Special political zone: urban planning, spatial segregation and the infrastructure of violence in Ahmedabad

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The violence in Gujarat in 2002 presented a paradoxical phenomenon, namely, a spectacle of violence ostensibly enacted by non-state forces that was covertly and overtly sanctioned by the state. Violence was both spatially localized and physically concentrated on Muslims. Apologists invoked a history of communal conflict and specifically of Muslim provocation, explaining the pogrom of 2002 as having ample precedent and justifiable cause. This paper addresses Ahmedabad's urbanity as an enabling locus for such violence, and draws on historical and ethnographic research to argue that spatial and perceptual practices in the city have combined to ghettoize Muslims, and produce forms of knowledge complicit with structural and episodic violence against them. Such practices (and their discursive uptake) are enabled by political conjunctures that give structurally embedded processes form and visibility. This paper explores the issue of political violence and Muslim vulnerability in Gujarat under the explanatory rubric of the 'Special Political Zone,' an informal analogue to a Special Economic Zone (SEZ), the latter being a site exempt from prevailing regulations, purportedly to enhance economic growth. The political ability to endow specific sites with exceptional legal status for economic outcomes implies the 'Special Political Zone,' a site where select laws of the land are voided to ensure specific political outcomes, for example the staging of violence to dramatize the restructuring of the relationship between majority and minority. This paper offers a limited examination of this hypothesis taking Ahmedabad as a privileged site where much of the violence in Gujarat in 2002 was concentrated.

Keywords: SEZ; special political zone; Ahmedabad; pogrom; Gujarat, 2002; ghettoization; walled city; space; perception; rumour

Introduction

The violence in Gujarat in 2002 is often seen as exemplifying politics in a '*Hindutva* laboratory', confirming the occurrence of a phenomenon whose essential characteristics are believed to be well understood.[2] Now, the events in question indeed appear to have been carried out by familiar suspects, the record of whose tactics are in several respects on a continuum with previous occasions of organized violence against Muslims. But they represented the first attacks when a BJP-led government, both at state and at central levels, was in power. Previous pogroms occurred mainly under the Congress-led governments that sought to localize the effects of the violence and downplay its significance. The BJP, by contrast, tried to nationalize the violence, endorsing the idea that the killings of Muslims

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were spontaneous, popular and righteous, although violence attributed to Muslims was anti-national and possibly of Pakistani origin.[3]

What resulted therefore was a paradoxical phenomenon, namely, a spectacle of violence ostensibly enacted by non-state forces, covertly and overtly sanctioned by the state. Nor was this altogether a phase in the arrival of a full-blown Hindu *rashtra*, of the kind that had been feared at the time by the BJP's critics. Federalism, from being a means of limiting the power of centralized state authority, had become a means to make human rights violations into an internal matter for state governments, something already witnessed in the Ayodhya case.[4] Similarly, if ironically, Gujarat under the chief ministership of Narendra Modi went on to become a favoured site of corporate investment and a model of efficient pro-business government, adopting the erstwhile icon of secular stardom, Amitabh Bachchan as a 'brand ambassador' for the state.[5] The commanding heights of economic policy were now being used for targeted and strategic purposes, such as the creation of Special Economic Zones where businesses could be allowed to enclose agricultural land, banking it for commercial use and adding value in the process (sometimes exponentially), while being relieved of the burden of labour and environmental laws, and indeed of most revenue demands, in the hope that exports would grow and world-class infrastructures would be created there.[6]

With the SEZ, the state draws on its sovereign authority to announce exceptions to its rules not for reasons of national security, or due to an emergency, but to enhance the material welfare of the society as a whole. The routinization of this process is suggested in the diminution of its linguistic register (it is merely 'special') and its encoding in a form of state speech that crowds the vernacular, namely the abbreviation, that like VIP, MOU or RTI becomes a common noun, and an artefact of state power that citizens negotiate.[7] Where the application of select laws is formally suspended (e.g. 'A Special Economic Zone shall . . . be deemed to be a territory outside the customs territory of India for the purposes of undertaking the authorized operations.' *Art. 53, SEZ Act, 2005*), what results is an amorphous and fluid landscape in which words such as SEZ offer lexical purchase, denoting singular spaces where events are explained not so much by reference to the existing juridical regime but through the name itself.[8]

Just as the laws of the land are exercised selectively for harnessing business initiatives in national development, the selective enforcement of criminal laws in this Indian interpretation of federalism may reflect the existence of *special political zones*, which tend to have strong leaders who brook no opposition, and who transcend their party status; it is they who define the party in their state rather than vice versa. The SEZ for its part is treated as a harbinger of hypermodernity, but it enacts a form of primitive capital accumulation, converting farm to non-farm land at the cost of agriculturalists and the public exchequer.[9]

The SPZ similarly witnesses a display of older modes of establishing political order, notably through the power to enact violence with impunity, although sophisticated forms of structural violence may exist alongside it. In these zones, state governments determine what can be admitted as facts, such as, in this case, the peaceful and law-abiding character of Hindus, and what should be rejected, including any suggestion that the state is geared to ensuring the violent dominance of the majority over the minority. Political humour tends to be scarce, indicating a brittle relation between social knowledge and political power. The form of knowledge defining a special political zone subsists for its constituents through a variety of piety, that is, one is understood to improve oneself by holding certain ideas, risking diminution or harm by questioning them. Whereas special economic zones have a formal purpose that is often subverted, since their benefit in fact accrues to a privileged few, special political zones have no formal status and are defined through the sense of participatory governance by the majority, although popular consent is confined within a narrow band

of expression ranging, typically, from passive acquiescence to active adulation.[10] Their durability is often indexed by reference to a name, in this case, 'Gujarat', or 'Narendra Modi'.

In bringing the existence of the special political zone into visibility, and rendering it into a mechanism for successful neoliberal development, Gujarat can be considered not so much a culmination of the project of *Hindutva* as a transfer point for inaugurating a new phase of politics. Here, regionalism and globalism can mesh together while avoiding the dead ends of erstwhile forms of cultural nationalism that understand the nation as a sacred body and hence a monolithic political unit, and that hold the literal-minded view that *de facto* Hindu supremacy should achieve *de jure* status. In Gujarat, we witness the ability to compensate for violence and misgovernance by pro-business governance by, for example, improving the efficiency of transactions and the establishment of a single-window clearance system for commercial enterprises, signalling the shrinkage of political process and regulatory oversight alongside claims of enlarged popular consent. The capacity to transfer capital accrued in one domain to void penalties that are technically non-negotiable and punishable by law may be due to a (perhaps temporary) success in presenting private interests as universal in character. But it might also signal *an emergent and regionally-specific logic of identity formation even while Gujarati capital is being globalized*. Globalization may in fact assist in the accelerated regionalization and growth of Gujarati capital, which then becomes the alibi for Gujarati identity. A reinforced local identity is thus here not the premise for capital accumulation so much as its result, one that is mediated by anti-Muslim violence. What is defined as good governance can be understood in terms that exclude the social fact of mass violence implemented with state assistance.[11]

Since multiple accounts of events circulate, the regulation of what can be known and what should be ignored, of what can be seen and what becomes invisible, is an ongoing process.[12] What can be acknowledged publicly as having occurred therefore requires to be certified as factual by the political leadership. The result of this certification is not achieved by mere dint of exhortation; it acquires its weight and force over time through the accretion and interaction of the effects of political policy, social mores and historical conflicts, which together sanction practices of silence and secrecy, and activate specific forms of political common sense.

The characteristics of a special political zone can be most clearly revealed through the formation of given spaces through which it instantiates itself, and the perceptual mechanisms through which it is apprehended. In this article I discuss the spatial order of the city of Ahmedabad through which the materiality of the city takes shape and acquires perceptual form, and indicate how the city could become the enabling ground as well as the visible artefact of political violence. In locating the city as both the product of spatial segregation, and an active agent of the Gujarat violence, I seek to destabilize narratives about Hindutva violence that rely on a realist logic about seemingly self-evident events to produce an explanatory order for anti-Muslim violence. Instead, I focus on the built space of Ahmedabad to indicate how structural, that is invisible, and overt forms of violence could combine to create the sense of mass Hindu consent to the violence in Gujarat.

Ahmedabad was the key arena of the anti-Muslim violence in 2002, and indeed the site of more recorded communal violence than any other city in India, next to Mumbai.[13] My inquiry will seek to provide a sense, albeit preliminary and partial, of how the bounds of legitimacy and illegitimacy were drawn in the context of public violence in the city.[14] Violence, when public, is typically staged by state machinery to demonstrate that it is enforcing the law, such as when police conduct a *lathi* charge on a crowd. By contrast,

mob violence does not display the insignia of law enforcement. Hence if claims are made about its popular basis and its legitimacy, these must rely on assumptions and conditions not available to direct perception, that my study seeks to clarify. I hope thereby to shed light on the production, or simulation, of a common sense acceptance of violence, and to thereby lay some groundwork for considering how the political and the popular connect with each other, considering especially the non-discursive register, including some urban organizational and symbolic forms that contribute to a spatial-visual order of the city of Ahmedabad. Such an account takes the urban landscape not as the background to violence but as a crucial site for the ordering of particular forms of sociality and the mapping of relations that become unspoken common sense.

Cities, although increasingly associated with agonistic modes of civility, and repositories of institutionalized and structural violence that variously affect their inhabitants, can also be settings for displaying overt violence.[15] Seventy per cent of recorded Hindu–Muslim violence between 1950 and 1995 is believed to have been concentrated in 30 out of India's more than 400 cities; of these, 8 cities were the site of almost half of all deaths. Ahmedabad, like the seven other cities in this group, has a large middle class, a high literacy rate and an old and established Muslim minority, confirming that the conventional indices of civility in modern society may correlate with violence in ways that received accounts do not necessarily illuminate.[16]

A riot-prone city

The impact [of the 2002 violence] on trade and industry was negligible and transitory.
—Gujarat State Industries Minister Suresh Mehta, 22 March 2002[17]

The statement from Gujarat State Industries Minister Suresh Mehta made a few weeks after the most intense phase of the violence, that the impact of the violence was negligible and transitory, contrasted with other statements frequently encountered, that Ahmedabad was a riot-prone city, the milestones of whose recent history itself were all too often related through a sequence of earlier riots – 1941, 1969, 1985 and 1992 – so that to ask why this had occurred was to display a lack of perspicacity. Where riots had occurred so often before, why would they not occur again?

