his living style (big house with many servants, drivers and guards) and the unorganized sector, as enabling it. The food was considered a part time snack, something one could indulge in for fun, though all admitted that sometimes it could be very good. Most of the UMIC respondents did not mind if the sector gets abolished.

None were aware of the implications, such a ban would have for the urban poor, or how essential low cost food was for a vast population in their city. The whole picture changes while looking at the responses from LIC. Here there was much more empathy towards the unorganized food vendors and resentment towards the forces destroying it. Very few (2 out of 24) favored abolishment; most of them wanted some improvements. Some respondents wanted to strike a balance between the deviating effects of complete abolishment and subsidized protection.



UMIC respondents have had hardly any contact with people who were street vending, except the commercial exchange. It was clear that LIC knew vendors and even claimed to have made friends within that profession. This could be because they were more regular customers and so could develop some form of basic relationship with them. Respondents were much more sympathetic towards the street food vendors and had more insight into the travails they have to face than the UMIC people. The survival strategy and difficulties faced by street vendors was known to most LIC respondents.



One common notion encountered during all interviews with higher income segment was the unawareness about the realities of street vendors. Many people knew of the ban but had not given much thought to it. All had seen violence against street vendors or the urban poor, but could hardly come up with reasons why it must be happening.

"This country is going to the dogs. Nothing will happen here unless we use force like China." (Male, 35 yrs., UMIC)

"Those are filthy places and if they are removed the people will do some better jobs. After all it can't be a fulfilling job. Even in Europe and America their used to be mostly informal economy but now everyone has good and safe jobs" (Female, 52 yrs., UMIC)



There was a frequent display of dissent towards the poor.

"If they are poor they should not get children. Why do they have so many children though they cannot afford them?"(Male, 35 yrs., UMIC)

"They crowd the streets and make them unsafe." (Female, 28 yrs., UMIC)

"It's not my fault that they are poor, why should I suffer, every time I want to get home and I get stuck in traffic jams in the Bazaar?" (Male, 40 yrs., UMIC)

One man argued

"Well it can't be too bad otherwise they would not do it. They get children so it means they are surviving."(Female, 35 yrs., UMIC)

"These people have to go back to their places, because they attract more and more, yet this city is already full."(Female, 28 yrs., UMIC)¹¹⁸



The hygiene argument was used as an explanation why they don't go to these places. Yet at the same time everyone had at least once dined at a street place.

"I get sick from the food because of the oil and so I avoid it." (Female, 62 yrs., UMIC)

"In my student days I would frequent these places quite often, but now I feel ashamed to stand around a street vendor in a street where everyone

¹¹⁸ Curiously, this person was herself a migrant and most of her friends too. It seemed she differentiated between the quality of migrants who should be allowed and those who should not be allowed to migrate.

can see me. They will say he can afford much better places and still he goes here. I don't want that. It is also that I don't feel safe (hygiene wise) anymore." (Male 40, MIC).

An observation was made that while most of the UMIC respondents said that they felt street food was unhygienic, they had never questioned the hygienic conditions of other fast food chains. Everyone agreed that street vendors use inferior ingredients, but at the same time they believed that fast food chains automatically would use more nutritional ingredients. This has not been proven in any country so far¹¹⁹.

For females interviewed, the atmosphere at a street vendor plays a big issue. Many street food places are frequented over-dominantly by men and thus women often avoid these places especially after the dark. Women in Delhi hardly ever go to a street vendor alone, unless it is in their known neighborhood. Especially women from the upper and middle income segment seemed to avoid street food vendors completely.

"There are always men standing around and staring. I don't like going to these places, it seems filthy." (Female 26 yrs., UMIC)

"Street food vendors have a sleazy atmosphere. I go only in places crowded with other women." (Female 24 yrs, UMIC)

"It's not that I don't like those places, I actually loved them as a child, but after growing up, they make me uncomfortable. Though I still go there with other friends"

Women hailing from the lower income segment were frequenting street food vendors, yet as it seemed, reluctantly, they would go in a group or with some male accompaniment, only go if necessary. Of course exceptions were made with vendors who were familiar and respectable.

¹¹⁹ It has not been proved that McDonald, Burger King or KFC, in developing countries with a vibrant street food culture, provide any more nutritional food than the street food vendors (Tinker 1997, Schlosser 2001).

Young couples who can afford better places will always prefer restaurants and cafe's because they will feel more secure, away from peeving eyes of street commuters.

Middle class India has its own explanations why street food vendors are poor.

Without intention many concomitant issues, not directly concerning street food, seeped into the conversation, which bear testimony, to the ignorance of the appropriated class, and the structural exclusion of the unorganized workers.



It seemed that resentment against street food vendors arises quickly after the purchase of the first car or vehicle. In Delhi parking spaces are often cause of great agony and anger. Es-specially in lower income class colonies the streets are narrow and clustered with food vendors. Middle class people having worked and saved for many years, can finally afford a car but realize the bitter truth that space for driving and parking is limited (Dasgupta 2009). The paucity of city planning is not seen, what is seen are the vendors clogging space.

A form of NIMBYISM¹²⁰ exists in Delhi, where many people want hawkers and their informal services to survive, so they can procure pirated films, cheap goods if necessary. They just don't want them in their colonies.



People from LIC expressed, implicitly, that corporate world was not for them. They had heard stories of people like them visiting multiplexes and being thrown out by the guard¹²¹. As mentioned earlier, many poor people just don't feel comfortable in that environment because they are reminded of their poverty painfully, as following statements illustrate.

¹²⁰ Nimby stands for "not in my backyard" and describes resident movements with the guise of public benefit advocating their own benefit. People want garbage dumps, but not in their area, so they protest with public mobilization. this would be a classical form of NIMBYISM

¹²¹ It is a known fact that lower income people, discernible through their clothes and physiognomy, are often not allowed into big super markets or multiplexes. There is no such official policy, but unofficially everyone knows about this.

"If I ever go to a shopping mall or a restaurant, I feel ashamed of myself. I am made to feel unwanted. People like me are only seen as servants there, not as consumers. Here on the street we maybe don't have chairs and tables, but we feel respected and well treated."(Male, 23 yrs., LIC)

"I don't have the capacity, to visit a multiplex or a supermarket. The Bazaar is more fitting for me and my children." (Male, 62yrs, LIC)

Many customers from the LIC agreed with the following quote of Rajagopal that "...it is here more than in any other market environment, we may remind ourselves, that the customer is truly king." (Rajagopal 2002)



"The government resettled many and gave them houses, but then again they just resold it to live in tents. Most of their money they spend on prostitutes, cigarettes and alcohol so how will they be rich?" (Male, 26 yrs, UMIC)

This opinion I have encountered in various guises while talking with more affluent people.

The argument frequently turned up, encompassing the notion, that poor don't value the efforts taken for their upliftment. This is often used as a justification for the harshness of the state or the indifference portrayed by the affluent individual. 16 out of 20 in the upper and middle income segments made remarks along following lines.

"We give them better places to stay but they sell those plots and start living in slums again. What can you do for them?" (Male 28 yrs., UMIC)

"They use resettlement schemes for making money." (Male 36 yrs., UMIC)

"They are here in the city to make money and go back to the village, thus they don't care about the quality of living. They are happy in their make shift arrangements." (Female 43 yrs., UMIC)

"Clearance is the only way they learn the lesson of being civilized." (Female 64. yrs, UIS)

The idea that urban poor resell their houses, allocated to them through resettlement schemes, has left a deep impression in the psyche of the upper and middle class. In fact it is true that many such occurrences happened, especially during the 80's and 90's, yet the reasons behind are much more economic and logical than an inert desire of the poor to live poor. It was found that in the capital city people had sold their plots in the resettlement colonies and were squatting once again on public land because employment opportunities and thus income saving was much higher. Compared to the high costs of transportation and the time loss arising due to the peripheral location of the new colonies, squatting seemed more economically viable (Rai, 1985).

