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Brokered Resilience Climate-Resilient Spatial Reconfigurations as Strategic Governance in Informal Labor Geographies, Case of Surat.

BASU, RITWIKA

Brokered Resilience

Climate-Resilient Spatial Reconfigurations as Strategic Governance in
Informal Labor Geographies,
Case of Surat

Ritwika Basu

ABSTRACT

As emerging economies strive to build more climate-resilient cities, urban regions are constantly (re) articulating which relations need to be made resilient, how, and in response to which crises. Amid growing calls for global urban climate-economic restructuring, southern 'resilient cities' are stepping into a new era of climate-resilient urbanism. As these cities aspire to enhanced climate-resilient economies, the need to contextualize emergent climate-resilient relational practices, logic, and reconfigurations acquires greater urgency. Against this backdrop, this study traces institutional resilience practices in relation to migrant labor geographies in Surat, a port city located on India's West coast. By examining the spatial intersections of climate-resilient reconfigurations and informal labor through a relational approach, this research foregrounds labor and labor geographies as constrained spatial agentic forces in emergent climate-resilient urbanism. This perspective builds on critical observations regarding the marginalization of labor and labor geographies in climate urbanism scholarship. The discursive-material reconfigurations in labor geographies highlight the intertwined spatial production of informal labor geographies, risk, and resilience in southern cities. This intertwined production motivates an inquiry into the differential encounters of resilience with urban heterogeneity in the city's prime economic labor geographies. The study uncovers critical dimensions of Surat's ongoing climate-resilient narratives, logic, and spatial reconfigurations within these heterogeneous labor geographies. Overall, these insights contribute to the broader argument of the thesis – that resilience functions as a spatial strategy to manage and govern labor amid climate-economic shifts in the region. Conceptually, this research builds on several subfields within the social sciences, including critical climate studies, urban infrastructure studies, urban science and technology studies, and labor geography. Methodologically, it employs institutional ethnographic and case narrative methods to pursue a relational inquiry at the intersections of climate

infrastructural practices, spatial risk management and governance, and informal labor geographies. At its core, this study advances our understanding of climate-resilient urbanism and racialized labor geographies from the perspective of differential spatial management and governance.

Keywords: Climate-resilient urbanism, labor, infrastructure, urban institutions, governance, southern cities

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

all aspects of field research. I appreciate Dhaval's enduring support as a field assistant. The time I spent in Surat will be cherished forever, largely due to the people I met during my fieldwork. Finally, I was deeply touched by the generosity and willingness of different migrant communities and individuals to share aspects of their lives with me. What I learned from them runs so deep that I have struggled to articulate it in words many times, yet I try. Their relentless pursuit of a meaningful, healthy, and dignified life is beyond inspiring.

Back in Durham, I am grateful to have made friends who are unique, genuine, and deeply considerate. We share a common intellectual and ethical commitment and have found solace and joy in each other throughout this journey. Durham would not have felt like home without friends like Victoria Jones, Pietra Perez, Carlos Tornel, Ayushman Bhagat, Kashish Madan, Sufia Singlee, Burag Gurden, Katherine Wyndham, Ivo Pink, Liping Zhang, Bridget Shaffrey, Leah Edwards, Gopi Basyal, Will Burton, Esha Afsana, Leonard Schliesser, and many others whom I had the good fortune to get to know. I am also very thankful to the people I met in Bristol during the last year of my PhD writing. As I transitioned from being a doctoral researcher to a Lecturer, I learned a lot from my mentors, Ed Atkins, Dan Lunt, and James Duminy. Conversations with early career academics in Bristol helped me soundboard ideas and gain clarity on balancing research with the equally challenging and rewarding process of teaching.

No words can do justice to how grateful I am to the closest people in my life who have seen me grow, wither, and lift myself again during this process. My mother, Piyali Basu, has been a force to reckon with all her life. I draw immense strength from her spirit and courage. And finally, my partner in crime and life, Shashwat Dhar— words cannot fully express the companionship, friendship, and love that sustained me and helped me give my all to the PhD through both good and difficult times. I cherish the countless conversations about life, work, politics, books, travel, food, music, and more that kept us both going on our respective PhD journeys. This

dissertation would not have seen the light of day without his support throughout. I am thankful to my family for their patience, nurturing love, and relentless faith in me. The PhD is as much a manifestation of theirs as it is mine.

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ABBREVIATIONS

100RC	100 Resilient Cities
ACCCRN	Asian Cities Climate Change Research Network
CSS	Centre for Social Studies
CRS	City Resilience Strategy
DRM	Disaster Risk Management
EWS	Economically Weaker Sections
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
HUDCO	Housing and Urban Development Corporation
ICSSR	Indian Council for Social Science Research
IE	Institutional Ethnography
IIM	Indian Institute of Management
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
JNNURM	Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission
KII	Key Informant Interviews
MS	Mahila Samiti
MC	Migration Cell
MoUD	Ministry of Urban Development
NDMA	National Disaster Management Authority
PMAY	Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana
PPP	Public-Private Partnership
RF	Rockefeller Foundation
SEWA	Self-Employed Women's Association
SGCCI	South Gujarat Chamber of Commerce and Industries
SHG	Self-help Group
SMC	Surat Municipal Corporation
STS	Science and Technology Studies
SURATiLab	Surat Ideas and Innovation Lab
SCCT	Surat Climate Change Trust
SUDA	Surat Urban Development Authority
UHCRCE	Urban Health and Climate Resilience Centre of Excellence
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UCD	Urban Community Development
WB	World Bank
WHO	World Health Organisation

DECLARATION

I, Ritwika Basu, certify that this thesis is solely my own work.

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The copyright of this thesis rests with the author. No quotation or excerpt from it should be reproduced or published without the prior written consent of the author. Any information derived from the thesis should be duly acknowledged.

1. INTRODUCTION

Resilience holds a prominent place in Surat's contemporary narrative. In the ongoing pursuit of building a resilient Surat spanning nearly two decades, urban imaginaries have been invented and abandoned. In this thesis, I trace Surat's institutional resilience practice in relation to racialized labor and labor geographies. I approach resilience as a situated relational approach to unpack the critical dimensions of climate-resilient urbanism in relation to labor in Surat. In other words, what does Surat's institutional resilience practice reveal about its hegemonic climate economic aspirations in relation to labor? Moreover, what do situated spatial tensions and negotiations reveal about emergent climate-resilient urbanism in relation to strategic migrant labor geographies?

This is important not only for Surat's sake but also for what Surat represents in contextually relevant geographies. It matters, considering Surat's purchase in trans-local climate-resilient economies and the situated reconfigurations these bring about. Over the years, Surat has gained widespread global recognition for pioneering an entrepreneurial brand of urban resilience in India through a nearly two-decades-long association with the Rockefeller-supported Asian Cities Climate Change Resilience Network (ACCCRN). Consequently, the influence Surat has garnered over the years has been instrumental in its ascendance to networked climate urbanism. In recent years, local authorities, such as the Surat Municipal Corporation (SMC) and the city-based resilience network, have galvanized efforts to assimilate normative risk and resilience frameworks into prevailing institutional practices and policy landscapes. I observe how the institutionalization of resilience is steadily evolving as an overarching spatial management and governance orientation to spatial reconfigurations in Surat. Many of these spatial reconfigurations intersect with informal labor geographies and urban margins.

The overall aim of this study is to deepen our understanding of emergent climate-resilient urbanism in the southern urban geographies of racialized labor migration. The primary objective of this work is to understand what these reconfigurations mean for Surat's institutional imaginary as a 'resilient city' and a city of migrants and to explore the implications for comparable southern geographies of labor where emergent climate-resilience urbanism is unfolding in similar ways. This thesis explores the critical intersections of resilience practice in relation to informal labor geographies, spatial subjectivities, labor relations, and constrained agentic labor practices to negotiate top-down spatial imaginaries. To this end, this study pursues the following questions:

1. How do situated influences and spatial logic mediate the institutionalization of resilience?
2. How does resilience reconfigure informal labor geographies?
3. What do these spatial reconfigurations reveal about emergent climate-resilient urbanism in relation to informal labor geographies?

This study employs a situated relational approach to trace the discursive-material dimensions of institutional resilience practice and spatial reconfigurations in relation to racialized labor geographies. The thesis is attentive to situated reconfigurations underway in select migrant micro-labor geographies of Surat in key textile production zones. These geographies represent spatial overlaps between labor geographies and institutional resilience practices shaped by Rockefeller's normative resilience agenda. This study foregrounds relationality as a critical approach by focussing on labor as a constrained spatial agentic force in southern climate urbanism. Relationality facilitates the overall analysis of institutional resilience practices and the differential spatial reconfigurations underway in labor geographies. I observe the institutionalization of resilience practice and spatial reconfigurations in three analytical themes that structure this thesis substantively: *mutation*, *approaches*, and *associations*. These themes correspond to different dimensions of

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institutional resilience practice and situated spatial reconfigurations in relation to informal labor and labor geographies in Surat city.

More specifically, *mutation* draws on critical policy studies to explain the translation of mobile discourses such as resilience in situated contexts (Chapter 4). *Approaches* refer to institutional spatial approaches to resilience in labor geographies (Chapter 5). *Associations* refer to emergent institutional and spatial labor associations in reconfigured labor geographies (Chapter 6). I further elaborate on these themes in Chapter 3 on methodology.

Collectively, these three themes facilitate an intimate understanding of the emergent climate-resilient economic reconfigurations in racialized informal labor geographies. In doing so, they offer important insights into the evolving spatial relations of institutional resilience practice within informal labor and labor geographies. This further elucidates how resilience as a spatial strategy interacts with embodied labor geographies, which represent a mosaic of racialized labor mobilities, spatial subjectivities, and differential historical-material relations with Surat's dominant urban politics. I elaborate on these dynamics by situating them within the city's dominant politics of Hindutva neoliberalism in the substantive chapters of the thesis.

Thus, to move forward with a certain degree of reflexivity between the discursive-material dimensions of institutional spatial practice and spatial reconfigurations in relation to labor, I draw on critical traditions in urban geographic and sociological thinking. These primarily include select works in urban Science and Technology Studies (STS) and urban infrastructure studies, critical labor geography, and southern urban studies (elaborated in Chapter 2).

Before we proceed, it is important to contextualize racialization in this study. Building on recent southern scholarship, I use racialization to highlight the

institutionalized naturalization of the differential exploitation and marginalization of social differences in the migrant labor geographies of Surat (Cháirez-Garza et al., 2022). Scholars argue that racialization as an analytic capture the differential assimilation of situated social-spatial differences in global racial capitalism. Critical scholars of (racial) capitalism and social differences assert that one cannot be explained without the other. They contend that all capitalism is inherently racial capitalism, as the racialization of social difference forms the basis for capitalist accumulation by dispossession (Bhattacharyya, 2018). Racialization emphatically highlights the contextual, systemic, and structurally intertwined production of social-spatial differences and capitalist expansion (De Genova and Roy, 2020).

Furthermore, recognizing the colonial roots of modern capitalism, racialization is intrinsic to the economic and political exploitability of intersectional social differences in situated contexts (Ranganathan, 2022). For instance, in Surat and other postcolonial urban geographies, social-spatial differences are shaped by religion, caste, gender, ethnicity, and citizenship. These social differences are spatially reproduced through varying degrees of institutional spatial segregation, shaped by different spatial logics. I discuss the reproduction of segregated labor geographies in Surat in relation to institutional resilience practices (see Chapter 5; Ravindran, 2019). This provides a conceptual basis for why and how racialization is used to denote the structural othering of urban margins and migrant labor geographies within the broader context of Surat's economy and politics, neither of which thrives without racialized social differences (Schling and Rogaly, 2022). I observe this in relation to the differential political and economic assimilation of migrant labor, decades after the 2006 flood (Chapters 5 and 6). Additionally, I argue that the spatial reconfiguration of migrant and racialized minority labor geographies is further legitimized through normative imaginaries such as climate-resilient cities (see Chapter 4).

1.1 Background

Figure 1.1: Locating Surat on the map
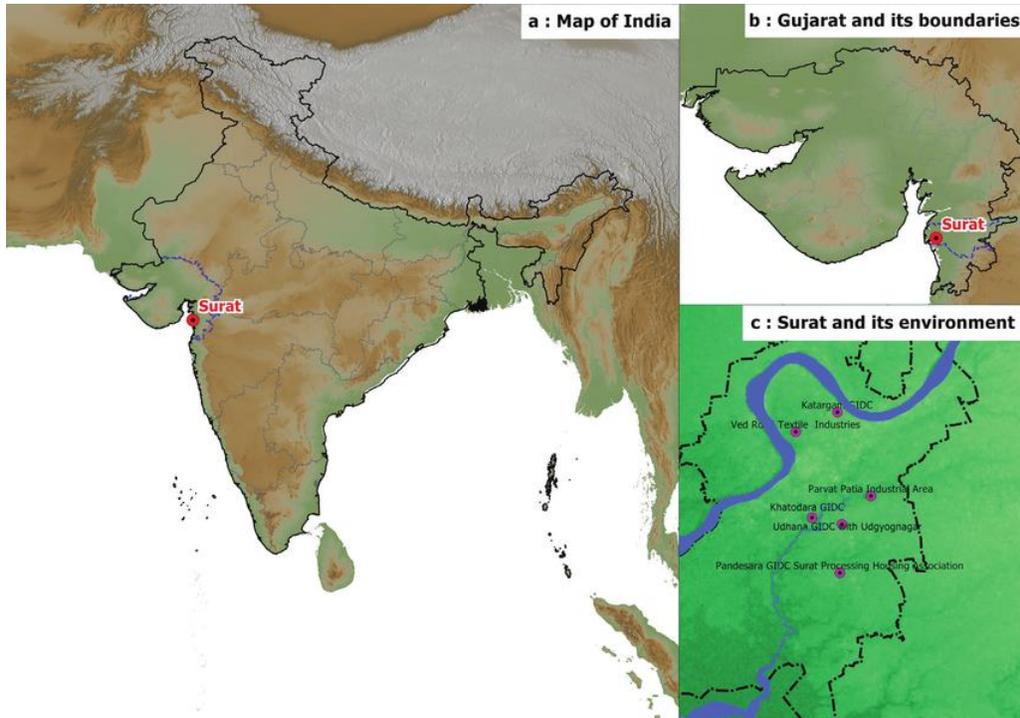
Source: Bahinpati et al., 2015

1.1.1 About Surat

Surat is a coastal city located in the Western Indian state of Gujarat. A postcolonial port city, Surat demonstrates close parallels with other postcolonial port cities; the city's character has been molded by the interplay between European trade systems, hierarchical markets, native mercantile and political elites, and labor communities from the hinterlands (Nadri, 2015). Like postcolonial port cities, Surat illustrates contemporary 'economic globalization as a historical process,' constitutive of logics and flows from multiple economic geographies that influenced its networked identity well before the emergence of networked policy urbanism (Driessen, 2005:130). This helps contextualize why Surat is receptive to specific influences in global climate-

economic restructuring, policy mobility circuits, and normative climate-resilient pathways.

Surat is one of the fastest-growing urban centers in the world and the eighth-largest city in India [1]. It was one of the first South Asian cities to participate in the Asian counterpart of the global urban resilience agenda launched by the Rockefeller Foundation in India in 2008 (ACCCRN, 2011). Despite the substantial restrictive effects of institutional and cultural borders on internal labor mobility in India, Surat has the highest percentage of labor migrants among all Indian cities, with most being employed in the city's extensive informal economy (Kone et al., 2018). Having served as a strategic trading post for imperial trade networks in South and Southeast Asia since the early 18th century, Surat has historically been a strategic urban economic and cosmopolitan labor geography. Archival records suggest that by the early 18th century, Surat had become one of the densest urban centers globally (Haynes, 1992). Like its European industrial urban counterparts, Surat has become a regional epicenter for recurrent disease outbreaks and public health crises, such as the bubonic plague (Porter, 1999; Shah, 1994). Institutional memories of recurrent episodes of plague and frequent urban disasters have laid the groundwork for contemporary frameworks of risk and emergency preparedness in this region (Dutt et al. 2006).

Historically, Surat has attracted migrant workers from all over the country (Tumbe, 2018). Surat's long-standing network of small and medium-scale capitalist entrepreneurs and artisanal firms, which is built on informal kinship ties (by caste, sect, and regional affiliation), has consolidated a highly differentiated and socially stratified worker base (Menning, 1997; Kantor et al., 2006). Historical accounts have revealed a sophisticated system of recruitment based on social contracts around caste and ethnic affiliations (Menning, 1997). Even today, ethnic networks and cultural ties actively feed the growing informal labor market (Tumbe, 2018; Das and Sahu, 2019). Previous studies have confirmed the vital role of these informal cultural ties and

networks in maintaining Surat's typical production modes, identified as vernacular hybrid economic systems (Menning, 1997). Today, these networks continue to mediate labor accessibility, mobility, and negotiations in Surat's extensive informal labor market. Contemporary labor migration is primarily driven by Surat's thriving textile, petrochemical, gemstone, and diamond industries, and more recently, the construction industry (Kantor et al., 2006).

1.2. Contextualising Labor Geographies in Surat

Surat owes its vast heterogeneous informal labor geographies to the mass influx of migrant labor from all over the country since the early industrialization of the 1950s. Economic reforms in the 1990s and the neo-liberalization of urban growth have further accelerated urbanization, leading to rapid changes in the spatiality, density, and social composition of urban labor geographies (Ong, 2006; Tumbe, 2015; Sugden, 2019). Since the 1970s, Surat's shift from agrarian to large-scale industrial capitalism has significantly impacted urban spatial informality, particularly along key urban nodes, highways, roads, intra-city areas, creeks, and the Tapi River (Das, 2016; Haynes, 2013). This transition accelerated land conversion and the creation of urban industrial enclaves within the Surat and surrounding special economic zones and greenfield sites, such as *Hazira, Magdala,* and *Sachin* (Ghosh, 1996; Tewari, 2020).

Gujarat was among the first Indian states to embrace neoliberal reforms to boost major sectors such as Surat's famed textile and diamond industries (Kohli, 2012). Structural economic reforms, including the deregulation of urban labor and land markets and decentralised governance, have directly influenced contemporary informal labor geographies, as well as shaped contestations and conflicts surrounding land, housing, property ownership, and urban citizenship for informal labor (ibid).

In addition, the administrative boundaries and legal status of informal settlements at the city level are subject to change in response to shifts in the political economy of spatial governance and land-based development. These render informal labor geographies relatively more susceptible to both minor and major spatial reconfigurations. Spatial changes in boundaries and the mobility of informal labor geographies are more apparent due to their inherent informality, often paving the way for more legitimate forms of land use and development (Sud, 2014).

Contemporary labor geographies within Surat and its expanding peripheries to the north, south, and east of the city are thus a mosaic of ethnic identities, skills, mobilities, and migration narratives. With notable exceptions, studies have rarely examined the relationship between spatial heterogeneity and institutional and popular narratives on urban social difference (Haynes, 1992; Jacob and Jacob, 2022). These spaces introduce new migrant workers into city life while simultaneously shaping migrant aspirations and expectations of life in the city and blending rural and urban imaginaries (see Doug Saunder's Arrival Cities, 2010). For others, labor geographies operate as extensions of home and are likely to become migrant home geographies over time (see similar examples in Naik, 2022 in reference to Gurgaon).

Thus, informal labor geographies represent spatial-temporal narratives of both the past and the future. For instance, some of the oldest slums, including refugee colonies classified as slums in cities like Delhi, Kolkata, and Hyderabad, emerged by offering cheap temporary shelters to refugees and displaced communities during the politically turbulent post-independence period (Sanyal, 2012). Today, these refugee colonies are integral to the city's key informal labor geographies (ibid). Therefore, urban labor geographies, in many ways, are akin to living archives that provide insights into deeply entangled urban histories and labor futures in making through situated relations (Lemanski et al., 2014; Sanyal, 2014). These observations highlight the academic and policy relevance of studying Surat from a labor geography

perspective to understand the relationship between urban futures and contemporary racialized labor mobility and migration.

1.3 Why Surat?

1.3.1 Surat's resilience legacy and transnational climate networks

Surat was a deliberate choice for this study for multiple reasons. Even though the city boasts of a relatively strong presence in urban climate studies, it remains undertheorized in critical climate urbanism scholarship (Chu, 2020). This study considers the potential for situated theorization from a relational perspective, focusing on situated relations and networks within the context of emergent climate-resilient urbanism. The relational agenda emphasizes labor mobility, migration, and labor geography. Acknowledging the (constrained) constitutive agentic forces in labor and labor geographies, this study underscores the importance of situated institutional relations, logic, and practices. As previously argued, urban labor mobilities and labor geographies are particularly significant in southern and global climate urbanism scholarship because of their peripheral and undertheorized status.

Therefore, the overriding logic for selecting Surat as a case is to contextualize climate-resilient urbanism in relation to labor and comparable southern urban geographies. Surat plays a crucial role in codifying normative resilience practices in Indian cities. A key consideration for selecting Surat was its potential to generate empirically grounded insights into the particularities of the evolution of institutional resilience practice in relation to longstanding urban histories of Surat's labor migration and racialized informal labor geographies. This empirical uniqueness is contextualized against the backdrop of Gujarat's virulent ethno-nationalist development model which draws from dominant politico-economic ideology of Hindutva Neoliberalism, Gujarat's legacy of urban (bourgeois) environmentalism, and the evolving political economy of internal labor migration and urbanization

(Baviskar, 2006; Pessina, 2019; Sircar, 2022). This provides an ideal context for examining the situated influences on Surat's institutional resilience practice in relation to racialized labor geographies.

