*Corresponding Author's Email: madhubarnadhar@gmail.com
Proceedings of The World Conference on Social Sciences
Vol. 4, Issue. 1, 2025, pp. 100-110
DOI: https://doi.org/10.33422/worldcss.v4i1.1213

ISSN: 2783-7785 online

Rethinking 'Aesthetic Environments' in Cities: Politics, Resistance, and Informal Street Vending in Kolkata, West Bengal

Madhubarna Dhar[1*], Amrita Sen[2], and Archana Patnaik[3]

[1] Research Scholar, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur, India
[2] Assistant Professor, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur, India
[3] Assistant Professor, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur, India

Abstract

Street vendors, often called 'hawkers' in South Asia, form a vital part of Kolkata's vibrant streets. Yet, as Indian cities are increasingly positioned as engines of national economic growth, there has been a growing intolerance towards the presence of these informal actors in public spaces. Street-vending spaces are being perceived as illegitimate, disorderly and antithetical to the idea of a "world-class" city. With the state favouring privatised and sanitised spaces centred around bourgeois aesthetics, street vending sites, on the other hand, are deemed as embarrassing and out of place in the modern city. Concerns over 'congestion' and 'pollution' have fuelled routine crackdowns and sweeping cleanup drives, rendering exclusion and displacement a normalised aspect of urban management. As a result, hawkers are left with contestations, political mobilisation and negotiations as their means to fight back. Drawing on ethnographic interviews and focus group discussions with street vendors and hawker organisations, this study uncovers the creative arrangements and tactics hawkers employ to resist eviction and reclaim their space in the city. Our findings challenge simplistic portrayals of street vendors as mere 'vote banks', revealing instead that they are sophisticated political thinkers who participate in urban governance at the micro-level. Through what we call the "politics of neutrality", Kolkata's street vendors vertically voice their concerns and navigate the paradox of remaining apolitically political to materialise their needs.

Keywords: Eviction, Street vendors, World-class City, Urban informality, Urban politics

1. Introduction

City streets and pavements do not simply carry pedestrians but are also spaces of informal economic activities like street vending. The National Policy on Urban Street Vendors (2009) in India describes street vendors, commonly called 'hawkers' in South Asia, as self-employed individuals working in the urban informal sector who sell goods and services in urban spaces without any permanent built structures. These vendors often operate from temporary, makeshift or semi-permanent setups located on sidewalks, overpasses, marketplaces and pavements. Today, hawkers face increasing threats of dispossession and eviction, driven in part by an urban planning and beautification agenda that regards access points to the informal economy as illegitimate and, therefore, problematic (Dhar, Sen & Patnaik, 2023). This perspective broadly reflects a planning ideology that frames informal economic activity as a "distortion of public space" and a form of "public nuisance" (Bandyopadhyay, 2016; Onodugo et al., 2016, pp. 95–96). Routine crackdowns and extensive clean-up drives by the state have become the norm as Indian cities struggle to achieve global prominence through the creation of spectacular, aesthetic and sanitised urban spaces. Baviskar (2011) highlights that the mission to 'clean up' and aestheticise urban spaces disproportionately targets marginalised groups, including street vendors, beggars, and slum dwellers. In the context of India, the state too has reframed Indian cities as engines of national economic growth (Coelho and Sood, 2022).

Such exclusionary visions severely restrict informal economic activities like street vending, leaving the urban poor with contestation, negotiation, and political mobilisation as their primary means of resistance and emancipation. Kolkata[1], where this work is empirically positioned, is no exception. Following Operation Sunshine (1996), a massive cleanup drive that involved removing street vendors from the city's landmark pavements, public space has become a fiercely contested arena. As conflicting narratives and visions about Kolkata's future between the wealthy and those barely surviving give way to more spatial frictions, we see a rising intolerance towards the presence of hawkers on city streets and sidewalks in recent years.