5.5 Commentary on chapter 4 and 5.

In Chatterjee's words, when corporate capital becomes hegemonic, it starts ousting non corporate capital gradually. There is a slow and constant demise of self employed street workers, but this does not imply that they are moving into the organized sector. It is more a transformation from self-employed to employed with minimum change in income. They still remain in the category of vulnerable, living just above poverty line but in any event of emergency be it hospitalization, roof collapse or death of a family member they are back into the tentacles of poverty (Sengupta in Sehgal 2007).

Hygiene is an important issue for all among the sample of respondents, though the method of assessing hygiene seems different. While UMIC believe that packaged and branded products are more hygienic, the LIC believes in their own assessment¹²².

The relevant issue is not that of hygiene, because hygiene can be learned and achieved through training's, education and best examples. The relevant issue is that of affordability. Does one need purchasing power to afford hygiene?

There is a difference between people who like cheap places because they are cheap and those who go to cheap places because they cannot afford more. Without doubt, given the infrastructure food vendors are capable of producing hygienic food. Then even those who cannot afford hygiene can have access to it.

Constantly ignored, by policy makers and the everyday public, seems to be the fact that street vendors mainly cater for the urban poor, and their abolition will affect them severely, making their everyday life more difficult.

¹²² There are well functioning informal networks of information, where people know where they can get the best and cleanest type of food with their affordability.

It is not the absence of higher paying UMIC customers that turns the heat on for street food vendors, they have enough customers. Their pricing cannot be matched by any enterprise, in terms of low cost. Through their 'self exploitation' they are ready to accept diminishing returns. Never the less they have been adversely affected by it, but on a different realm. There is increasing pressure on them that is very part due to new global ideas of development. It is this increasing hostile environment that causes them disdain

UMIC assume that inferior products are used by street vendors, though this may be true, they do not bother about this while visiting MNC fast food chains. Here they believe in the superiority of the product used. Even the Health Department, showed this bias towards unorganized stalls, in comparison with branded food stalls that were never raided (te Lintelo 2009).

Customer knew that police raids and corruption is insidious in India, thus the corruption and discrimination, was not a surprise for them. There was a passive acceptance of this blatant discrimination that had not been given any thought. The alienation of this sector from everyday life, could give rise to more unreflected bias.

Gentrifying market areas without a general elevation of incomes for everyone, will lead to a further widening of the one sided approach that modernism is taking, purchasing power will be the sole benefiter. Already now low income population complains of the few choices that they are left with.

Chapter 6: Cultural Imperialism and conspicuous consumption

On an individual level people make consumption choices out of free will, yet these choices are influenced by tacit and implicit notions¹²³. These notions of the affluent classes are increasingly influenced by globalization, or what some call cultural imperialism of globalization. The proceeding chapter will briefly elucidate the effects of cultural imperialism and how status becomes an important variable defining consumption choice, gradually permeating into the societal unconsciousness. It further argues that both cultural imperialism and conspicuous consumption play a role in defining and promoting a new visual regime, which is structurally affecting street food vendors.

6.1 Cultural imperialism

Cultural imperialism is expressed through the influence of a certain culture on another culture. Cultural imperialism is seen inevitable with the onset of economic globalization, as it has become an integral part of the process. The dominant values or ideas of the hegemonic culture, which is western culture or more precisely American culture, become more relevant undermining local values and ideas.

In the words of Schiller:

“A society is brought into the modern world system, when its dominating stratum is attracted, pressured, forced, and sometimes bribed into shaping its social institutions to correspond to, or even promote, the values and structures of the dominating center of the system” (Schiller 1976, 103)

Globalization was initially a mere economic process but has increasingly grown to influence many other spheres of human life, be it their social

¹²³ People choose between branded and not branded, because of their notion which is better, cleaner etc

behavior or politics and culture. Increasingly the cultural expansion is being perceived as a problem or challenge (Galeota 2004).

Although the study of cultural imperialism falls in the domain of cultural studies and predominantly focuses on the transformation of culture's through the hegemonic American culture (Ibid), here it is used to show how western notions of hygiene or the idea of a clean modern town are part of a cultural imperialism that is gaining influence in the country.

Tomlinson argues that in conditions of globalization a growing number of people are influenced by cultural trends that are typical for capitalist modernity and furthermore

“...as global cultures fall into conditions of modernity through the spread of the institutions of modernity, they all face the same problem of the failure of a collective will to generate shared narratives of meaning and orientation” (Tomlinson1991, p.165).

Thus, it is possible to speak about cultural imperialism as a consequence of the impact of several factors, modernity, spread of global capitalist system, development of media and increasing role of information, and enforcement of cultural nationalism just to mention a few.

The cultural imperialism is very obvious in television, cinema and radio but also very much present in the consumption choices people make, the reasons they have for their choice and in the way people perceive their social reality. This impact of cultural imperialism is much more discernible in Asian countries, because it is in a strong contrast to their own particular culture (Chen 1996, 42).

The decisions made by Indian judiciary and random comments made by affluent classes for example, show forms of cultural imperialism, as local preferences are overlooked in favor of world class benchmarks. The gaze of admiration goes towards countries afar, while it is blind to its very own special surroundings. For instance, successive cities in Europe are introducing cycle rickshaws as an ecological mode of transport, India is

adamant at abolishing them, still focusing on highways and motorized transport.

This also is the case for street vendors selling processed food. They are not allowed to serve cooked food though they have customers, because it is considered unsafe for the citizens. Packaged food is considered much safer as it complies with international standards.

6.2 Conspicuous consumption of the upper and middle Class

The middle and upper class in India is as varied as India itself, yet for an analysis of consumption pattern it is necessary to work with this broad category. It is the more consuming and affluent segment that we refer to¹²⁴.

Like in most capitalist economic countries, conspicuous consumption has become a noted phenomenon of the well off class. Indian society, increasingly in urban areas, cultivates a strong reverence towards status and status symbols, and it is for this that conspicuous consumption is omnipresent throughout the emerging Indian landscape. Products that are beyond affordability for the majority of its people are displayed and promoted vicariously.

In the search for theories describing the change of middle class consumption, one stumbles across Thorstein Veblen's 1889 book "*The theory of the leisure class*" and his 1902 seminal work "*conspicuous consumption*". Conspicuous consumption is that form of consumption the nouveau riche indulges in, which is not necessary for living and yet an essential indicator of one's status. His descriptions of changing consumption patterns, of those who emerge as wealthy during the second industrial revolution, and through it the reformation of social class in the nascent 20th century, seems fitting even a century later to describe the arrival of conspicuous consumption in Delhi. What he refers to as the "gentleman of leisure" or the "leisure class" can now be said for the consuming middle and upper class.

¹²⁴ The previously mentioned approx. 300 million well of Indians.

"During the earlier stages of economic development, consumption of goods without stint, especially consumption of the better grades of goods,--ideally all consumption in excess of the subsistence minimum, --pertains normally to the leisure class. This restriction tends to disappear, at least formally, after the later peaceable stage has been reached, with private ownership of goods and an industrial system based on wage labor or on the petty household economy. But during the earlier quasi-peaceable stage, when so many of the traditions through which the institution of a leisure class has affected the economic life of later times were taking form and consistency, this principle has had the force of a conventional law. It has served as the norm to which consumption has tended to conform, and any appreciable departure from it is to be regarded as an aberrant form, sure to be eliminated sooner or later in the further course of development." (Veblen 1902)

Yet as can be noted from a contemporary view point, the "peaceable" stage has not been reached in developing countries so far, and it is a fundamental debate whether it will ever be reached, given the vastness of underdeveloped population and the dawning realization that wealth cannot be achieved for all.