Additionally, Surat's significant involvement in transnational urban climate networks and their key drivers make it particularly well-suited to this endeavor. Surat's strong positionality in transnational climate networks is largely due to the region's post-liberalization legacy of environmentalism and disaster resilience (Chu, 2020). As a result, it provides an impetus for competitive global climate networks to build on the pre-existing institutional legacy and culture of urban resilience, which is rooted in a shared understanding of urban resilience (Karanth and Archer, 2014; Chu, 2016, 2018). Interviews with the ex-Chief Resilience Officer (CRO) and other core actors in the city resilience network, for instance, emphasized the value of legacy as capital and opportunity, which largely aided Surat's selection by the Rockefeller Foundation in early 2007 (based on elite interviews).

The perceived favorable institutional landscape and leadership for urban climate economic transformations highlight the hegemonic influences of urban spatial practices within ranked ethnic societies. Sociological theories on ranked societies have long recognized how ascribed status translates into political and economic power, influencing state apparatus (Bharathi et al., 2024). In Surat, I examined how local influences and power dynamics in urban institutions interact with global climate economic networks. The legacy of resilience and capital aid Surat's rise in trans-climate economies, serving as a spatial strategy within the city. This is particularly evident in post-disaster labor geographies, where resilience strategies often consolidate existing social and economic hierarchies tied to class, caste, and ethnicity (Cretney, 2014). These strategies resonate with the concept of the 'resilience dividend,' facilitating an uneven distribution of benefits that reinforces the status quo by primarily serving those already in power.

Thus, the ACCCRN supported by the Rockefeller Foundation, chose Surat for a competitive multiphase resilience program, modelled on the Global North equivalent of the 100 Resilient Cities (100 RC) global initiative (ACCCRN, 2013; Sharma et al., 2014; Blok, 2016). Since then, resilience mainstreaming and the accompanying transitions have intensified in southern cities (Peters et al., 2016; Borie et al., 2019; Hughes, Chu and Mason, 2020). Arguments in favor of popularizing normative urban resilience in southern cities often build on their relatively stronger position to course-correct or get it right the first time, compared to many advanced industrial and post-industrial economies (Bahadur and Tanner, 2014). It is for this reason that urban regions like Surat are advocated as key sites for building resilience by global resilience actors (see the evolution of climate urbanism in Hughes et al., 2020; Bulkeley, 2021).

Aside from Surat's climate vulnerability profile aligned with ACCCRN's normative resilience framework, Surat's favorable economic climate and local leadership were key considerations in its selection. Surat's relatively influential elite networks and historical predisposition to global entrepreneurial culture were also important considerations. Subsequently, other resilience and climate networks have responded favorably to these prevailing conditions and logic. Today, Surat is competitively positioned to consolidate climate investments through a growing number of urban climate economic opportunities (Personal interviews with ex-CROs).

Additionally, Surat's celebratory culture of collective resilience stems from an institutional and public commemoration of past urban crises and how *Suratis* have always bounced back (personal interviews with institutional actors). The notion of *Suratis* being resilient against all odds runs deep into the city's psyche. It also forms the bedrock of contemporary public discourse, perceptions of resilience, and the role of key urban institutions and actors. The popular representation of resilience as a special attribute of different communities is self-affirming and problematically

essentializes and individualizes resilience. This corresponds to critiques of neoliberal resilience, for instance, and how often this perpetuates a depoliticized culture around normative resilience practice (Grove, 2017; Mann and Wainwright, 2020).

The normalization of this vein externalizes the responsibility of resilience in marginalized and vulnerable groups, such as migrant working classes in Surat, rather than addressing the systemic and historical factors that cause deep-seated precarity and vulnerability (Harris, Chu, and Ziervogel, 2017; Leitner et al., 2018; Nightingale et al., 2020). Additionally, this way of thinking valorizes subaltern practices of surviving debilitating forms of poverty and structural violence and celebrates vernacular ingenuity in getting by or *jugaad* as markers of resilience. In so doing, dominant resilience framing legitimizes minimum state accountability and evasiveness (Joseph, 2013; Chandler and Reid, 2016). The rhetoric surrounding resilience reshapes how the normative resilience agenda is framed and pursued as a public good, an ideal imaginary, and reflects on the state's role, complicity, and accountability.

1.3.2 Surat's role in codifying southern climate-resilient urbanism

Surat and other southern cities are key actors in the ongoing global climate economic restructuring in low and middle-income economies (Bigger and Webber, 2021; Silver, 2023). The impetus for cities like Surat, which is instrumental in codifying urban climate practices for southern urban geographies, is derived from numerous dissimilar logics. This logic stems from a range of global discourses with different ideological positions and agendas that mediate how and why different southern cities are assimilated and rescaled in emergent global-climate urban imaginaries (Bulkeley, 2022; Sareen and Waagsaether, 2023). Key examples include the rhetoric of decolonization and internationalization of urban climate practice and, consequently, a greater push for representation of southern cities in urban climate imaginaries (Robin et al., 2020; Crawford et al., 2023).

However, these seemingly progressive ideological underpinnings tend to appear rather evasive in urban institutional resilience. Instead, urban institutions and networks that assimilate the global normative resilience agenda seem to be more inclined towards pragmatic climate technocracy (see Farias and Blok, 2016; Broto and Westman, 2020). Climate, as an increasingly powerful force in southern urbanism, is therefore predominantly driven by normative discourses of development and fiscal deficits as well as societal and structural vulnerabilities that reinforce southern geographies as legitimate climatic regions (Ribot, 2014; Harris et al., 2018).

Therefore, this study focuses on a situated analysis of intra city-resilience reconfigurations. The analyses further identify key logics, institutional approaches, and discursive and material dimensions of reconfigurations in post-disaster labor geographies tethered to institutional resilience practice. I contextualize and draw connections between logic, spatial approaches and reconfigurations in relation to the institutional resilience imaginary and Surat's dominant techno-politics in the substantive chapters of this thesis.

1.3.3 The 'Gujarat Model' and institutional resilience practice

Surat is a critical node in Gujarat's economic geography. Like other urban regions in Gujarat, Surat's economic supremacy builds on a particular model of economic growth and development, called the 'Gujarat model' in vernacular development registers (Shah, 2013; Sud, 2022). The 'Gujarat model' as the name suggests is endemic to the Northwest province of Gujarat. Although, it is increasingly being weaponized as a virulent ideology by far-right groups for political consolidation in India (Desai, 2011; Shah, 2013; Sud, 2022).

In recent decades, the model has gained remarkable symbolic and persuasive power as an electoral, political, and radical cultural instrument in the far-right politics of Hindu nationalism (Harriss et al., 2012; Harriss and Jeffrey, 2017). The

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model is essentially a combination of the puritanical far-right politics of ethno-nationalism, ideological Hindutva, and vernacular adaptation of global neoliberalism (Jaffrelot, 2019; Sud, 2022).[1] A core element of this model is what critical commentators describe as Hindutva neoliberalism. The state of Gujarat has been likened to a 'laboratory' for pioneering and nurturing the politico-economic machinery of Hindutva neoliberalism (Shah 2002; Desai 2011; Simpson 2013; Harriss et al. 2017). Although Bombay has superseded Surat economically as the national financial capital, Surat remains Southern Gujarat's most vibrant economic hub (Maloni 2010). However, Gujarat's liberal and progressive development narrative is intercepted by the incongruous history of extreme right-wing ethnopolitics, communal pogroms, gentrification, and segregation of major cities such as Surat and Ahmedabad on sectarian and caste lines (Shah, 2013).

Commentators have linked urban Gujarat's economic and industrial dominance, despite critiques, to their growth models (Sud, 2009, 2022). Consequently, Gujarat exemplifies intricate, negotiated forms of capitalism in its cities and urban regions (Yagnik and Sheth 2005; Jaffrelot 2019; Sud 2022). Once a Gandhian socialist stronghold, postcolonial Gujarat now exhibits a strong inclination towards neoliberal capitalism. This is said to have transformed Gujarat's entrepreneurial and technocratic urban development culture, which forms a crucial contextual backdrop to the critical analysis of institutional resilience practices in this research.

This development model significantly impacts Surat's resilience practices, particularly in the discursive dimensions and the roles of local elites and urban techno politics. Detailed sociological analyses of Surat City show the persistent centrality of such ethnoreligious and caste-based elite networks in producing dominant economic and cultural visions for the city (Upadhya, 2023). For instance,

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[1] The state development model is a mix of progressive economic policies and ultra conservative Hindutva politics that pervades all aspects of urban Gujarat.

the textile industry is largely controlled by the Hindu-Baniyas and the diamond industry by the Jains (Yagnik and Sheth, 2005). The elite gatekeeping in Gujarat's business and political culture significantly influences both Gujarat's and India's climate-economic future (Menon, 2022)[2].

Being a leading industrial urban region in Gujarat, Surat embodies productive and disruptive tensions between the global and indigenous forces of urbanization (Menning, 1997; Yājñika and Sheth, 2005). This context is essential for understanding the development of Surat's current resilience techno-politics and culture, as Gujarat's political economy has significantly shaped urban institutions, policy approaches, and governance of urban environmentalism in Surat and other cities in the Western Indian state (Williams and Mawdsley, 2006; Datta, 2015; Mukherjee and Véron, 2023). In Surat's case, as detailed later, prevailing institutional culture, networks, and political governance have significantly shaped its resilience practices. Conversely, Surat serves as a relevant case study to understand how an ethnonationalist state reconfigures a normative liberal concept like resilience (discussed in Chapters 5 and 6).

That said, this thesis acknowledges various networked forms and expressions of resilience in Surat, with a focus on those arising from racialized labor geographies. This study examines these through institutional spatial approaches, spatial labor narratives, and subjectivities across specific micro-labor geographies. (See Chapter 5). While some alternative articulations of resilience from labor and subaltern geographies appear subversive, others seem more attuned to institutional spatial imaginaries of resilience. Crucially, this study focuses on the micro-context of labor geographies that influence emergent agentic labor relations and associations in response to ongoing institutional reconfigurations. The situated narratives of reconfiguration and associations reveal varied negotiations across micro-labor

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[2] This is recognizing the growing political capital of the 'Gujarat model' in the current right-wing political regime.

geographies, highlighting the distinct spatial constraints on labor agency and capacities to negotiate.

1.4 Thesis Structure

The first part of the thesis comprises three chapters and provides a broad overview of the research. These include the introduction (the current chapter), the conceptual framework (Chapter 2), and the research methodology (Chapter 3). The second part of the thesis comprises three substantive chapters, and the third section features the conclusion and discussion (Chapter 7). The substantive chapters reflect continuity in narrative and insights that support the broader argument of the thesis. Therefore, it is important to approach the three chapters as a cohesive whole, with each responding to a part of the larger research puzzle. The final concluding chapter synthesizes findings and insights from the individual chapters into a cohesive argument. I finish by discussing potential contributions of my work to theory, policy, and practice, and highlight key areas for further generative critical enquiry.

1.5 Core Argument and Methodological Approach

As mentioned earlier, this study argues that institutional resilience is a key spatial strategy for managing and governing racialized labor mobilities and geographies. Here, I briefly explain how the conceptual and empirical strands of this thesis contribute to the overarching argument. Before I proceed to chapter-specific aims and objectives aligned with the overall thesis, it is important to situate relationality in this study. Attention to relationality is a core aspect of the overall methodological approach in this study. As an approach, relationality justifies and empirically foregrounds specific spatial relations, institutional narratives and practices, and particular labor geographies significant in this study's context. Overall, relationality unsettles the epistemic and ontological boundaries of climate urbanism. From a methodological standpoint, this involves examining which relationships are

conceptually and empirically studied, and what methods are deployed to study them. Specifically, it asks: What relationships are examined, and how do they enhance our understanding of the contextual dynamics of power, perspective, and vantage points?

Broadly, the following three arguments animate the bulk of the conceptual and empirical analyses, and key contributions of this thesis. The following pages elaborate on the main arguments and summarise their contributions to the overall thesis.

Argument 1: Resilience is materialised, legitimized and contested through the interplay of infrastructure and labor.

In this study, resilience practices are constituted through infrastructural interventions and spatial strategies that mediate the intersection of resilience with informal labor geographies and embodied urban difference. Given the centrality of infrastructure in resilience governance, this thesis argues that infrastructural relations and denials are not merely technocratic responses to climate risk but potent political instruments that shape labor geographies. By demonstrating how resilience strategies reconfigure migrant labor geographies through selective infrastructural inclusion, exclusion, and denial, the thesis foregrounds labor as a crucial yet underappreciated spatial agent in climate urbanism. Examining the spatial interactions between resilience practices and labor, particularly as they unfold in the governance of infrastructure, reveals how labor's agency, though contested and constrained, remains both articulate and legitimate. This governing logic of resilience reproduces spatial inequality through the differential distribution of infrastructure and services, which, in turn, activates labor's constrained agency across micro-spatial contexts and circumstances.

By centering labor within the analysis of infrastructural governance, this thesis offers a critical intervention into climate urbanism. It demonstrates how resilience is both materialized and contested through infrastructure-labor relations in reconfigured geographies. The analysis that follows examines how the uneven distribution of

infrastructure shapes differential labor mobilities, spatial subjectivities, and labor politics, influenced by locational (un)privileges and the unequal dimensions of urban precarity. This foregrounds labor as a central yet under-examined force in the broader political economy of climate urbanism in Surat. The following expands on this by elaborating on how infrastructural relations and denials become key sites of inquiry in this thesis.

Stabilisation of labor through infrastructural relations and denials

In this thesis, labor stabilization refers to how resilience practices, through infrastructural strategies, manage and spatially reconfigure labor in ways that constrain and govern racialized mobilities. These strategies structure differential limits and capacities within labor geographies, selectively privileging certain populations based on caste, ethnicity, and racial identities, while excluding others. This results in differentiated access to key resources, prime housing locations, networks, and labor markets.

The comparative analysis of spatial subjectivities and labor negotiations across different case sites in the empirical chapters further illustrates these dynamics. Chapters (5 and 6) highlight the mediated nature of infrastructural relations and denials, showing how resilience practices selectively govern access to key resources such as affordable housing, formal labor markets, and strategic networks. By controlling these infrastructural elements, resilience practices deepen spatial and socio-economic divides. This process of selective access where access to critical resources and infrastructure is often brokered through intermediaries—reinforces existing hierarchies and inequalities. It is through these 'brokered' processes that labor geographies are not only stabilized but also stratified, perpetuating exclusions and preserving the socio-political structures underpinning Surat's political economy. *Brokered resilience* ensures that labor is not just segregated but controlled, entrenching caste and racial hierarchies within Surat's climate-resilient urbanism.

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Infrastructure as a Mechanism of Labor Stabilization

Infrastructural strategies recognized by the state as central to the resilience agenda and its outcomes include interventions for disaster risk reduction and management (DRM). These strategies have become widely accepted and heavily invested in across multiple cities, particularly in coastal urban regions such as Surat and Chennai, where flood hazards and vulnerability are critical components of the city's risk profile. However, since climate-resilient and adaptation strategies must address not only spatial risk, but also structural vulnerabilities rooted in deep-seated socio-economic inequalities manifested materially in urban informality—DRM infrastructure alone is insufficient to build urban resilience, either as a localized solution or a city-wide strategy. As a result, climate-resilient infrastructure relations have expanded to include a broader range of social infrastructure interventions, such as affordable and state-sanctioned housing, mass rapid transit systems, the provisioning of shelters, and critical infrastructure for potable water, healthcare, and protection from heat stress.

Rather than merely identifying what constitutes climate-resilient infrastructure, this thesis critically examines how, where, and under what spatial logics infrastructure penetrates and reconfigures informal labor geographies. It approaches infrastructural relations and denials as central to understanding how resilience practices govern racialized labor mobilities and produce uneven geographies of labor. By primarily focusing on the entangled responses to spatial informality and risk, the thesis traces how resilience strategies, through evictions, relocations, containment of informal settlements, and coercive mechanisms driving the uptake of state-endorsed affordable housing, actively reproduce segregation and racialisation of minority labor populations.

These interventions, far from merely mitigating climate risk, act as mechanisms for regulating spatial mobility, particularly among racialized and migrant labor populations. Practices like selective resettlement, evictions, conditional integration into prime labor markets, and the relegation of racialized minorities to peripheral areas exemplify how resilience strategies leverage differentiation and exclusion to sustain spatial inequities and control labor. Insights from comparative case studies in Kosad, Ved, and Bamroli, illuminate how these processes unfold, particularly in terms of a wide range of negotiation practices shaped by spatial constraints and contextual precarity.

These cases also highlight how infrastructural relations structure differential access to essential resources such as safe drinking water, sanitation, healthcare, and key networks, privileging certain populations while excluding others. This dynamic shapes rights to mobility central to informal work, secure habitation, and gendered spatial vulnerabilities, as well as opportunities for economic participation. Crucially, it is through such economic participation that migrant labor populations can assert their agency—not just as (non) citizens excluded from formal politics, but through various labor platforms, civil society networks, and agencies that enable them to contest and improve conditions within informal economies.

The cases also engage with notions of infrastructural denials and their role in shaping spatial subjectivities and the politics of labor, particularly in geographies where denial operates as a strategic political tool. The dual framing of infrastructural relations and denials within the broader discourse of spatial governance extends the conceptual understanding of infrastructure, particularly in relation to the entrenchment of clientelistic political formations in informal urban contexts in India.

Empirically, this thesis examines how resilience-driven infrastructural reconfiguration, particularly the strategic use of denial function as mechanisms of governance in heterogeneous migrant geographies. Political parties and local elites

exploit infrastructural vulnerabilities to consolidate electoral bases among fragmented migrant populations. The selective allocation of housing, utilities, and land tenure establishes a governance framework whereby migrants remain politically dependent on the state or dominant political factions, reinforcing their economic precarity and socio-political subordination. By withholding access to economic mobility, secure housing, legal recognition, and essential services, state and non-state actors engage in forms of political brokering and mediation, positioning infrastructure as a crucial instrument in the political management of diverse migrant constituencies.

Observations from Ved and Kosad further illuminate how political mobilization and homogenization occur within the broader framework of grassroots politics aligned with the BJP, resonating with recent scholarship on political clientelism in India's informal urban geographies. These cases demonstrate how infrastructure materializes caste and racial hierarchies in the urban landscape, reinforcing spatialized exclusions that regulate who belongs where, who has access to resources, and who remains structurally marginalized. The denial of stable housing, reliable transit, and social services entrenches marginalized groups within precarious labor markets, sustaining an urban economy in which both physical and economic mobility are differentially structured and tightly regulated. Furthermore, caste and ethnic divisions within migrant labor populations are exacerbated through spatial segregation, ensuring that workers remain fragmented, competitive, and structurally inhibited from collective organization or political bargaining.

These observations underscore how resilience, in this context, operates as a spatial instrument for mediating controlled access to infrastructure and essential services—leveraged for electoral consolidation and political loyalty among migrant populations. As a result, infrastructurally destabilized migrant communities are compelled to align with dominant strains of Hindu nationalist politics in Surat in order to secure basic rights, entitlements, and protection from systemic violence, police repression, and the escalating threats of eviction. Through the interplay of infrastructural

provision and denial, resilience strategies not only govern labor geographies but also reinforce caste and racial hierarchies, ensuring that economic vulnerability remains structurally embedded within the governance of migrant populations.

Argument 2: Resilience practices reproduce spatial unevenness and racialization in labor geographies. In doing so, resilience becomes an instrument for entrenching and governing racialized mobilities and labor.

The argument builds on how racialization, as an analytic, enables both the conceptual and empirical analysis of resilience as a governing strategy for labor, racialized mobilities, and migration. The thesis applies racialization to explore how resilience logics differentially operate on embodied urban difference in labor geographies. It examines how resilience reconfigures labor mobilities and spatialities, governing racialized (non)mobilities, labor relations, politics, and geographies in Surat.

Racialisation and Hindutva

Racialisation serves as an analytic in this thesis to trace how resilience practice interacts with racialised intersectional identities and mobilities in Textile geographies of labor in Surat. It facilitates urgent conceptual debates on a) racialisation and resilience within the contextual folds of *Hindutva* that is increasingly becoming a hegemonic ideology and imaginary across urban and rural landscapes in India.

Drawing inspiration from European fascist thought, Hindutva emerged as a cultural ideology spearheaded by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), a Hindu militaristic organization and the cultural arm of the BJP. A plethora of academic and political commentaries have since shaped public discourse and critical debates on how Hindutva underpins the BJP's political consolidation and expansion across India's diverse geographies. The ideology has been characterized by many as a deeply casteist and racist ideology (Natarajan, 2021). It thrives on discourses and symbolic

politics and practices of externalising threats, anxieties and discontents on the figure of the 'other', the enemy. The rhetorical politics of othering in the current political regime fueled by Hindutva, like any fascist or hegemonic populist ideology, stirs suspicion, fear, and calls for the extermination of the 'other' for the perceived good of the majority—across scales, from cities to transnational diasporic platforms.

Whether the ideology asserts Hindu supremacy through notions of racial purity and pollution or leans toward cultural domination through strategic and conditional assimilation remains contested—particularly in the case of racialized 'others' such as Muslims in India (Thorat and Krieger, 2012). While it does invoke Hindu supremacy through notions of racial purity and pollution to an extent, it also enforces cultural domination through strategic and conditional assimilation—except in the case of racialized 'others' such as Muslims and non-caste groups, who remain firmly relegated outside the caste framework (Natarajan, 2021).

Over the decades since the late 19th century, Hindutva has shifted from a powerful yet fringe imaginary to one at the center of contemporary right-wing politics in India embodied by the BJP. What started as a fringe cultural-pedagogical project has transformed into a fully legitimized, pan-Indian political force, with Gujarat emerging as the epicenter and laboratory of political Hindutva. The cultural ideology of racialized difference that cultural Hindutva valorizes for its own legitimacy has reinforced caste heteropatriarchy and solidified Savarna dominance over Scheduled Castes, including Dalits, oppressed caste groups, and non-caste communities.