Figure 1: The Eastern Metropolitan Bypass Area in Kolkata, India.
(Source: First Author)

In this paper, we focus on the hawker evictions carried out in the Eastern Metropolitan Bypass Area in 2012 to build a multilane road (*Figure 1*). This led to a prolonged fight between the hawkers and the authorities as stalls were bulldozed overnight with no prior notice or arrangements for rehabilitation. But with the help of the Hawker Sangram Committee[2] (HSC), the street vendors could reclaim their spaces and were subsequently rehabilitated on the opposite side of the road. To vertically voice their concerns and make their needs a reality, the HSC held a unique political position, which we highlight in this paper. Through the fieldwork conducted in Kolkata, we argue that the HSC operates through the 'politics of neutrality' by remaining unaffiliated to any specific political party but strategising on electoral politics to

[1] Kolkata, formerly known as Calcutta, is the capital and largest city of the Indian state of West Bengal.
[2] The Hawker Sangram Committee (HSC) is a prominent street vendors' union based in North Kolkata, West Bengal. It serves as a federation representing over 70 hawkers' unions across the city.

stake its claim. The organisation provides an apolitical platform and encourages all hawkers to temporarily suspend their political stances when representing the committee. In this way, without being affiliated with any of the parties in power, the HSC can reach out to powerful people from multiple political parties through the connections that their members have built in the respective parties over the years. This unique stance of being 'apolitically political' is used to unite hawkers and to remind them that this is a collective fight against hunger and for their survival. As one of our respondents told us, the survival of the hawker on the street depends on the balance of 'jibon' (life) on one hand and 'jibika' (livelihood) on the other. In the next section, we briefly discuss the rationale for selecting Kolkata as a research site and a brief history of hawker evictions in the city.

1.1 Why Kolkata?

Kolkata, where this work is empirically positioned, was founded by the British East India Company in 1690 (Bose, 1965). It grew out of the three villages of Sutanuti, Gobindapur and Kalikata. During British colonial rule, the city underwent rapid development as a strategic administrative and commercial hub, though this trajectory shifted dramatically following the colonial government's decision to transfer the capital of British India to Delhi. The city's post-colonial challenges intensified after the 1947 partition of Bengal, which geographically severed Kolkata from its primary economic hinterland in East Bengal (present-day Bangladesh). This geopolitical transformation triggered large-scale population displacement, and millions migrated to West Bengal's urban centres, with the majority settling within Kolkata's metropolitan area. Rising population, along with a declining industry and weak regional economy, caused a socio-economic crisis in the city. This led to infrastructural strain, housing shortages, and slow industrial growth that continued into the late 1900s. The post-partition aftermath and the arrival of an influx of refugees in Kolkata make this city an optimal site for the study of informality. Additionally, the city has a longstanding history of trade unionisation, in this context through its association with the HSC and the National Hawker Federation (NHF)[3], both headquartered in Kolkata. Consequently, the city has become a key political centre and influential hub for shaping policies and advancing the rights of hawkers at the local, national, and international levels.

1.2 A Brief History of Hawker Evictions in Kolkata, West Bengal

Bandyopadhyay (2009) argues that the history of street vending in every city is shaped by a recurring pattern of crackdowns, resettlement efforts, and ongoing negotiations between vendors and state authorities. In Kolkata, we find that hawkers had been the target of eviction attempts in 1975 as part of "Operation Hawker". The Public Works Department, the Calcutta Municipal Corporation, and the Calcutta Metropolitan Development Authority collaborated during these crackdowns. The eviction attempts of 1975 sparked protests organised by hawkers and the Left, which at the time was an opposition party.