Doing fieldwork in Gujarat not long after the violence of 2002, I was struck by how quickly people seemed to accommodate the fact of violence and explain it with ready-made accounts, often centring on the immiscible presence of Muslims, whose concentration in ghettos seemed a reflection not on the city or the state but on Muslims themselves, and the disharmony they allegedly generated.

Now, in discussions of Muslim ghettoization in Ahmedabad, it is the walled city that has been dominant, partly on the assumption that these were always designed as predominantly Muslim, but this is questionable.[18] At least one architectural historian has suggested based on a study of Indo-Muslim towns in Gujarat including Ahmedabad, that they all contained walled cities, and that these had been built not only to guard the ruler but as well, and importantly for the defence of their populations, as the merchants and traders among them had wealth that required protection. Because the commercial classes were preponderantly Hindu, the conclusion followed that Muslim rulers had built walls to safeguard their Hindu subjects, no doubt to ensure a source of revenue, but clearly to protect their lives and homes as well.[19]

By the early twentieth century, the old walled city was not seen as wealthy so much as congested and dilapidated, and it was this that was the focus of Patrick Geddes' attention

when he wrote his report on Ahmedabad following his visit in 1915. The ramparts of the old city had been restored in 1832; the question before him as Geddes saw it was whether to follow the method of John Ruskin and William Morris, which would demand restoration at any cost, or that chosen by Baron Haussmann and his disciples, which would call for the summary removal of the walls. Geddes urged that no effective city planning could be done unless a comprehensive survey of all existing aspects of the city were assembled and studied, but recommended preserving the monumental beauty of the 500-year-old fortifications wherever it was practicable to do so, keeping in mind the living needs of residents and pedestrians. He was mindful of what he called 'the intensifying deterioration and squalor of the ... industrial age.' In some places he argued for the retention of the wall where the availability of funds (while Britain was fighting a war) might not permit its repair or removal, noting, '[E]ast ends in India are apt to crowd and deteriorate, like east ends elsewhere; it is thus not the mere presence of the wall which causes slum conditions or overcrowding, and there is as little reason to hope that its removal would abate these evils.'[20] Ahmedabad indeed did adopt a third way for the walled city, neither that of Ruskin nor that of Haussmann, although it was far from that which Geddes had envisioned. There was neither architectural romanticism, nor demolition followed by grandiose reconstruction, but instead, demolition followed by preservation. Local elites, led by Vallabhbhai Patel, took over the Ahmedabad Municipality by 1919, and managed to mediate colonial intervention in city planning on their own terms. Old elites whose power was based on local networks and were opposed to opening up the old city came together with newer elites, including Vallabhbhai Patel and Kasturbhai Lalbhai, who saw an opportunity for popular mobilization that would win them a constituency in Ahmedabad, as well as gain a measure of national prominence due to their anti-government stance.[21]

The colonial government sought to raise taxes for the purpose of urban improvement, to reduce the congestion and insanitary conditions that were probably responsible for the high levels of infant mortality there, by extensive changes to the walled city.[22] The proposals drew widespread resistance that Vallabhbhai Patel and others succeeded however in championing.[23] Unlike the previous town leaders who had sought to cooperate with the colonial government, those led by Vallabhbhai Patel identified with the nationalist movement, and sought to define an indigenous urbanity, in which any colonial intervention would be modulated through a locally controlled municipal body. Significantly, the propertied, rent and tax-paying sections of the society as well as the salaried classes were awarded seats in the Municipality in a General Ward, in addition to seats awarded on the basis of the local wards they resided in. This reorganization of the franchise excluded Muslims from extra allocation of seats in the General Ward, and ensured a disproportionate influence for Hindu monied classes.[24]

The walls were eventually removed in 1940, but otherwise conditions in the old city were left largely unchanged. Over time, the old city grew into a symbol of dysfunctionality in Ahmedabad and at the same time provided a rationale for new developments that strangely left the problem untouched. It was as if the old city enclosed a form of moral pollution that had to be preserved as a way of underlining the relative purity of the remainder of the city.

Indeed, the walled city became a political imaginary, and in urban planning, a metaphor for a pattern that reproduced itself as Ahmedabad grew. If invoking it meant a reference to the slum-like conditions of the poor, over time it increasingly signalled Muslim habitations and the problems they allegedly brought in their wake for Hindus, so that life in Ahmedabad was a defence against the threat it represented. However, city surveys tended to ignore the distinction between Muslim and Hindu settlements, officially because municipal authorities

were indifferent to the distinction, and successive city plans made no mention of it.[25] Ward-level census data was of course in the government's possession, which could show the relative concentrations of Hindus and Muslims in each neighbourhood across the city, and the ways these had grown and moved over time, but this was at best obliquely alluded to in city plan documents.[26]

Earlier a major centre of the textile industry, Ahmedabad's economy is today dominated by tertiary and informal sectors. The shift in the state away from textiles to chemical, petrochemical and engineering industries since the 1980s has led to massive informalization of the labour force on the one hand, and a shift of industries away from Ahmedabad to South Gujarat on the other.[27] This has disproportionately affected Muslims and reinforced an ongoing trend of ghettoization.[28]

In the words of a Hindu photo journalist referring to the relationship between growing hostility and the growing physical separation of Hindus and Muslims in Ahmedabad, '*Dividation ho raha hai*' – dividation is happening.[29] I heard the term more than once. Preserving the verb ('divide') while making it into a noun connoted the active process behind the Latinate construction. Since at least 1969, each major episode of violence, in 1969, 1985, 1992 and 2002, has led to further separation of Hindu and Muslim populations in the city, and increasing ghettoization of Muslims in a smaller number of localities.

Michel de Certeau has observed that those who move through the spaces of a city – he was referring to pedestrians, but we might extend the observation to others too – operate in spaces that they cannot visualize; they are within built spaces that they use but, typically, neither design nor choose.[30] In this sense, de Certeau suggests, they 'write' the urban 'text' without being able to read it, much as if the practices organizing a city were characterized by a certain blindness.[31] And similarly different bodies of people in their movement through the city make different parts of the city vanish while enlarging and amplifying others; in this way parallel urban texts can coexist for periods of time without reference to each other.

An old adage of urban studies understands space as a reflection of society. But as a container of things and people that themselves change over time, space expresses social conflicts and tensions as they interact with each other, rather than merely reflecting an unchanging social reality.[32] Older, organic totalities get overlaid with enormous inflows and concentrations of people and property, possessing varying access to mobility, thereby repressing and dissolving earlier urban formations without including them in new and more advanced forms of organization. No uniform formula can be provided, therefore, for the layered and disjoint assemblage that results, combining fragmented signs of the urban but in a kind of negation of urbanity.[33]

Space has its homogeneous aspects, which correspond to systematic logics and deliberate strategies, such as, for example, those of class or communal stratification. On the other hand, interferences between different spatial strata if not accommodated can grow over time, building a pent-up force that periodically gets released, sometimes through benevolent forms of city planning, or otherwise through destructive and explosive forms that may either alter, reinforce or elaborate existing arrangements and patterns.

The walled city and the production of ungovernability

Ahmedabad was founded by Sultan Ahmed Shah in 1411. Some of its most spectacular monuments, such as the Jama Masjid built in 1423, are indubitably Muslim. Its largest Muslim neighbourhood is in Juhapura (formerly Gyaspur), to the southwest and technically outside city limits, but across the road from what is colloquially called Vejalpur

(itself technically within Juhapura), which is understood to be within the city. Few, if any, city services are provided to Juhapura, however, unlike Vejalpur. Neither the mosque nor Juhapura appears on many maps of the city, moreover. A visitor to the Masjid which stands opposite Mahatma Gandhi Road, and east of Teen Darwaza, will find no signboard and none of the usual commemorative marks of a major historical landmark. The mosque is in fact surrounded by a row of insignificant shops selling cheap knick-knacks, creating the impression of a small town bazaar and offering no hint of what lies behind. Seeking to go there, I passed it by a few times myself, before I located the entrance. Nearly invisible to passers-by, the mosque has a doorway that is undistinguished and devoid of any noticeable sign. Its collapsible steel gate is itself painted saffron, the hue of *Hindutva* in the city that adorns numerous signboards placed by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad in Ahmedabad. One mounts the steps through saffron portals that look back at the visitor, bearing the impress of Hindu town-planners and municipal corporators who make the entry into the mosque possible, and seek to mark this fact. Entering the structure, no visitor could fail to contrast the grandeur within and the squalor without (Figures 1–3).

One can at times delve beneath the surface of a city in this way and discern its deeper layers. The city's space is ostensibly continuous and navigable but one encounters misleading sequences; the facades may conceal interiors that do not announce themselves with the usual notices. Its absence in the case of a major historical site suggests that urban space in Ahmedabad is not homogeneous; what can be seen on the exterior is not always part of a general traffic of visual signs, commerce and sociality, but may belong to a separate economy, whose fraught and conflictual relationship to the dominant economy is belied by its spatial proximity and physical accessibility.

Through a series of adjustments over time, a separate space has in a sense come to characterize the old walled city itself; once it was the better part of the city and today it has come to be treated as pathogenic, as a predictable place of violence, and as an explanation for violence which may actually occur elsewhere, as was the case in 2002.

In the old city, Ahmedabad has maze-like lanes and tightly woven residential neighbourhoods that are introvert with respect to the city but extrovert with respect to the

Figure 1.   Street frontage bordering the fifteenth-century Jama Masjid in the old city.

Figure 2.   Street frontage bordering the fifteenth-century Jama Masjid in the old city.