Any neoliberal adaptations that are compatible with, or gain traction from, Hindutva-infused models of capitalism, thus reproduce material and cultural privileges, networks and cleavages, around the dominant caste order. These in turn, sustain systemic and structural violence, to suppress any attempts to transgress caste hierarchies and contextual practices of racialized othering. In both its overt and insidious forms, Hindutva maintains cultural boundaries and caste power through

endogamy, spatial and symbolic politics, rituals, everyday epistemes, and the spatial reconfigurations in caste, ethnic and communally heterogenous geographies such as Surat.

The mainstreaming of Hindutva in spatial politics and practices in Surat reinstates logics of segregation along the lines of caste, and racialized Muslims- India's largest minority, and selective marginalisation of ethnic and non-caste groups. Mainstream spatial planning and property market dynamics, endorsed by state-led place-making, public-private partnerships, and private real estate development, reinforce an increasingly segregated urban landscape marked by xenophobia and cultural racism. Spatial planning and practices in Surat remain immune to criticism regarding the long-term and irreversible harms of segregation on spatial and social injustice.

This immunity is sustained by liberal discourses, like resilience, that portray segregation as innocuous. Resilience justifies spatial divisions by invoking individual preferences, cultural differences, and appeases Hindu caste majority sentiments, including ritual purity, and politics of aesthetics, framing these as vital for peace, harmony, and social cohesion, implicitly aligning with Hindutva. It mobilizes the rhetoric of cohesiveness amidst cultural diversity while reproducing segregation in Surat and beyond. In doing so, it depoliticizes and neutralizes counter-narratives of spatial injustice, concealing the structural harms and daily brutalities imposed on marginalized and racialized populations, while reinforcing racialized segregation through strategic spatial reconfigurations in labor geographies.

What makes resilience strategic in Surat is how it actively reconfigures and governs labor geographies and racialized mobilities in service of dominant agendas and economic resilience. It operates as a spatialised technology that differentially reconfigures labor geographies and governs informal labor and migration. This thesis critically engages resilience as both a powerful imaginary and a spatial-political instrument, tracing its entanglements with labor migration, racialized mobilities,

and governance. Within this framework, racialization serves as a critical analytic, offering deeper insights into the political economy of climate-resilient urbanism and its embedded hierarchies, power relations, and regimes of inclusion and exclusion.

How Racialisation is Operationalised in Relation to Resilience?

Racialization facilitates an inquiry into how resilience practices spatialize racial and caste hierarchies in the city, and map them onto key labor geographies in Surat This raises urgent questions around resilience practice with respect to selective racialization and inclusion of urban difference within geographies of labor. For instance, what constitutive logics and practices of resilience reproduce racial and caste hierarchies in geographies of labor, and how these feed into politics of conditional inclusion of racialized labor. The differential encounters and reconfigurations of labor relations and spatiality is rendered visible through racialisation as an analytic discussed earlier. The analysis of differential movement and work of resilience across geographies of labor, and difference in turn becomes the premise for situating emergent labor politics and negotiations going forward.

To unpack this, the thesis draws on the cases of Ved and Kosad, which represent distinct labor demographics and spatial histories of inclusion and migrant politics in the city (see Chapter 3 for details). These cases illustrate how resilience drives differential spatial reconfigurations, shaping emergent spatial relations, labor subjectivities, and political dynamics. They reveal the spatially variegated political work of resilience and the underlying spatial logics that govern labor geographies—logics that remain obscured in discourse and planning but become evident in practice. It is through tracing logics and approaches to resilience practice that ongoing and strategic and contested dimensions of spatial reconfigurations that govern labor geographies come to the fore. For example, resilience differentially shapes the racialization of marginalized labor populations, both within and beyond the prime labor geographies of the city. This variation arises from competing logics and actors

that determine which spatial technologies and processes are mobilized for specific labor populations. As the cases further elaborate, the intersecting and sometimes conflicting logics and spatial interests make the spatial fix project of resilience complex and contested.

Contestation arises across multiple institutional scales and spaces of practice. The dual construction of migrant labor—as both an economic resource and a potential political figure activated in specific spatial configurations—adds complexity to labor spatiality. This renders the political work of resilience more intricate than it may initially seem—an evolving and increasingly sophisticated spatial instrument of risk governance. Therefore, in addition to growing critiques of resilience in relation to adaptation politics and risk governance in Surat and similar contexts, its nuanced and insidious operations across the overlapping economies of informal labor, electoral politics, and cultural politics expose a shifting landscape of spatial logics and agendas contingent on the dominant actors and interests at play. Together, these reveal critical insights into the evolving political economy of emergent climate urbanism— one where climate instruments, technologies, and investments are increasingly embedded in the urban fabric, materiality, flows, politics, and identities, with heightened stakes that can steer urban futures in different directions.

Argument 3: Resilience and the Racialized Production of Surplus Labor

And finally, building on the preceding arguments, the final argument examines how resilience produces racialized surplus labor through differential spatial reconfiguration of infrastructure relations across textile labor geographies of Surat. Racialization as an analytic reveals how resilience functions as a mode of strategic governance that normalizes exclusion and regulates labor mobilities. It embeds caste and racial hierarchies into labor geographies under the pretext of risk management and securitization. For instance, the empirical chapters demonstrate how dominant imaginaries of urban resilience materialize through spatial practices such as

affordable housing, resilient infrastructure development, planned resettlements, and involuntary relocations. These practices are found to reinforce and entrench ethnic, caste, and racialized non-caste hierarchies within Surat's otherwise fluid labor geographies. The empirical cases further elaborate on the implications of these material reconfigurations on the micro-spatial contexts within which labor lifewords are articulated; spatial subjectivities, infrastructure of work, habitation and social reproduction, spatial networks and relations are formed and sustained.

While much of this fluidity in the concerned geographies of labor stems from the precarity and vulnerability of informal economies, it is also shaped by heterogeneous mobilities driven by autonomous desires and aspirations of urbanity, and collective resistance to extractive and oppressive forces within labor geographies. These mobilities unsettle hierarchical labor markets, challenging dominant spatial orders. However, resilience strategies function as mechanisms to counter these unsettling labor fluidities by selectively stabilizing labor along caste-racial hierarchies. As elaborated later, planned resilience measures often involve forced evictions, involuntary relocations, and coerced absorption into state-endorsed affordable housing (as seen in the case of Kosad). These measures aim to manage and contain the disruptions caused by the heterogeneity and fluidity of labor. Simultaneously, these spatial fix strategies entrench caste-race hierarchies within reconfigured labor geographies. They function as tools for governing urban difference and racialized mobilities.

The thesis demonstrates how resilience strategies govern labor by differentially reconfiguring spatial relations, value and economic inclusion—incorporating some workers into prime textile geographies like Ved while relegating racialized 'others' to Kosad's peripheries as surplus labor. Even within the context of precarity in labor geographies, these marginalized groups are particularly vulnerable. As spatial narratives and life histories later reveal, populations in Kosad are disproportionately burdened by economic alienation, existing in a state of liminality. These surplus

populations are predominantly ethnic and religious minorities such as Muslim migrants from districts within Gujarat and elsewhere. They are left to negotiate conditional assimilation and absorption into Surat's informal labor and housing markets, as well as formal politics. Location and spatial constraints on mobilities are particularly critical for the doubly marginalized status of minority informal migrant workers, as their access to work, opportunities, and resources—whether in Surat or back home—is disproportionately shaped by the contingencies of location, in what it affords, and more importantly what it takes to imagine viable lifeworlds despite the spatial constraints.

Location and spatial constraints on mobility are particularly critical to the doubly marginalized status of minority informal migrant workers. Their access to work, opportunities, and resources, whether in Surat or back home—is disproportionately shaped by the contingencies of location, not only in what it affords but, more importantly, in what it limits and the costs entailed in imagining a viable life despite the constraints. As ethnographic narratives from Kosad, Ved and Bamroli further reveal, the processes of conditional assimilation are spatiotemporally stretched, rendered even more uncertain by other locational drivers such as speculative markets and peripheral development dynamics.

In Kosad's case, assimilation is further shaped by speculative forces in the expanding affordable housing market, driven by ongoing negotiations between the state and various non-state intermediaries. These actors seek to tap into the city's vast informal labor population as a potential low-income clientele while simultaneously attempting to stabilize mobile migrant workers through conditional naturalization. However, this process remains fraught, as many migrant workers strategically choose informal settlements to maintain access to economic opportunities in the informal economy which are incompatible with state-endorsed affordable housing models. This highlights the tensions between housing formalization and the fluid, adaptive demands of informal labor.

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Overall, a closer look at resilience strategies reveal that they are not merely about risk management; they also function as mechanisms that consolidate political and economic power, particularly through labor geographies that sustain the city's economic and cultural hierarchies. By safeguarding key labor-intensive industries, such as textiles that are central to Surat's identity and future, resilience practices actively uphold the political and economic structures of Hindutva neoliberalism. These industries are deeply entwined with caste power, where the management of heterogeneous labor mobilities is critical to sustaining the city's economic and social hierarchies. Thus, while resilience may initially appear as a technocratic solution to urban risk and crises, it operates within the broader logics and practices of securitisation. In doing so, it subtly reinforces social hierarchies and governs labor mobilities in ways that align with the spatial agenda of Hindutva neoliberalism.

Across the three arguments, racialisation is central to the analysis. It reveals that resilience operates not merely as a technocratic tool of risk governance but as a political instrument that sustains exclusionary socio-spatial orders. The dialectics between spatial fixity and fluidity within resilience strategies demonstrates how these spatial approaches adapt to and govern the contradictions of urban informality, shaping labor mobilities and spatial hierarchies in ways that reinforce dominant power structures. Hindutva exerts particular cultural racism and xenophobic tendencies in the spatial reconfiguration of marginalized and racialized labor populations—that are both materially and symbolically indispensable for the legitimacy of Hindutva and its material manifestations. This thesis thus contributes to critical debates on the political economy of climate urbanism, offering key insights into resilience, racialization, and the future of climate urbanism under authoritarian populism, while urging a rethinking of resilience beyond its dominant risk framing.

1.5.1 Mutation

The first empirical chapter, titled "Mutation" examines the institutionalization of normative resilience in Surat. This chapter traces the assimilation of strands of normative resilience thinking and practice (Rockefeller's city resilience framework) into Surat's prevailing institutional practices in relation to racialized labor and labor geographies. As mentioned earlier, the concept of 'mutation' from critical policy mobility studies. Mutation refers to the different stages and practices of translation and policy alignment of resilience in the institutional spatial contexts of risk in post-disaster labor geographies in prime textile production zones of the city.

The first section traces the genealogical roots of urban resilience. The insights reflect on the risk and crisis underpinnings of normative resilience frameworks that afford legitimacy to spatial governance and the management of risk that reinforces the status quo in urban regimes. The second half of the chapter delves into situated genealogical influences on the institutionalization of normative resilience in Surat. The chapter primarily builds on insights from textual analysis of policy and secondary materials, select archival materials, and interviews with local influential actors and institutional elites.

The findings reveal how the standardized resilience framework interacts with institutional legacies and spatial narratives of embodied risk within urban informality, racialized labor mobilities, and migration. This contributes to a contextual understanding of the integration of resilience frameworks into prevailing spatial practices for disaster risk and crisis management in informal labor geographies. Furthermore, the findings emphasize that risk-driven spatial approaches legitimize ongoing climate-resilient reconfigurations in migrant labor geographies. The chapter further elaborates on the central argument of the thesis, highlighting how top-down spatial reconfiguration facilitates the institutional management of informal labor mobilities and geographies.

1.5.2. Approaches

Chapter 5, titled "Approaches", examines institutional spatial approaches to spatial risk management and reconfigurations in post-disaster micro-labor geographies in Surat's prime textile production zones. This chapter builds on spatial case narratives, institutional interviews, migrant life histories, and responses from Q-FGDs. The analysis offers comparative insights into institutional spatial approaches across different micro-labor geographies. These contribute to the understanding of differential spatial approaches to informal labor geographies, guided by situated politico-economic logics and dominant spatial interests.

The second half builds on select cases from micro-labor geographies that demonstrate different spatial histories of post-disaster reconfigurations. These cases offer situated labor narratives of negotiating spatial reconfiguration and juxtapose the role of differential spatial agency, labor networks, and spatial privileges in structuring institutional-labor relations. Overall, this chapter offers spatially nuanced insights into intra-city spatial subjectivities and spatial negotiations from the vantage point of informal labor and racialized labor geographies. It empirically underscores the relationship between post-disaster spatial reconfigurations and contested institutional spatial approaches to governing migrant labor and labor geographies.

1.5.3 Associations

This chapter examines emergent spatial associations in labor geographies. Building on the previous chapters, it expands on a key area of resilience practice: state-sanctioned affordable housing in migrant labor geographies. As mentioned earlier, the term "Associations" captures the emergent institutional and migrant labor associations facilitated by resilience strategy. Conceptually, it anchors the convergence of spatial actors, institutional practices, and the logic underpinning

institutional approaches to housing in the spatial management and governance of informal labor (Truelove, 2019).

The chapter elaborates on two parts of these associations. The first part examines institutional associations with key state-sanctioned housing policies, narratives, and actors driving spatial approaches to housing informal migrant populations. The second part explores situated migrant labor associations in response to past and ongoing spatial reconfigurations. Insights into spatial approaches in resilience practice and reconfigured labor geographies illuminate ongoing spatial negotiations at the intersections of institutional spatial practices, key spatial actors, and labor geographies.

This chapter argues that emergent institutional and hybrid labor spatial associations and negotiations underpin how resilience operates as a spatial strategy to govern migrant labor geographies. Additionally, the ongoing strategic alignment with the regional affordable housing market demonstrates how resilience is increasingly becoming infrastructure-centric amid climate-economic shifts in the city. This shift indicates that affordable housing and infrastructure development will likely solidify infrastructural dominance in Surat's climate-resilient urbanism. Finally, the chapter emphasizes the critical role of spatial associations and situated logic in mediating how resilience facilitates the spatial management and governance of informal labor geographies. As resilience practice evolves in response to emergent climate-economic opportunities and challenges, these spatial associations will play a crucial role in shaping how key local institutions and spatial practices interact with informal labor geographies in the urban region.

1.6 Conceptual Background

1.6.1 Conceptual provocations

Conceptually, this project contests the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of emergent climate-resilient urbanism. By this, I mean the assumptions that underpin the dominant epistemologies of climate urbanism as predominantly directed by dominant climate economic interests amid neoliberal influences. This project is motivated by key spatial agentic forces and imaginaries that shape and are reshaped by climate-resilient urbanism. Consequently, while the main analytical focus is on climate economic reconfigurations aligned with the normative urban resilience agenda, this thesis emphasizes situated and relational perspectives from southern urban climate geographies. The conceptual framework, therefore, derives its relevance from the specific geography it addresses.

The conceptual framing of this thesis is critically generative and useful in the situated contexts of southern urban climate geographies, where normative practices, such as resilience and adaptation, are increasingly legitimized in spatial practices. The legitimacy of normative resilience in urban practice and governance further reinforces the ontological assumptions upon which geographies are legitimized as climate geographies are premised. By this, I mean ontological assumptions that build on epistemological representations of geographic climate vulnerabilities and historic fragilities of the Global South. The normative assumptions, rationale, and climate ethics that drive the Southern urban climate render these geographies ontologically flat.

Consequently, emergent climate urbanism in the global urban south presupposes situated urban influences and approaches normative climate discourses and processes, and the politico-structural pathways likely to emerge as a result. The flattening of climate ontologies risks normalizing climate ontological reductionism at a scale. Reductionism in global frameworks is often pragmatically motivated by the urgency of the need to systematically tackle the increasingly complex climate risks, impacts, and vulnerabilities in the concerned geographies and beyond (O' Brien, 2018; Magnan et al., 2020). However, a critical consequence of such ontological

reductionism pertains to marginalized representation of situated plural climate interactions and signals in southern urban geographies and underlying forces and relations (Bond et al., 2020).

This is evidenced by the growing popularity and influence of global networked processes mobilizing standardized urban climate frameworks in the urban south. The wide resonance across geographies is partly due to reductionism in the geographic representation of urban climate geographies. Moreover, these representations and the (non)recognition of situated forces render southern urban geographies more susceptible to reconfiguration by global hegemonic climate-economic forces. In addition, neoliberal lineages of hegemonic urban climate frameworks have been found to facilitate place-agnostic climate reconfiguration (Mikulewicz, 2019; Castro and Sen, 2020). This study demonstrates aspects of climate reductionism in relation to the institutionalization of normative resilience in Surat.

On the other hand, examining institutional practice in situated contexts also reveals tensions and negotiations that emphasize how institutions are embedded in differential spatial networks and beholden to different aspects of urban materiality, culture, and urban politics, which reveal ontological aspects of southern urban geographies that, regardless of hegemonic climate representations and knowledge, will exist and continue to reconfigure climate practice from below. This tension conceptually animates the overarching relational approach in this thesis. Further, taking inspiration from Stuart Hall who famously said, that no hegemonic force including neoliberalism is ever complete or completed[4]. Attributing a universal determinism to the prevailing hegemonic order obscures forces and interactions that make the hegemonic order itself, a constant work in progress (Hall in Henriques et al., 2018). For a hegemonic order to survive, it requires norms and processes of social exclusion and constant negotiation. Paying attention to these spaces of negotiation in racialized spaces where various hegemonic and non-hegemonic forces of world-making interact could reveal nuanced interpretations of relationality and agency at

play. Therefore, to illuminate how situated forces, such as labor and labor geographies in this study unsettle the dominant climate-resilience economic paradigm, I build on relevant conceptual debates from urban geography and urban sociological literatures.

1.6.2 Conceptual anchor and contributions

1.6.2.1 Normative world-cities climate order and the Urban South

Globalization of urban resilience builds off a particular geopolitical legacy and orientation rooted in world-cities crisis management, securitization, and reconstruction (Wakefield and Braun, 2014; Grove, 2017; Leitner *et al.*, 2018). Contemporary discourses on global economic reconfigurations in response to climate risk and crises strongly advocate for resilience as a development corrective measure (IPCC, 2022). Urban resilience is commonly advocated as an overarching orientation, strategy, or governing instrument for southern cities in the era of the Anthropocene (Derickson, 2018; Hughes et al., 2020). Global climate imaginaries germinate in the Global North and are *improvised* in the provincial urban South (Harris et al., 2017). These imaginaries usually map onto the conventional hierarchies of transnational mobile policy circuits, technology, and knowledge transfer (ibid).

In the recent past however, different climate interest groups have challenged the status quo perpetuated by global normative climate imaginaries (Mikulewicz, 2019; Chakraborty and Sherpa, 2021). Voices and representation from global margins and historically vulnerable groups are pushing for radical transformation for a more equitable global climate order (Mikulewicz and Taylor, 2020; Henrique and Tschakert, 2021). The incremental shifts one observes in how collective understanding of climate ethics, representation, and recognition is evolving, is a result of the gradual but growing visibility of longstanding marginal histories of social justice and situated Indigenous environmental movements (Ranganathan and Doshi,

2018; Farhana, 2022; Ranganathan; 2022). Actionable steps to undo the hegemonic climate order thus build upon situated relational processes that challenge the status quo[3]. Transformation is then built into climate propositioning through actionable ethical considerations to selectively harness and redistribute privileges and power of hegemonic climate institutions, culture, and processes (Westman and Castán Broto, 2022). Although much like its predecessors, upon becoming a discourse, climate *transformation* discourses are found to reproduce fallacies like previous climate discourses (ibid).

Critical observations suggest that limitations to achieving the true potential of visions such as urban transformation and resilience are often less to do with the discourse itself, but rather the interplay of contextual forces that de-politicize discourse in its translation (Westman and Castán Broto, 2020). Depoliticization fundamentally dilutes core components of social justice in climate praxis, such as recognition, capacities, and participation (Basu and Bazaz, 2018; Chu and Michael, 2019; Mikulewicz and Taylor, 2020). Global and local forces that depoliticize climate discourses and make them amenable to neoliberal technocratic capture are therefore complicit in building a hegemonic normative climate order, which is likely to achieve climate targets at a huge social cost for marginalized communities in affected geographies (Paprocki, 2021; Baldwin, 2022).

1.6.2.2 Normative resilience and Surat

Rockefeller's resilience programs for Asian cities extend customizable models to Global South cities (see Bahadur and Tanner, 2014). Climate policy frameworks and guidelines supporting ambitious urban resilience visions indicate that normative climate processes are responsive to the needs and accessibility of southern cities

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[3] These include recognition of processes that reproduce status quo and power across different stages of knowledge production, institutionalization, network consolidation and legitimization on one hand, and resource mobilization, metrics and methods of evaluations and incentives on the other.

(Vale, 2014; Leitner et al., 2018). In doing so, the normative climate-economic models signal enhanced opportunities for Global South assimilation and incentivize southern cities to participate. Beyond improved mobility and prestige within the hegemonic world-cities climate order, incentives encompass opportunities in an expanding climate finance market (Lee, 2014; Webber et al., 2020). The alignment between normative world-city climate models and the aspirations of emerging economies necessitates structural adjustments. It entails the constant making and unmaking of spatial imaginaries and reconfigurations in situated contexts.

Consider Surat's resilience journey. Since 2006, Surat has continued to scale and negotiate its position in transnational urban resilience and climate networks. Surat is connected to over 15 such networks, as confirmed by the former Chief Resilience Officer (CRO) during an interview (November 2021). City authorities and local leadership attribute Surat's relative success in negotiating global climate markets and mobile policy networks to Surat's celebrated entrepreneurial culture (Personal interview, November 2021). Key local leaders believe that this success is primarily due to Surat's responsiveness and adaptability to entrepreneurial, climate-resilient economic pathways. However, the success also stems from Surat's ability to negotiate its place as a leading (climate) finance destination given its institutional legacy, politico-economic culture, and neoliberal entrepreneurial fervor (see chapters 4 and 5).