However, in subsequent years, the official position of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) underwent a significant shift. Being the ruling party now, they wanted to rebuild the city to make it more investment-friendly. To revitalise the city, the Left Front government started making significant investments in urban infrastructure, such as flyovers, motorways, and bridges from the 1990s, as they signified 'progress' (Donner, 2012). Anand's (2006) study on the construction of roads in Mumbai shows how such city development plans and the

[3] The National Hawker Federation (NHF), established in Kolkata, is a comprehensive association representing street vendors across 28 states in India. It encompasses thousands of affiliated unions, including 11 central trade unions within India and over 20 international trade unions abroad.

construction of such infrastructures are always underlined with the politics of class. Roy (2004) refers to 'Calcutta'[4] as the 'Gentleman's city' and explains how Calcutta was being remade under the Left rule to facilitate neoliberalism and attract foreign investors. However, tensions grew between the state and the street vendors as a result of these developments because the state believed that the street vendors were distorting the idea of the orderly modern city. In 1996, Operation Sunshine, which was a massive cleanup drive, was launched with the support of the Left to evict hawkers from busy sidewalks and public spaces. During Operation Sunshine in Calcutta in 1996-1997, the hawkers were able to resist eviction with the help of the HSC. Upon realising that the Left had abandoned them, the hawkers turned to opposition parties, knowing full well that electoral victory would not be possible without their support. Since 1996, the HSC has emerged as a prominent and influential organisation in Kolkata, playing a central role in shaping discourse, advocacy, and negotiations related to hawker rights and policies.

In the Global South, urban informal groups typically mobilise through what Chatterjee (2004) calls the 'political society', whereas the more affluent tend to engage in the apolitical realm of 'civil society' (Chatterji & Roy, 2016). In Kolkata, hawker communities have historically been referred to as 'vote banks[5]' due to their patterns of political mobilisation. Since hawkers are a diverse and often mobile group within the urban workforce, it is important to clearly distinguish them from other informal urban populations, such as slum or squatter settlement residents, whose patterns of political engagement and relationship to the city may be quite different (Bandyopadhyay, 2012).

The next section reviews key scholarship on the making of world-class cities and the framing of the 'hawker menace', emphasising the connections between urban planning agendas and the regulation of informal urban spaces.

2. The World-Class City and the Hawker Menace

There appears to be a global competition among cities to become world-class (Flowerdew, 2004). In India, economic liberalisation has redefined urban centres as key drivers of national economic growth, positioning cities at the forefront of the country's development agenda (Coelho and Sood, 2022). Brosius (2009) believes that India is changing physically through the globalised imaginaries of the world-class images. In the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM), urban poverty was identified as the main cause of 'unregulated urban growth, environmental damage, and a growing crime rate in cities' (Banerjee-Guha, 2009, p. 97). On top of this, Fuller and Benei (2009) contend that informality is frequently conceptualised as a manifestation of state inadequacy or institutional failure. Thus, the state's preoccupation with promoting aesthetically curated urban spaces often necessitates the displacement of informal actors from the city spaces.

Anjaria's (2006) study of street vendors in Mumbai explores how hawkers are frequently perceived as 'eyesores' that hinder the transformation of Indian cities into globally competitive, world-class cities. However, it is reductive to view the state–capital alliance solely as working against the hawkers. According to Nogueira (2020), city dwellers also participate in urban governance regimes to preserve their lifestyle and neighbourhood culture from change. Baviskar (2011) employs the term 'bourgeois environmentalism' to describe the middle class's

[4] In 2001, the West Bengal government made the decision to change the name of the city from 'Calcutta' to Kolkata to reflect its Bengali pronunciation.
[5] The term "vote bank" was coined by Indian sociologist M.N. Srinivas to refer to the practice of political parties winning elections by relying on the support of certain social groups.

drive for order, cleanliness, and ecological conservation. This approach emphasises aesthetic and sanitary enhancements that largely benefit middle-class interests, often at the expense of economically disadvantaged groups, particularly informal workers such as street vendors, thereby undermining the principles of inclusive environmental justice. This obsession with order is explained in Chronopoulos' (2020) work, where he traces the concept of the orderly city to New York in the 1980s. Since an orderly city was a prerequisite for economic prosperity, he claimed that social disorder implied the gathering and activities of the city's undesirables and that their removal from public space was necessary.