As observed consumption above the subsistence minimum in Delhi is still confined to a leisure class, which definitely has expanded, but still remains a minority in comparison with the whole population.

With the affordability of certain products, a mindset also sets which deems certain products as befitting and other as not worthy of one's status or intelligence.

"The quasi-peaceable gentleman of leisure, then, not only consumes of the staff of life beyond the minimum required for subsistence and physical efficiency, but his consumption also undergoes a

specialization as regards the quality of the goods consumed.....He becomes a connoisseur in creditable viands of various degrees of merit, in manly beverages and trinkets, in seemly apparel and architecture, in weapons, games, dancers, and the narcotics." (Ibid)

Consumption of branded products becomes a way of defining oneself or at least differentiating oneself from the *Aam log*¹²⁵. In India this has become visibly evident over the last decade.

"Since the consumption of these more excellent goods is an evidence of wealth, it becomes honorific; and conversely, the failure to consume in due quantity and quality becomes a mark of inferiority and demerit."¹²⁶ (Ibid)

This was illustrated vividly by a food vendor in Delhi who said that "if I would charge two hundred rupees for one bowl of *Choley* (*cooked chick peas*) which currently costs 20 Rs. then nobody would ask about hygiene and I would have more customers from better income groups". (Puri Sabji Vendor, male, 36 yrs)

According to that Veblen states:

"This growth of punctilious discrimination as to qualitative excellence in eating, drinking, etc., presently affects not only the manner of life, but also the training and intellectual activity of the gentleman of leisure. ... for it now becomes incumbent on him to discriminate with some nicety between the noble and the ignoble in consumable goods." (Ibid)

It is here than the idea of hygiene plays a role. People who start earning better or who have grown up in affluent surroundings have a different

¹²⁵ common people

¹²⁶ Indeed this inferiority was felt among all LIC respondents who would like to consume differently, but forced to buy cheap products, which are even perceived inferior by others.

concept of hygiene. They perceive that street food is filthy and undeserving of their social status.

Conspicuous consumption is not confined amongst the rich, establishing a mental relationship between upper class lifestyle, the perceived appropriate mode of living, is the classic method of popularizing non essential goods.

In his essay on Delhi Dasgupta notes the arrival of a multitude of brands and new lifestyles, among the rich and those aspiring to be.

“There is nothing superficial about brands in contemporary Delhi. This is a place where one’s social significance is assumed to be nil unless there are tangible signs to the contrary, so the need for such signs is authentic and fierce. And in these times of stupefying upheaval, when all old meanings are under assault, it is corporate brands that seem to carry the most authority. Brands hold within them the impressive infinity of the new global market. They hold out the promise of dignity and distinction in a harsh city that constantly tries to withhold these things. They even offer clarity in intimate questions: ‘He drives a Honda City,’ a woman says, meaningfully, about a prospective son-in-law. Brands help to stave off the terror of senselessness, and the more you have the better. Where the old socialist elite was frugal and unkempt, the new Delhi aristocracy is exuberantly consumerist.”
(Dasgupta 2009)

This consumerist values have mass appeal for all other segments of society, even those who cannot afford it. This trend has been exacerbated by the media, for example the English media in Delhi, which is more concerned with fashion shows and lavish lifestyles of celebrities than social issues.

Most English newspapers in the capital carry a 3-5 page supplement called page three that focuses exclusively on sumptuous and luxurious lifestyles

or brands that are not accessible to 99% of its population. Critique about the bias towards promoting middle and upper class values; and blatant fostering of corporate interest through the media has been stated by Sainath (1996)

“The leisure class stands at the head of the social structure in point of reputability; and its manner of life and its standards of worth therefore afford the norm of reputability for the community. The observance of these standards, in some degree of approximation, becomes incumbent upon all classes lower in the scale. In modern civilized communities the lines of demarcation between social classes have grown vague and transient, and wherever this happens the norm of reputability imposed by the upper class extends its coercive influence with but slight hindrance down through the social structure to the lowest strata. The result is that the members of each stratum accept as their ideal of decency the scheme of life in vogue in the next higher stratum, and bend their energies to live up to that ideal. On pain of forfeiting their good name and their self-respect in case of failure, they must conform to the accepted code, at least in appearance” (Veblen 1902).

Scrase (2006) shows how this approximation towards affluent lifestyles is financially strenuous and often bereft of logic for the Indian lower middle class. He sees a drastic change in the consumption patterns of middle class families researched over a period of ten years.

It is only in the lower levels of indigence that people cease to consume valuable goods for their appearance. This is the realm where the consumption levels are bereft of any pretentiousness and follow the sole principle of necessity.

Yet recent research on conspicuous consumption (Postrel 2008) shows that as soon as one rises in economic terms conspicuous consumption becomes an important aspect. Even more in emerging market economies

where large parts of the population live in the above mentioned “lower levels of indigence”, people who just cross the margin start indulging excessively in conspicuous consumption.

6.3 Cultural imperialism and the new visual regime

There is a reshaping of social relations, caused by new ways of seeing and thinking, influenced by the growth and spread of markets.

“A distinctive ensemble of commodity aesthetics is diffusing across not only the stores and bazaars, but other old and new urban spaces as well as more intimate settings, displacing and transforming earlier understandings of harmony and balance” (Rajagopal 2002)

Rajagopal (2002) defines this change in social relations as the influence of the “...increasing centrality of consumption to the formation of social identities”. He further elucidates that “...consumption has become a new and unpredictable form of civic participation, distinct from those prevailing in the era of the developmental state.” (Rajagopal 2002, 65)

He posits that there are new kinds of rights and capacities for imagination that are generated by market and media, which have not been scrutinized in prevailing academic schema.

Ironically, food vendors are part of the economy that spurs consumption, but yet they function as “vagrant figures requiring to be disciplined.”(Ibid).

There is a new “visual regime” that redefines forms of human coexistence- A visual regime that reconfigures politics and the public sphere. It creates notions of public space and aesthetic value, which are further pursued and implemented largely by those classes that are hegemonic.

The new media technologies¹²⁷, connect vast masses of hitherto unconnected population with urban spheres¹²⁸, ideas, new modes of existence, but also discriminatory perceptions about their modes of living.

“The uneven character of the resulting development has provoked new forms of social imagination that cannot be understood simply as delayed manifestation of events already seen elsewhere.” (Ibid)

The new forms of social imagination often ignore the existing realities for the majority of population in India, who are not only ridiculed through policies and actions concerning them, but are also portrayed in inferior ways- A subtle form of discrimination created by this regime, appropriated in the self perception of the poor.

6.3.1 Role of media

Examples from advertising should illustrate the workings of the new visual regime.

Advertisements focus primarily on their assessed market, which is generally a segment of society with a certain purchasing power. With the growing purchasing power of upper and middle class an aesthetic is introduced in television, print media and cinema, which is not always acceptable to popular audiences. Many examples come to the mind but following were selected for their poignancy in explaining the point.

A car advertisement where the woman asks the man why he brings his car to company showroom if the mechanic near their house is cheaper? He keeps quite and after the work is done asks her out for tea. The next scene shows the car stop near a small roadside food stall. The woman is appalled and asks in shock “You want to take me for tea, here at this place? It is dirty.” The man smiles and says that’s the reason he took his

¹²⁷ innumerable television channels with their insatiable appetite for news, constantly depict stories that adhere to middle and upper class sentiments. Thus generally in favor for legal enforcements and strict regime against recalcitrant encroachers.