Transnational climate networks generally appeal to local city networks and leadership in Surat and other economically rising cities in India, extending to other aspirational urban areas in the region (ibid). Despite the growing integration of southern cities into these transnational resilience processes, the complex and lasting consequences require more nuanced situated engagement (see Chapters 5 and 6). Previous studies have demonstrated that the consequences of many such reconfigurations in southern contexts can provide deep insight into the relationship between equity, scale, and temporality (Jazeel and Legg, 2019). Studies have also established links between normative climate processes and protracted institutional

violence, social injustice, and conflict (Hughes 2010; Chu and Michael 2019; Mahadevia and Desai 2019). These critical insights urge this study in the direction of (re) assessing the associated long-term social wounds and losses associated with normative resilience practices in southern urban labor geographies and opportunities to reverse them.

Contestations also arise from tensions between universal and situated meanings attributed to resilience, especially considering that discourses are more than just words and are translated in context (Hajer and Versteeg, 2005). Recognizing this, contextual and situated interpretations of resilience in practice matter. The discursive meanings that key stakeholders, especially institutional actors, associate with 'resilient city' influence its translation into policy and practice. Institutional interviews and labor narratives about managing urban disasters highlight the importance of temporal (dis)continuities and specific events and memories in shaping institutional resilience in particular contexts (See Chapter 4).

Other relevant non-episodic narratives of resilience go beyond the normative, risk-centric understanding of resilience. Rather, these emphasize the concomitant intersectional and psychosocial aspects of enduring and negotiating life in post-disaster labor geographies. The generalizable aspects from these refer to differential (re)production and reconfigurations of labor geographies, which simultaneously reveal ongoing marginalization and the production of spatial margins in some cases. These further provoke us to think about what individual and collective pursuits of resilience mean from the vantage point of racialized labor and labor geographies. Under what circumstances and situations do certain institutional-spatial relationships enable specific micro-labor geographies to become conditionally resilient and more capable of negotiating?

To close this section, contestations around resilience in Surat arise from its prima facie neoliberal orientation among others (Wakefield, 2022). Distinctions

between resilience as a discursive institutional orientation and spatial practice become clearer as the thesis traces how resilience is institutionalized. I tease out specific aspects of resilience spatial practice and the contested reconfigurations associated with them (Chapter 5). I further elaborate on resilience spatial practices in the realms of affordable housing and urban infrastructure in hybrid geographies of labor. The last section of the conceptual background further crystallizes the relationship between spatial reconfigurations in labor geographies and corresponding agentic labor responses. This leads to a final conceptual discussion at the intersection of urban politics and the institutional governance of labor geographies and urban margins.

1.6.2.3 Infrastructural reconfigurations and labor geographies

The constitutive role of infrastructural orientation in institutional resilience practice is central to Surat's emergent climate-resilient reconfigurations and, therefore, to this thesis. Chapter 4 traces the key logic that has naturalized infrastructural-spatial reconfigurations in normative resilience and Surat and other southern-climate geographies (Eakin et al., 2017). Infrastructure gains primacy in how it (re)configures urban space and places differently in relation to labor in this study (Graham, 2000; Hodson and Marvin, 2009). Key infrastructures in this study, include state sanctioned affordable housing and infrastructure for urban poor including migrant labor geographies to tackle spatial informality, and conventional disaster management infrastructures such as flood embankments.

To understand emergent climate urbanism in Surat using resilience as an analytical approach, this thesis investigates how infrastructural-spatial reconfigurations to bolster urban economic resilience perpetuate the uneven accumulation of spatial privileges, social, and political capital even within racialized labor geographies. This continuous accumulation entails the redistribution of

entrenched vulnerability and labor precarity to the urban margins of racialized labor geographies (Kosad in Chapters 5 and 6).

Considering the post-disaster context of labor geographies, the findings further underscore how both formal hybrid institutions capitalize on existing community social cohesion (or lack thereof), ascribed social and labor identities, political and social beliefs, and ideological inclinations to organize into semi-autonomous labor associations that feed into dominant clientelist politics (Chapter 6). The findings further reveal how formal hybrid institutions leverage community social cohesion (or its absence), and spatial subjectivities influenced by dominant ideologies to form semi-autonomous labor associations that feed into urban clientelist politics (Chapter 6).

As Simone's conceptualization of "people as infrastructure" suggests, these semi-autonomous spatial labor associations facilitate the exchange of information, basic services, and resources and shape spatial privileges and opportunities (Simone, 2004). In doing so, hybrid associations enable racialized labor communities to navigate differential precarity in exclusionary regimes of urban citizenship and governance (Bhan, 2017; Banks et al., 2020). Situated struggles and politics surrounding the material infrastructure reproduce the interconnected intangible spatial infrastructure that manifests as spatiotemporal labor networks and identity-based political and extra-political formations, including migrant politico-cultural associations (elaborated in Chapter 6).

1.6.3 Resilience and the urban political

Being a member of Rockefeller's southern cities network (ACCCRN) has been advantageous for Surat. Membership in normative global climate networks has enhanced Surat's financial autonomy and economic prospects regarding land-based development and financialization (Chu, 2015). However, to understand what

positions Surat to harness a 'resilience dividend' in relation to a vast economic labor geography, it is vital to situate it in its political context. In other words, cities such as Surat are situated within broader national frameworks such as India's federal governance structure that decentralizes certain privileges and responsibilities but also regulates institutional power and autonomy (Pillai and Dubash, 2021). The situatedness of cities as political actors within the broader framework of sovereign politics thus shapes key institutional policy and practice, development agendas and spatial governance, and financial and political autonomy.

Therefore, despite the political rescaling effects of networked policy mobilities on cities, such as greater agency and strategic visibility on global platforms, cities and urban regions are still territorially bound and significantly shaped by national politics. There is only so much that transnational climate imaginaries can envision and deliver in cities, regardless of the influence of nation-states (Bulkeley, 2021). Thus, the political context within which Surat's urban institutions and governance operate is instrumental to how resilience is assimilated into urban institutional practice and more fundamentally, how resilience as a political discourse and culture reinforces the status quo (Moore et al., 2015, Chapter 2).

This line of inquiry acquires growing urgency, given the ongoing global climate economic restructuring, the rise of majoritarianism in global politics, and the growing influence of Hindu nationalism in India (Kaul, 2017; Shani 2021). These global and local political trends not only influence the urban politics of progressive transformations in climate-societal relations, but also how climate politics becomes a vehicle of strategic geopolitics (Menon, 2021). As cities are constantly rescaled by global climate networks, they are also agentic vehicles through which national politics and political ideologies are projected in the global arena. Furthermore, critical conceptualizations of urban climate processes acknowledge both the potential and limits of what the urban represents in different geographies (Parnell and Robinson, 2017). It is therefore vital in this study to juxtapose institutional resilience practices

and spatial politics in the concerned labor geographies. Doing so uncovers the critical relationship between resilience as a spatial strategy and prevailing urban politics in racialized labor geographies and urban margins. I argue that this could potentially inform the situated understanding of underappreciated spatial logic and influences that spatialize resilience in the service of dominant urban politics (for a longer discussion, see Chapter 2).

1.7 Substantive Contributions and Discussion

Key provocations that motivate substantive contributions to critical climate studies and, more specifically, the evolving scholarship on climate urbanism, are as follows. What do the geographic particularities of emerging post-colonial southern economies have to offer? Other related provocations relevant in this context include: Why are resilience and labor spatial intersections relevant? What does the contextual relationship between risk and resilience in Surat specifically contribute? As the substantive chapters illustrate, southern economic geographies offer opportunities to deepen empirically driven theorization of global climate-resilient urbanism in relation to a key spatial agent, that is, racialized labor and labor geographies in (southern) urban economic geographies. Situated perspectives on spatial interactions between labor as constrained spatial agent practices and spatial reconfiguration reveal important insights into the spatial management of informal labor geographies. This is particularly relevant as resilience increasingly consolidates into a citywide spatial strategy amid the ongoing climate-resilient economic restructuring of southern urban geographies.

This thesis further advances critical thinking on the spatial relationship between normative risk and resilience in Surat's urban institutional practice. This derives from a situated genealogical analysis of the prevailing institutional resilience legacy, spatial narratives, and urban techno politics that translate normative risk and resilience in Surat (Chapter 4). Genealogical insights further illuminate why

standardized risk-driven urban resilience frameworks appeal to cities such as Surat (e.g ACCCRN framework). These insights highlight how the prevailing institutional legacies and colonial remnants of spatial technologies and crisis management approaches assimilate normative resilience practices in Surat. Moreover, insights into the institutionalization of resilience reveal how resilience perpetuates racialized segregation within labor geographies under the guise of spatial risk management.

Critical reflections on the relationship between normative risk and resilience facilitate contextually driven theorization of the spatial currency of resilience in spatial politics and the governance of racialized labor and labor geographies. The overall findings suggest that institutional spatial risk narratives invoke resilience in relation to migrant labor geographies in Surat. This affords resilience, spatial legitimacy, and the agency to reconfigure and manage migrant labor geographies. In summary, the relationship between normative risk and resilience affords urban institutions access and legitimacy to deepen and consolidate institutional practices in migrant labor geographies. In doing so, urban institutions manage and govern not only spatial risk but also their embodied geographies of racialized migrant labor and the untapped politico-economic dividend that can be derived from it.

Moving on, intersections of institutional resilience practice and labor geographies, examined through relocations of the labor population from low-lying informal settlements into state-sanctioned affordable housing projects, solidify perspectives on the spatial reconfiguration of labor. Furthermore, findings reveal emerging non-state spatial actors, conflicting spatial interests, and negotiations shaping the institutionalization of affordable housing in resilience practices for strategic spatial management of migrant labor.

Through the case of state-sanctioned affordable housing and infrastructural reconfigurations, this study demonstrates the micro-spatial political economic influences on institutional approaches in different migrant labor geographies. For

example, spatial cases from the northern and southern textile production zones illuminate the dominant spatial influences in the micro-contexts of migrant labor geographies. These dominant spatial influences imply that institutional spatial risk narratives distort the microspatial realities of institutional resilience practices. Particularly, in contested and segregated migrant labor geographies that cater to the hierarchized informal labor market of Surat textile industry.

Additionally, institutional interviews highlight spatial dilemmas and negotiations regarding the spatial management of labor through resilience practice. This calls into question the (in)adequacy of standardized risk-driven resilience that appears to gloss over the more entrenched spatial logic that circumvents or even manipulates risk in relation to labor. Consequently, spatial reconfigurations driven by the resilience agenda appear to reproduce the spatial risk on urban margins and relocate it elsewhere rather than address it.

From the standpoint of labor, hybrid spatial labor associations illuminate the differential spatial governance of migrant labor geography. I call these different spatial approaches governance by assimilation and governance by denial. I argue that these hybrid spatial approaches are indicative of the differential distribution of spatial privileges and vulnerability within informal labor geographies. The differential distribution of spatial privileges in terms of settlement infrastructure, basic provisioning, access to labor networks, and spatial vulnerability contribute to spatial narratives of risk. This, in turn, legitimizes the spatial currency of resilience to reconfigure migrant labor geographies.

Overall, at the scale of the city and urban region, I observed a mutually reinforcing spatial relationship between risk and resilience in the realm of spatial management of informal labor geographies. My findings reveal that institutional risk governance consolidates climate-economic resilience practices into ongoing institutional spatial practices in labor geographies. The differential consequences of

these reconfigurations explained through illustrative cases (Kosad and Ved, Chapter 6) reproduce differential risk in racialized labor geographies through ongoing fragmentation and peripheralization of informal labor geographies. This perpetually invokes resilience in relation to expanding the spatial management of mobile racialized labor and labor geographies mediated by the spatial reconfiguration of risk.

In summary, this study contributes empirically informed conceptual insights into southern climate-resilient urbanism as it relates to racialized labor geographies. The final chapter expands on this and ties it together (Chapter 7). Additionally, in this chapter, I reflect on the resonance of emergent climate-resilient urbanism with racial capitalism in relation to labor. Overall, the chapter discusses key academic and policy-relevant insights and shares methodological reflections, limitations, and directions for future work.

2. CONCEPTUALISING BROKERED
RESILIENCE

Climate-resilient spatial reconfigurations in southern cities are primarily driven by the 'resilience dividend' principles pioneered by Judin Rodin of the Rockefeller Foundation (see Rodin, 2014). Contemporary resilience practices in Surat and other Rockefeller cities are grounded in this principle, positioning resilience as a strategic approach to managing urban crises and risks to enhance overall economic resilience. Against this backdrop, I discuss key conceptual debates that inform this study.

I draw on relevant urban geographic and sociological debates, including urban infrastructure studies, critical climate studies, labor geographies, and migration studies, and examine concepts from recent advancements in urban Science and Technology Studies (urban STS). This chapter integrates these seemingly disparate yet complementary strands of literature to support the study's central inquiry into climate-resilient reconfigurations in relation to racialized labor geographies. The conceptual debates reveal synergies with climate-resilient urbanism, particularly in their contribution to critical appreciation of situated interactions between urban vulnerability, risk, informal precarity, institutional processes, governance, infrastructure, and politics. Additionally, these conceptual traditions help foreground relationality as an analytical approach in this study. As mentioned earlier, relationality lends itself to examining situated aspects of changing climate infrastructure – labor mobilities – labor geography relations, which appear peripheral in contemporary debates on climate urbanism.

This chapter utilizes these conceptual perspectives to enable a situated inquiry focused on climate-resilient urbanism in relation to racialized labor geographies

(Banki, 2016). Furthermore, this study underscores the centrality of infrastructure and housing in institutional resilience practices in relation to informal labor and labor geographies. It further addresses gaps in the constrained spatial agentic role of migrant labor and labor geographies in emergent climate-resilient urbanism scholarship. Substantive ideas in this study further provoke thinking about labor as a key spatial actor that reconfigures institutional relations and politics within climate-reconfigured geographies. In doing so, racialized labor geographies assert their constrained spatial stakes and political agency amidst ongoing climate and economic shifts in the city. Therefore, the conceptual debates in this chapter advance scholarly discussions on emergent climate-resilient urbanism, particularly in relation to labor and labor geographies.

2.1 Chapter Structure

The overall aim of this chapter is to consolidate key concepts and empirically driven conceptual insights from the relevant fields of urban infrastructure studies, urban STS, and labor geographies and migration studies. This is to facilitate an informed critical analysis of intersections of resilience and racialized labor geographies. This chapter is divided into four main sections that elaborate on the conceptual review of relevant literature. Each section builds on conceptual perspectives and illustrative examples to contextualize key concepts from the multidisciplinary fields of urban infrastructure studies, contemporary urban science and technology studies, critical urban studies, and labor geography.

The sections are organized around specific substantive chapters of this thesis. The first section of this chapter focuses on resilience as the central theme of the study. It builds on contemporary perspectives and critiques of resilience, particularly in critical climate studies relevant to the Global South. This section summarizes these critiques and their implications for urban governance and practice.

The second section explores theoretical debates in urban infrastructure and urban STS studies, focusing on urban climate imaginaries, techno-politics, governance, and politics. This discussion aligns with the analytical focus of Chapter 4 on 'Mutation', which examines the policy translation and institutionalization of resilience in Surat.

The third section builds on conceptual debates in critical urban studies, urban infrastructure studies, and other cognate perspectives that inform the intersections of infrastructure and informality in the Global South, racialized labor geographies, and urban margins. This section builds on the longstanding theoretical contributions of critical urban infrastructure studies on spatial inequality, marginalization, and urban precarity. A key objective of this section is to situate infrastructure-labor relations based on a review of critical urban literature. This is particularly relevant for Chapters 5 and 6, which examine relational processes at the intersections of institutional spatial practice, infrastructural reconfigurations, and racialized migrant labor geographies.

The final section builds on urban literature from the perspective of labor geographies. It builds on the previous section by emphasizing the importance of labor geography in climate-resilient economic processes. This section uses illustrative examples from vulnerable southern climate geographies to explore the relevance of labor geographies and perspectives in climate urbanism.

2.2 Contemporary Resilience Thinking

2.2.1 Resilience thinking

Since its inception in the 1970s, urban resilience discourse has evolved to recognize the inherent diversity in urban forms, compositions and processes that make cities unique, dynamic, and amorphous (Walker and Cooper, 2011). Having originated from

systems thinking/approach, resilience thinking lends itself to a wide range of applications in the 'urban' (Tyler and Moench, 2012; Chandler, 2014). There is a wide range of conceptualizations and even wider range of interpretations across different registers of academic and policy discourse and practice (Chelleri, 2012; Meerow and Stults, 2016; Meerow and Newell, 2019).

The most widely used definition of resilience in the context of the 'urban' albeit not alone urban, connotes the 'ability to withstand shocks and risks' (Evans, 2011; Brown, 2016). It is a much-contested departure from the earlier definitions stemming from socio-ecological studies (Gunderson, 2003; Wakefield and Braun, 2014). In practice however, urban resilience is primarily concerned with building capacities of cities to hedge against emergent global risks including climate change (Keck and Sakdapolrak 2013; Waagenar and Wilkinson, 2015). Over the decades, normative urban resilience thinking has most prominently been shaped by discourses on global crises, risk and emergency narratives (Walker and Cooper, 2011; Bourbeau, 2018).

As per scholars of the politics of risk, authoritative narratives of crisis and emergency grant legitimacy and justificatory value to state-sanctioned discourses on resilience and its operations (Knuth, 2020). For instance, studies highlight some of the reinforcing effects of narratives of crises and risks in urban politics and governance (Beilin and Wilkinson, 2015; Borie et al., 2019). These include state-sanctioned technologies of securitization and surveillance, financialization of risk, investments in resilient infrastructure, centralization of power and authority in governance, and the use of anticipatory decision-making and scenario-production technologies (Chandler, 2014; Amoore, 2023). Crisis and risk narratives underpinning urban resilience often justify state-sanctioned investments in spatial technologies and infrastructure assemblages to foreclose potential channels of everyday and episodic risks. This is particularly salient in contemporary urban resilience frameworks that, in theory, are increasingly designed around poly-risk and crisis scenarios amid climate change and other emergent crises (Davies and Arrieta,

2024). Particularly worth emphasizing here in the context of emergent climate-resilient urbanism is how risk and crisis narratives can potentially reinforce urban hegemonic power relations and authoritarian forms of spatial governance (Amoore, 2013; Jones et al., 2018; Grove, 2023).

Additionally, the globalization of urban resilience embeds the logic of risk in spatial planning and everyday governance of space, place, and people through the lens of state-sanctioned securitization (White, 2016; Blok, 2020; Rogers and Wilmsen, 2020). The 2007-08 financial crisis is an evocative example. The global financial crisis marked a crucial turning point in urban crisis narratives, solidifying the discourse of urban resilience within the framework of economic resilience (Curtis, 2016; Rogers, 2016; Leitner et al., 2018). Rodin Judith's concept of the 'resilience dividend', shaped by the 2007 financial crisis and aligned with 'risk societies', underpins the Rockefeller Foundation's global urban resilience initiative (Joseph, 2013).

The authoritative discourses on resilience and networked climate governance models that followed have significantly contributed to the globalization and codification of urban resilience (Bulkeley, 2013; 2022; Castán Broto, 2017). The Rockefeller Foundation's 100 Resilient Cities initiative and its Asian counterpart, ACCCRN, are an outcome of this legacy and continue to reconfigure geographies of risk, including climate-vulnerable urban regions in emerging economies of the Global South (Castán Broto, 2017). Furthermore, institutionalization of resilience in southern urban regions amid intensifying poly-risk and crisis situations, reinforces discursive power of the state to invoke resilience as a governing strategy indefinitely to maintain an 'equilibrium state' (Tooze, 2022 in Jayasurya, 2023; also see in relation to sustainable urbanism in Pelling et al., 2024)[4].

2.2.2 Relevant critiques of resilience

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[4] A poly crisis is defined as "the causal entanglement of crises in multiple global systems in ways that significantly degrade humanity's prospects" (Lawrence et al., 2022 in Lawrence et al., 2024). The underlying aspect of interactions among crises distinguishes the concept from related concepts such as systemic risk and other variants.

In lieu of the growing popularity of normative urban resilience, critical scholarship continues to question the normative good that is attributed to resilience rather unquestionably at times. The perceptible agility of resilience has inspired a range of critical perspectives in relation to the urban particularities and conditions under which resilience is enacted (Meerow et al., 2016; Meerow and Newell, 2016). These range from critical observations on how resilience is imagined, constructed, reproduced, and enacted to conceptual (de)mystification of what resilience is all about, and more importantly, why resilience thinking perpetuates and sticks (Fainstein 2018; Matin et al., 2018; Elmqvist et al., 2019).

In the following pages, I elaborate on relevant critiques of urban resilience primarily in the realm of urban spatial practice, governance and management. Recent studies highlight the paradoxes and fallacies of translating urban resilience into practice in neoliberal institutional environments (Braun 2019; Wagenaar 2011; Hajer and Wagenaar 2023). This literature problematizes the growing influence of technocracy on resilience planning and its implementation (Hajer and Wagenaar, 2023). Scholars have noted that technocratic influences erode the progressive political possibilities of urban resilience (Chandler, 2019). Instead, technocratic institutional cultures enable elite capture and depoliticization of resilience (Amin, 2016; Chu, 2020).

Scholars are increasingly worried that the diminishing spaces for deliberative politics, both within and beyond climate and urban resilience practices, could further depoliticize future visions of the 'resilient city' that build on prevailing institutions of resilience, city networks, knowledges and practices (Schulz and Siriwardane, 2015; see Lévêque, 2023 in resilience governance in Mumbai). For instance, in a recent study on resilience planning in the Philippines, scholars underscored the effects of technocratic resilience planning on shrinking opportunities and capacities for contestation by the affected urban poor and marginal communities (Ensor et al.,

2021). Other concerns emerge around diminished capacities to negotiate and participate in the urban politics of state-sanctioned redistribution and relocation of vulnerable communities, essential services, housing, and infrastructure (Harris et al., 2018; Miller, 2020; Few et al., 2021).