Hanser (2016) discusses how city streets and sidewalks function as spaces where ideals of modern urbanism are projected and enforced. The visual appearance of the city is often treated as a reflection of its overall well-being, and in this context, street vending is perceived as a visual and symbolic blemish on the modern urban landscape. However, it is crucial to understand that the aim is not to remove the urban poor entirely but to render them invisible, kept out of sight yet readily accessible to serve the needs of the city (Tawakkol, 2021). As spatial frictions increase, uneven capacities to access urban resources and inequalities become amplified in Indian cities. Thus, Sassen, who coined the term 'global city', argues that cities today have become sites for 'claim-making by the powerless' (Sassen, 2017, p. 120). Against such odds, the urban informal actors have to think of innovative tactics to secure their place in the city, which becomes quite tricky due to the 'state of exception' that they embody (Roy, 2005, p. 147).

Scholarly work on informality is frequently portrayed in dichotomous terms, either lauded as 'creative entrepreneurs' who navigate and survive within a heavily regulated state or framed as 'vulnerable victims' of systemic marginalisation (Banks, Lombard & Mitlin, 2020, p. 223). However, hawkers are far from passive victims; rather, they actively resist and employ innovative strategies to secure their survival in the urban environment. For instance, Bayat (2000, p. 545) identifies a 'quiet encroachment of the ordinary' where the poor silently encroach on the property of the powerful. Crossa (2009) shows how street vendors use a unique method of resistance called 'torear', where instead of erecting permanent stalls, they become mobile. Musoni (2010) introduces the concept of 'adaptive resistance', suggesting that subordinated groups may be less focused on transforming the overarching structures of the oppressive state and more inclined to navigate and utilise these structures to their advantage. This is something that we highlight in this paper as we move forward into the subsequent sections. We shed light on how hawkers in the context of this study have tried to counter oppression through what we call the 'politics of neutrality'. A pervasive discourse of 'illegality' often constructs squatters, street vendors, and other marginalised segments of the urban poor as integral to vote-bank politics (Ghertner, 2015).

Thus, the HSC looks at political neutrality as a strategic position which not only helps the organisation to draw support from multiple political parties but also aids hawkers in the erosion of this label. But it must be remembered that the organisation is always a part of the political process and never outside it. Dai et al. (2019) also highlight how street food vendors of China have adopted an attitude of 'covert cooperation' with the authorities instead of 'overt opposition', which may be associated with greater risk. In the following section, we provide a detailed discussion of the methodological tools used to collect data from the field.

3. Study Area & Methodology

For this investigation, a qualitative research methodology was employed. Urban ethnography serves as a vital methodological approach for examining the lived experiences of marginalised communities, including socially stigmatised groups, ethnic and racial minorities, informal economy participants, and migrant populations (Suttles, 1976). Since this method allows us to comprehend how our respondents interpret their subjective experiences and simultaneously emphasises the impact of the spatial dimension of the field on the respondent, it is ideal for researching street vendors and hawker organisations in Kolkata. As a research method, ethnography uses many qualitative social investigation techniques (Imilan & Marquez, 2019). Researchers typically use observation and unstructured or semi-structured in-depth interviews to learn more about the respondents. We have used a standard interview guide for the study, which is a list of questions that serve as a memory aid to direct the interview. Additionally, we have also prioritised writing fieldnotes during the fieldwork. According to Emerson et al. (2011), fieldnotes are observations that are recorded in a consistent, systematic manner while in the field. In certain cases, focus group discussions were also conducted. Sometimes, respondents are more comfortable when they speak as a group as opposed to a one-on-one interview with the researcher.