Figure 3.   Inside the Jama Masjid.

neighbourhood, allowing for internal policing by neighbours but rendering surveillance difficult if not impossible for city authorities. On one occasion in the summer of 2003, walking into a deserted neighbourhood one afternoon, I was confronted by three young men who had seen me and had rapidly assumed a kind of formation as I came back out onto the main street. Swinging something like a bicycle chain with his hand, one of them asked me my name. I gave it and was allowed to move on; strangers were clearly not welcome. No part of the city offers the kind of anonymity associated with modern urban locales. If anything, the opposite is true: Ahmedabad retains a stronger continuity between its pre-colonial formation and its subsequent development than most other major cities in India
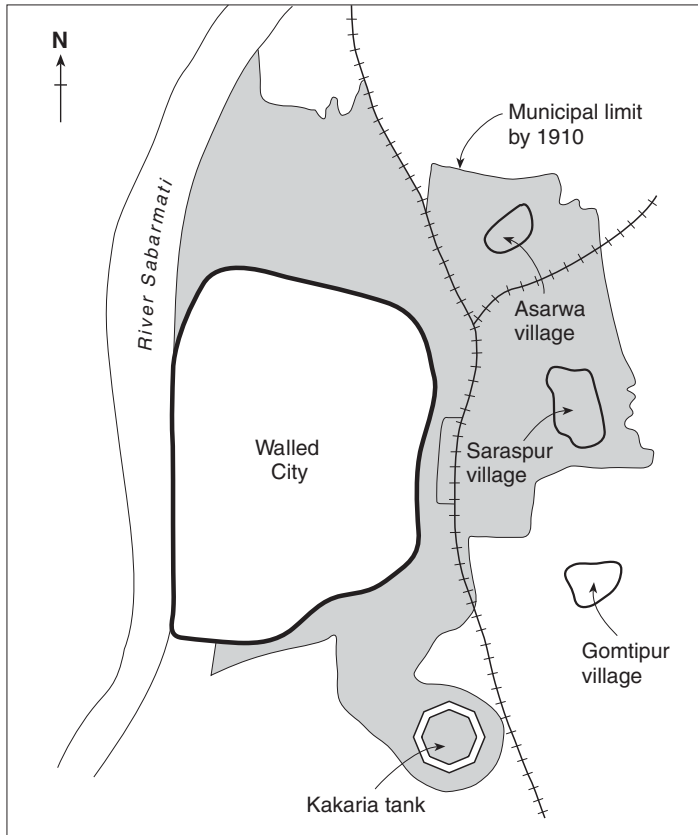
Figure 4.   The city before the twentieth century.
Source: Sompura, 1983.

(Gillion, 1968: 124–5), and it remains organized around identifiable clusters of caste and community that have reproduced themselves at every stage of the city's growth (Figure 4).

Within the old city, rapid and unsurveilled transit was available to residents only, which put police at a disadvantage, as was noted by the Justice Reddy Inquiry Commission Report on the riots in Ahmedabad in 1969 (Figure 5).

> The unique feature of this walled area is that the poles or lanes and sub-poles or sub-lanes are so narrow that it is difficult for two persons and sometimes in a sub-pole even for one person to walk. Most of these poles have gates at their entrances which exist as a measure of protection. These poles and sub-poles have always created difficulties in the maintenance of law and order during disturbances and when riots break out, the miscreants come out on the road, commit mischief and disappear before the arrival of the police ... [P]eople can move from any two points between the main roads from roof to roof and get on to the other side. In this way, miscreants could take the shortest route through the poles and bye-poles and from roof-tops, while the police have to take a detour and traverse a long distance to reach the other point and could only arrive there long after the miscreants had reached there, caused damage and disappeared. The police however, could not use these poles and bye-poles or chase them deep into them for fear of being surrounded and out manoeuvred.[34]

Successive urban plans in fact retained the unsurveillable design of the old city, that favoured residents' property interests at the expense of municipal agencies' own professed
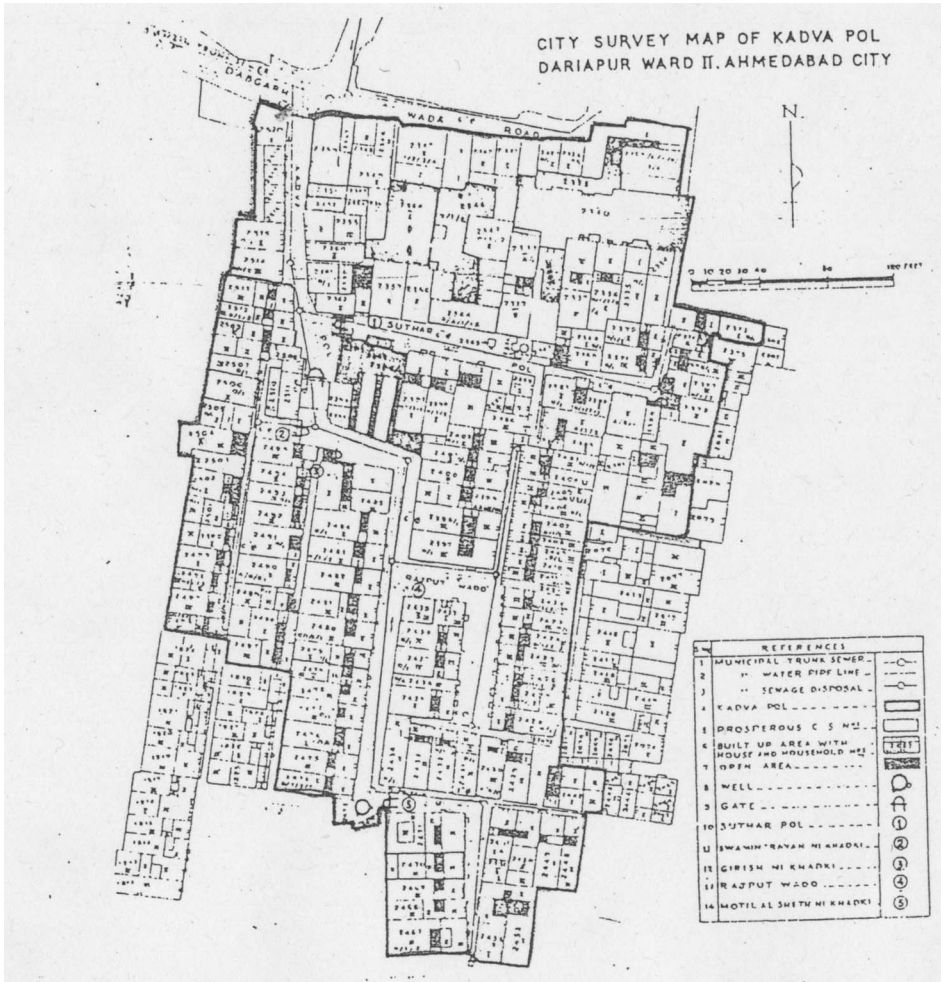
Figure 5.   Pol Layout.
Source: City Development Plan, Ahmedabad, 2006–2012.[35]

needs (see below). Although in 2002, the main sites of the violence in the city were in fact no longer within the walled city, but in settlements outside it such as Naroda Patia, it was the walled city that continued to dominate the Hindu imagination as a source of inexhaustible danger, requiring repeated 'combing operations' by the police that seldom failed to discover AK-47s and explosives, according to news reports in the Gujarati press.[36] This seemingly ineradicable sense of intrigue and indeed ungovernability in the city provided the alibi during the 2002 pogrom for continuing violence, and for selective law enforcement that targeted victims rather than perpetrators.

Antipathy, repugnance and the geography of violence

In his essay, 'The Metropolis and Mental Life', Georg Simmel contemplates the relationship between violence and urbanity by observing that the multiplicity invasiveness and of modern stimuli are enhanced by conditions of urbanity.[37] City-dwellers tend to respond

intellectually to their environments, Simmel suggests, because reason is the most plastic and accommodating of the faculties.

Emotions, by contrast, are slow to change; an emotional response is more appropriate to rural or small town life with its predictable routines. The rational response to the metropolis is, by contrast, cool and deliberate. The metropolitan individual takes a somewhat distant and many-sided view of phenomena, an attitude apposite to a thoroughly monetized economy.[38] Simmel sees urban experience assessed and quantified to render city life more predictable and manageable.

This aspect of urban sensibility is echoed in Kenneth Gillion's much-cited 1968 history of Ahmedabad:

> The most tragic problem of modern Indian political history – the communal problem – has fortunately played only a small role in the history of Ahmedabad. This accords with the spirit of sensible compromise and tolerance evident in other aspects of Ahmedabadi life, such as the mahajan tradition and the good relations between capital and labour. . . . [After 1714] . . . [t]here were no recorded riots between the two communities for two centuries.[39]

Gillion concludes his work thus: 'Just as it was in the sixteenth century, Ahmedabad is again one of the most prosperous and attractive cities in India.' He saw the city as a model of indigenous urban culture, a rare case of a native city flourishing and retaining its character through the colonial period. The *mahajan* or guild tradition comprised syndicates of merchants and financiers and formed an elite circle whose fortunes depended on trade, not agriculture or industry. The survival of indigenous trading networks during British rule meant that mahajans both remained prosperous and espoused social values that reflected the dynamism and inclusiveness of commerce, rather than, say, the conservatism of landlords or the brutality of industrial capitalists.[40]

Gillion reproduces an image of the cool, deliberate urban sensibility Simmel cites: commerce and civic virtue are allies presumed to require each other. Commerce requires that possible antagonisms be contained within the limits of a cooperative enterprise.[41] Commerce could not involve the passions, and indeed could be a counterweight to them.[42]

Gillion's depiction is not strictly accurate. In 1941, there were major communal riots in Ahmedabad and riots occurred again just after Gillion published, in 1969 and thereafter. But no doubt this was a view Gillion heard from influential sources during his research. Unlike Gillion, however, Simmel proposes that the metropolis does not simply beget harmonious reason and social concord. The very profusion of stimuli requires an armouring of the body, a repulsion of external sensations to protect internal stability, the development of a blasé attitude. Indifference is the most typical urban demeanour, the price paid for the unmanageable profusion of sensations. But Simmel sees indifference as an unsustainable veneer:

> [W]e are saved by antipathy which is the latent adumbration of actual antagonism since it brings about the sort of distantiation and deflection without which this type of life could not be carried on at all. Its extent and its mixture, the rhythm of its emergence and disappearance, the forms in which it is adequate, these constitute, with the simplified motives (in the narrower sense) an inseparable totality of the form of metropolitan life. What appears here directly as dissociation is in reality only one of the elementary forms of socialization.[43]

Antipathy – expressed through distancing, deflecting and dissociating behaviours – is the default response of a burdened sensory system. Antipathy and by extension aggression in this context are not purely anti-social, however. Rather they become ways of socialization

into city life and derive from 'actual antagonism', such as class conflict or religious repugnance. Hostility enclosed in social relations diffuses in the manifold encounters of a crowded urban life and may in fact be enhanced through social contact. Such feelings are not external or aberrant to city life but comprise its very texture.