¹²⁸ Establishment of national television throughout the geographical boundaries of India has been concluded in the late 80’s and beginning 90’s.

car to the showroom. Final scene shows them entering a “proper¹²⁹” teahouse.

This makes the insinuation that informal unpaid work is always of inferior quality and therefore if affordable, one should go for the established companies. It is not deemed fitting to visit these places. Yet as Rajagopal (2002) points out in a country where majority of population still goes to informal enterprises or works there, cultural violence¹³⁰ is perpetrated against this majority.

An advertisement by a juice manufacturing MNC shows that their juice is the pure form of fruit without outside contamination, a revolving mango or orange that colorfully implodes to become a juice, flowing into the packaging. A Family sitting in a “proper” living room taking their essential vitamins is the concluding scene.

A country like India were, most towns and cities, have fruit juice vendors selling fresh pressed juices to all customers, it becomes essential to differentiate on the lines of hygiene and better quality, if you enter the market with packaged fruit juices. Though the question whether packaged food is more hygienic remains disputed, it is of course taken for granted.

The “*thanda matlab Coca Cola*” campaign by Coca Cola is another revealing example, how a visual regime is gradually established through the projection of certain notions. A brand appropriates virtues of a trade that are beneficial, adding it to the brand appeal, yet at the same time discriminating those aspects that could be of a commercial threat. It was a series of advertisements with the before mentioned slogan that were broadcasted over a period of approx. five years, using a famous Indian celebrity¹³¹. *Thanda* was, and to some degree still is, the colloquial term for a cold beverage, and thus the slogan implied that cold beverage means Coca cola. It would typically use small stalls, as its backdrop scene, with the coca cola selling stall being a legitimate enterprise (that is

¹²⁹ “Proper here refers to the ideal imagined setting, generally that of affluent modern standards.

¹³⁰ As discussed in the following chapter, it is a form of cultural violence.

¹³¹ It was the period of Coca Cola’s market expansion on the subcontinent

searched for by people) and those selling homemade cold beverages¹³² are shown as the aberrant vagabonds selling the dupe, in the name of the original. I.e., one advertisement showed that a local city guide was treated on a “homemade” cola by his supposedly urban customers, telling him it was the real Coca Cola. In his disgruntled mood he shows his customers an ugly appalling building declaring it to be the Taj Mahal, and a small street cat as the great Indian Tiger. Upon the disbelief of his customers he snorts angrily that if that drink was a Coca Cola, then these things are what he declares them to be.

The transient notion, among all ads of this series, was that only a branded product was worth consumption and therefore required, everything else was a form of dishonesty towards the consumer. The powerful impact of aspersions like this needs no further elaboration.

“The urban image invoked here is like a narcissistic fantasy in which any external social elements external to the projected consumption utopia are forbidden” (Rajagopal 2005)

6.3.2 Appropriation of food vendors in the new visual regime

As explained earlier a growing market for consumer brands, local and global, tries to replace the informal economy of food stalls, but still seeks to absorb the image it replaces.

Most news reports, especially English media, try to portray street food stalls as anarchistic and illegitimate, mirroring middle class and corporate campaigns against *Pheriwallahs*.

However, installing a new visual regime, where in the itinerant traders get metamorphosed into a special cap and T shirt wearing store and mall employee is a structural shift that does not happen peacefully. “Violence is inseparable from this shift and in the imagination of the process, television is an accomplice”.

¹³² There used to exist, and in some states still surviving, a variation of homemade soda's that would cost one third of a coca cola bottle. Interestingly they would serve one flavor called cola, which smelled similar to the corporate beverage.

The beginning of this century saw fierce media campaigns against encroachments (Ibid). The point of encroachment giving another lucid example of the biased perception food hawkers have to deal with. Food hawkers would not exist without the connivance of police and municipality. Builders all over India are infamous for their link with politicians providing them votes in exchange for favor (change in zoning laws etc).

Delhi like other Indian cities boasts of examples where essentially public urban spaces were given to some builders, violating zoning laws with impunity. There are major construction sites and building complexes that violate all laws existing undisturbed¹³³. Most people in Delhi encroach on public space, either through illegal expansion of their homes or appropriating public space as their private parking space.

Many problems persist and arise due to this haphazard planning, yet it is the smallest but most visible manifestation, the unorganized food sector, that is blamed and acted upon.

The arguments about street vendors and pavement dwellers, in the media generally lack consistency. An interesting observation made is that the controversy seldom revolves around the inhuman treatment meted out to our fellow citizens or the grotesque form of modernization imposed upon them. Rather more, it is the aesthetic and political side which provokes disdain. Street vendors are offensive, they make a place filthy, they cause inconvenience (blocking traffic) and above all they are illegal.

Objection to the food hawkers regard them as perpetrators of an injustice to the public, rather than as victims. The inability to remove them completely is not seen as an indication for wrong policy or an existing flawed structure within society. Rather it is seen as an indicator for the states corruption and the impotency to deal with these "illegal vagrants".

¹³³ This is no hidden secret. Most Indians are aware of it, as there are numerous hotels and shopping malls which are blatantly built without permission.

Examples of Shanghai, Singapore and Hongkong are cited in the media discourse, arousing certain fantasies but also further depressing the urban well settled "world city" dreamer, since achieving this dream in his city seems impossible¹³⁴ .

Middle class is more concerned with the proliferation of hawkers. It is often uttered, that the menace of street hawkers is taking over the urban city space, like the fear of a manicured garden park transforming into self-willed wilderness, if not weeded in time.

The perceived chaos is an ongoing torment in the eyes of the state. Food hawkers with their nomadic enterprises are forms of anarchy the state cannot tolerate. Thus the state attempts to introduce measures that can domesticate the vagrant, or exercise more control over them.

The effort to impose order on city spaces is about the value of real estate involved. Order (the western perception of order) and value (the monetary value of the real estate) are recurring themes in the aesthetic, economic and political argument wagon here.

The denial of proper citizenship to the majority of population widens the gap between the haves and the have not's, making it socially unsustainable for any democratic society. Those few places where various segments of society would invariably interact are being removed successively. Street vendors and pavement dwellers are not treated as citizens, whereas the well settled citizens assert their citizenship rights (clean space, parking place, private parks etc) with new gained certitude.

¹³⁴ For further media references to this argument see Rajagopal (2002

Chapter 7: Transcending “Violence against the poor” towards a more social sustainable society.

Arun Sengupta (commissioner of the NCEUS) reminds the Indian prime minister, that developmental conflicts like the present menace of Naxalism, ought to be addressed seriously and holistically “because at its heart is the deeper structural violence that our democratic Republic refuses to address: a violence that forces 77 percent of Indians to live on less than Rs 20 a day while 5 percent enjoy lives that border on obscene excess.” (NCEUS 2008, 1-13)

The “problem” of street vendors is now addressed in a different light, using the insights gained in the fore gone chapters. Street food vendors are presented as part of a larger conflict of interests between civil society and political society. Street food vendors and their activity is presented as a form of rebellion of the disenfranchised termed aptly as “silent encroachment of the ordinary” (Bayat 2000).

Finally the present chapter will discuss one alternate solution to the issue of street vendors. How can a sustainable solution be sought to improve the lives of street vendors is the underlying question here. For this the Transcend Approach for conflict mediation (Galtung 1990) has been utilized. It takes into consideration that a larger dimension, that of structural violence against the poor, is at work and thus any solution sought, needs to incorporate a violence mitigation effort (in all its dimensions structural, direct and cultural). After explaining the basic philosophy of the transcend approach, it is applied to imagine a different vision for Delhi.