The majority of the conversations and interviews were transcribed, and notes were made when verbal consent to record the interview was denied. Between May and August of 2024, fieldwork for this paper was conducted in a variety of locations throughout Kolkata, depending on access. The street vending community in Kolkata can only be accessed through the existing unions. Otherwise, people are considered "outsiders" and are turned away. We were granted access by the HSC, and our frequent visits to the field site enabled us to establish a rapport with the street vendors. It is important to keep in mind that street vending is a busy activity. When interacting with the hawkers, it is best to call and ask the respondents when they are available to speak. As a resident of Kolkata and a native Bengali speaker, the first author conducted most of the interviews and fieldwork. The data collected was transcribed, and important themes were identified for analysis. The analysis was done manually by the authors, and the major findings were developed accordingly.

Before discussing our key findings, some limitations must be discussed. Street vending is a male-dominated profession, making it difficult to represent an equal number of women as men in the interview process. It was rare to find female representatives in a union room full of male members or female vendors in certain areas of the city. The noise during the interview recording was another issue. Transcription was challenging and time-consuming because the majority of the interviews were done in the street vendors' stalls, where it was very difficult to block out automobile noise. Apart from this, one of the drawbacks of union access is that area leaders or representatives would often loiter in the background, making it hard for the respondent to answer freely. Again, there was minimal access to areas that were not unionised.

4. Findings and Discussion

Following the fall of the Left, the transition in political leadership brought little substantive change in urban policy, as the new administration had long advocated for a comprehensive urban makeover of Kolkata (Banerjee-Guha, 2012). In March 2012, the Kolkata Metropolitan Development Authority (KMDA) demolished numerous roadside eateries and vendor stalls along a six-kilometre stretch of the Eastern Metropolitan Bypass as part of a road-widening initiative, reducing them to rubble (Lahiri, 2022). Thus began a series of what my respondents called '*meeting-michil-andolan*' (translated from Bengali: meeting-procession-movements) as they joined hands with HSC, who vowed to protect them. They slept, cooked, and ate for months on the streets from where they were evicted as an act of resistance against this spatial injustice. These hawkers were provided with small cubicle-like permanent shops on the other side of the road after a six-year-long agitation. One of my key informants pointed out that a few residents of the area had a serious discomfort with street vendors operating in front of the gate of the multistoried residence, which was one of the main reasons for their eviction in the first place. The residents believed that hawkers were ruining the look of the area by using shabby shops with tarpaulin sheets and making the environment dirty. This resonates with Arabindoo's (2016) work on Resident Welfare Associations[6] in Chennai, who hold vegetable and food vendors responsible for polluting the environment with discarded peels and waste. This phenomenon is emblematic of a broader 'politics of intolerance', wherein public concerns are disproportionately directed at the urban poor under the guise of elite environmentalism, while institutional polluters—such as clubs and restaurants—often evade comparable scrutiny or accountability. According to Donner (2012), Operation Sunshine (1996) was driven by widespread concerns about 'contamination', 'congestion' and 'pollution'. Environmental concerns are frequently invoked to depoliticise issues that are fundamentally rooted in class-based inequalities.

*Figure 2: The 'Hawker Sangram Committee' Banner in Bengali in their office in Kol*kata.
(Source: First Author)

Upon asking them how they were able to change their circumstances and come back to the Bypass Area, the street vendors told us that they adopted a unique strategy which could only work if they were a part of the HSC, since the organisation is not affiliated with any political party. The HSC recognised, through the historical shifts in the attitudes of ruling parties and the patterns of eviction drives in Kolkata, that the power of any political party is inherently impermanent. Thus, it makes little sense to be affiliated with a particular party, as it takes away the freedom to collaborate with others when needed. Thus, the members of the HSC practise something we call the 'politics of neutrality'. As a respondent explained this to us,

> *"When entering the Sangram Committee, we are entering a non-political platform… we strictly leave our political affiliations behind… this is a fight for survival… This is a fight against hunger…. At the end of the day, they may go back to their political party offices, but this works to our benefit… Some of these vendors are in high positions in their respective party… so if we get stuck somewhere… these people help us out by pulling some strings and making some arrangements and help us to meet and have discussions with powerful people…"*
>
> \- *(Interview excerpt, May, 2024)*