While these explain the prevalent paradoxes of urban resilience amidst the neoliberalization of urban policy and governance, one is also drawn to the idea of examining urban neoliberal regimes through the analytical lens of resilience (MacKinnon and Derickson 2012; Mykhnenko, 2016). Employing resilience to examine underlying urban institutions, culture, and politics in relation to its institutional practice aligns with this study. In doing so, one challenges the assumed homogeneity of urban geographies under neoliberal influences, which further unsettle normative assumptions in global resilience networks (Mayer, 2016). Moreover, challenging notions of urban homogeneity in southern urban regions with comparable political economies facilitates a deeper understanding of situated climate politics. Focusing on the specific context enhances the appreciation of local actors, relations, and key conjunctures that shape a city's institutional resilience practices. It also underscores the influences of human and non-human actors, within and beyond formal institutions, in institutionalizing resilience (see Chapter 4 on mutation).

In addition, a growing body of critical-Marxist and radical Black and Feminist approaches have proposed alternative climate-resilient imaginaries (Fainstein, 2017; Gressgård, 2019; Goh, 2021; Ranganathan and Bratman, 2021). These alternatives are informed by a mix of intersectionality-oriented feminist, decolonial, anti-colonial, and historical-materialist frameworks (Amo-Agyemang, 2021; Ma rch and Swyngedouw, 2022).

Others highlight the potential of resurrecting an emancipatory climate politics of care by incorporating oppressed and marginal political histories, which lay bare the historic roots of global climate crises (Davies et al., 2021; Carr, 2023). Similarly,

critical studies have pursued what resilience conceals rather than what it seemingly aspires to achieve (Ziervogel et al., 2017). For instance, Bonds writes that "resilience thinking conceals the political and racial nature of social systems, obscuring the role of previous policies, institutions, and authorities in siphoning resources from poor neighborhoods of color in order to build resilience elsewhere" (2018; p. 3). Therefore, in geographies where resilience intersects with deep vulnerability and structural precarity, examining the intersections of urban social differences and resilience can illuminate the discursive politics of embodied urban differences in resilience practices (Béné et al. 2018; Harris, Chu, and Ziervogel 2017). Furthermore, the spatial dynamics of resilience in uneven urban areas can underscore the role of institutional practices in the social reproduction of uneven-risk geographies (Evans and Reid, 2015; Fainstein, 2018). Examining resilience in the context of structural power asymmetries is crucial for understanding various spatial manifestations within the city.

In contrast, a more pragmatic and optimistic cadre of critical scholars advocate for urban resilience based on successful cases in specific contexts and scales (Bahadur and Tanner, 2014; Peters et al., 2016). However, the parameters by which normative resilience frameworks define and measure success — along with the prerequisites related to institutional form, culture, structures, and practices required to achieve success by normative standards — are considered contentious (Chandler and Reid, 2016; Harris et al., 2017). Nevertheless, the global urban resilience industry continues to expand unabated. In a similar vein, recent critical adaptation studies highlight the overlooked politics of local incentive structures, the political economy of policy-brokering, and the role of development and adaptation finance in shaping climate vulnerability and adaptation narratives in climate-fragile geographies (e.g., Baldwin, 2022; Paprocki, 2022).

Beyond this, studies have noted how the politics of adaptation unfolds across various scales. They involve adapting knowledge and policy broker networks

themselves to reduce disruptive asymmetries between local development, political cycles, and global climate networks (Wainwright and Mann, 2015; Mikulewicz, 2019). Another study by Weinstein et al. (2019), called the fantasy of resilient growth in the urban regions of Kolkata and Mumbai, adeptly captured this tension. She explains that resilience planning and development politics have historically operated as separate domains, both analytically and institutionally, in both regions, with minimal interaction. However, these domains must be integrated in practice to demonstrate 'climate-resilient economic development.'

This study further observes a concerning trend in which cities pursuing isolated resilience planning and piecemeal climate interventions are considered climate compliant by normative standards and metrics. This highlights the necessity to further investigate the scalar politics of climate compliance, intra-city negotiations, and reconfigurations that seem climate-compliant or resilient, but are not. It further challenges normative success metrics, and the nature of urban climate pathways promoted by global climate economic frameworks and incentives, such as finance, transnational membership, and soft power (Fainstein et al., 2023).

Critical climate scholars emphasize the substantial soft power wielded by transnational-local urban elite networks in shaping southern climate urbanism (ibid). This global soft power is mobilized within the institutional realms of climate-performing or model cities through the efforts of city networks to form competitive urban climate coalitions. Research on the entrepreneurial shift in urban knowledge production and the development of 'networked cities' has long anticipated the implications for reconfiguring urban governance that extend beyond urban administration and management (Bulkeley and Betsill, 2013; Swilling and Hajer, 2017; Smeds and Acuto, 2018).

The discussion here lays out contemporary ways in which resilience is relevant to climate studies in southern urban geographies. But more importantly, the section

summarizes relevant critiques of resilience in institutional governance and practice that informs this study. Based on a review of urban resilience literature, the discussion links normative resilience, urban governance, and critiques of neoliberalism, highlighting intersections in situated contexts that require closer attention as resilience gains prominence in climate-resilient urbanism in the Global South.

Building on these ideas, this thesis uses resilience as a relational approach to examine climate-resilient urbanism in the city of Surat. Some of these critiques lend themselves to nuanced ways of looking at how and why resilience is institutionalized in prevailing spatial planning and practices in Surat (Castán Broto and Westman, 2022). For instance, chapter 4 traces situated logics and influences that mediate institutional resilience practice. To do so, the chapter employs textual analysis to engage with a wide range of institutional narratives, spatial practices and perspectives that invoke resilience (see Mutation). Institutional narratives and practices further reveal insight into wider urban conditions and institutional relations with racialized labor geographies and migrant labor (Chapter 5). These chapters highlight the significance of institutional narratives and discursive practices of resilience assimilation in understanding the broader logic and processes of climate-resilient urbanism in labor geographies (Solecki et al., 2017; Harris et al., 2017).

2.3 Urban Technopolitics and Resilience

This section builds on relevant conceptual debates in urban STS and infrastructure studies that conceptually anchor parts of the substantive analysis of the institutionalization of resilience shaped by situated techno-politics (Chapter 4). Conceptual insights illuminate the discursive influences of urban techno-politics and spatial imaginary (or on the institutionalization of resilience in racialized geographies of labor and urban margins (Chandler and Reid, 2016; Randall, 2013;

Mikulewicz, 2020). Additionally, critical debates on urban imaginaries and infrastructural politics complement the analytical relationship between the idea of a resilient city, infrastructural relations, and situated urban politics. I draw on an evolving critical body of work in the multidisciplinary field of urban STS research[5]. Given the empirical focus on climate-resilient practices in this thesis, I review the critical application of concepts like imaginary and techno-political regimes in recent studies on climate-resilient, sustainable transitions, and urban transformation literature. Conceptual debates in urban STS and cognate fields are thus well-placed to inform critical scholarship on emergent global climate (resilient) urbanism in emerging economies and elsewhere (see Fraser, 2014; Blok, 2020).

Furthermore, strands of postcolonial and southern urban thinking in urban STS scholarship offer particularly relevant observations in this study's context. The term 'postcolonial' in urban STS critiques the flat ontological assumptions of anglophone urban STS (Law and Linn, 2017). In doing so, it diversifies urban STS by promoting 'productively ambiguous' ideological and intellectual critiques that reveal spatiotemporal asymmetries and address tensions from provincializing forces in specific contexts (Datta, 2019; 2024; more examples below). Recent studies by Southern scholars have demonstrated that contemporary smart and climate-resilient urbanisms, despite their claims of rationality, efficiency, predictability, and proficiency, do not focus exclusively on these metrics (Datta, 2019; Hommels, 2020). Instead, the urban imaginary and tools for envisioning future cities—such as narratives, projections, rhetoric, and imagination—often (re)politicize and influence the institutional science-technology reconfiguring instruments (see the politics of smart urbanism in Datta, 2019; 2024). Recent theorizations from Southern and Eastern geographies reinforce the explanatory power of postcolonial variants in

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[5] STS thinking has historically informed urban research in significant ways since the 1970s and the 1980s (See 'STS in the City' Farias and Blok, 2017). These have focused on evolution in the sociological underpinnings of science and technology that has shaped the urban environment (ibid).

urban STS. Moreover, these critique Anglophone STS for perpetuating Western technocracy and misrepresenting emerging techno-digital urbanisms in the Far East.

2.3.1 Imaginaries, narratives, and climate-resilient urbanism

The concept of 'imaginary' is used in a wide range of discursive and theoretical applications to designate the collective imaginary in critical social studies. Fundamentally, 'imagination' underpins the social construction of a collective imaginary, which is inherently abstract and often metaphorical or theoretical in social analyses (Jasanoff and Kim, 2015 on smart cities as sociotechnical imaginaries). Likewise, institutional resilience imaginaries act as a discursive force shaping climate-resilient future materialities, which, in turn, derive legitimacy and structure from a collective imaginary. In a recent study on smart cities, Dutta deployed imaginary as a continuum of logic, narratives, power relations, and performative politics to reconfigure the urban present through justificatory strategies and futuring tools (see Dutta, 2024, p. 400). Amidst the rise of far-right Hindu nationalism in India, Dutta contends that the 'futuring' paradigm, smart nationalist imaginaries are scaled down to cities (ibid).

Other studies on socio-technical imaginaries emphasize the discursive politics of legitimizing around a 'future' premised on assemblage of social institutions, practices, networks and power relations (see Kitchin, 2014; Jasanoff and Kim, 2015). For example, Jasanoff and Kim (2015) demonstrated that 'smart cities' as a sociotechnical imaginary extends beyond the technologies of smart urbanism. Rather, it permeates everyday spheres of social life and animates the cultural production of collective desire through curated visions that comprise infrastructures, practices, and somewhat harmonized meanings of social life (Jasanoff and Kim, 2015).

Spatial imaginaries are particularly relevant in the context of this study. A spatial imaginary connotes a shared understanding of space: how it is socially

constructed, inhabited, used, represented, and materialized. They are integral to the social construction of space and the material practices that underpin it, such as social imaginaries. Spatial imaginaries have been widely used in urban geography at the intersections of space, politics, territoriality, belonging, and the politics of marginalization (Butler, 2012). Earlier urban studies described spatial imaginaries as "particular understandings of space … cognitive frameworks, both collective and individual, constituted through lived experiences, perceptions, and conceptions of space itself" (Lefebvre, 1991; Wolford, p. 410).

Spatial imaginaries are increasingly applied in the context of normative urban concepts such as the 'resilient city,' 'smart city,' and 'good city' to understand the underlying discursive narratives and power relations. These imaginaries lend meaning and materiality to a 'deeply held, collective understanding of socio-spatial relations' that are translated in practices (Davoudi et al., 2018; Borie et al., 2019). Davoudi's reflections on the evolution and critical applications of spatial imaginary in the context of climate-resilient and other normative propositions for cities worldwide is resonant here. He states that a collective imagination (even if not representative of everyone's desire) is central to the social construction of a spatial imaginary such as a 'resilient' or a 'smart city' much like stigmatized imaginaries of de-industrialized cities and ruination (see naturalization of Detroit as a site of urban decay in Millington, 2013). Tools and objects, such as narratives, data, maps, algorithms, and practices, articulate a collectively held imagination into a representation of possibilities and performative politics (in some cases). Spatial imaginaries are produced through negotiation, contestation, and acknowledgment of the lived narratives of places that are repetitive, performative, and discursive in practice for them to translate over time.

These conceptual renderings of spatial imaginary emphasize the intertwined relations of narratives and practice in situated contexts rather than circulating as dichotomous rival causal drivers espousing the ideal and material (See Raynor, 2018).

Spatial imaginaries are rendered tangible through spatial contestations and various spatial articulations of institutional resilience in this study, for instance (Hubbard and Kitchin, 2010; Kitchin, 2021). These further delineate spatial boundaries that seek to naturalize inclusion and exclusion and facilitate 'othering' of certain spaces and places (see Lindner and Meissner, 2019). In this research, the concept of spatial imaginaries lends itself to a relational understanding of discursive underpinnings of resilience, institutional spatial practices in racialized labor geographies, and urban majoritarian politics.

Narratives are closely entangled with imaginaries. Narratives eliminate noise and reshape beliefs, ideas, aspirations, and imagination in the realms of everyday urban life and within the mundane transactions of spatiotemporally dispersed institutional practices (see Chapters 5 with reference to institutional resilience narratives). Narratives play a crucial role in mediating cultural relatability in everyday urban life, where many forces counteract attempts to homogenize spatial imaginaries (as demonstrated in Dutta 2024). Insights into resilience and smart city imaginaries depict how the 'future' is often backtracked through narratives as a powerful tool (See Chapter 4). Constructed around shared values, norms, institutional practices, and spatial imaginaries are sites of negotiated visions of present and 'desirable' resilient future (Lindner and Meissner, 2018; Hommels, 2005). Concepts such as imaginary and narrative are increasingly pertinent in critical analyses of forces shaping climate-smart and climate-resilient urbanism across various urban regimes (Hommels, 2005; Gieryn, 2006).

2.3.2 Technopolitical regimes and urban resilience narratives

Technopolitical regimes function both within and outside formal institutional structures, and they (de)legitimize specific policy discourses and transformation narratives (Kitchin 2021). These regimes shape how techno-political forces establish and maintain certain institutional practices, norms, and methods for promoting specific urban visions or practices—such as urban resilience. Kitchin's recent work has been influential in examining how political imaginaries and narratives influence smart city concepts (Kitchin, 2021).

Other studies have explored how technopolitical regimes implement prescriptive pathways and programmatic frameworks, such as those on climate-resilient development pathways in Cape Town (Simpson et al., 2023). These pathways are shaped by policies, technological artifacts, legal instruments, environmental narratives, spatial practices, and management strategies, highlighting the interplay between imaginaries and technopolitical regimes (Beumer et al., 2017; Miller, 2020). These conceptual tools are instrumental for understanding institutional reconfigurations that produce normative climate-resilient city imaginaries.

The examples provided further elucidate the interaction of core concepts, such as urban imaginaries, technopolitical regimes, and climate reconfigurations, from a southern urban STS perspective. Hecht's extensive work in Latin America examines emerging technocratic discourses on urban air pollution within the broader context of the techno-politics of liberal environmentalism and (anti)coloniality (Hecht, 2020). This study highlights how liberal environmental discourses, like climate mitigation and air pollution, can obscure and undermine long-standing indigenous land sovereignty and resistance against extractive urbanism in the Amazon. The concept of the 'urban' in these discourses often reflects and perpetuates neocolonial imaginaries of extractive urbanism. Hecht's findings reveal how liberal environmental processes can normalize violence and marginalization in historically marginalized regions, such as the Amazon (Anthias and Hoffman, 2021).

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These observations align with trends in other southern urban regions. In Surat, similar patterns are evident in the emerging climate-resilient reconfigurations and the intra-city displacement and marginalization of historically disadvantaged labor geographies (Chapters 5 and 6). Similarly, Gopakumar's work on remaking 'world-class cities' unravels emergent urban infrastructural imaginaries and techno politics in postcolonial Bangalore (Gopakumar, 2020). He amplifies the need to contextualize relational politics of scale and temporality that animate the production of hegemonic technopolitical regimes (ibid)[6]. This study employs conjunctural analysis to contrast the postcolonial Nehruvian socialist ethos of self-sufficiency with the post-liberalization period's free-market ideology. It identifies overlaps and disruptions in institutional legacies and logic from various political and economic ideologies that shape Bangalore's contemporary techno-politics of spatial planning (Gopakumar, 2020).

Likewise, research on technopolitical regimes argues for examining hierarchies and power structures in the knowledge-practice continuum that influence spatial inequality and infrastructure (Robin and Acuto, 2018). A place-based STS orientation thus offers conceptual cues for discursive analyses of institutional resilience practices and urban climate topology (Jasanoff, 2015; Miller, 2020)[7]. This further emphasizes the significance of urban techno politics and spatial imaginaries in facilitating cross-scale examination of broader discursive patterns in urban climate-resilient transitions across regions. Overall, these conceptual debates

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[6] The findings and approaches of such analyses of urban techno politics arising from situated sensibilities and sense of history resonate deeply with resilience practice in Surat and other southern cities.

[7] Topological reading refers to a spatial understanding of state capacities and hierarchical power exertion in reconfigured urban climate geographies, which are neither inherently horizontal nor vertical (Allen, 2011). This approach suggests a dispersed spatialization of institutional power and form, legitimized through spatial imaginaries of resilience tied to geographically configured risk narratives, which in turn shape institutional-spatial relations.

inspired by urban STS thinking inform the analyses of the institutionalization of resilience in Surat.

The illustrative studies presented here highlight the conceptual value of imaginaries, narratives, and techno politics in understanding discursive constructions of resilient cities and their associated techno-political frameworks. These studies provide insight into how institutional resilience legacies and spatial narratives shape and are shaped by these imaginaries. Additionally, analyses grounded in southern urban STS perspectives offer valuable contributions to the study of emergent southern climate urbanism, emphasizing the cross-scalar and relational dynamics at play.

2.4 Infrastructural Reconfigurations and Labor Geographies

This section delves into conceptual debates at the intersection of urban infrastructure and labor geographies, emphasizing how infrastructure shapes socio-spatial unevenness and racialized differences. It is particularly relevant given the central role of infrastructural reconfigurations in Surat's normative resilience framework and their impact on racialized labor geographies. The interplay between critical urban infrastructure studies and labor geography provides a robust discussion of their conceptual strengths. This includes the appreciation of relationality and flows from an infrastructural perspective, and constrained agency and relational autonomy from select strands of labor geography and related fields. Considering the focus of this study on infrastructural reconfigurations and labor geographies, understanding these conceptual intersections is essential.

Critical literature on urban infrastructure has long addressed questions of embodied urban difference and socio-spatial unevenness across urban geographies and disciplines (Brenner, 2014; McFarlane et al., 2017). Moreover, ongoing intellectual debates about the dual nature of urban infrastructure make it

particularly suitable for relational inquiry into both its tangible role as an object and its intangible relations within social networks, institutions, practices, and governance (Anand et al., 2018; McFarlane, 2021). Brian Larkin's seminal work, Politics and Poetics of Infrastructure (2013), effectively captures this duality, highlighting infrastructure's role both as a physical object and as a relational construct in specific contexts.

The duality of infrastructure makes it a constitutive spatial agentic force. It is intertwined with other agentic forces, such as labor and labor geographies in this context. Scholars have often ascribed the conceptual unruliness of infrastructure to this inherent duality. However, they harness the same unruliness to unsettle and advance critical analyses across the socio-material, political, cultural, aesthetic, and affective lives of the city (see McFarlane, 2008; Anand, 2011; Collier and Jones, 2016). The duality of infrastructure becomes more pronounced when considering mobile labor as a constrained spatial force, revealing that infrastructure–labor relations are open to deeper, onto-epistemic interpretations beyond their visible manifestations (Appel, 2012). The following draws on a critical body of work on urban infrastructure that reveal the tenuous ways in which infrastructure intersects with labor and geographies of labor.

2.4.1 Infrastructure-labor intersections in the Urban: Complementarity and significance

Critical urban infrastructure scholarship contributes to a nuanced understanding of how infrastructural reconfigurations intersect with informal labor geographies, urban margins, and embodied spaces of urban difference (Truelove and Ruszczyk, 2022). A significant body of research examines how infrastructure mediates urban inequality and structural discontent through slow violence, manifesting in chronic poverty, marginalization, and structural racism within spatial configurations (Silver, 2014; Stokes and De Coss-Corzo, 2023). Additionally, studies have demonstrated the

everyday effects and affects of spatial privilege and power as shaped by infrastructural configurations of place and space (Desai et al., 2015). These investigations often uncover the concealed discursive-material relations embedded within infrastructural spatial processes.

Intellectual deliberations on labor–infrastructure relations have a long-standing history, particularly within neo-Marxist urban infrastructure studies (Harvey, 2001; Mayer, 2006; Cox, 2016). These perspectives have contributed to a nuanced understanding of infrastructure-labor spatial relations, labor mobilities, and social reproduction, primarily through capital-centric class analysis. However, this focus often overlooks other axes of power that differentiate lived realities of labor within class-analogous social geographies, such as ethno-religious identity, gender, caste, and class, which mediate infrastructural relations in these labor geographies (Addie, 2021). Contemporary post-structural debates in labor geography are well-positioned to address this blind spot by incorporating intersectionality and recognizing constrained labor agency in the context of racialized labor geographies.

In this regard, perspectives from critical urban and labor geography complement a relational understanding of infrastructural spatial reconfigurations in post-disaster labor geographies, such as those in Surat, by highlighting the constrained spatial agencies of labor. Labor, as a constrained spatial agent with transgressive potential in urban spatial politics, particularly through hybrid labor associations, is underexplored in the context of emergent climate-resilient urbanism in southern geographies. Conceptual debates in labor geography can provide significant insights into land-labor-infrastructure relations, especially as climate-resilient urbanism unfolds in southern urban areas. This perspective complements the understanding of infrastructural reconfigurations from the vantage point of labor and highlights critical dimensions that can be mutually enhanced in situated analysis. For example, understanding the logic and spatial reconfiguration of

infrastructure within institutional practices related to affordable housing in racialized labor geographies (Chapter 6).

Furthermore, historicizing labor in its encounters with urban space, as emphasized in recent discussions on labor geography and racial capitalism, illuminates the specificities of labor's relational agency and the conditions under which it is either amplified or erased (McGrath and Strauss, 2015; Ranganathan, 2022). These insights underscore the deep entanglement of labor and spatial reconfigurations, shaped by contextual and conjunctural forces.