7.1 Civil Society vs Political Society

Partha Chatterjee (Chatterjee 2008) argues that there are two diametrically opposed societies within the political realms of India, civil

society and political society, both led by a distinct economic logic, that of corporate capital or non corporate capital. A state that cannot harmonize the apartness of these two societies is in grave danger of falling apart.

Indian civil society, as Chatterjee posits, is populated by the urban middle class. They have adopted the normative models of bourgeois civil society, represented in the domain of capitalist hegemony. They believe in corporate capitalist sectors ability to solve India's problems and see the state as corrupt, inefficient and populist¹³⁵.

Contrary to this there is another vital domain peopled by the urban and rural poor. It is what Chatterjee calls the political society. They are deeply concerned and affected by the impacts of primitive accumulation. Their only mandate to make a difference is the electoral mandate, their power to vote.

The capitalist class has acquired a position of moral-political hegemony over civil society. They influence governments (state or central) not through electoral mobilization but the bureaucratic-managerial class, the English media, the judiciary etc. Indeed it seems that all decision making positions in India are occupied by people belonging to an urban educated circle and thus being unaware of the perils faced by the common man (Kishwar 2005). This argument is proven right by the unanimous support for capitalist growth among all major political parties, even in states where communist parties are in power.

Civil society is where corporate capital is hegemonic and political society is the space of management of non-corporate capital. The demand for economic growth at a high rate holds sway over civil society which influences politics through dominating the discourse on development. The aspirations of middle class have become tied to corporate capital.

¹³⁵ te Lintelo (2009) criticizes Chatterjee for ignoring the fact, that it was because of few NGO's belonging to civil society, like SEWA and Manushi, who highlighted the plight of informal sector, that the NSVP was formulated. Yet, in general he agrees with the preposition that civil society works for its own, affluent middle class, benefit.

Political society is the realm where marginalized fight for their right to a dignified life style. Interestingly it strives for inclusion into civil society, though it is the role of civil society to assure its own unequal access to resources (Baviskar 2003).

7.2 Reversal of the effects of primitive accumulation

Modernity is a painful process with much debris burning under the surface of passive acceptance. Indian newspapers are brimming with gloomy tales of peasant insurgency, large scale protests over eviction caused by Mega projects, developmental conflicts and appalling stories of poverty. Capitalist industrial growth has serious consequences for the rural population of a country. The process of primitive accumulation takes away the means of production from primary producers, peasants, and artisans etc, rendering them jobless and vulnerable¹³⁶. Most of these migrate out in search for work¹³⁷.

“The emergence of modern capitalist industrial production is invariably associated with the parallel process of the loss of the means of production on the part of primary producers such as peasants and artisans. The unity of labor with the means of labor, which is the basis of most pre-capitalist modes of production, is destroyed and a mass of laborers emerge who do not any more possess the means of production.” (Chatterjee 2008, 54)

India has not enough opportunities to absorb this mass; and not enough will power or capacity to compensate for their loss. Resistance that is bound to occur cannot be repressed by sheer force, as it will undermine

¹³⁶ It is also called primary or original accumulation. “in Marx’s sense to mean the dissociation of the laborer from the means of labour. There is no doubt that this is the key historical process that brings peasant societies into crisis with the rise of capitalist production (Sanyal 2007).

¹³⁷ Although primitive accumulation is an essential factor, in present day India we can assume that there are many more factors that inspire migration into cities, not to forget the need to escape from caste based and oppressive feudalistic rural lifestyles led by many.

democracy sooner or later. There is a demand for rehabilitation of displaced people who have lost their means of subsistence. Primitive accumulation is not stopped, so the government has to reverse its consequences.

As mentioned above, given that India is a democracy, political society has the electoral mandate through which it can sanction governments¹³⁸, thus government has to show resolve towards addressing the prevailing poverty in the country.

Another important factor here is the effect of mass media, in particular television. With the new media capitalizing and spreading the tales of poverty, suppression and exploitation to a largely urbanized well settled population, the “bad consciousness” of urban dwellers is aroused and needs feel good activities undertaken by the government to mitigate effects of poverty (Chatterjee 2008, 53).

Therefore a compromise is reached, where the state comes forward to resolve issues raised by political society. Communities within political society ask for their particular rights “adopting highly emotive resources of solidarity and militant action” (Chatterjee 2008, 61). The ruling government under pressure tries to mitigate the problem and offers some compensation or reprisal. This is generally done through making exceptions to the rule, than amending the rule (te Lintel in Bhaviskar 2010, 280).

It can be presumed that rapid growth in India will continue and so will civil society be dominated by corporate capital. Everything is pointing toward an increase in primitive accumulation and an influx of development refugees¹³⁹.

138 In India this is colloquially referred to as ‘vote bank politics’

¹³⁹ India faces a sever crisis of internally displaced people, be it due to projects of modernization, natural calamities or state led eviction drives. In Delhi alone, between 2004 and 2007, approximately 400,000 have allegedly lost their place of dwelling, becoming victims of Delhi’s ‘world city’ gentrification drive. If continued unabated it will lead to more social conflicts (Narain 2007).

Primary producers like peasants, artisans and petty manufacturers, will continuously lose their means of production. These victims lack the resources and required skills to enter the formal economy or the realms of corporate capital.

For the government this entitles a risk of turning them into “dangerous classes” which on the long run will effect economic growth and development. Recent violence in Lalgarh and the continued fight with Naxalism bears testimony to this. What Chatterjee invokes is that the growing distinction between the urban middle class and the rural or urban poor can cripple a state, render it incompetent of neither achieving its dream of capitalist modernity nor its ambition of social equality.

Though in opposition there is a logic that can bind these two deviating interest groups, civil society and political society, the logic of reversing the effects of primitive accumulation. To mitigate this risk of creating a dangerous class, a series of schemes and programs are devised, reversing the effects of primitive accumulation.

Chatterjee and Sanyal argue that various schemes run by the present Indian government like micro credit initiatives, employment guarantee schemes, ration cards for BPL (below poverty line) free education and even the Street vending policy are all interventions to reverse the effects of primitive accumulation (Chatterjee 2008, Sanyal 2007).

These are measures to cure the symptom but not intended to heal the disease.

The effects of primitive accumulation have been exacerbated by the high economic growth targeted. This is bound to create development refugees who will arrive into the cities, in search for livelihood. Here they ‘rebel’ against their unjust destiny, through encroaching silently on the consumption and the space of the rich.

7.3 The silent encroachment of the ordinary by the urban poor

“A major consequence of the new global restructuring has been a double process of integration, on the one hand, and social exclusion and informalization on the other” (Bayat 2000, 596).

A useful concept to understand the strategies and the reasons, applied by the urban poor to survive the above cited restructuring is that of “silent encroachment of the ordinary” by Asef Bayat (2000). The whole process of unemployed urban poor taking over public spaces to pursue their livelihood is seen by Bayat as a form of rebellion, namely the silent encroachment of the ordinary.

“The notion of quite encroachment describes the silent, protracted but pervasive advancement of the ordinary people on the propertied and powerful, in order to survive and improve their lives” (Bayat 2000, 592)

This is a type of quite grass root activism that tends to contest many fundamental aspects of the state prerogatives, like order, control of public space, and the relevance of modernity.

Street food vendors and in general the informal economy, belong to that segment who are in a perpetual struggle of survival. They arrive into the cities and encroach upon the city and its collective consumption, upon public space and business opportunity.