Put simply, when hawkers enter the space of the HSC office, they are expected to temporarily set aside their political affiliations and beliefs to collectively engage with issues that affect all hawkers in Kolkata. This space allows them to adopt a unified identity as 'hawkers', transcending divisions of caste, religion, gender, and political ideology. However, upon leaving this space, their political affiliations often re-emerge. Many vendors occupy influential

[6] A resident welfare association is a non-governmental organisation that takes care of the interests and welfare of a residential society or colony in a city.

positions within their respective political parties and strategically leverage these connections to facilitate meetings with powerful figures. Through such networks, HSC leaders can engage with various levels of the state apparatus—ranging from councillors to police officers and other bureaucrats—many of whom may have their vested interests. It is important to recognise that the state is not a monolithic entity (Lata, Walter, & Roitman, 2019), and this fragmentation enables such dynamic interactions and negotiations. What is particularly noteworthy is how hawkers operate from a seemingly neutral platform, yet their actions are deeply political. This strategic stance can be described as being 'apolitically political'. This process of temporary suspension and subsequent resumption of political affiliations is what we call the 'politics of neutrality'. Far from being passive subjects or mere vote banks, hawkers emerge as sophisticated political actors, challenging reductive narratives that overlook their agency and tactical engagement with power.

Following their rehabilitation, several challenges surfaced. After the multilane road was built, there was hardly any footfall on the other side. There was no infrastructure for the pedestrians, who were the potential customers for the hawkers, to get to the other side to access the vendors' shops. As one of my female respondents pointed out,

> *"Why would anyone cross a multilane road with fences and barricades to come to this side for a five-rupee cup of tea?"*
>
> *- (Interview excerpt, June, 2024)*

Similarly, hawkers began advocating for the construction of a subway or overbridge to ensure the safe movement of their customers across the road. Recognising the need to escalate their demands, they adopted the strategy of 'politics of neutrality', which enabled them to engage with a wide range of power holders, regardless of political affiliation. This approach allowed hawkers to articulate their concerns and influence key decisions in the shaping of urban infrastructure. However, our fieldwork in Kolkata challenges the idea that such transformations are always top-down interventions. Instead, it reveals how hawkers actively mobilised to demand these changes as a means to safeguard their livelihoods. These actions exemplify how the everyday practices and tactical agency of street vendors contribute to the production of counter-spaces—spaces shaped from the ground up by marginalised actors **(Lata, 2023)**. After years of struggle, a subway was eventually constructed, facilitating safe pedestrian movement across the road. Such instances represent rare yet powerful moments where hawkers participate meaningfully in the remaking of Kolkata from below.

5. Conclusion

This study has examined how hawkers in a rapidly transforming Kolkata have engaged in a nuanced urban politics of neutrality to navigate shifting and often ambiguous definitions of informality. Far from being passive beneficiaries of state patronage or mere 'vote-banks' (Bandyopadhyay, 2012), hawkers emerge as active and informed political agents. Their ability to temporarily suspend individual political affiliations when engaging in collective union spaces reveals a flexible and pragmatic approach to urban governance and survival. They recognise that the rule of any party is impermanent, and affiliating themselves with one party does not give them the freedom to collaborate with others for their needs. This political dexterity allows hawkers to negotiate with multiple actors and institutions, working across party lines when necessary to secure their livelihoods. Ultimately, the politics of neutrality practised by hawkers offers a compelling lens to understand how marginalised urban actors can actively participate in shaping the city. Their practices demonstrate that the urban poor are not merely subjects of development but are capable of inscribing themselves into the fabric of the city, not just as workers but as makers of urban futures (Sassen, 2016). After years of battle, the Street Vendors' Bill (SVB)[7] was passed in 2014 to address the unemployment and economic displacement faced by hawkers (Mathur, 2014). However, this only decriminalised the occupation of street vending but failed to provide a solution for the spatial issues. Street vending as an occupation is inherently connected to and cannot be separated from the environment in which it occurs (Young, 2017). Therefore, we contend that this paper contributes to the broader discourse on informality and the political dynamics of marginalised urban workers in the Global South, who find creative ways to secure their place in the city and assert their needs beyond the boundaries of formal policies and development projects (Benjamin, 2008).