2.4.2 Relevant perspectives from urban infrastructure studies

Critical scholarship on urban infrastructure offers a broad canvas of conceptual tools around infrastructure as an agentic relational force in the urban (Graham and Marvin, 2002; Graham and McFarlane, 2014). Infrastructure often serves as a critical conduit for unravelling the complex spatial-temporal relations of power, dependency, extraction, and uneven materiality (Graham and Marvin, 2022).

Additionally, insights into everyday infrastructural politics facilitate a more intimate understanding of the specificities of lived realities against the backdrop of wider urban conditions (Collier, 2011; Anand, 2011; Appel, 2012).For instance, how spatial disparities stem from systemic (slow) violence shaped by everyday infrastructural processes that define and are simultaneously defined by spatial situatedness (see Larkin, 2013; Pain, 2019; McFarlane, 2021). This is relevant in the context of the differentiated labor geographies of Surat, where spatial privileges and disparities are relative, conditional, and contested in relation to the wider politics of urban citizenship (see Silver and Mc Farlane, 2019; Lemanski, 2020; Bhatkal, 2021 in reference to Mumbai).

For instance, Nikhil Anand's work on 'hydraulic citizenship,' reveals the extensive overlaps between technical and state-shadow networks and its effects on brokered water provision in the dense slums of Mumbai (Anand, 2011). This study highlights how politicization of vital life-sustaining resources such as water is deployed as a powerful instrument by political elites to capture and occupy political voids within subaltern spaces (Anand, 2011; Auerbach, 2019). More importantly, it structures the terms of engagement in subaltern citizenship (Auerbach, 2019). Other leading thoughts on the intersections of infrastructural topologies and suburban urban geographies reveal the instrumental and symbolic ways in which infrastructure orchestrates biopolitics (Legg, 2006; Silver and McFarlane, 2019; Lemanski, 2020). This acknowledges that infrastructural work is relational and shapes everyday inequality through embodied and visceral socio-spatial articulations (Bhan 2017; Sultana, 2020; Truelove and Ruszczyk 2022). Inevitably, infrastructural view of urban inequality foregrounds the spatial and processual embeddedness of infrastructure in spatial configurations (Graham and McFarlane, 2015; Truelove, 2021; Roy, 2016; Lawhon and Truelove, 2020).

Furthermore, the foundational role of infrastructure in the social reproduction of labor is contextually relevant in this study. Scholars argue that physical and social infrastructure is closely linked to labor and social reproduction (Norton and Katz, 2017; Addie, 2021). Although social reproduction is often associated with reproductive labor at home and commodified care in the market, scholars contend that the material and social structures that govern the reproduction of social life are deeply integrated into everyday infrastructures of care, mobility, shelter, and sociality (see Hall, 2020; Hall, 2023). Scholars criticize the prevailing masculine paradigm that prioritizes economic (physical) infrastructure over social infrastructure (ibid). They argue that this binary approach devalues the gendered, racialized, and ethnic labor involved in creating and maintaining social infrastructure (Hall, 2020). Additionally, scholars argue that separating the two risks favors one over the other. They argue that this could potentially rupture the infrastructure needed for the social reproduction of

labor life worlds and the ability of alienated gendered labor to sustain them (elaborated in Chapter 5).

The rupture is particularly visible in southern urban geographies where infrastructural imaginaries are entangled with the governance of capitalist placemaking (Truelove and Cornea, 2021; see Gandy, 2019 in reference to Mumbai and Lagos; Ramakrishnan et al., 2021; Addie et al., 2019). Based on observations from different southern cities, Truelove and Cornea (2021) argue that infrastructural practice is central to contemporary urban environmental governance. The intertwined governance of the environment and infrastructure are extensions of capitalist placemaking across many southern labor geographies.

These observations point to intimate ways in which infrastructural relations mediate the governance of spatial heterogeneity. They emphasize situated tensions in spaces of heterogeneity, where infrastructure reconfigures spatial identities, subjectivities, and relative values. These tensions imply that infrastructural relations are perpetually incomplete and constantly (un)made. Others argue that the tensions resulting from incomplete infrastructural relations in liminal informal spaces create opportunities to reimagine infrastructure in ways that restore, and repair labor geographies disrupted by neoliberal governance (Doshi and Ranganathan, 2017; Addie et al., 2019; Niranjana, 2021).

Finally, what do we learn from critical urban infrastructure literature about relevant conceptualizations of relationality that can support this study? The long-standing tradition of thinking and practicing relationality in critical urban inquiries offers relevant insights (Jones, 2009; Graham and McFarlane, 2015; Hart, 2018). The focus of this study is not on relationality per se, but rather on the significance of its conceptual applications in contemporary urban research. Relational inquiry often examines the constitutive other in the urban and (non) urban that are overlooked and epistemically marginalized in urban knowledge and practice. In doing so, these

approaches highlight the radical potential of critical infrastructure studies to deepen our understanding of the urban as a dynamic practice and process, informed by diverse lived and situated perspectives (Parnell, 2016).

In other words, incorporating the relational 'other' or seemingly unrelated intersections offers valuable critical insights that can (re)politicize and pluralise contributions to the ever evolving onto-epistemic understanding of the urban (Cesafsky and Derickson, 2019; Robinson, 2022). Scholars examining urban questions by exploring underexamined dimensions of relational geographies have provided insights that unsettle dominant spatial assumptions, logic, and practices (Sheppard et al., 2013; Simone, 2022). In doing so, they critique and question conventional urban practices, knowledge, and approaches that reproduce socio-spatial hierarchies and depoliticize infrastructural lives in cities (Doshi, 2015; Marvin et al., 2023).

This body of work views infrastructure as central to broader urban processes, emphasizing its relational construction across space and time (Simone, 2014). Scholars argue that a relational approach reveals how infrastructure interacts with and reshapes the discursive-material and embodied spatial dynamics in diverse urban settings (Truelove and Cornea, 2021). They point out that discussions about urban infrastructure often go beyond the infrastructure itself, uncovering complex constitutive relations (Dodson, 2017). For instance, in this study, infrastructure plays a key role in resilience practices within informal labor geographies, bringing institutional relations with racialized migrant labor into focus. This underscores the significance of infrastructure in spatial politics and labor governance (Chapters 5 and 6).

The next section explores emerging perspectives on infrastructure-labor intersections from the standpoint of labor and labor geographies. Urban infrastructural studies have traditionally had limited engagement with racialized labor and labor geographies as spaces of embodied difference (Strauss, 2020).

Recently, however, a growing body of work has addressed these critiques and expanded the discussion on labor (Addie, 2021; Stokes and Lawhon, 2022; Barnes, 2017; Ramakrishnan et al., 2021). This section also highlights the concept of labor as a constrained spatial agent and examines its relevance in the context of climate-resilient infrastructural practices and spatial reconfigurations.

2.4.3 Laboring infrastructural relations

The politics behind calls for revival of 'labor geography' as an autonomous field in geography in recent times holds vital cues into why and how labor in geographic thinking is well-positioned to engage with contemporary urban geography (Castree, 2023). The term 'labor geography' was coined by Andrew Herod in the late 1990s to direct attention away from the erstwhile 'geography of labor.' This was considered a radical shift from the vantage point of labor (Herod, 2023). A growing body of literature actively positions labor as a situated spatial actor, deepening our understanding of infrastructural processes and relations, and providing valuable insights into urban geography and related fields (Vasudevan, 2015; Stokes, and Coss-Corzo, 2023).

Strauss and others have argued for the intellectual and political autonomy of labor geography, recognizing the numerous ways in which labor departs from economic determinism in its former parent discipline of economic geography (Strauss, 2020; Castree, 2023). Therefore, regardless of the lacunae and critiques within the subfield, particularly around the concept of agency, Castree and others have recently advocated for its revival, considering its timeliness (Strauss, 2020; Furlong, 2020; Castree, 2023). These scholars argue that labor geography is politically and ethically astute to inform the unfolding of constrained agentic politics of labor in the context of rapidly reconfiguring global geographies of precarious labor (Castree 2004; Sheppard 2008).

Recent scholarship prompts us to explore how labor geography and labor perspectives can deepen our understanding of emerging phenomena and complexities in evolving southern labor geographies, including those affected by climate change (Parsons and Nielsen, 2021). This emphasizes the need to prioritize geographic thinking on labor and its diverse spatiotemporal relations, mobilities, identities, narratives, subjectivities, and politics, and to foreground labor in place-based climate research (Parsons et al., 2022).

Moreover, the emerging convergence between labor geography and racial capitalism reveals significant conceptual and analytical potential for this study (Strauss, 2020; Rogaly, and Schling, 2022). The intersections of labor and capital in racialized urban geographies highlight how capital exploits social and economic disparities in these spaces while reinforcing social differences (Castree et al., 2003; Castree et al., 2008). This opens new ontological possibilities amid ongoing reconfigurations, where labor continually reproduces, relates to, negotiates, and reconfigures itself within emergent urban processes (see Castree, and Christophers, 2018). Increased focus on infrastructure-labor relations in the context of profound geographic changes could emphasize the importance of precarious labor and the relevance of labor geography today (Herod, and Lambert, 2016; Natarajan et al., 2019). This suggests that the contingencies and uncertainties driving emerging climate infrastructural changes in labor geographies may contribute to a broader discourse on the evolving politics of labor in climate-resilient urbanism.

Additionally, from the standpoint of labor, numerous critical observations contribute to the understanding of how infrastructure intersects with regimes of exclusionary urbanism, or as De Genova frames it as 'obscene inclusion' in vital geographies of labor (De Genova, 2017, p. 19). Recent infrastructural analyses of intersectional labor geographies and marginalized urban spaces and enclaves have scrutinized the foundational aspects of urban politics—historical, structural, socio-material, and cultural—that legitimize exclusionary urbanism at a granular level

(Silver, 2014; Bjorkman, 2018; Truelove, 2019). In grey spaces or 'unplanned' settlements of informal geographies in Delhi and Mumbai, studies have traced numerous ways in which human and non-human infrastructural actors, hybrid political networks, and logic mediate water or 'piped' politics (Bjorkman, 2018; Truelove, 2019). Here, the informality of water and institutional denial of formal services mobilizes informal residents to articulate a situated politics and formation of a hydro-social infrastructure around it.

In other informal contexts, situated infrastructural politics uncover politico-legal dimensions of precarity and exclusion that legitimize state withdrawal, resulting in rapid decline and denial of essential services and infrastructure (McFarlane, 2019). Similarly, scholars have used 'infrastructural citizenship ' to analyze the limits of (in) formal citizenship in the basic provision of services and infrastructure in racialized urban migrant neighborhoods (for example, in informal majority black settlements in post-apartheid South Africa in Lemanski, 2018; 2020). These further illuminate counter-politics and claims to citizenship that emerge from narratives of infrastructural ruptures, disrepair, and complete lack of it (e.g., Bolivia in Hope, 2022; Sultana, 2020). Lemanski argues that using public infrastructure in ways deemed 'illegal' by the state can be viewed as a legitimate form of citizenship-in-action, especially in contexts affected by enduring apartheid legacies, racialized poverty, inequality, and rapid urbanization (Lemanski, 2020, p. 589; 2024).

2.4.3.1 Labor mobilities and migration: Thinking through infrastructural relations

Connections between mobility and labor are a historic one (Sassen, 1988). '... There would be no capitalism without migration' exemplifies this (Mezzadra, 2011). Marxist scholars have long deliberated on the dialectics between spatial fixity and fluidity that determine the value of labor in different capitalist systems of production (Harvey 2001; Herod, 1997). Here, I examine labor mobilities and migration in relation to emergent infrastructural logic and processes, and spatial governance.

The focus on material underpinnings of mobility is well-established, as scholars have explored the "spatial, infrastructural, and institutional moorings that configure and enable mobilities" (Hannam et al., 2006, p. 3). Nonetheless, the empirical and theoretical foundations for infrastructure-labor mobility in urban studies have been solidified more recently (Lin et al., 2017). For example, studies on Singapore and Chinese migrant workers have explored the spatial aspects of social, material, and affective labor of mobility infrastructure, showing how infrastructural practices shape the spatial management and governance of labor (see Yeoh and Lin, 2013 in reference to Chinese migrant workers in Singapore; De Genova, 2016). Mobility infrastructure facilitates various labor mobilities and migration as a conduit and defines the spatial context and boundaries for labor mobilities (Yeoh and Lin, 2013).

In another part of Pakistan, in the Attabad region, scholars found disparities in access to mobility infrastructure undermining post-disaster recovery pathways among minority ethnic groups. In the region of Attabad, mobility infrastructure is framed as a social good by dominant groups and inhibits needs-based investments in regions inhabited by ethnic minorities. This has demobilized ethnic minorities and marginalized minority labor communities (Cook and Butz, 2018). Ethnic minorities trying to rebuild their lives after the disaster were doubly disadvantaged and marginalized by inaccessibility, existing infrastructural deficiencies and vulnerability. This further suggests that conceptualizations of labor mobility and migration are enhanced by paying attention to their infrastructural basis. Infrastructure thus gains primacy in how it mediates, governs and regulates labor mobility and spatiality.

These observations apply to intra-city labor mobilities in segregated southern cities too (Mansoor and Abraham, 2021; Motiram and Vakulabharanam, 2020). An empirically rich body of work examines the structural reproduction of racialized spaces and intra-city mobilities in segregated cities (Gordon, 2018; Motiram and

Vakulabharanam, 2020; Rodriguez, 2024). Similarly, contemporary work on cultural segregation in southern cities looks at the interconnected politics of gendered labor mobility patterns, economic mobility, and the politics of autonomy (Kelly, 2012; Jamil, 2017; Luthra, 2021). These studies demonstrate myriad entanglements between ethno-racial urban segregation, gendered and racialized labor mobilities, and occupational segregation in contemporary urban labor markets (Mansoor and Abraham, 2021).

Other relevant discussions pertain to labor mobilities and migration in climate-stressed urban regions and transitioning regions (Wrathall and Suckall, 2016; Piguet et al., 2018). Climate migration is predominantly framed as a response mechanism to first-order climate risks and impacts (McLeman, and Smit, 2006; Adger et al., 2020; Boas and Rothe, 2016). While these studies have significantly shaped our understanding of voluntary and involuntary migration patterns, including climate-induced displacement in climate-stressed regions, they seldom look beyond first-order climate risks and mobilities (Adger et al., 2020). This is well demonstrated in the 'migration as an adaptation' thesis (ibid; Vinke et al., 2020). As argued earlier, this is problematic (elaborated in Chapter 7). The representation of climate migration based on first-order risks and impacts reinforces the dichotomous categorization of the decontextualized and racialized figure of the 'climate migrant' from contextually rooted labor.

Moreover, the 'migration as adaptation' thesis overlooks the impacts of climate-economic reconfiguration on local informal labor markets and labor mobilities shaped by market-oriented climate solutions (see Adger et al., 2024). In this study, I examine the second-order links between climate-economic infrastructural development and informal labor mobility and migration. Few empirical studies have contextualized climate-economic reconfiguration within the broader context of changes in the local political economy of development and

migration (Jabeen, 2019; Paprocki, 2020). I draw relevant conceptual insights from these studies to support my core argument.

Recent work in Bangladesh has closely observed the ripple effects of ongoing coastal erosion and various disaster infrastructures in rural coastal Bangladesh within the wider regional political economy of development (Jabeen and Guy, 2015; Miklian and Hoelscher, 2020). One such ripple effect of disaster infrastructure and climate-development trajectories includes informal labor mobility and dynamics in nearby small towns and cities (see adaptive planning and informal mobilities in Compton, 2024). Relevant examples include Jabeen's study that examined the dual links between coastal climate-adaptive infrastructure and the rural labor circulation economy (Jabeen, 2015). The study further explored how urban exclusionary labor markets differentially absorb migrant rural labor, which is affected by first- and second-order climate impacts, within the context of the regional political economy of climate development (see the case of Philippines in Trinidad, 2023; Ajibade, 2022)

In a similar vein, Dewan's study shows that the climate appropriation of development narratives tends to mask the structural drivers of precarious gendered labor regimes (Dewan, 2023). She and others find that the distortions in livelihood, spatial priorities, and projects induced by climate appropriation of development narratives have gendered implications on labor mobilities (see Bernzen et al., 2019). Specifically, marginalized women's relationships with the built and natural environments are affected, and labor vulnerabilities are further entrenched in a highly patriarchal culture and precarious labor market (Dewan, 2023). These observations reify the links between labor mobility and migration and climate-induced changes in local climate development narratives and processes. More importantly, these observations help contextualize labor mobility and migration patterns to specific climate infrastructural projects and their implications for intersectional marginalized groups in transitioning regions.

Although relatively lean, this body of work informs the numerous ways in which local climate vulnerability and infrastructural fragility and development intersect with the local geographies of labor mobilities and migration. Some of these observations justify the urgent need to strengthen empirically driven conceptualizations of emergent climate-economic infrastructural imaginaries and their entanglements with political economies and ecologies of differential labor mobilities. Most of these studies critique quick-fix infrastructural solutions that are increasingly enforced as putative measures in climate adaptation and climate-resilient development in highly vulnerable southern labor geographies. Relevant here, are also critical observations on the implications of such quick-fix climate infrastructural development interventions on the social and economic inclusion of informal labor and gendered labor mobilities (Natarajan et al., 2019).

2.4.3.2 Narrative and identity distortions

Central to the critiques highlighted above, in Bangladesh and elsewhere, are reductive climate-development narratives that sanction infrastructural spatial practices and determine underlying relations with migrant labor. Recent studies have shown how dominant climate narratives victimize most migrant labor populations based on singular narratives of climate risk and impacts. Baldwin and others have observed that such narratives tend to distort the discourse around migration by framing a vast majority of climate-vulnerable rural populations as current or future 'climate refugees' (Baldwin, 2022).

The construct of 'climate migrants' distorts representations of marginal groups, such as working women's representation in local politics and economic and cultural institutions of power. This is because the ahistorical narrative of 'climate migrants' render racialized migrant groups politically ambiguous and even disenfranchised across sending and host regions. Baldwin contends that labeling some migrant groups as 'climate refugees' exacerbates the dehumanization and racial

exclusion of already vulnerable communities from disadvantaged climate regions (Baldwin, 2022). This is particularly true for white-majority countries that receive migrant labor from an array of climate-stressed southern geographies but also within southern regions (ibid). Societal and political prejudices against 'refugees' perpetuate hostility towards racialized migrants and lead to economic and political exclusion (Tilley et al., 2023). For instance, political exclusion of migrant working classes in Bangladesh, framed as climate migrants, devalues their political voices and legitimacy in claiming property and gendered social rights (Dewan, 2023).

Furthermore, research from the perspective of local institutions and regional climate economies suggests that reductive climate narratives play a crucial role. Reductive narratives streamline climate-economic transitions by facilitating the financialization and consolidation of key political and economic actors, both globally and locally. Consequently, these narratives are strategic in reinforcing climate finance and economic support for climate-economic restructuring, especially in disaster-prone regions of the Global South (Paprocki, 2021). Regardless, observations suggest that normative climate narratives and processes demand critical scrutiny in the context of ongoing climate-economic reconfigurations. To specially unearth the role of narratives and institutions in promoting selective adaptation and resilience at the cost of marginalized vulnerable groups, such as migrant labor communities who often become pawns in an increasingly complex maze of global climate politics (Long, 2021).

2.5 Labor Prefigurative Politics

Recent conceptual applications of prefiguration and prefigurative politics are worth exploring in the context of this research (Castree, 2014; Silver, 2014). As the word suggests, 'prefiguration' or prefigurative politics is centered around the notion of the future and associated subaltern political practices to reclaim a future constructed by dominant imaginaries (Dyson and Jeffrey, 2018). Dyson and Jeffrey examined

subaltern political practices and future aspirations in migrant youth in North India's informal labor geographies, using the concept of prefigurative politics. They observed that prefigurative politics can be distinguished from other anticipatory politics in the core principles of emancipatory hope that guide the practices of prefigurative politics. It is a spatial process that brings together spatial-material approaches, narratives, practices, and affective atmospheres to enact a desired future (Dyson and Jeffrey, 2018).

A distinguishing factor is the commitment to enact the future, driven by a collectively nurtured belief of a future that is different from the present. The commonly held idea of the future is more inclusive and sustainable than the dominant grain of the future, where the status of the subaltern other remains unchanged. Prefigurative politics enables a broader conceptualization of constrained spatial agentic practices of labor and emerging hybrid political associations in Surat's segregated labor geographies. I observe these spatial associations and politics in relation to labor housing and infrastructure, labor mobility, and the differential spatial economic privileges of migrant labor. These conceptual observations are particularly resonant considering the spatial tensions between top-down climate-economic imaginaries and the perceived spatial futures of labor that animate much of the situated labor politics in Surat (Case of Kosad in Chapters 5 and 6).

2.6 Discussion

The first half of the chapter reviews the contemporary urban resilience literature and highlights the critical connections between normative resilience and risk, urban governance, practice, and underlying neoliberal critiques. The findings indicate that while resilience and risk have long been recognized as tools of spatial governance, embedding resilience within infrastructural reconfigurations in labor geographies further facilitates the spatial management and control of labor.

Additionally, a key takeaway from this study is the conceptual relevance of resilience as a relational approach. The chapter further emphasizes infrastructure-labor relations by building on conceptual debates in critical urban infrastructure and climate studies. The conceptual discussions in these remaining sections support Chapters 5 and 6, which foreground labor geographies in the analyses. The literature review illuminates the spatial entanglements of infrastructure and labor in contemporary climate-infrastructural placemaking. This section also provides conceptual insights into infrastructure-labor intersections, informing the understanding of infrastructural spatial reconfigurations in urban margins and racialized labor geographies. These insights matter not only in emergent climate-resilient urbanism but also more broadly in critical urban climate studies. Overall, this section draws connections between labor, infrastructural governance, citizenship, political economy, and urban politics. These connections are particularly relevant in the context of ethno-racially segregated cities and urban regions, where spatial logic plays a crucial role in the management and governance of labor.