Following Simmel, then, the city may become a source and channel for feelings of violence; the space of the city is in part formed by the ways in which it expresses and contains violence. The specific form of totality of metropolitan life would depend on the extent of antipathy, 'its mixture, the rhythm of its emergence and disappearance, the forms in which it is adequate ... .'[44] We might then consider the spatial-visual order of the city as a perceptible geography, or a potential field of covert, routine or everyday violence.[45]

If Simmel sees antipathy in the metropolis as producing a kind of randomized violence, in Ahmedabad we have a more explicit form of social segregation and religious repugnance being enacted. What this leads to, however, is the formation of urban spaces where the structured exclusion of Muslims acquires a natural character. This relates to the geographic specificity of the violence in Ahmedabad: violence was mainly confined to the Muslim localities.[46] As the city grew, residential and industrial development separated from each other spatially, as in many other cities. Although town planning legislation in the region began in 1915, 'the concept of over-all growth was totally absent in phasing various town planning schemes' for decades, according to the 1975 Ahmedabad Draft Development Plan.[47] By 1965, when the first municipal development plan was sanctioned by the State Government, following the formation of the state of Gujarat in 1960, elites were able to resist the efforts of town planning authorities to acquire land for public housing and other public purposes, and to uphold their own uses of their property even where these did not conform to town planning schemes (Figure 6).[48]

Now as we know, colonial urban planning in India reproduced in spatial terms the prevalent racial distinction between rulers and ruled, maintaining well-manicured and policed 'cantonment' or 'civil lines' where whites lived, while the 'black town' inhabited by natives was crowded and unsanitary by comparison. The antagonism of the metropolis Simmel observed was thus given an overt spatial definition in terms of the structure of the colonial city. Although this was the case in Ahmedabad also, the British cantonment (dating from 1850) had itself been on the east bank, north from the walled city. As bridges were built across the Sabarmati, beginning in 1870 with Ellis Bridge, Indian elites as well as whites moved across the river, and residence on the western bank became a clear marker of class status. Characteristics attributed to the 'black town' continued to be applied to the walled city even after independence. It became the place to escape from, as residents acquired the means to move. Over time, the spatial separation on either side of the river acquired a Hindu–Muslim definition, with Muslims acquiring a disadvantaged and deprived status vis-à-vis Hindus.

As the city grew, elites moved out first from the walled city, going north towards the British cantonment, and by the 1930s to the west of the river to Ellis Bridge and beyond. The east remained the site of industries and of the lower classes, and movement to the west signalled upward mobility. Private, residential construction dominated development on the western side of the river for decades. When institutions took root there, these were predominantly higher education institutes serving the local population, encouraging further middle and upper class residential settlement in the area, arose exclusively in the west, including S.L.D. Arts College in 1931, H.L. College of Commerce in 1936, M.G. Science Institute in 1936, L.M. Pharmacy College in 1947, Gujarat University in 1949 and several thereafter.[49]

Middle and upper classes in Ahmedabad, who were mainly upper caste Hindus, managed to steer the course of urban development to make the western side of the city
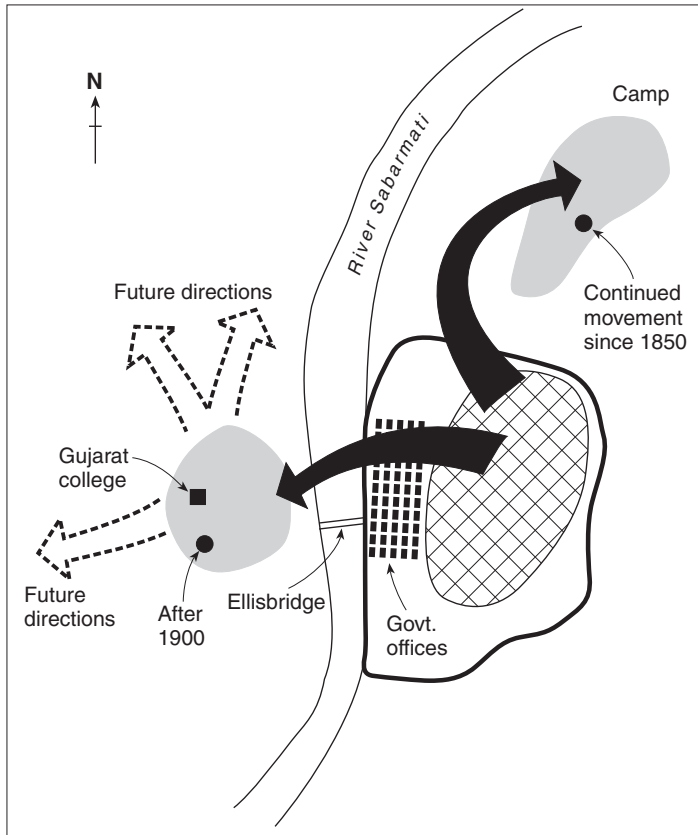
Figure 6.   Elite Movement After 1900.
Source: Sompura, 1983.

effectively an upper caste Hindu enclave, albeit without walls. With the exception of
Juhapura, Paldi and Navrangpura Muslim Society, the western section became almost
entirely Hindu. Muslim ownership or rental of property became scarce in the newer
part of the city. Working and lower middle classes, including concentrations of Muslims,
dominated the eastern side of the city (Figure 7).

Physical separation between middle and upper middle classes grew to the point where
young Ahmedabadis would be unlikely to encounter a Muslim. Few Indian cities have
managed such a systematic separation based on caste, class and community. When the
walls of the old city were taken down in 1940 and a 'relief road' built through it to ease
congestion, it was expected that residents would spread out to other parts of the city with
the money given in compensation for their homes. Instead it effected further crowding as
residents chose to invest the money they received to purchase or rent homes in the same
area where they had lived. This suggests that the social networks residents maintained in
the old city were so localized that they were thought to be at risk even if people moved
across a small distance within Ahmedabad (Figure 8).

In general, urban planning in Ahmedabad supported many aspects of urban social
segregation, certainly insofar as city planning occurred sectorally, largely without the
attempts made in other cities to redesign the urban landscape as a whole.[50] Instead, new
developments in the city reproduced or reinforced class and community divisions. Muslims
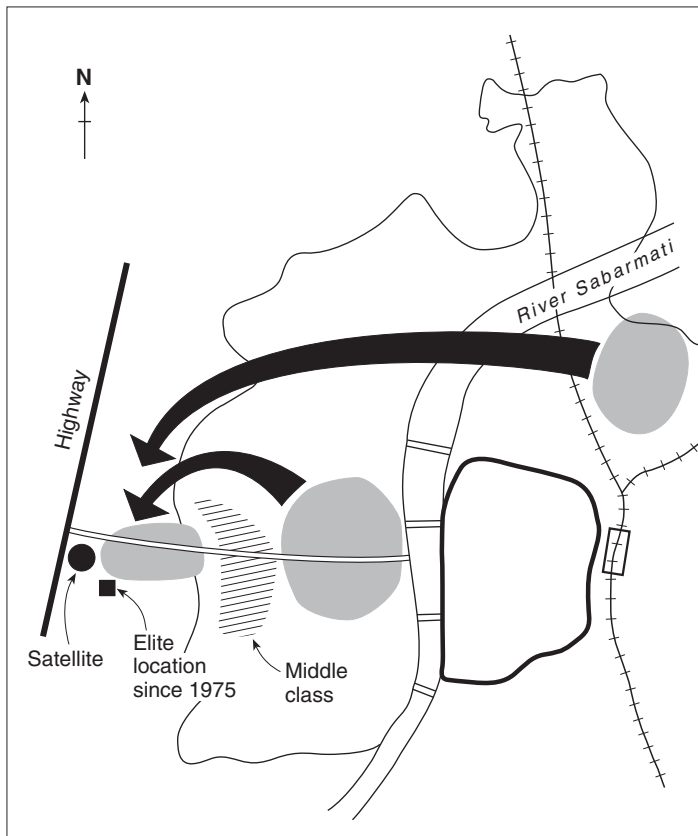
Figure 7.   Elite Location by 1970s.
Source: Sompura, 1983.

even if they succeeded in finding housing in Hindu areas, discovered that their physical security could not be guaranteed, making it likely they would move to areas designated as Muslim, and so making overcrowding more likely. Muslims were hence obliged to live together in ghettoes with little class distinction; auto-mechanics and bootleggers resided amidst clerics and dentists, journalists and teachers. Even financially solvent Muslims were denied housing loans since the areas where they were concentrated were usually 'red-lined' as unsound investment prospects. This drove rents upwards and further concentrated Muslims, again reinforcing red-lining practices said not to be exclusively based on financial prospects.