Acknowledgments

We thank all the street vendors who generously shared their time, experiences, and insights for this study. We also sincerely thank the Hawker Sangram Committee members for their unwavering support and invaluable help during the fieldwork. Verbal consent has been acquired from the respondents before recording the interviews, and anonymity has been maintained throughout the research process. The Institute Ethical Committee has reviewed our work and has approved it.

References

Anand, N. (2006). Disconnecting experience: Making world-class roads in Mumbai. *Economic and Political Weekly, 41*(30), 3422–3429.

Anjaria, J. S. (2009). Guardians of the bourgeois city: Citizenship, public space, and middle–class activism in Mumbai. *City & Community, 8*(4), 391–406.

Arabindoo, P. (2016). Bajji on the Beach: Middle-Class Food Practices in Chennai's New Beach. In C. McFarlane & M. Waibel (Eds.), *Urban Informalities: Reflections on the Formal and Informal* (pp. 67–88). Routledge.

Bandyopadhyay, R. (2009). Hawkers' movement in Kolkata, 1975–2007. *Economic and Political Weekly, 44*(17), 116–119. https://doi.org/10.2307/40279193

Bandyopadhyay, R. (2012). In the shadow of the mall: Street hawking in global Calcutta. In G. Mathews, G. L. Ribeiro, & C. A. Vega (Eds.), *Globalization from below* (pp. 181–195). Routledge.

Bandyopadhyay, R. (2016). Institutionalizing Informality: The hawkers' question in post-colonial Calcutta. *Modern Asian Studies*, 50(2), 675-717.

Banerjee-Guha, S. (2009). Neoliberalising the 'urban': New geographies of power and injustice in Indian cities. *Economic and Political Weekly, 44*(22), 95–107.

Banerjee-Guha, S. (2012). Nonadanga eviction: Questioning the right to the city. *Economic and Political Weekly, 47*(17), 13–15.

Banks, N., Lombard, M., & Mitlin, D. (2020). Urban informality as a site of critical analysis. *The Journal of Development Studies, 56*(2), 223–238.

[7] The Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014, is a landmark legislation enacted by the Indian government to safeguard the rights of street vendors.

Baviskar, A. (2011). Cows, cars and cycle-rickshaws: Bourgeois environmentalists and the battle for Delhi's streets. In A. Baviskar & R. Ray (Eds.), *Elite and everyman: The cultural politics of the Indian middle classes* (pp. 391–449). Routledge.

Bayat, A. (2000). From dangerous classes to quiet rebels: Politics of the urban subaltern in the global South. *International Sociology, 15*(3), 533–557.

Benjamin, S. (2008). Occupancy urbanism: Radicalizing politics and economy beyond policy and programs. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 32*(3), 719–729.

Bose, N. K. (1965). Calcutta: A premature metropolis. *Scientific American, 213*(3), 90–102. https://doi.org/10.1038/scientificamerican0965-90

Brosius, C. (2009). The gated romance of 'India shining': Visualising urban lifestyle in advertisements of residential housing development. In K. M. Gokulsing & W. Dissanayake (Eds.), *Popular culture in a globalised India* (pp. 194–211). Routledge.

Chatterjee, P. (2004). Are Indian cities becoming bourgeois at last? In *The politics of the governed: Reflections on popular politics in most of the world* (pp. 131–147). Columbia University Press.

Chatterji, T., & Roy, S. (2016). From margin to mainstream: Informal street vendors and local politics in Kolkata, India. *L'Espace Politique. Revue en ligne de géographie politique et de géopolitique, 29*, 1–18.