The last section highlights the numerous ways in which the underappreciated facets of labor mobility, migration, spatiality, and politics must be recentered in critical urban climate debates. For example, studies on climate adaptation infrastructure in Bangladesh reveal how dominant institutional practices distort the representation of migrant labor and narratives that invisibilize migrant labor as a key spatial actor in regional climate-economic processes (Dewan, 2022; 2023; Baldwin, 2022). Insights further invite us to consider how the normative climate narrative and representation influenced by global climate economic actors and incentives delegitimize vulnerable groups from meaningfully participating in ongoing climate adaptation developments in the region (Paprocki, 2022). More crucially, the illustrative examples underscore the conceptual and analytical merits of undertaking situated analyses of climate-economic reconfigurations in the wider context of the

situated political economy of climate change. The substantive chapters of this dissertation build on these provocations. ⌷

2.7 Conceptual Framework: Brokered resilience

The concept of "brokered resilience" acknowledges that resilience, particularly within the context of Surat's labor geographies, is not a given or a spontaneous process. Rather, resilience emerges through ongoing contestations and negotiations among various spatial actors, competing spatial interests, and complex power relations. The term "brokered" emphasizes the idea that resilience is articulated through the active mediation of these various forces that render its distribution uneven and highly contextual. Brokered resilience thus refers to the ways in which resilience is mediated by intermediaries, spatial actors, and power structures with varying stakes in the untapped and changing potential of Surat's racialised labor and broader urban geographies. Without such mediation, resilience remains largely unattainable for marginalized labor populations, especially in its emancipatory form.

This suggests that resilience is inherently contested and subject to differential access, relations, and processes of brokering. Specific spatial (re) configurations of labor and infrastructural conditions mediate how different intersectional social groups in Surat's labor geographies experience and negotiate resilience. The process of mediation, negotiation, and spatially contingent decision-making renders climate-resilient processes open to contestations and reconfiguration. These are informed by competing interests in labor markets, housing, governance, and infrastructure. It is through the ongoing mediation of these forces that resilience is articulated spatially; whether through state interventions such as affordable housing, reconfigurations of infrastructure-labor relations, or informal market structures.

Thus, brokered resilience provides a critical conceptual lens for tracing the overlaps between Surat's racialized labor geographies and resilience. Unpacking practices of brokering within and in relation to climate-resilient processes reveals resilience as a

contingent and dynamic phenomenon—one that mutates in spatial form, logics, and practice in response to shifting institutional narratives and practices, socio-economic, and political landscape. This thesis captures these ongoing reconfigurations within institutional resilience and those induced by it through the notion of *mutation*. It emphasizes how resilience is rarely a static or defined practice in relation to racialized labor geographies, but continually reworked by intersecting forces of urban governance, dominant spatial interests and infrastructural relations and denials.

Brokered resilience, essentially captures how resilience itself is continuously reconfigured and negotiated, even as it reconfigures labor geographies where it is enacted. This discursive-material reconfiguration inside-out emerges through complex interactions between competing spatial logics and processes around housing, infrastructure relations, spatial governance, labor, and power.

The conceptual framework foregrounds the relationship between emergent climate-resilient spatial reconfigurations and their impact on shifting labor-infrastructure relations and constrained agency. It further illuminates the logics and processes that determine how resilience in uneven labor geographies is neither uniformly nor readily accessible to Surat's diverse racialized labor populations.To further differentiate the relative hierarchy of concepts and relationships in this study, it is important to underscore specific concepts that add more weight to the theorization of *Brokered Resilience* within Surat's variegated racialized labor geographies (see the section below).

To understand the differential reconfigurations of institutional resilience in Surat's racialized labor geographies, demands that other constitutive relational forces be brought into the conversation, such as labor's constrained agency and infrastructure relations and denials. For instance, examining the differential practices of constrained agency across labor geographies is crucial when considering the uneven and brokered nature of resilience in Surat. This, in turn, elucidates the underlying

logics governing the differential institutional responses to urban informality, risk, and evolving infrastructure-housing configurations situated within the broader political economy of resilience. Together, these dynamics play an instrumental role in shaping the politics of labor spatiality and mobilities within the context of emergent climate-resilient urbanism in Surat. This approach departs from previous strands of climate urbanism, wherein the potentialities of urban resilience as a global political imaginary and a citywide spatial strategy to govern racialized labor mobilities were not as virulent or entrenched.

Bringing these core concepts into conversation, while acknowledging their varying conceptual significance —helps situate labor's marginalized spatial stakes and agentic role in emerging climate-resilient urbanism. This agency is both enabled and foreclosed by climate-resilient infrastructure-housing relations, urban governance, and broader transformations in labor geographies. These dynamics, in turn, are mediated through local registers of risk and securitization within the broader global imaginaries of resilient cities. The discussion ties into brokered resilience by examining how labor navigates socio-spatial constraints and opportunities, precarity, and state-sanctioned interventions, such as affordable housing, while remaining embedded in local politics and governance structure, competitive labor and housing markets.

Overall, the conceptual framework encompasses the following key themes related to brokered resilience, elucidating the relations and processes that reveal its uneven distribution across variegated labor geographies. These sub-themes complement the core concepts outlined earlier, emphasizing how resilience is differentially accessed and mediated through discursive-material reconfigurations of infrastructural relations, as well as their denials, exclusions, and the contingencies that shape them.

Conceptual Hierarchy

This section foregrounds key concepts that most significantly contribute to the conceptualization and operationalization of brokered resilience in this thesis.

Independently and in relation to others, these concepts serve as critical analytical tools that advance the core arguments outlined in Chapter 2 and, to some extent, in the methodology chapter (Chapter 3). This is important to also underline concepts that add most weight to the conceptualization and operationalization of *brokered resilience* in this thesis. Given the diverse conceptual debates and literature this thesis engages with, it establishes a conceptual hierarchy, not in any particular order, but to emphasize the significance of key concepts in the analytical framework. The aim is to foreground conceptual provocations that most effectively address gaps in emergent strands of climate urbanism, particularly in relation to the lived experiences and political stakes of labor. Ultimately, framing Brokered Resilience is crucial to centering the perspectives of some of the most marginalized yet agentic spatial actors in the futures of climate urbanism—migrant labor populations and geographies.

Following a brief discussion of these key concepts, the chapter concludes with a substantive reflection on framing Brokered Resilience. To fully appreciate how and why 'Brokered Resilience' came about as a conceptual anchor for this thesis, it must be considered alongside the key constitutive concepts outlined below.

2.7.1 Constrained agency of Labor and Infrastructural Relations

2.7.1.1 Situating constrained spatial agency of labor

This thesis conceptualizes constrained agency by drawing on feminist critiques of libertarian and masculinist understandings of autonomy (Mezzadri, 2021). Feminist perspectives, particularly those informed by the relational turn, challenge the disembodied, individualistic approaches to gendered autonomy in labor geographies. They assert that autonomy is inseparable from its relational foundations, emerging through the spatial and social conditions of gendered labor, care, and social reproduction—conditions without which autonomy cannot truly materialize. Thus,

rather than framing agency as an individualistic, disembodied capacity, this perspective emphasizes its realization through situated, relational, and embodied processes.

A key contribution of this thesis is its analysis of how migrant working populations in Surat navigate spatial constraints and precarity shaped by intersecting spatial, social, and economic structures. By examining the gendered articulations of constrained labor agency in negotiating mobility limits, conflicts, barriers, and opportunities, this study reveals how the labor of navigating spatial constraints—its affordances and costs—shapes distinct yet interconnected forms of spatial politics of labor. Shaped by scalar overlaps and embedded in specific spatial logics, these negotiations offer critical insights into the lived realities of labor agency under structural constraints and emerging possibilities. The remaining section thus deliberates on how relational approaches to constrained agency facilitate the analysis of *how resilience differentially operates within Surat's uneven geographies of labor?*

Building on this understanding of constrained agency and relational autonomy, a key conceptual contribution of this thesis lies in its exploration of the different practices of constrained agency across labor geographies of work and home. In many instances, these spaces overlap, particularly within home-based or informal labor in Surat's textile industries and similar South Asian contexts. While categorizing agency in its various forms has been instrumental in understanding the social-spatial dynamics and political-economic conditions that shape labor's agentic practices (Katz, 2004; Natarajan, 2021), this thesis takes a non-categorical approach. It seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of how labor's constrained agencies are differentially reconfigured by resilience across Surat's prime labor geographies. Specifically, it examines how racialized laboring populations navigate their spatial agency and intersectional identities—both in relation to themselves and others within Surat's segregated urban milieu, structured by race, caste, and class dynamics.

And therefore, inspired by feminist inflections in labor geography, this thesis incorporates social reproduction and critical socio-spatial relations into the conceptualization of constrained labor agency (Strauss, 2020). Like recent studies, this approach underscores the importance of integrating differential social reproduction and precarity (Carswell and De Neve; Rao, 2021; Mezzadri, 2021). By doing so, conceptually it facilitates a more nuanced engagement with intersectional migrant labor identities, lived experiences, spatial subjectivities, and the everyday negotiations and labor politics reconfigured by resilience.

Spatial subjectivities assume particular significance in understanding how agency derives from the micro-spatial configurations of racialized labor, lived experiences, and perceptions of latent or emergent possibilities for change. Grounding differential agentic practices within their micro-spatial contexts requires an engagement with spatial narratives and subjectivities. Specifically, it factors in how locational associations, networks, relative value, and access to resources shape laboring conditions and the capacity to negotiate spatial constraints and precarity while safeguarding spaces of social reproduction and care. As later comparative case analyses reveal, these dynamics uncover the spatially contingent expressions of constrained labor agency—whether through resistance, claims to mobility, dignity, and recognition, or the lack thereof.

2.7.1.2 Constrained agency and infrastructural relations

The constrained agency of labor animates how workers negotiate spatial opportunities, barriers, and the relational dynamics of mobility in Surat and elsewhere. At the heart of diverse labor lifeworlds in Surat's segregated yet interconnected geographies of labor, constrained agency shapes the everyday struggles and adaptations of the workforce. Through its limited yet dynamic agentic power, labor plays an active role in configuring, co-creating, disrupting, and (de)stabilizing the spatiality of work, identity, politics, and social reproduction. In

doing so, it both defies and reinforces the binaries of fixity and mobility, demonstrating a conceptual fluidity that mirrors the dual nature of infrastructural relations and spatial configurations—shaped simultaneously by fluid and fixed materialities and mobilities. Labor's contextual spatial agency thus emerges through, alongside, and within these infrastructural formations, rendering it substantive in the spatial politics of difference in Surat.

One might ask; *how and in what ways is labor's agency constrained within its specific contexts?* The local and translocal influences of social and economic forces animate a range of market and non-market logics, underpinning the differential spatialization and (de)stabilization of labor across distinct social categories of difference. These include racialized structures of caste, gender, ethnicity, and religion, alongside codified caste practices embedded in Surat's textile labor market. This underscores that labor is not merely positioned within economic structures but is also socially and spatially embedded, shaping its calibrated agency across specific geographies.

Beyond economic structures that undoubtedly shape the variegated topology of labor's agency in Surat's global textile industry, a range of situated forces plays a critical role in its spatial articulation. These include the associational life of labor, cultural politics of belonging, and the modalities through which laboring populations negotiate citizenship and social inclusion. The agency is constrained by labor's spatial location, stakes and negotiating power shaped by local actors, infrastructure-housing relations, and spatiality through informal work-housing and mobility practices.

However, while the term 'constrained agency' may suggest limitation or lack, it is precisely through an analysis of these situated relations that the substantive and discursive dimensions of labor's agency become visible. By tracing how labor navigates its spatial stakes and negotiating power, we uncover the ways in which agency is articulated, asserted, and reconfigured within structures of constraint. The focus on *constrained agency* thus brings attention to the relations and logics that delineate boundaries and impose constraints on labor's mobility and spatial agency

in Surat. At the same time, this study illuminates the micro-spatial relations and processes through which labor contests, reconfigures, and unsettles the fixed potentials of racialised mobilities. Simultaneously, it negotiates a collective capacity to imagine and construct local lifeworlds that push back against the ongoing ruptures of a racialized capitalist system—one that, in this study, is mediated through imaginaries of urban resilience.

2.7.2 Infrastructural relations and denials

The notion of infrastructure in labor geographies, and vice versa, as constructed through the spatial associations of labor with infrastructural relations and denials, underpins the bulk of the analysis of the political work of resilience in Surat. Specifically, how resilience differentially reconfigures, (de)politicizes, and governs racialized mobilities and labor geographies is animated by infrastructural relations of provisioning, access, and denials. This raises critical questions about the spatial implications of resilience politics on labor.

As the thesis progresses, the central inquiry focuses on how labor and infrastructure are co-constituted within the hegemonic imaginary of climate-resilient cities. By foregrounding this constitutive relationship in the political work of resilience, the analysis illuminates the scalar and situated influences of the global resilient cities imaginary on local risk governance, securitization, and the city-wide politics of informality and labor spatiality. These dynamics, in turn, inform the complex spatial politics of racialized difference, where infrastructural relations and denials serve as a powerful—though not singular—instrument in structuring labor's evolving agency within emergent climate urbanism.

Analytically salient here is the constitutive role of infrastructural labor and the labor of infrastructure in negotiating resilience through varying infrastructural configurations and relations of access and denial. These negotiations unfold through

mediated relations of transactability, disposability, and reciprocity across specific cases of labor settlements. As demonstrated later in the thesis, these dynamics are exemplified through gendered social and care infrastructures, alongside infrastructures of work, mobility, housing, and social reproduction, highlighting their interconnected roles in sustaining labor lifeworlds.

This interplay between infrastructures of work and care reveals how labor's socio-spatial location and mobility are shaped, constrained, and contested. In particular, labor's dual position as both migrant and informal worker offers deeper insights into the recursive politics of labor spatiality in the city. These dynamics demonstrate how locally embedded infrastructure-labor relations, along with their attendant logics, mediate politics of conditional inclusion within both informal and state-backed housing and labor markets. At the same time, these relations shape negotiations around (non)rights and the (il)legalities in racialized labor geographies, which embody overlapping marginal identities.

2.7.3 Conceptualizing Brokered Resilience

Overall, brokered resilience, as an overarching conceptual framework in this thesis, akin to constrained agency and infrastructural relations and configurations—is relational, contested, and mediated across multiple spatial and temporal scales. It is neither reducible to the inherent or latent capacities of historically marginalized and precarious working populations, intermittently activated within micro-contexts of informality, constrained mobility, and migration, nor is it solely an externally facilitated process enacted through institutionalized mechanisms such as formal planning, infrastructure provision, service delivery, and state-led adaptation strategies aimed at mitigating systemic vulnerability and spatial risk.

Rather, the very notion of *brokered resilience* suggests that resilience is relationally constructed through ongoing contestation and negotiation, where discursive

imaginaries of resilience materialize in substantive ways only to be continuously negotiated. The practices of negotiation, as we find later, extend beyond material outcomes to encompass the politics of resilience—specifically, contestations over its redistributive potential and the (re)configuration of power, which can either enhance or constrain capacities to survive and thrive.

Thus, the processes of negotiation and mediation observed across the micro-contexts where resilience is enacted reveal brokering as an act of contesting and negotiating power—as resilience reconfigures space, place, and social relations within the uneven and marginalized geographies of labor. Just like, constrained spatial agency of labor and other spatial actors, the relational and situated nature of resilience differentiates its encounters and outcomes within the variegated geographies of labor in Surat. Much like how practices of negotiation and agency are contingent on the micro-spatial contexts of risk and vulnerability, and fluidity of informal labor geographies–how resilience practices are perceived and engaged with, are also contingent on socio-spatial relations of labor, mobility and infrastructures of social reproduction and care. Rather than a universally accessible condition to labor geographies of Surat, resilience is mediated through institutional actors, labor networks, and intermediary structures of power that shape how differentially racialised laboring populations navigate precarity, access resources, and negotiate survival.

Therefore, resilience is not merely an outcome of structural forces but rather an active site of negotiation—where laboring populations navigate constraints, mobilize resources, and contest precarious conditions. Access to material conditions and resources to customize resilience for individuals and communities is contingent upon locational associations, spatial capital, networks, and the relative value of labor within Surat's hierarchical labor market. In this sense, resilience is relationally constructed and contingent upon the spatial and temporal dynamics of labor.

This framework also acknowledges the scalar implications of resilience. In deploying the concept of brokering, the interplay of actors, agendas, practices, and normative imaginaries of resilience at different geographical and administrative scales is highlighted. The act of brokering transcends scalar fixities, imbuing resilience with a fluidity as it mutates across space and time. This mutation is shaped by contextual forces such as institutional narratives, memory, and associations, with resilience assuming different scalar connotations in the process of translating within and beyond Surat. Furthermore, resilience, like constrained agency, is neither absolute nor unidirectional. While it offers conditional forms of protection and adaptation, it also risks reinforcing dependence on intermediaries who skew power relations and often perpetuate the status quo and spatial unevenness. The act of brokering resilience transcends scalar fixities, imparting fluidity to how resilience mutates through space and time. The practice of brokering, as examined in this thesis, involves not only negotiating institutional narratives and memory but also responding to the political, social, and economic forces at play in different geographic scales.

Finally, *brokered resilience* suggests that resilience is neither absolute nor unidirectional. While it offers conditional forms of protection and adaptation, it also risks reinforcing dependence on intermediaries who skew power relations further, and often reinforce status quo and spatial unevenness. Thus, brokered resilience is best understood as a contingent, mediated, and contested process, one that reveals both the limits of institutional adaptation and the potential for laboring populations to reconfigure their conditions through everyday practices of negotiation, resistance, and collective action. In this framework, labor's spatiality plays a crucial role in conditioning how resilience is brokered, distributed, and contested.

Going forward, the analysis of 'Brokered resilience' highlights the tension between reproducing urban inequality and the ongoing negotiations within racialized labor geographies, where the status quo is both contested and reinforced. While laboring

populations exhibit varying degrees of resistance and constrained agentic practices, these mechanisms can also perpetuate dependence on intermediary structures, often further skewing power dynamics. The thesis leaves readers with a critical question: does resilience, as a global political imaginary, provide genuine opportunities for empowerment in the racialized labor geographies of Surat, or does it merely adapt to and perpetuate racialized precarity? The limits of brokered resilience lie in its ability or lack thereof—to challenge the underlying power structures and institutional processes that perpetuate inequality. Does it foster meaningful, enduring change, or simply reconfigure immediate risk while reinforcing systemic vulnerabilities? In this way, brokered resilience functions both as a potential site of transformation and a mechanism that perpetuates inequality within the structurally disadvantaged labor geographies of the Global South.

3. METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides a detailed methodological overview of the study. Building on previous discussions of the critical relevance of relationality in approaching institutional resilience (Chapter 2), this chapter expands on the methodological dimensions to situate a relational inquiry in Surat. This chapter emphasizes relationality as an overall analytical approach to examining Surat's institutional resilience practices in relation to post-disaster informal labor geographies. Additionally, the chapter shares methodological reflections on the intellectual opportunities, strengths, and limitations of this approach to studying emergent climate-resilient urbanism in relation to labor. The methodological design leveraged the critical analytical potential of relational interactions among key spatial actors, logic, and processes to direct the analysis. Overall, the methodological design and key

methods are attentive to the institutional and non-institutional spatial overlaps of resilience with informal labor geographies.

A key conceptual provocation that drives the methodological design is the under-theorized representation of the constrained spatial agency of racialized labor and labor geographies in southern climate urbanism (see Chapter 2). The methodology primarily seeks to elucidate the overlooked yet critical intersections between climate-economic resilient urbanism and racialized migrant labor geographies in emerging southern economies. In practice, this means incorporating underexamined spatial relations and processes in Surat's institutional resilience practice regarding informal labor. The analytical building blocks of the methodological design thus pay close attention to institutional spatial relations with labor geographies, where resilience is enacted or performed as a spatial discursive-material strategy. This highlights the constrained spatial agentic role of labor and labor geographies in climate-resilient urbanism in Surat. The three analytical themes correspond to three primary research questions and chapter objectives: mutation, approaches, and associations (see Chapter 1). These themes capture aspects of institutional spatial relations and practices in the concerned labor geographies in Surat's prime textile production zones. The figure below depicts the substantive connections between the analytical components and overarching argument and narrative.

3.1 Chapter Structure

The first section of the chapter provides a brief overview of the research context and geography (3.2). This is followed by a discussion on the philosophical underpinnings of this study (3.3). In this section, I emphasize the philosophical underpinnings derived from the creative tensions between ontological, epistemological, and theoretical assumptions that drive this study. The section that follows provides a detailed account of the research design (3.4). This section contains the bulk of the

discussion on how, why, and what of this research in addition to critical reflections on the process. Finally, I close this chapter with additional critical reflections on positionality, context (labor geographies during the Covid-19 pandemic), and methodological provocations for future inquiry (3.5). The key takeaways from this section include reflections on navigating the field during the Covid-19 pandemic. It also discusses relevant methodological adaptations in response to the field's shifting realities during the pandemic. The reflections tease out specific aspects of reflexivity in interpretive situated research and how it may have influenced knowledge production about resilience, particularly in relation to informal migrant labor geographies that were disproportionately affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

3.2 Research Philosophy: Harmonizing Epistemological, Ontological, and Theoretical Assumptions and Provocations

Insofar as philosophical underpinnings are concerned, previous field encounters and intellectual influences from prior research experiences matter. Immersive insights and provocations from various climate perspectives examined prior to my doctoral research significantly influenced my research inquiry and evolving positionality. My previous immersive research experiences on the climate and development nexus in southern urban geographies have greatly influenced this study. More specifically, field insights into different urban contexts of informality and climate processes have motivated why and how this study privileges certain aspects of underrepresented climate ontologies and epistemologies in the Global South from the vantage point of informal labor.