Muslims therefore faced the prospect of economic ghettoization as a consequence of their spatial segregation. The Central Business District remained in the old city, where the industrial area grew in proximity to the railway station. But following the completion of the infrastructure for the new capital city of Gandhinagar in 1970, commercial establishments increasingly began to be located in the west, along the Sarkhej–Gandhinagar or S.G. Road. Since around this time, C.G. Road (named after an Ahmedabad businessman, Chimanlal Gandalal) also began to draw businesses away from Ashram, Gandhi and Relief roads in the east. Although seven bridges were built across the Sabarmati in the last century and a half, the resulting ease of movement did not result in a uniform diffusion of people across the river. Rather, class and community loyalties expanded and fortified in the more
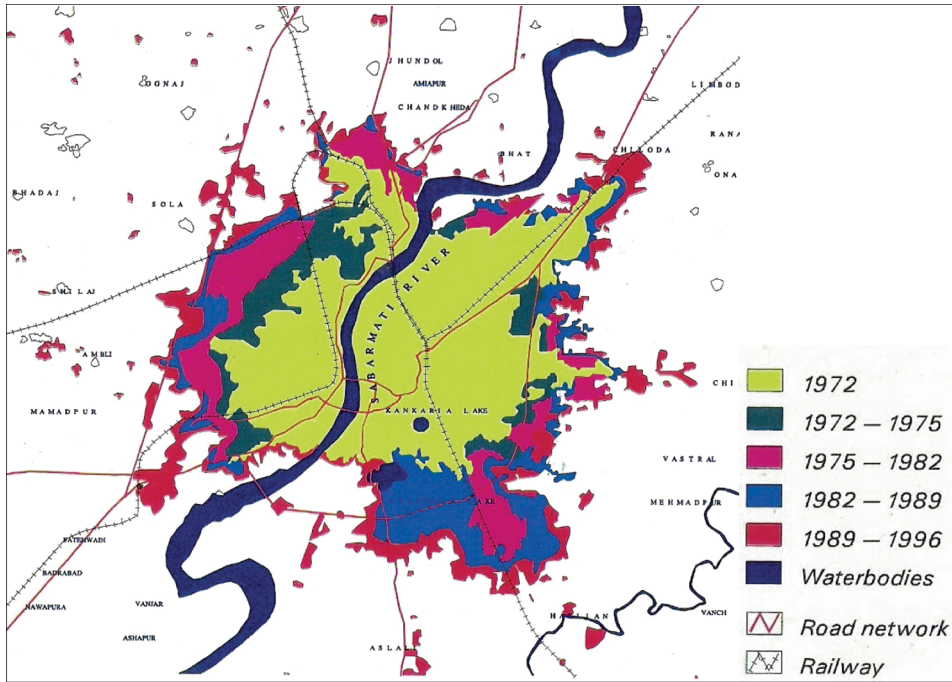
Figure 8.   Growth of the city, 1970s onwards.
Source: Ahmedabad City Development Plan, 2006–2012.

ample region west of the river. Over time, these developments revealed subtle mechanisms of exploitation favouring Hindus, who sold relatively highly priced property in crowded areas, to those who had nowhere else to go. Although Hindus relocated in the more ample and inexpensive spaces in the west, freeing up capital for productive investment, Muslims paid higher prices to remain in business. A Muslim businessman in the old city told me:

> One Kantilal, who used to have a cloth store there, sold it for 35 lakh, bought a store in the western side for 5 lakh, bought goods for 5 lakh, and put the rest in fixed deposit. The truth is that the cost of doing business in the old city has become so prohibitive that it would make more economic sense to simply invest money in the bank – how can you make money after spending 35 lakh on buying a shop?[51]

Housing regulations that favoured group rather than individual investment, offering loans and insurance policies to 'societies' rather than persons, helped to reproduce caste networks as people moved out of the old city into the new. When these groups moved across the river to more spacious homes, they reproduced their spatial proximity, obtaining loans for plots in new housing societies contiguous with each other. The Ahmedabad Guide of 1940 lists the Maharashtra Society, the Brahmakshatriya Society, the Jain Society, the Saurashtra Society, the Patel Society, the Brahman Society and so on.[52] More recent housing society names are unlikely to be so explicit but their caste identity is seldom a secret.

If on the one hand, urban development improved transport and communication, unequal access to the means of mobility ensured that existing social stratifications were not only reproduced but acquired a stronger spatial definition. In the old city, the rich and the

poor lived in close proximity, whereas as the city expanded west of the Sabarmati, greater distinctions could be produced across middle and upper classes. At the same time, the percentage of the city's population living in slums has grown over time, that is, while the well-to-do achieved greater spatial separation not only from the poor but also with respect to each other, for those who fell on the other side of the dividing line, there was a blurring effect as poverty forced them together.[53] Although the Gujarat State Housing Board's welfare initiatives were among the more effective ones in the country, they effectively subsidized the better-off at the expense of the poorer classes, financing the latter's homes at lower rates, and demanding higher rates of return on their hire-purchase schemes.[54]

Rigorous spatial division became a means of anchoring a form of antipathy that was diffused throughout the city. Muslims were understood to be spatially confined to a specific part of the city, to its most crowded and poorest quarters. One Muslim told me: 'Shahpur, Bapunagar, Juhapura, Jamalpur – Muslims cannot live anywhere else in the city'.[55]

The latest phase of 'dividation' began with the 1969 riots, with Muslims moving out of Khadia and other areas in the walled city, and after the 1985 riots, there was a further efflux from places like Teen Darwaza, whereas Hindus moved out of areas such as Shahpur. By 2002 most middle and upper classes could spend extended periods of time without ever seeing a Muslim, or knowing that they did, which amounted to the same thing.[56] Amidst the rarity of contact, antagonism towards Muslims led to curious stories circulating without corroboration. The young daughter of a couple I knew reported one day that the mother of a friend said that Muslims made *rotis* by kneading dough with their feet. Coming from such a source, their daughter believed what she heard.[57] There were other stories and incidents, not all fantastical, but like the above, emerging to conjure a peculiar form of sociality in the absence of much real interaction.

A young friend working in the publicity office of a hospital laughingly told me about a Muslim classmate, Irfan Syed, who lived in Gomtipur: 'He was such a good guy, we told him he was not a Muslim, or else he was a stain on the reputation of his community'. The humour of the story came from its inversion of what he supposed to be the truth, which was that Muslims were all alike, and were not good.[58] The same friend told me why it was that a mob had gathered around the former MP Ehsan Jafri's home on 11 March 2002: 'Jafri was a bad character, involved in all kinds of crimes. The newspapers cannot report these things.'[59] To know the truth it was necessary to draw on informal knowledge; the news by itself could be misleading, he was telling me. This was not always the case, however; at times newspapers themselves purveyed rumours, which I heard from informants, as with a young chartered accountant, who once took me aside and said very earnestly, 'If we had not attacked, they would have finished us off, I am telling you.' It was a rare acknowledgement of participation, but defended as a response to an imminent 'Pakistani terrorist attack', rumours reported as news in *Sandesh* and other Gujarati papers.[60]

A retired city planner, while lucidly explaining the shifts over time in the growth of the city, remarked:

> Once a single Muslim comes he will start misbehaving. He will eat non-veg food, employ abusive language, adopt improper clothing, bring in his relations and other visitors – naturally Hindu community will be affected. But Hindus let go; they are liberal.

A single Muslim, in this account, was a contagion of bad etiquette and vice, requiring defences that Hindus, due to their innocence, lacked. But although I did not question him on his views, he himself proceeded to caution me:

Don't tell the students in the UK that there is a rift between Hindus and Muslims. There is no rift. Only one percent are creating [it].

He saw me as an emissary to the west and sought to project a harmonious image; the divisive behaviour of Muslims ought to be private knowledge.[61] He made this remark not long after televised massacres of Muslims by Hindus. If this was an older, Congress, narrative about communal concord, it contrasted with his own common sense about Muslims as bad citizens. It suggested how antagonism signalled not only a stratified social discourse but could lead to a multiplication of historical voice without an ability to recognize its internal disparateness.

The relationship between stratified social space and antipathy to Muslims is hardly one-to-one, as if spatial distantiation made Hindus vulnerable to supporting violence against Muslims. The proliferation of rumour suggests both the withdrawal of agency from violence and an attempt to reconstitute it in language, conveying the sense of belonging in a collective without acknowledging the initiative of joining it. Increasing reliance on rumour follows from the eroding credibility of official systems of mass communication, but in conveying the sense of a society that can univocally be spoken for, it reproduces the splintering of social discourse and confirms the failure of society to join together with its official representation. Here, rumour and violence each confirms the inability of society to cohere with itself, and in this respect each mirrors the other.[62]

The sparsely filled space of actual contact with Muslims was thus compensated for by a sociality produced by rumour. Not all of it was hostile, but in each case my informants distinguished between what was known and what ought to be known, between misleading public facts, and informal or secret theories required to complement and correct those facts. Individual judgement could not rely on the evidence of one's senses, by such accounts.

It was on empirical grounds that Muslims criticized Hindu rumours. At one public occasion, I encountered an elderly bearded Muslim remarking:

You can go to mosques and see what they are doing there. There are no underground cells where they are conducting terrorist or anti-national activities. Anyone can come into a mosque – no one will stop you. There was a swami – what is his name? – Swami Sacchidanand! He used to say the idols in a temple are made of gold and silver, and are hence likely to be stolen. In a mosque nothing can be stolen because there is nothing of value there![63]

The bare austerity of the mosque corresponded, for this person, to the pure piety of what went on there, in contrast to the Hindu need for expensive idols in their own worship. Just as Hindus were not independent in prayer, and placed a false value on worldly wealth, they placed a false value on the authority of others for their information, he seemed to imply. His complaint pointed to his conviction that Hindu hostility was resistant to evidence, perhaps for peculiarly Hindu reasons, placing Muslims on the side of reason and rationality in a typical gesture of defiance.

Visual perception and the productivity of violence

Under BJP rule, saffron-coloured signs sprouted at several crossroads in the old city to welcome their readers to a Hindu rashtra. For example, in Shahpur in Ahmedabad, the following sign could be seen (in Gujarati):

Jai Shri Ram	Jai Shri Ram
Hindu Raashtra mahanagar nu Shahpur	Hindu Raashtra country's Shahpur branch
Aapdu Hardik Swaagat kareche	Welcomes you whole heartedly
Vishv Hindu Parishad	Vishva Hindu Parishad
Shri Rampur Khand - Ram Nu Khand	Shri Rampur place, Ram's place
_____ _____	
Har Hindu Banega Garv	Each Hindu will become Proud
Hindu Raashtra	Hindu Nation
Tera Vaibhav Amar Rahega	Your glory will be forever
Hum Din Chaar Rahe na Rahe	Even if we (i.e. the VHP) stay only for a few days (Figure 9).

Figure 9.   VHP street sign in Shahpur.

There is a faintly beleaguered character to the welcome – *hum din chaar rahe na rahe*– roughly translated, whether or not we stay [in office] for a few days, reminding us of the fickle nature of political power. Here is an attempt to assert the truth, briefly the VHP may linger in public space, surrounded as it is by the enemies of the Hindu nation. The sign is made possible by political victory but the values behind it aspire to immortality (*tera vaibhav amar rahe* – may your [the Hindu nation's] glory be forever).