Bayat sees this encroachment, as a rebellion, a protest against the “notions of order, modern city and urban governance espoused by the Third World political elite” (Ibid). A vendor selling false or dupe products, that use some well known brand name (pirated), is also a form of encroachment.

The ventures are started individually, with some help from kinship, and are done in a subtle and restrained manner

This whole process is not a deliberate political act but one driven out of necessity to survive and improve one's life. Many small ‘quiet

encroachments', acts of defiance against state regulations aggregate and form a cumulative force. Albeit, this formation only takes place as a defense, and never (till now) as an active force voicing demands. They get involved in collective action only when there is a political threat to all. So while the encroachments and acts of defiance are done individually, the defense of their gain is collective and audible.

But why this individual and quiet direct action if their cumulative force could pursue direct demand making? The reasons for this, Bayat, sees, in the deflated political awareness of the 'quiet rebels'. They have many times histories of humiliation by state authorities, and their own perceived inferiority to achieve higher goals makes them prefer to have as little contact with the Hegemon as possible. They opt for fulfilling their needs individually and discreetly (Ibid, 593).

Their rebellion is one of redress and not of protest, "a struggle for an immediate outcome through individual direct action"

The motives of these "silent encroachments" are similar to those of a social rebellion.

- The redistribution of social goods and opportunities
- Attaining autonomy, cultural and political, from the regulations, institutions and discipline imposed by the state and modern institutions.

"In their quest for security, the poor then are in constant negotiation and vacillation between autonomy and integration. Yet, they continue to pursue autonomy in any possible space available within the integrating structures and process" (Ibid, 594).

Apart from the obvious appropriation of value from the state and the rich, like public space, business opportunities, real estate, electricity and water tapped illegally, it is the autonomous character that challenges state authority.

Unregulated jobs, unregistered people, nameless streets etc, are entities hidden from the government books that the state wants to control. This gives rise to the prevailing conflict.

Streets are such a site of contestation, as it is the only place for many disenfranchised to work, live and meet people; it is also under state surveillance due to police, traffic police and municipality.

The silent encroachers are those disenfranchised who find it difficult to adapt to the “modernizing economic and cultural systems characterized by market discipline, contracts, exchange value, speed and bureaucratic rationale” (Ibid). But it also contains those, who were perpetrated redundant by globalization and its corollary structural adjustments.

However, this non movement is neither able to bring about substantial change in the political environment, nor does it aim for it. They might be able to get ad hoc amnesties, some electricity or water provision but they don’t acquire essential rights and entitlements. Unless these individual “rebellions” are cumulated and articulated on a larger (even global) realm, they will not have an influence on the forces affecting them.

7.4 The Transcend approach for street vendors

If we recognize the current situation of street vendors as an underlying societal conflict we can approach classical theories of conflict transformation to gain insights into the dimensions of this particular conflict.

Integrating street vendors into society, promoting an inclusive development approach, it needs more than small adjustments to policy or more than those efforts that Chatterjee (2009) calls the “reversal of the effects of primary accumulation”. It needs a theory that is sensitive to the structural discrimination of street vendors; empathic to the role they play in society; sensitive to the void of communication and the bias existing between affluent and non-affluent classes; and lastly one that recognizes the conflict as harmful for a sustainable future¹⁴⁰.

The transcend approach of conflict transformation, generally applied to analyze and mediate conflicts that are caused by competing interests and

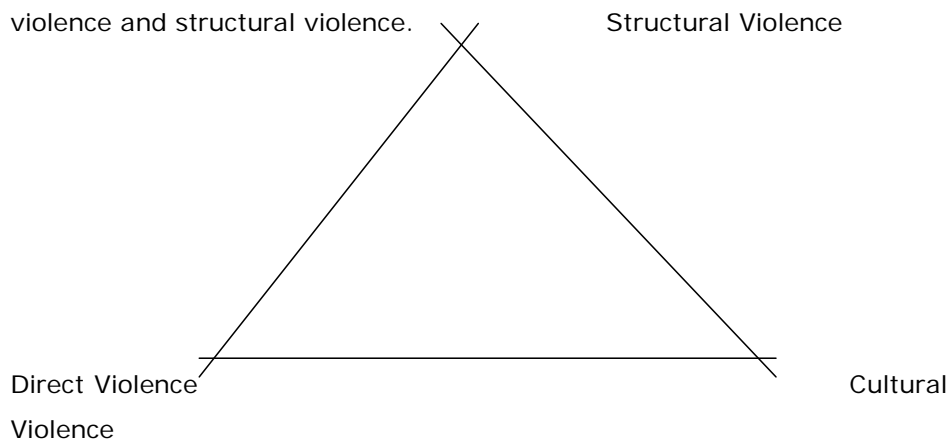
¹⁴⁰ Mainly social sustainability.

values, is adaptable for the above mentioned purposes. It can be used as a practical tool to analyze the conflict and furthermore find ways to transcend the current situation and move towards a more sustainable and inclusive development.

7.4.1 Direct, structural and cultural violence

Violence is seen as avoidable insults to basic human needs or as “need deprivation”. Galtung (1990) differentiates between four types of basic needs- survival needs; well being needs; identity and meaning needs; and freedom needs.

Violence occurs in three different forms, and can be put into the violence triangle. The three forms or ‘super types’ are cultural violence, direct violence and structural violence.



Direct violence is an event, the visible form of violence, what is generally understood under violence like beating and killing. The breaking of vending stalls, random beatings and harassment denigrating the dignity of a human being.

Structural violence is a gradual process with ups and downs that is conducive to outbreaks of direct violence. Discriminatory policy repeated

over times and existing structures of inequity can all be structural violence.

Galtung, for example, describes the vertical division of labor and therefore also "the principle of unequal exchange" as a form of structural violence. It is everywhere in an unequal world, with and within countries (Ibid).

Cultural violence is an invariant permanence, remaining essentially for long periods, justifying structural and direct violence. It is found in the symbolism of communities (flags, anthems, road names), in the language or in the cultural acceptance and intolerance towards deviant cultures. Cultural imperialism as mentioned in the previous chapter is a form of cultural violence perpetrated against the poor.

"The culture preaches, teaches, admonishes, eggs on, and dulls us into seeing exploitation and/or repression as normal and natural, or into not seeing them (particularly not exploitation) at all. Then come the eruptions, the efforts to use direct violence to get out of the structural iron cage, and counter-violence to keep the cage intact."
(Ibid)

This concept is apt for socio economic issues, evident when Galtung (1990) describes the theorem of comparative advantages as a "Law... that legitimizes a structurally intolerable status quo...a piece of cultural violence buried in the very core of economics".

7.4.2 Perpetual cycles of violence

Violent cycles connecting the corners can start at any point. For example blatant direct violence against urban poor can lead to an acceptance in society that this happens and it is normal. This insidiously translates into a structural violence, establishing discriminatory rules and policies, which further translate into cultural violence. After some time, direct violence is forgotten, beatings and maiming is forgotten, and what remains are expressions like "discrimination" for massive structural violence and

“prejudice” for massive cultural violence. “Sanitation of language itself is cultural violence”. (Ibid)

Another circle could be that vicious violence starts in the structural violence corner.

“Social differentiation slowly takes on vertical characteristics with increasingly unequal exchange, and the social facts would then be in search of social acts for their maintenance and cultural violence for their justification”. (Ibid.)

For the case of the Street vendors it can be said that the ban against street food, itself the product of a earlier struggle for space (te Lintelo 2009), sets a new intensity for evictions and discrimination, thus starting a new cycle of violence and evictions, that translate into direct and later into cultural violence.