Chronopoulos, T. (2020). The making of the orderly city: New York since the 1980s. *Journal of Urban History, 46*(5), 1085–1116.

Coelho, K., & Sood, A. (2022). Urban studies in India across the millennial turn: Histories and futures. *Urban Studies, 59*(13), 2613–2637.

Crossa, V. (2009). Resisting the entrepreneurial city: Street vendors' struggle in Mexico City's historic center. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 33*(1), 43–63. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2427.2008.00826.x

Dai, N., Zhong, T., & Scott, S. (2019). From overt opposition to covert cooperation: Governance of street food vending in Nanjing, China. *Urban Forum, 30*(4), 499–518. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12132-019-09367-3

Dhar, M., Sen, A., & Patnaik, A. (2023). Unpacking urban environmental visions and contestations of street vendors in Kolkata, West Bengal. *Global Social Welfare*, *10*, 351–358. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40609-023-00297-4

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

Emerson, R. M., Fretz, R. I., & Shaw, L. L. (2011). *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes* (2nd ed.). University of Chicago Press.

Flowerdew, J. (2004). The discursive construction of a world-class city. *Discourse & Society, 15*(5), 579–605.

Fuller, C. J., & Benei, V. (2009). *The everyday state and society in modern India*. Social Science Press.

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

Hanser, A. (2016). Street politics: Street vendors and urban governance in China. *The China Quarterly, 226*, 363–382.

Imilan, W., & Márquez, F. (2019). Urban ethnography. In A. Orum (Ed.), *The Wiley Blackwell encyclopedia of urban and regional studies* (pp. 1–15). John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

Lahiri, K. (2022). Formal organising in the informal sector: The Hawker Sangram Committee and the politics of hawking in Kolkata, India. *Global Labour Journal, 13*(1). https://doi.org/10.15173/glj.v13i1.4412

Lata, L., Walters, P., & Roitman, S. (2019). A marriage of convenience: Street vendors' everyday accommodation of power in Dhaka, Bangladesh. *Cities, 84*, 143–150.

Lata, L. N. (2023). The production of counter-space: Informal labour, social networks and the production of urban space in Dhaka. *Current Sociology, 71*(6), 1159–1177.

Mathur, N. (2014). The Street Vendors Bill: Opportunities and challenges. *Economic and Political Weekly, 49*(10), 22–25.

Musoni, F. (2010). Operation Murambatsvina and the politics of street vendors in Zimbabwe. *Journal of Southern African Studies, 36*(2), 301–317. https://doi.org/10.1080/03057070.2010.485786

Nogueira, M. (2020). Preserving the (right kind of) city: The urban politics of the middle classes in Belo Horizonte, Brazil. *Urban Studies, 57*(10), 2163–2180. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098019872167

Onodugo, V. A., Ezeadichie, N. H., Onwuneme, C. A., & Anosike, A. E. (2016). The dilemma of managing the challenges of street vending in public spaces: The case of Enugu City, Nigeria. *Cities, 59*, 95–101.

Roy, A. (2004). The gentleman's city: Urban informality in the Calcutta of new communism. In N. AlSayyad & A. Roy (Eds.), *Urban informality: Transnational perspectives from the Middle East, Latin America, and South Asia* (pp. 147–170). New York: Lexington Books.

Roy, A. (2005). Urban informality: Toward an epistemology of planning. *Journal of the American Planning Association, 71*(2), 147–158.

Sassen, S. (2016). The global city: Enabling economic intermediation and bearing its costs. *City & Community, 15*(2), 97–108.

Sassen, S. (2017). *The global city: Introducing a concept*. *The Brown Journal of World Affairs, 11*(2), 27–43. https://doi.org/10.2307/40279193

Suttles, G. D. (1976). Urban ethnography: Situational and normative accounts. *Annual Review of Sociology, 2*(1), 1–18.

Tawakkol, L. (2021). Reclaiming the city's core: Urban accumulation, surplus (re)production and discipline in Cairo. *Geoforum, 126*, 420–430.