Oddly enough then, although the government belonged to the party promoting a Hindu *rashtra*, its own notice had the whiff of forbidden sentiment, expressing eternal values proscribed in a space more attuned to the demands and designs of the bazaar, whose propensity to falsehood only entities such as a Hindu *rashtra* could check.

The boards were positioned like pedestrian signage but pointed beyond the road to a higher realm, so that alert passers-by could savour the occupation of an embattled public space. The sign was visible; the battle itself was not, but knowledge of it provided essential orientation. This battle was not perceptible to the reader of the English language road signs such as 'Stop and Go', nor were these signs rendered in English to appropriately caution those without Gujarati. The medium of the knowledge being presented is

precisely Gujarati, in fact. And these signs were located exclusively in the old city, east of the Sabarmati.

Complementing these visible signs pointing to invisible evidence was a parallel circuitry of hard data for officers of the state, invisible to the public, of ballot rolls, and files registering home and business ownership, all enabling the meticulous separation of Hindu space from Muslim, of part-owned Muslim businesses from wholly owned Hindu owned ones. Thus the VHP might pierce the veil offered by names like Abhilasha restaurant, near Panjarapole, Bhagyoday Restaurant near Thakkarnagar Char Rasta and Tasty restaurant in Satellite, to ignite the truth that lay beneath.

Muslims might have naively assumed that secrecy could serve as a guarantee of survival. If they chose they could shave their beards, discard their veils or name their businesses ambiguously. Who would know the difference between a Muslim and an ordinary human being? A Muslim doctor living in Ahmedabad, remarked to me that although he had passed these establishments often, he did not know who owned them, until the time of the riots when these hidden truths burst into flame, and announced their real identity before being reduced to ashes.[64]

Not only did violence create an alibi for enhanced ghettoization, it thus also provided opportunities to remove Muslims as economic competition, in addition to rendering them socially vulnerable. Successive communal riots in Ahmedabad both consolidated and accelerated what urban planning accomplished during ordinary conditions – spatially separating Hindus and Muslims from each other and further clustering the members of each community together. In some areas this led to the shrinkage of Muslim-occupied territory. For example, the two wholesale markets in the old city, in Palij Kuan and Kalupur, were combined after the 2002 riots because Muslim merchants there had been so damaged by the attacks on their businesses. At the other end of the spectrum, spatial dissociation of Ahmedabad enabled violence, when it occurred, to be rendered out of sight for the middle and upper classes. When mobs were rampaging east of the river in 2002, college students could be seen hanging out at multiplex cinemas and eating snacks along a main artery, S.G. Road.[65] Relatively undisturbed, middle and upper class Hindu residents of the city could find little to complain about. As is well known, middle and upper classes themselves took opportunities to loot stores and shopping malls during the violence, carrying goods away in their motor vehicles in the daytime unimpeded by the police and clearly unafraid of being apprehended. Such incidents were widely reported, and were also recorded on the closed circuit television cameras of some of the stores. During riots in the past, people were unable to go to work for periods as long as 4–8 weeks, due to curfew, threats of violence and, often, the destruction of businesses. With the growing spatial segregation of the city, the violence could be drawn out much longer, because the problems of civic disruption were restricted to the poorer classes as much as possible.

As I have argued above, Hindu violence is both enabled and occluded by the spatial design and layout of Ahmedabad, which boasts of its open frontier enabling growth on the western side, and its teeming but closed spaces, of which the east bank and the walled city in particular became figurative, that could only generate loss – economic, social, cultural and sometimes physical. The near-absence of all signs of Muslim life in much of the west resulted from the way in which the city had been developed over time, and also indicated a sanitization of those spaces where Muslims had been kept out or removed, where they were not allowed to rent or own homes, where campaigns were conducted to urge Hindus to boycott Muslim businesses and so on.[66] The absence of Muslims was thus an artefact of the history of urban planning, economic development and the politicized re-engineering of social relations in the city. Thus when we consider the visual evidence of homogeneous

Hindu neighbourhoods stretching continuously across Ahmedabad, or the undifferentiated commercial spaces in the old city around the Jama Masjid giving no hint of what lay behind them, the operation of seeing conducted by an individual observer itself is a function of a larger set of events and forces. In the process, highly mediated and provisional arrangements appear as transparent and self-evident knowledge, by substituting the social fact of vision for the production of a visual landscape that has actively produced (and staged) Muslim vulnerability.[67]

Conclusion

In what ways does the violence of Gujarat in 2002 mark a departure from previous episodes of violence in India? Upendra Baxi has argued that it signalled the formal onset of what he called 'holocaustian politics', politics that rendered the state into a mechanism for subordinating the minority to the majority, and ensuring that submission became the only means by which the former could exercise their rights. Communalized governance had become the object of the state, rendering minorities into permanently endangered subjects, Baxi argued, and such governance was distinguished by three key components. First, the state was to champion the principle of collective guilt and responsibility, negating the idea of individual rights. Second, the right of the majority community to violence against the minority was to be upheld and encouraged, for reasons of revenge, and self-defence as well as future deterrence, thus rendering the majority community into a *de facto* developmental force of the state, educating minorities into the form of citizenship available to them. This indicated a third crucial fact, namely that the rule of law in India had come to constitute a reign of terror, signalling a broad consensus legitimating organized political violence. Analysts of Indian politics needed to confront the difficult and unpalatable task of theorizing these new realities, Baxi urged.[68]

What Baxi did not discuss was the broader political-economic conjuncture that enabled the anti-Muslim pogroms, which succeeded in simultaneously regionalizing the violence of 2002, and accommodating it to a global neoliberal context. Although the BJP government was replaced at the Centre after Baxi wrote his essay, the chief minister of Gujarat accused of masterminding the violence only strengthened his position in the state thereafter, and came to be lauded by corporate India as a model chief minister. Court proceedings and inquiry commissions were initiated, but like other juridical processes that followed previous acts of mass violence in India, served to delay and perhaps deny justice, while simulating due process. Federalism, from being a guarantee of limiting centralization of state authority, had become a means to make human rights violations into an internal matter for state governments. Popular elections, instead of expressing democratic rights against established elite power, can become a means of nullifying the law and absolving crimes against humanity – this is clearly what the BJP sought to accomplish in Gujarat, at any rate. State institutions designed to serve the people regardless of their community or creed were turned into means for ensuring that the rights of a minority were negated, while activist groups and news media that challenged such discrimination themselves became targets of vilification, as anti-people or anti-national.[69]

The mimicking of anti-colonial politics for very different purposes by the postcolonial state suggests the inadequacy of the conventional repertoire of liberal and activist forms of politics, with their reliance on putative state impartiality combined with public protest to appeal to wider sympathies. In this case neither the one nor the other was available in very great measure, at least domestically – as a result of which appeals to international

audiences and organizations were made, which then could be used to reinforce claims of anti-nationalism by the state.

I argued above that Gujarat's exceptional 'success' as the poster child of neoliberal development was complemented by the manner in which it had normalized an exceptional social order predicated on accelerated practices of social segregation, which in turn enabled anti-Muslim violence (and its rhetorical justification). Urban growth, economic development and ghettoization operated in tandem in Ahmedabad, with patterns of spatial expansion and capital accumulation together working to force Muslims more closely together into spatial proximity and social intimacy, while rendering the rest of the city as a canvas for Hindu aspirations. These aspirations were not merely economic or territorial, but they were most significantly perceptual; that is, they did not limit themselves to the Hindu-dominated areas but impinged on the city as a whole. As a result, various forms of structural and phenomenal violence became naturalized to the point where their results were seen as attributes of Muslims themselves or as the results of their behaviour, rather than as a consequence of conditions imposed on them. The form of public communication in which these conditions were reproduced relied not on transparency but on a structure of secrecy and surveillance, producing a relationship between a surveilled and a surveilling population, a population understood to be different and one that believed itself to be normal. *Violence was not external to the reproduction of this system of communication, but one of its constitutive components*.

My argument about the relay between the special economic and political zones as both a symptom of and a modal social form for understanding the specificity of Indian globalization can be understood at two levels. First, it asks us to view 'Gujarat' as signalling the possible consolidation of a set of relationships between political violence and economic globalization, between an accelerated emphasis on regional identity, or Gujarati *asmita*, on the one hand, and the globalization of Gujarati business classes on the other *as a circuit secured by the performance of anti-Muslim violence*. The forms of spatial segregation, economic marginalization, and ultimately, of Muslim ghettoization have taken over the Gujarati public sphere even as they have rendered the English sphere suspect and non-authentic, thus aiding in remaking political common sense. Second, my argument regarding the special political zone is an effort to specify the forms and practices of postcolonial political violence, and to resist the tendency to generalize contemporary anti-Muslim violence as but another illustration of biopolitics as already understood in the western context.[70]

However, dehumanizing violence is but one aspect of a broader politics of vision and of visibility; it is an integral, if inadequate element in the production of a broader perceptual field where Muslim vulnerability and spatial segregation are mutually entailed in the remaking of political common sense. It is this longer-term production of vulnerability, and of the complicity of political economy with violence, that I have addressed here in order to ground anti-Muslim violence in a neoliberal order where the logic of economic and of political exception interlace with each other.

Notes

1. Portions of this article have been presented at Sciences Po in Paris, at a colloquium titled 'Who is a Citizen in India Today?' in June 2010, and at a conference titled 'Cities and Fundamentalism' at UC Berkeley in 2007. My thanks to those who responded with helpful comments and suggestions during these presentations. I would also like to thank the people who have helped in my research and writing, including Binu Alex, Bharat Desai, Rubina Jasani, Brij Kothari, Anosh Malekar, Carin McCormick, Jagdish Parikh, Aakar Patel, Fr. Cedric Prakash, Amrita Shah, Mukul Sinha, Ashim Roy, Ajay Umat and Achyut Yagnik.