7.4.3 Importance to include the structural and cultural dimension

“Small victories apart, interventions by many national and international NGOs through hundreds of projects in different slums and resettlement colonies in different phases of city’s growth, especially, since the 70s, have had little impact on state authorities and their policies for pro-poor urban governance.” (Singh & Shukla 2005, 103)

Most approaches to integrate the urban poor have not carried fruit till now. Many victories achieved by SEWA and Manushi (like the NSVP) have not fulfilled the goals expected by them. Often a success turned into failure as soon as something in the coalition of negotiators (NGO’s and policy makers, government employees etc) changed, be it a change of government or the transfer of a sympathetic bureaucrat, nullifying the

whole movement back to square one where they started (te Lintelo in Bhowmik 2010, 275 -310).

This happened because all attempts are limited to the 'superficial level' of direct violence. They focus on either helping the street vendors cope with globalization or to advise policies which are more in favor of street vendors. They do not address the mindset that leads to these unfavorable conditions for the urban poor; the violent structures and violent cultures that are working tacitly. If these are not transformed no sustainable future can be achieved.

7.5 Vision sparkling Delhi

Using the transcend approach this thesis now goes beyond the realms of academia and attempts to enter an imaginative sphere, where one can dream a different kind of 'world city' and a truly 'shining India'.

An inclusive and peaceful society in India can only be reached if the incompatibility of various goals, for example that of a clean modern world city and the goal of surviving on the streets through the process referred by Bayat as "the silent encroachment of the ordinary", can both be accommodated with equal right. If the society as a whole reaches higher levels of affluence the silent encroachments will become redundant by itself, as long as they are still happening they have to be integrated into society, preventing further violence.

To aim for equality, equity and symmetric power relations in a highly segregated society, needs creativity, endurance and determination. This can only be reached if society realizes their necessity for its own survival. Only if the people of Delhi, especially the hegemonic classes, become aware of the interdependencies with other human beings in their everyday life; the notions behind their bias and prejudice; the structural discrimination that other fellow citizens have to endure and also the violence of the new consumption culture, then there can be a move towards an equal society.

The sustainable solution for such a conflict should address three things simultaneously.

Transforming strategies, actions and behaviors in the actors

This has to be done through series of discussions among stakeholders. In the first step policy makers, representatives from RWA, TPC ,MCD and police have to discuss among each other the prevailing conditions, restrictions and in general become aware of the virtues and the difficulties that street traders have to face. Unless the policy makers and executives recognize the basic human needs of the other, the prevailing legal apartheid towards the unorganized food sector will continue.

Only then in the next step a composite dialog with the street vendors can be initiated, in a democratic and equal manner. The breaking of hierarchy within the dialog is essential; otherwise it becomes a further monolog of the powerful.

It was reported that single police officers and MCD officials often showed empathy towards the vendors, yet as an institution they were ruthless. This indicates that on an individual level many officers are aware and this individual awareness can be translated into collective awareness. The health department inspectors need to be trained in a proper manner, to discern hygienic from not hygienic food, to distinguish cleanliness from dirtiness. They can be more of educators then law enforcers, working together with the food vendors training them and giving them necessary information.

Transforming goals and contradictions in the structural dimension

Here the insidious system of corruption has to be addressed. How it is used to intimidate vendors and keep them in perpetual illegality. The negligence of town planning to adapt to existing realities has to be

brought to light. By far, the most pertinent and immediate need, is to change the focus on motorized transports. Private cars for everyone is not possible, space wise and pollution wise, no matter how many roads and flyovers are build. Once this fact is accepted new ideas can sprout.

The contradiction within the argumentation and implementation (like hygiene promotion through raids) has to be highlighted and resolved. This has to be solved with creative conflict transformation, looking for indigenous solutions instead of aping the west. The envisioned goals, like "world city Delhi", should be questioned for its social inclusiveness and attainability.

The reorientation has to be at an ideological level. Instead of imposing alien societal models, new indigenously inspired systems should be generated and nurtured. The reality on the streets teaches its own sermon that deserves listening.

To achieve these qualities creativity is asked for, a creativity to think of particular approaches for every city. Street vendors are very creative in adapting their strategies to prevailing condition, they are creative in running their low cost enterprises, and thus including them in a new city vision can use this creativity. It could be a good exercise in bottom up development planning.

Every city has its own street food specialties and forms of running the trade. Municipalities and police offers, who have empathy towards the street traders, could learn, train and collaborate with them. As is widely known in India, informal enterprises serve as information sources about the area they vend¹⁴¹, this can be utilized for disseminating information and knowledge. Vendors with their unique position towards the urban poor can help the government in its pro poor policies, if it is serious about it. Small good examples in various areas have to lead the way and show that indeed another form of societal coexistence is possible.

¹⁴¹ It is very common in natural markets like bus stands to go to the next food vendor and ask for information. They know which bus to take, whether the train is delayed or not, and what procedure has to be followed,

Transforming values, assumptions and attitudes in the cultural dimension

There are uncountable possibilities and ways towards enabling a positive culture of acceptance instead of a violent culture of discrimination, yet at its core has to be empathy towards the other. Transforming values and assumptions is a gradual process that has to be envisioned and pursued with sagacity.

The Bhagidari scheme could be useful to establish contact between street vendors and middle class population. Platforms of communication are required

to enable a fair dialog and awaken empathy among the alienated residents.

The role of media can be crucial in changing the cultural violence against the poor. This can happen if journalists and media personnel become aware of the perpetual violence that is inflicted on the poor through thoughtless or one sided portrayal of street food vendors. If the incredible India campaign can use street vendors to portray the incredibleness of India for luring foreign tourists, the same can be advocated through media within India¹⁴². Street food vendors, properly trained, can add up to the visual picture of the city. Diversity of foods is a virtue to be proud of. Representing the poor in a balanced way, enabling discussions within society on how we treat our fellow citizens, would be a good way to go forward

The vicious triangle of violence can be transferred into a virtuous triangle. The triangular syndrome of violence and injustice has to be contrasted in the mind, "with a triangular syndrome of peace in which cultural peace engenders structural peace, with symbiotic, equitable relations among diverse partners; and direct peace with acts of cooperation, friendliness and love" (Ibid)

¹⁴² Incredible India was a advertisement campaign from the Indian tourism industry.

The demand for street food will continue existing and even rise, since the high costs of the supermarket system will become evident. Working class population and students will require available food where they work or study.

Vendors will adapt, and unless they are not harassed, they will improve the food sold, its handling and its nutritional standard. Simply, because they want to retain their customers.

The two aspects of nutritional value and hygiene will both be improved automatically, as long as it becomes a issue of importance for the regular customers (until then all efforts are in vain). The profits are also likely to increase when govt. declines and organizational efficiency increases.

A city that recognizes its inner beauty, illuminated through millions of small sparkling enterprises. A multitude of vendors given responsibility for their existential space, taking care about it in terms of waste management and security, providing good hygienic food to the masses, promoting a low energy form of production.

Once street food vendors and residents, taking care of their own and yet working together for the benefit of the whole, collectively manage natural markets and streets, a new form of egalitarian society can emerge. Best practices can be promoted to inspire each other, one spark lightening another spark, gradually illuminating the whole.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

It can be summarized that street vendors interact with different segments of urban population and have a specific role in urban society and space; that their primary role consists of providing livelihood and employment to especially the poor classes; that they help in reducing unemployment and poverty by providing remunerative employment. Abolishing street vendors and street food vendors will increase the difficulties of survival for the poor.

The NCEUS recognized the essence of the problem lying with the legal system of the cities, which consistently failed to provide any space to street vending as an activity. The urban poor bear the brunt of all those years of policy neglect, like inappropriate town planning or hap hazard infrastructure development, being blamed for the murky conditions prevailing in the city, though they are the ones who made survival for so many workers possible.