2. See, for example, Satyakam Joshi, 'Explosion in the "Laboratory"' and 'Preparation for Violence'.

3. Roy, 'Gujarat Genocide', pp. 3–17.

4. The campaign to demolish the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya culminated under a BJP-led government in Uttar Pradesh, in 1992. Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao at the time argued that since law and order was a state subject, the central government could not intervene despite the threat to public safety in Uttar Pradesh. Hence the demolition went unhindered, albeit under the watch of tens of thousands of security personnel from the CRPF, BSF, RPF and other forces. Citizens' Tribunal on Ayodhya, 1993. For a brilliant critical assessment of the implications of the events in Gujarat soon after the violence, see Baxi, 'Notes on Holocaustian Politics'. Baxi sets out some of the terms of the theoretical and political challenges before critics posed by the Gujarat violence, and concludes with some (understandably) modest proposals for policy intervention. While he describes the 'holocaustian' turn of political outcomes, my own essay seeks to uncover infrastructural conditions and perceptual practices that assist in the conduct of, as well as the denial of violence.

5. Bachchan's move drew fierce criticism, and in his response to critics he distinguished between endorsing Gujarat in terms of its history, and its government, although the 'branding' was itself sponsored by the government. See, for example, 'I am Endorsing Gujarat's Glory as Brand Ambassador, not Present Govt: Bachchan', PTI, March 25, 2010. http://timesofindia. indiatimes.com/india/I-am-endorsing-Gujarats-glory-as-brand-ambassador-not-present-govt-Bachchan/articleshow/5721971.cms (accessed July 26, 2010).

6. Declared to be public utilities under the Industrial Disputes Act, strikes are illegal in SEZs. The precursor to the SEZ, the Export Processing Zone or EPZ, was first established in Kandla, Gujarat, in 1965, to replace the deepwater port facilities lost in Karachi, following Partition. The port of Kandla itself was inaugurated about a decade earlier. By the 1990s, the provision came to be treated mainly as a regulatory loophole to be exploited by businesses. What mainly resulted then were schemes to acquire real estate, and often, windfall profits, while avoiding taxation, and relying on existing public infrastructure without contributing to it in any way. See TNC Rajagopalan, 'Govt Must Quickly Review its Present SEZ Policy', *Business Standard*, June 28, 2010, 6. A special report on the state of Gujarat's economy in one of the business papers reports that exports from Gujarat's SEZs accounted for over Rs. 1 lakh crore of the total exports of Rs. 2 lakh crore from all of India's SEZs in 2009–10. Maulik Pathak and Kalpesh Damor, 'The Entrepreneurial State', *Business Standard Special Report: Gujarat: Home of Indian Enterprise*, August 2010, 3.

7. State-led economic development itself is conducted like an emergency, to be sure. Here what I am pointing to is the regularization of governmental discourse in this respect. The abbreviations cited are VIP: Very Important Person, for whom exceptions of all kinds are routinely made; MOU: Memorandum of Understanding, for example, between the government and a company, for example, outlining the terms on which rights may be granted to the company in return for its anticipated contribution to the exchequer; RTI: the Right to Information (Act), used by citizens applying to have specific items of information released by petitioning the PIO or Public Information Officer of any government department. RTI can be seen as an indirect example of my point: in a context where few demands for information can be made of the government without provoking suspicion or in fact, being rejected, the RTI Act of 2005 made available a limited right, namely the right to obtain a response about whether a precisely designated piece of information could be provided, and if not, to disclose that such information could in fact not be disclosed.

8. My discussion here draws on Agamben's work, but seeks to extend his discussion from sites that he mainly focuses on such as the concentration camp to the domain of political economy as such. See Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life,* and *State of Exception*.

9. For example, land acquisition at Dadri, Gujarat and Kalinganagar, Orissa was at about a third and a tenth of the prevailing market rate respectively. See, for example, Praful Bidwai, 'The Great Land Grab,' *Frontline*, September 2006, http://www.tni.org/article/great-land-grab. Meanwhile the drastic and unexplained drop in exports from the domestic tariff area and the rise of claims about exports from SEZs may suggest that already existing exports are being claimed for SEZs that in fact originate elsewhere. See 'Another SEZ Controversy', *Business Standard*, editorial, July 9, 2010, 9.

10. The subject of what might be other candidates for inclusion in a list of 'Special Political Zones' deserves discussion; states as diverse as Bihar, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal could arguably qualify under the terms discussed here, but this is an issue beyond the scope of my paper.

11. For instance, Pratap Bhanu Mehta, in a column titled 'Globalisation and Nationalism' in *The Hindu*, February 27, 2004, argued: ' . . . [I]t can be argued that insofar as the BJP seems to be acting moderately, globalisation is a contributing factor to that moderation. . . . For one thing, greater integration into the world has made the BJP a little more solicitous of India's image (etc.).' See also Sunil Jain, 'Vote Vajpayee', *Business Standard*, February 16, 2004, 11.

12. See Ranciere, *The Politics of Aesthetics*.

13. See Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life*.

14. The relatively high ratio of state to non-state agency disclosed by the Tehelka 'sting' operation on the extensive planning and state involvement via members of Hindutva organizations, while obviously important, does not address the question of the prominence of the perception of non-state agency in the violence.

15. See Davis, *Dead Cities and Other Tales*.

16. These figures are from Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life*. Varshney himself wishes to reserve urbanity and civility from reproach, and assumes that an increase in civic ties, indexed as 'social capital', would deter from violence and lead to more democratic political outcomes, following Robert Putnam's argument in *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001. Like Putnam, Varshney assumes a continuity between voluntary, and face-to-face civic life at the grassroots and overall political conditions, and like Putnam, he assumes that familial and sectarian commitments that are not public are consequently not fully voluntary, and can be excluded from consideration. These assumptions are questionable. First, like economic capital, social capital is multivalent and not a cumulative entity whose increase necessarily entails positive outcomes. Second, abstract and highly mediated relationships acquire a density and force fully capable of grounding democratic politics even in the absence of face-to-face relationships, as seen, for example, in various movements seeking alternative forms of globalization today. Third, the assumption that civic ties are located in the public, and by this reason are transparent and modern, relies on a further assumption about their separation from traditional and neo-traditional forms of association. But in postcolonial contexts, nationalist mobilization has often relied on religious association and symbolism, and hence confounded such neat divisions; the growth of organizations like the RSS, which Varshney does not consider, is itself a case in point. The RSS certainly builds on face-to-face relationships and with good reason, presents itself as community-building, but it excludes non-Hindus, and discriminates against lower castes even within its organization, while its reliance on violence is well-documented.

17. *Times of India*, Times News Network, 'Riot's Impact on Trade, Industry Negligible: Govt', March 22, 2002.

18. This ghettoization has been mainly located in the old city, although in recent years, newer settlements beyond the municipal limits in the west, and in the east; I will expand on this below.

19. Dr. V.S. Pramar, 'A Study of Some Indo-Muslim Towns of Gujarat', 1984. The study examines Ahmedabad, Baroda, Cambay, Palanpur, Radhanpur and Surat; except for Surat and Cambay these were all founded by Muslim rulers or under Nawabi control, and all six were 'under strong Muslim influence' (ibid.). The citadel which the rulers occupied were, in all these towns, as well as in other cities founded by Muslim rulers such as Delhi and Agra, located not at the center of the walled area where presumably security would be maximal, but on the periphery. Pramar suggests this was to preserve the seclusion of the women, whose privacy would be better preserved on the periphery, with one wall of the citadel looking outside rather than into the city; in each of the eight cities he considers, the citadel is located on the periphery of the walled area.

20. See Geddes' report, titled 'Ahmedabad', (Part I – Walls), 1915. General Department (Comp), Files 1005-1916, Maharashtra State Archives. (See also the note by the Consulting Surveyor to the Government A.E. Mirams, dated August 25, 1915, expressing his reservation about identifying Geddes's views as those of the government. Mirams himself, in his Report on the Ahmedabad City Wall Improvement Scheme of 1919, later proposed the demolition of the walls altogether. Government of Bombay, Revenue Department ('28' Series), File

no. 1086/28 I, pp. 323–35; File no. 1086/28 III, pp. 301–5; AMR, No. 143, 1st quarter, 1921–2, pp. 109–11, 121. Cited in Raychaudhuri, 'Colonialism, Indigenous Elites', 694. Geddes' arguments were themselves in line with the City and Town Planning Exhibitions that had become an influential vehicle for inculcating urban planning as a governmental activity. Geddes visited India after Lord Pentland, the Governor of Madras, invited him to visit and enlighten municipal authorities on the subject of town planning, in 1914. The Town and City Planning Act of 1909 had been an outcome of efforts Geddes was involved in, and his City and Town Planning Exhibitions, which he designed as an educational tool, had begun to gain popularity. See Geddes, *Cities in Evolution*. For a discussion of Geddes' work in relation to recent debates see Welter, *Biopolis: Patrick Geddes and the City of Life*.

21. I return to this issue below. For a detailed historical account see Raychaudhuri, ibid., 687–703.
22. The death rate of infants under one year of age per 1000 births in Ahmedabad was 552.32 in 1904, 802.99 in 1905, 725.79 in 1907 and 976.69 in 1908. Government of Bombay, Annual Report of the Sanitary Commissioner for the Government of Bombay, Year 1904 (Bombay, 1905), 6; Year 1905 (Bombay, 1906), 6; Year 1906 (Bombay, 1907), 5; Year 1907 (Bombay, 1908), 6; Year 1908 (Bombay, 1909), 7. Cited in Raychaudhuri, ibid., 677–726.
23. Pathak and Sheth, *Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel*. In this connection, see Raychaudhuri, ibid. Raychaudhuri's essay however dwells on the fact of indigenous elite resistance to colonial intervention; it is less clear exactly what the effects of such resistance were on the life of the city, in his account.
24. *Ahmedabad Municipal Record* No. 132, 2d quarter, 1918–19, 26–7, 28–32. Cited in Raychaudhuri, ibid., 693.
25. My reference here is however only to two city plan documents, cited elsewhere in this article.
26. This data is theoretically available to the public, but in practice can prove hard to obtain. Meanwhile, the population density of the walled city area is said to have reached saturation levels, and the number of persons per hectare has reduced from 716 in 1971–599 in 1981 and 560 in 1991, the most recent year for which figures are available. Over the same period, the number of persons per hectare in the western AUDA (or Ahmedabad Urban Development Authority) area has increased from 13 to 28–43, and the corresponding figures for eastern AMC have grown from 79 to 134–78. Both of these areas have concentrations of Muslim populations. CEPT/GIDB 2005 Ahmedabad BRTS Report no.1, cited in City Development Plan, 13.
27. Thus, for example, the number of registered workers in Ahmedabad has remained unchanged for four decades, while the population has more than doubled, and the area measured as Ahmedabad has itself grown. See in this context Breman, *The Making and Unmaking of an Industrial Working Class*.
28. The official picture is upbeat, however. To quote the City Development Plan of 2006–2012: 'With its low unemployment rate, reasonably balanced income distribution, and low cost of living, the city has the reputation of LIVABLE CITY' (sic). Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission, *City Development Plan, Ahmedabad, 2006–2012*, 131. My thanks to Amrita Shah for leading me to this report.
29. Jagdish Parikh, Ahmedabad, January 3, 2008.
30. It is perhaps relevant to note that medieval era portraits of the city imagined a celestial eye in their effort to enfold the city pictorially, that is, a view not humanly accessible to them. Aerial photographs now surmount this difficulty as far as representation goes, but the awareness of users of space is bodily rather than visual. See in this context Dubbini, *Geography of the Gaze*.
31. de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Chapter VII.
32. Castells, 'Cities, the Informational Society and the Global Economy'.
33. Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution*.
34. Reddy et al., *Report on Inquiry into the Communal Disturbances at Ahmedabad*, Chapter III, Section 3.2, 22.
35. See Patel et al., 'Rights and Wrongs', sections 6 and 7.
36. See Simmel, 'The Metropolis', 1903, http://www.scribd.com/doc/8384593/Georg-Simmel-The-Metropolis-and-the-Mental-life (accessed August 28, 2010).
37. Building up from a phenomenology of everyday life, Simmel arrives at insights that clarify the structure of social relations in capitalist urbanity. There is more to this complex essay than I can explore here, hence my discussion will be limited.
38. Which comes first, it is hard to say, Simmel acknowledges, but the two cannot be separated. For an interesting and related work that traces the origin of rational discourse to the division

between intellectual and manual labor in ancient Greece, see Sohn-Rethel, *Intellectual and Manual Labour*.

39. Gillion, *Ahmedabad*, 171.
40. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*.
41. Hirschman in *The Passions and the Interests* has identified this as a view that originated in the early modern period, when Florentine potentates granted trading rights to merchants because such activity was seen as harmless and unthreatening to their power. As Montesquieu remarked in *L'Esprit des Lois*, 'It is fortunate for men to be in a situation where, though their passions may prompt them to be wicked, they nevertheless have an interest in not being so.' Cited in Amartya Sen, Foreword, Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests*, xxii.
42. A similar view was held by Mughal rulers, who granted European trading companies the rights they sought from the sixteenth century on, believing that traders could not constitute a challenge. By contrast, China forbade the granting of such rights to foreign merchants, and insisted that trade was an imperial prerogative.
43. Simmel, 'The Metropolis', 15, http://www.scribd.com/doc/8384593/Georg-Simmel-The-Metropolis-and-the-Mental-Life (accessed August 28, 2010).
44. Ibid.
45. See in this connection Veena Das's argument for interpreting violence not as an interruption to the everyday so much as, increasingly, interwoven with it, in Das, *Life and Words*.
46. In, 2002 however, the newer settlements outside the old city were chosen, where recent migrants to the city were more numerous, presumably because they presented softer targets.
47. Citation from *Draft Development Plan*, p. 9. The basic concept of town planning involved, on this account, 'pulling together all the ownership of the area and redistributing it in a proper reconstituted form after acquiring the lands for social infrastructure and super-imposing a road-network in the area' (p. 9). Housing and public uses of urban space (in addition to roads) were to be regulated by action against non-conforming users by acquiring their lands. However, courts ruled that the Municipal Corporation had no power to enforce 'non-conforming' owners to obey its injunctions. This was the case of Municipal Corporation of Ahmedabad filed Criminal Appeal No. 382/1968 against Asarwa Bobin Works, in a case decided by the Gujarat High Court on March 9, 1970, for non-conforming uses of its property, for which it had not sought permission from the AMC. In addition, the 1975 Plan proposed the acquisition of 400 acres for public housing, in addition to acquiring other lands for 'various public purposes' (pp. 10–1) but the Revenue Department of the state government issued a circular (No. LAQ/2269/LA/IV/20-6-1970) ordering all acquisition proceedings to cease. In Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (Town Development Department) *Draft: Revised Development Plan 1975–1985*. Sanctioned by Administrator under Resolution No. 1535, dated 26-12-1985.
48. Satyakam Joshi, 'Explosion in the Laboratory' and 'Preparation for Violence'.
49. Sompura, 'Residential Structure and its Evolution – A Historical Analysis of Ahmedabad City', 68.
50. Post-plague urban policy in Bombay illustrates similar characteristics; see in this connection Hazareesingh, *The Colonial City and the Challenge of Modernity* and Kidambi, *The Making of an Indian Metropolis*.
51. Abdul Razaq Sheikh, May 9, 2004. Ahmedabad, Personal Interview.
52. Sompura, 'Residential Structure and its Evolution', 69.
53. In this respect the experience of Muslims was akin to that of the poor as a whole, though it was laden with additional layers of social stigma, to say nothing of the campaign for economic boycott against them. In 1961, 17.67% of households lived in slums. By 1971 this grew to 24.7%, by 1981, 31.82%, and by 1996–1997, to 41.1%. Sompura, 'Residential Structure and its Evolution', p. 83 except for the 1996–1997 figure, which is from Dutta and Batley, *Urban Governance, Partnership and Poverty*, 39. The figures from Dutta and Batley for 1981 do not agree with those in Sompura, however.
54. Paul, 'Housing Policy', 1985–90.
55. Abdul Razaq Sheikh, personal interview.
56. For example, some Muslims I encountered had taken Hindu names, and avoided any visible markers of their religious identity, while working in Hindu-owned businesses in the western part of the city. Traveling from Naroda Patia to the Satellite area once by rickshaw, my

rickshaw driver, who guessed that I had never been to his area before, disclosed that similarly he had never been to mine. All along the way, he stopped at provisions stores, auto-mechanic stands, and other businesses to inquire how to proceed, and in each case he approached an establishment he believed was Muslim-owned, judging by discreet signs indicating the owners' identity, such as a few letters written with chalk on a board, or painted on a sign. A parallel circuit lay across the city that an enterprising person could utilize, that Hindus would not necessarily know about. Fieldnotes, Ahmedabad, March–April 2004.

57. Conveyed by Keshab Das and Tara Nair, Ahmedabad, May 4, 2004.
58. This young man, whom I will call Pravin, went onto tell me that this Muslim friend and his brothers were hauled off to police custody for several days, and badly beaten there, for no fault of theirs. The family moved to Hyderabad thereafter, Pravin said. The injustice done to his friend and his friend's family, who were the only Muslims he knew, were incidental in relation to what in Pravin's mind was the essential fact, namely that Muslims as a whole were criminal. Fieldnotes, Ahmedabad, June 2004.
59. Fieldnotes, Ahmedabad, June 2004.
60. [Informant name withheld.] Fieldnotes, Ahmedabad, April 2004.
61. [Informant name withheld.] Fieldnotes, Ahmedabad, July–August 2003; January–June 2004.
62. See Feldman, 'Ethnographic States of Emergency', 230–2.
63. Peerzada, resident of Juhapura. Conversation on the occasion of Mohammed Arif Khan's public address in Ahmedabad, following his joining the BJP. March 23, 2004.
64. Hanif Lakdawala, medical doctor and Director, Sanchetna, personal interview, Ahmedabad, May 21, 2004.
65. Ajay Umat, News Editor, Divya Bhaskar, Personal Interview, Ahmedabad, August 2003.
66. See in this context the PhD dissertation by Rubina Jasani, submitted to the Centre for Development Studies, University of Sussex, 2007, 26.
67. We might note some revealing adjacencies with the perceptual terrain of 'untouchability'. In the case of untouchability, it is not the personal animus that the upper caste bears against the untouchable, but the sense that he or she gains merit by acting in this way, and moreover avoids the odium of contact with a degrading body. In this sense, it is first of all an impersonal sensibility that is involved, and individual revulsion is only secondary and even incidental to the process of discrimination. If we extend this to the precarious visibility of Muslims, who emerge out of conditions of unseeability and of ghettoization to become visible in the context of anti-Muslim violence, we see that the logic governing invisibility is informal, constituting a form of common-sense: it is not the intention of the individual to avoid visual or physical contact with the stigmatized person, but rather, that an impersonal sensibility renders Muslims unfit to be seen, or repugnant.
68. Upendra Baxi, 'Notes on Holocaustian Politics', *Seminar* No. 513, 2002, http://www.india-seminar.com/2002/513/513%20upendra%20baxi.htm (accessed) May 12, 2010.
69. Baxi, ibid.
70. Achille Mbembe has undertaken the important work of exploring the character of bio-politics in the postcolonial context, but his questions gain their specific interest against the background of civil war and militarized violence in Africa. In this article, it is the perception of anti-Muslim violence as merely a regional problem, and the rationalizations by means of which such violence is then excused or condoned, that interest me. See Achille Mbembe, 'Necropolitics', *Public Culture* 12, no. 1 (2003): 11–40. I am thinking here of scholarship exploring the relationship between sovereignty, the law of exception, and the production of 'bare life,' and which draws on the work of the philosopher, Giorgio Agamben. As is well known, Agamben focuses on the figure of *homo sacer*-the person who can be killed without compunction, that is, one who stands outside the logic of sacrifice-as illuminating the truth about sovereignty. In killing homo sacer, according to Agamben, the sovereign exhibits his right to exempt himself from the laws governing homicide, and demonstrates the capacity of sovereign violence to create a distinction between the political citizen on the one hand, and bare, biological life on the other. This logic of dehumanization, that is, the ability of sovereign power to produce disposable lives or social detritus is indeed what Agamben takes to be at the heart of genocidal politics. Here Agamben assumes a formal model of sovereignty, rather than exploring historically the contradictions through which political power is exercised, and used to produce biopolitical subjects, as I have done here. Agamben, ibid.

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