Civil society is dominated by corporate capital, having over proportionate influence on the way development and modernity is pursued and imagined. Yet, political society, by far a majority, can protest against their unjust treatment, either in a democratic or a non democratic way, through violence.

Governments balance this tension through the process of reversal of primitive accumulation, whereby policies and measures are made to mitigate, but not to solve the problem.

The unorganized and the organized are here to stay. As long as the economic system remains it will create more refugees of primitive accumulation, arriving into the cities with the hope of survival. Here they are confronted with walls of injustice and discrimination that they cannot bridge. Their rebellion against this is the silent encroachment on public space and consumption. Only if the society as a whole emancipates to higher egalitarian realms, the silent encroachments will disappear.

Their resilience and persistence in enduring hardship every day, carries an essential lesson for those who want to learn. It is not through punitive measures that an envisioned clean and modern city will be attained; it is through the integration of all who comprise this city, that a higher vision can be achieved.

Delhi is much more a world city for the things that are abolished subsequently and much less for the envisioned gentrification. The old city of Delhi is a living ancient entity, full of life and living traditions. The capacity to feed and sustain(even though in abysmal condition) millions of people in a space where just few thousand affluent residents would adjust, is something that should be studied and improved- Lessons that the affluent could learn.

Many problems of the present age derive from the reign of rapacious capitalist mentality. Ignorance is no alternative; the only alternative is to rethink economic development as it is pursued.

There are many lessons the global north can learn from the global south, if the one world wants to be achieved. Policies made for high income low population countries cannot be used for low income high population countries. Street food vendors self exploit themselves for their survival but yet they make possible the survival of so many others. The least a society can do is give them some dignity and respect.

There are continuous evictions before the visit of some foreign minister or even Indian minister. Yet just evicting the poor does not change the fact that they exist. It just creates a false pretension of wealth. Honesty towards accepting the poor does not undermine the credibility of a country, to the contrary it helps creating a true and honest democracy that addresses the needs of its entire people.

Indian development should eradicate poverty; currently it is eradicating the poor.

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Abstract

The following paper deals with the issue of street food vendors in post liberalization India. Street food vendors are own account workers selling food at very low prices, thus fulfilling an essential function of providing food to the urban poor.

The central research question addresses the effects of globalization on the unorganized food sector. It studies the cultural politics of development and how it has subsequently undermined the existence of the urban poor.

The 2007 ban on cooking and selling street food in Delhi, is the focal point to analyze current development approaches and their tacit assumptions, towards the urban poor in general and in specific the street food vendors.

The two leading notions affecting adversely street food vendors in Delhi, are "hygiene" and "the world city debate". The paper shows that both hygiene and the promotion of world cities is connected or even caused by globalization and its concomitant cultural imperialism. The emergence of new powerful elite that defines the shape of India's development is also discussed.

The fieldwork for the thesis was a micro survey involving various stakeholders. This approach helped discern deviating opinions about street food vendors and the bias they face.

Furthermore it posits that as long as there is the systematic exploitation of labour in India, the necessity for street food persists. Through the analysis of media campaigns, policy approaches, and the stated opinions of customers and vendors interviewed, it is posited that there is a structural and cultural violence happening against the poor in India.

If this violence is not recognized and addressed in a holistic manner, all development efforts will not only be a futile exercise, but also a callous one.

Zusammenfassung

Der sichtbarste Unterschied zwischen so genannten entwickelten und unterentwickelten Staaten macht sich vor allem durch die Präsenz oder Nicht-Präsenz von Straßenhändlern deutlich, die verschiedenste Waren und Dienstleistungen anbieten. Die vorliegende Arbeit thematisiert den informellen Nahrungsmittelsektor Indiens, spezifisch *Streetfood vendors* in Delhi“.

Streetfood vendors sind selbständige Arbeitnehmer innerhalb des informellen Wirtschaftssektors, die Essen zu niedrigen Preisen anbieten und dadurch eine essentielle Funktion innerhalb der indischen Gesellschaft erfüllen, indem sie leistbare Nahrung für die armen Bevölkerungsschichten anbieten.

Der erste Teil der Arbeit beginnt mit einer Darstellung von *Streetfood vendors*, sowie dem informellen Sektor allgemein, dies wird dann anhand *Streetfood vendors* in Delhi spezifiziert und zusammengeführt.

Folgende zwei Forschungsfragen werden dabei näher beleuchtet:

Wie hat sich Globalisierung auf den informellen Nahrungsmittelsektor ausgewirkt? Und wie kann man den Informellen Nahrungsmittelsektor nachhaltig in die Gesellschaft integrieren ohne die Subsistenzgrundlage der Händler zu zerstören?

Anstoß obiger Fragestellungen stellt das 2007 in Delhi verkündete Verbot des Verkaufs von Nahrung auf offener Strasse. Weiters fungiert dieses Verbot innerhalb dieser Arbeit auch als Analysepunkt gegenwärtiger Entwicklungsstrategien und ihrer zugrunde liegenden Annahmen über städtische Armut allgemein, vor allem aber über die Straßenhändler Delhis. Zwei miteinander verwobene Diskurse bestimmen die Debatte um Straßenhändler, damit sind einerseits die neuen Vorstellungen von Hygiene, andererseits das neue anvisierte Image von der Weltstadt Delhi gemeint.

Es wird argumentiert, dass beide Diskurse mit Globalisierung und ihren Begleiterscheinungen, wie kultureller Imperialismus und das Aufkommen einer modernen reichen Elite, die alleinig den Entwicklungsdiskurs gestaltet, korrelieren.

Die vorliegende Forschung wurde methodisch anhand einer Mikrostudie, inklusive einer Stakeholderanalyse aufbereitet.

Dieser Ansatz ermöglichte das Erfassen von kontroversen Meinungen und Vorurteilen hinsichtlich des informellen Nahrungsmittelsektors, vom einfachen Konsumenten bis hin zu kaufkräftigen Oberschicht.

Es wird postuliert dass so lange die systematische Ausbeutung von Arbeitskraft in Indien vorherrscht, wird billiges und leicht verfügbares *Streetfood* eine Notwendigkeit bleiben. Durch die Analyse von Medienkampagnen, Staatspolitiken und den durchgeführten Interviews wird argumentiert, dass in Indien eine strukturelle und kulturelle Gewalt gegen die Armen existiert. Solange diese Gewalt nicht erkannt und adäquat adressiert wird, bleiben alle Entwicklungsbestrebungen fruchtlos.

Curriculum vitae

Name: Stephan Shankar Nath
Date of birth: 14.03.1981
Place of birth: Austria, Vienna
Nationality: Austrian

Education

1985- 1991: Sacred Heart High School (English Medium), Dharamsala
India.

1991- 1994: Rudolf Steinerschule India (English Medium),
Dalhousie India.

1994- 1997: Krishnamurthy School (English Medium),
Varanasi India.

1997- 2002: Externistenmatura, Hegelgasse 14
Vienna, Austria.

2004-2010: Individuelles Diplomstudium Internationale Entwicklung,
University of Vienna
Vienna, Austria.

Experiences and Duties

2003 - 2004: Foreign Civilian Services at Nishtha Rural Health,
Education and Environment Center, Himachal Pradesh,
India

2009: Project assistant for the peace programme of UTTHAN

Gujarat, India

1999 – 2010: Freelance tour guide for South Asia for
Asiabike tours, Apsara Travels and Exodus London
Travels to: Marocco, Iran, Pakistan, India, China,
Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Uzbekistan.

Language Skills:

German (mother tongue)

Hindi (fluent)

English (fluent)

French (basic knowledge)