I consider experiential knowledge from immersive research before my PhD journey as instrumental in shaping the key philosophical underpinnings of this research. For example, my prior exposure to questions on urban climate politics and the governance of climate development pathways in aspirational Global South cities played a crucial role. This exposure to how global climate economies influence local climate and adaptation pathways sparked my curiosity and continued to drive my interest throughout my doctoral research journey. First-hand observations on framing and translation of normative climate agenda in practice, the interplay between climate knowledge systems, policy brokers, and other influential urban actors, and contradictions and trade-offs were invaluable in shaping the preliminary research questions in this research. Subsequently, through the iterative stages of the research process, these questions have evolved and crystallized into an interpretation of one version of Surat's contemporary climate-resilient urbanism story, while many others remain to be told. Recognizing the steering role of philosophical underpinnings

in bringing together the relevant epistemological, methodological, and ontological strands of this interpretive research, I briefly discuss the key aspects below.

The principles of social constructivism capture the philosophical underpinnings of this study most aptly. According to critical social theorists, the knowledge construction of social processes is an abstracted representation of patterns, synchronous or asynchronous processes, and relations that exist regardless of their representation (Habermas, 1984). To further expand, the existence of these relations and processes is independent of social inquiry, but rather gains credence in the knowledge economy through incremental illumination and translation (Hendriks, 2007). Broadly, these principles drive the examination of how institutional and politico-economic forces mediate institutional resilience practices in Surat. Methodologically, this entails an examination of the logic, motivations, and processes that underlie how relevant institutions and networks translate normative resilience into practice in broader social contexts (Chapter 4). Constructivism emphasizes the interplay between resilience subjectivities and their assimilation into prevailing institutional spatial practices and politics (see Chapter 5). Recognizing this interplay illuminates evolving institutional associations beyond the institutional sphere in relation to emerging climate-economic opportunities (see Chapter 6).

3.2.1 Normative assumptions and provocations

At a meta-conceptual level, key provocations that animate this study derive from a critical view of the widespread normative assumptions in urban climate discourses and processes, particularly those concerning urban resilience. These include normative assumptions that regard resilience as an inherently equity-oriented policy object and framing of urban municipalities and city municipal corporations as legitimate urban (climate) transformation actors, and even urban as the appropriate scale and process for climate (resilient) transformations. This led me to consider the assumed neutrality in institutional spatial practices that assimilate resilience as a

spatial strategy in risk management. It encouraged me to think about institutional logic and situated influences on institutional spatial approaches that legitimize reconfigurations in urban margins and labor geographies in Surat.

Other important provocations pertain to the centrality of risk and crisis in institutional resilience narratives that shape how spatial relations are (de)stabilized in the labor geographies concerned. What do these narratives reveal about institutional 'non-issues' in resilience practices? In doing so, what other spatial vulnerabilities and risks are eclipsed by hegemonic framings of risk as the dominant spatial logic in institutional resilience practices? Cumulatively, this raises fundamental questions regarding complicity and power in transnational climate-resilient processes, including the politics of standardized risk and resilience frameworks. And questions about the likely influences this might have on institutional spatial management and governance of informal labor.

In summary, these provocations motivated me to examine the core spatial logic and situated influences on how resilience was institutionalized in Surat (Chapter 4). Following this, I examine institutional spatial approaches to reconfiguring post-disaster labor geographies in the prime textile zones of the city (Chapter 5). Finally, from the vantage point of labor, the analysis focuses on situated spatial approaches and emerging labor associations in post-disaster reconfigured informal labor geographies (Chapter 6). These provocations have shaped the primary research questions and the overall research design of this study:

1. How do situated influences and spatial logic mediate institutionalization of resilience?
2. How does resilience reconfigure informal labor geographies?
3. What do these spatial reconfigurations reveal about emergent climate-resilient urbanism in relation to informal labor geographies?

3.3 Research Design

The research design builds on reflexive interpretive methods (Hendrik, 2007; Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2017; Yanow, 2017). This study primarily builds on institutional ethnographic and case narrative methods (Burawoy 2003; Venkatesh 2013). Additionally, indirect reflexive methods of sensing and learning about the field through journaling and observation supplemented observations (Venkatesh 2013). These methodological approaches are well aligned with the primary research questions and specific aims and objectives mentioned earlier. The chosen methods are well suited to examining the spatial overlaps between resilience and racialized labor geographies. The methodological choices facilitate relational analyses by combining institutional ethnographic insights into spatial narratives and approaches, spatial labor subjectivities, and lived experiences into a coherent analytical framework.

In principle and practice, institutional ethnographic methods and case approaches recognize the asymmetries between theory and fieldwork, necessitating adaptations in response to field realities during immersive research (Smith, 2005) Institutional ethnographic methods are well-placed to support relational inquiry into institutional thinking, narratives, and approaches to resilience in the realm of everyday urban bureaucracy in Surat. The complementarity of these methods, scale suitability, and alignment with the research agenda are vital considerations. Moreover, the methods lend themselves to a wide range of institutional and situated perspectives on spatial reconfigurations in post-disaster labor geographies (elaborated later). The combination of ethnography and case inquiry shapes how research traverses the distance from 'situational knowledge to social processes' in local yet highly networked urban climate geographies (Bulkeley, 2013).

3.3.1 Methodological approaches

3.3.1.1 A genealogical approach to institutional spatial assimilation of resilience

The first empirical chapter traces the situated logic and influences that have influenced Surat's institutionalization of resilience. To approach Surat's resilience journey from a situated genealogical approach, I asked myself what logics and relations have made a certain resilience imaginary hegemonic. Scholars of genealogy have described such an approach as historicizing the present to better understand the interplay between past and present conditions in how a phenomenon mutates (Bartleson 1995). The analysis illuminates how and why (logics) normative resilience resonates with Surat geographically and politically.

The chapter combines genealogical insights with ethnographic insights obtained from a combination of primary and secondary sources[8]. I draw on secondary materials including contemporary archival texts obtained from institutional and digital archives and some primary interviews[9]. To distill genealogical insights, I used textual methods and interviews to supplement the narrative. I consider a genealogical approach suitable for tracing the key influences and logic driving Surat's institutional resilience legacy. The approach to resilience facilitates a broader inquiry into the everyday realities of some of the densest migrant labor geographies in India, amid ongoing climate-economic reconfigurations. Despite its limitations and trade-offs, the genealogical approach is relevant here, as it elucidates how past critical junctures shape contemporary resilience practices.

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[8] These included semi-structured interviews with institutional actors, urban elites, practitioners, and civil society members, and secondary academic and non-academic materials, including archival materials such as Gazetteer, old newspapers, institutional brochures, census reports, and colonial studies on Surat.
[9] I accessed relevant archival materials from the Centre for Social Studies (CSS) and digital archives such as the ProQuest, British Library, National Archives of India and *Abhilekh Patal* and Economic and Political Weekly archival section.

3.3.1.2 Tracing spatial approaches to resilience in post-disaster labor geographies

The next chapter (Chapter 5) traces institutional spatial approaches to post-disaster labor geographies in relation to resilience. The chapter builds on insights from institutional and elite interviews, migrant interviews, and Q-FGDs with migrant social groups in select micro-labor geographies mentioned earlier (Boateng, 2012; Lancaster, 2017). Elite interviews are commonly used in political and policy studies (Lancaster, 2017). What distinguished elite actors from other institutional actors in Surat was the relative power and exclusivity among authoritative policy and practice influencers in Surat. Furthermore, these actors represent the interests and agenda of the conventional political and economic elites in Surat's growing entrepreneurial technocracy in urban climate action and sustainability practices. These interviews were useful for accessing the city's core policy influencer networks.

The second half of the chapter focuses on infrastructural reconfigurations and its discursive-material effects in select labor geographies. This builds on insights obtained from primary data collected that were stitched together as case narratives in the analysis stage (see analysis). The combination of institutional ethnographic interviews and case narratives was particularly important for understanding the underlying motivations and rationale behind post-disaster spatial reconfiguration in affected labor geographies. The methodological design aimed at facilitating a deeper understanding of the prevailing spatial approaches to spatial informality and risk in the city's prime textile areas. Additionally, it sought to understand different labor perspectives and spatial subjectivities around citywide climate-resilient spatial reconfigurations since its institutionalization after the 2006 Surat flood.

3.3.1.3 Tracing emergent hybrid institutional and labor spatial associations

The final empirical chapter (Chapter 6) traces the emergent institutional and spatial labor associations in reconfigured labor geographies. This chapter delves into state-

sanctioned affordable housing as a spatial consolidation of resilience practices within a profit-driven urban housing enterprise The second half of the chapter focuses on the spatial associations of labor in reconfigured labor geographies. This refers to hybrid political networks that assimilate different migrant social groups as a spatially embedded approach to negotiating informal living conditions, spatial precarity, tenurial rights, and informal labor networks.

Like the previous chapter, this chapter draws on semi-structured institutional and elite interviews with various actors, including emergent non-state stakeholders, such as the Surat Builder's Association, which represents low and middle-income housing developers. It also includes real estate groups, senior representatives from zone-specific textile associations, the City Chamber of Commerce (SGCCI), and key local authorities like the Affordable Housing Cell, Labor Department, Urban Community Development (UCD), and the temporary 'Migration Cell,' which was dissolved shortly thereafter (early 2022).

Additionally, the chapter uses insights from in-depth life history interviews with migrant community leaders who work as political mobilizers with dominant political clientelist networks in Surat's informal labor geographies. Chapters 5 and 6 combine FGDs with migrant labor interviews to collate spatial perspectives and subjectivities from different micro-contexts of select labor geographies. Additionally, all three empirical chapters draw on a critical textual analysis of relevant policy and other grey literature, such as city resilience plans, affordable housing and town and city planning documents, and policy directive papers drafted by government-appointed housing policy experts and local academics (Hendriks, 2007).

3.3.2 Defining the field: Scoping, sampling and site selection

Figure 3.1: A typical case site from a dense mixed industrial-informal worker residential site in Udhna Udyog.

Source: Author's fieldwork

3.3.2.1 Scoping

What was initially planned as a scoping visit to Surat prior to immersive fieldwork had to be adapted to digital scoping over two months during the Covid-19 pandemic. Amid speculation due to volatile field circumstances and travel restrictions, digital scoping facilitated numerous conversations that resulted in valuable field connections in India. These contacts and preliminary conversations turned out to be generative from a variety of intellectual and ethical standpoints of researching labor geographies and resilience. I reached out to previous academics who had worked on

urban resilience in Surat and elsewhere, as well as prominent sociologists, labor economists, urban practitioners, and an urban historian at the local branch of the Indian Council for Social Science Research (ICSSR) in Surat, and the Center for Social Science (CSS).

Additionally, I scoped Surat's institutional resilience plan and other relevant documents to identify the key resilience actors and stakeholders in the city. Preliminary interviews with academics helped piece together a preliminary set of resources and channels that would prove to be invaluable later during fieldwork. Digital scoping interviews followed the snowballing technique commonly used in qualitative field research (Noy, 2009). These interviews snowballed into many more digital and physical interviews with members recruited from an extensive local network of relevant institutional and non-institutional actors. These include members from civil society organizations such as the CSS, Navsarjan Trust, and Ajeevika Bureau; the academics mentioned earlier; and key institutional actors such as the Chief and Deputy Chief Resilience Officers, senior officers from key departments of the Surat Municipal Corporation (SMC), officers from the Surat Innovation Lab, and special units like the 'Migration Cell' and 'Affordable Housing Cell.' Additionally, senior representatives from the South Gujarat Chamber of Commerce and Industries, trade unions, labor, environmental, and human rights activists, local journalists, labor officers, lawyers, and prominent leaders from migrant cultural associations are also involved, among others.

During the scoping phase, numerous individuals and organizations expressed an interest in collaborating or participating in the study in various capacities. City-based practitioners were intrigued by the 'labor migration' aspect, as it is uncommon for labor and urban climate resilience to be presented together as an integrated spatial concept. Local focal points advised against conducting fieldwork unaccompanied in 'migrant' settlements which some deem difficult, hostile, and even dangerous. Upon conducting more background research on these parts of the city, I

found that these were predominantly inhabited by ethnic minority groups. Incidentally, most of my chosen sites were in these areas as they met my selection criteria and represented Surat's vulnerable racialized labor geographies. Later, I came to understand that the hesitation and reservations I had initially sensed had greater significance in an increasingly surveilled and censored research environment in India, especially in Gujarat (elaborated in reflections at the end).

3.3.2.2 Sampling and site selection

The sampling strategy employed a combination of purposive and snow-balling techniques to define primary and secondary stakeholders and sites for ethnographic interviews, FGDs, and observations aligned with interpretive methods, such as Institutional Ethnography (Emmel, 2013; Creswell et al., 2006). Qualitative sampling forms a crucial link between the collection of insights and various analytical approaches for interpreting them with respect to broader research interest (Patton, 2008; Maxwell, 2021). The preliminary scoping interviews facilitated the selection of labor settlements, institutional sites, cases, and relevant institutional actors that represent institutional connections with resilience practices in informal labor geographies.

Subsequently, I interviewed the Deputy Chief Resilience Officer and other key climate practitioners from the municipal corporation responsible for mapping and monitoring climate risks, hazards, and spatial vulnerability in Surat. The institutional interviews were instrumental in the selection of cases and sites. These further revealed crucial insights into spatial logics and practices around zoning that guide institutional spatial planning and differential prioritization of low-lying labor settlements in key textile zones of the city.

In addition, I thoroughly examined Surat's resilience planning documents, hazard maps, previous flood-assessment reports, and disaster resilience plans hosted

on official SMC websites. I also examined ward-level census reports and city demographic data to gain a comprehensive overview of the spatial overlap between labor geographies and officially delineated geographies of disaster risk and spatial vulnerability. The preliminary secondary analysis of spatial data and reports helped identify spatial overlaps of climate risk and hazard, spatial informality, and migrant-dense labor geographies in Surat.

Figure 3.2: Spatial distribution of textile labor geographies overlapping with risk vulnerability map of Surat
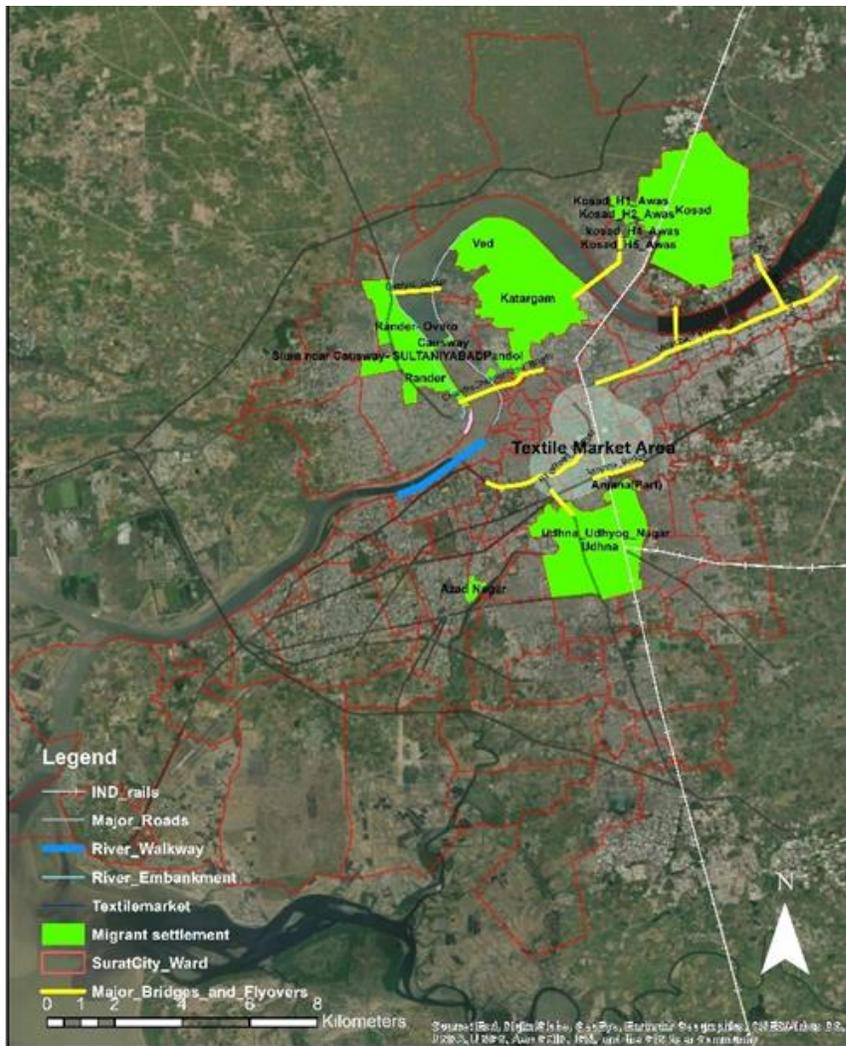
Source: Based on fieldwork data

I combined preliminary assessments of the spatial risk distribution in labor geographies with sociological and political economic analyses of migrant labor in the city. Building on the existing academic literature on economic migration in Surat and sociological accounts of its urban history, I identified relevant local scholars for future interviews.[10] From these in-depth interviews, I gained crucial insights into Surat's social history, spatial heterogeneity, migrant industrial enclaves, and spatial distribution of various ethno-religious and caste groups in a highly segregated city. Additionally, digital scoping provided institutional perspectives on spatial risk and hazard, aiding the final selection of cases and specific sites in micro-labor geographies within textile production wards in the city's northern, northeastern, southern, and southeastern zones (as shown in the figure above).

3.4.2.3 Sites

Figure 3.3 below delineates informal settlements across all eight zones of the city, each characterized by high migrant density. These settlements appear to be highly vulnerable to seasonal floods and inundation and have been profiled as vulnerable hotspots by city authorities. Following a comprehensive assessment of settlements (n=7) in zones that experienced recurring flooding and housing high (migrant) density informal settlements, five settlements in *Kosad, Bamroli, Katargram, Ved*, and *Udhna* were selected for in-depth qualitative fieldwork.

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[10] Interviews with urban sociologists, development economists, and labor economists from the Center for Social Sciences (Surat), Gujarat Institute of Development Studies, and IIM-Ahmedabad significantly informed this study's methodological approach.

Figure 3.3: Map depicting informal migrant settlements in low-lying areas of Surat
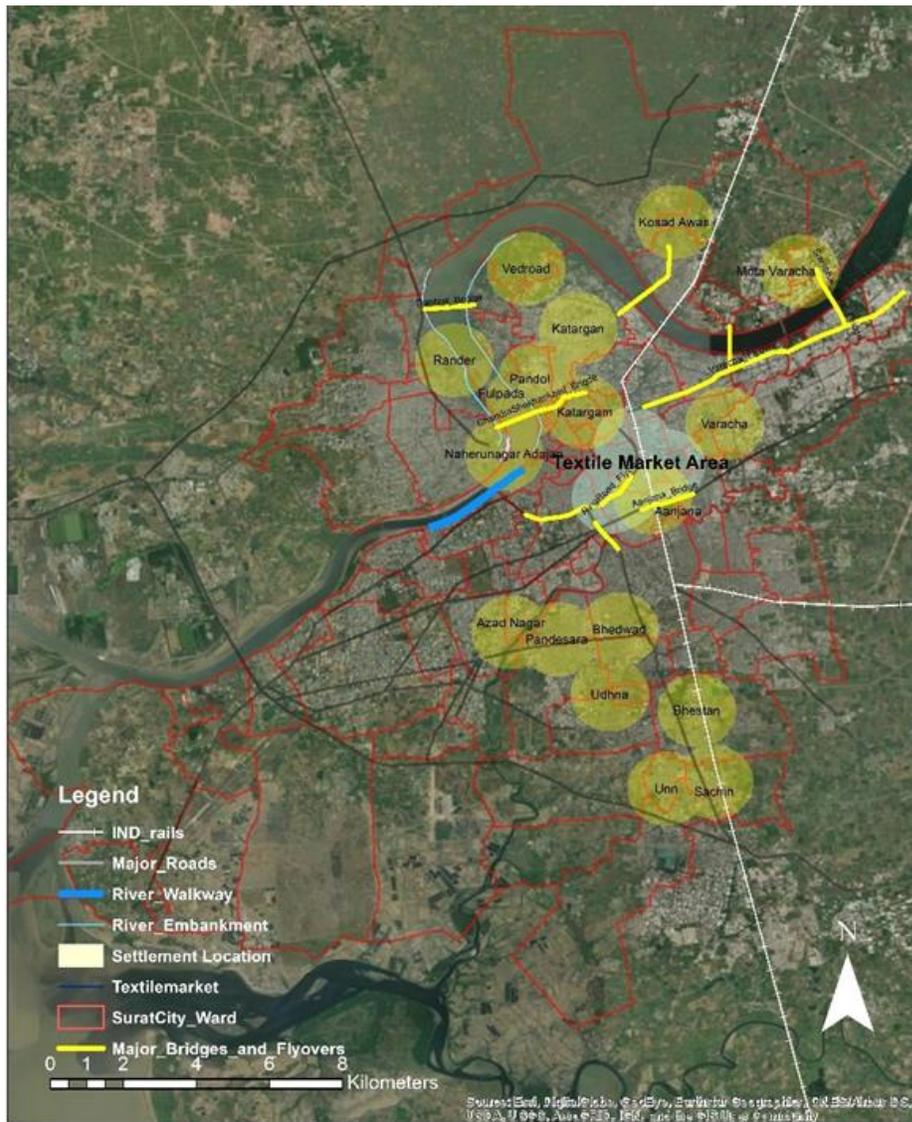
Source: Author's fieldwork

I chose the state-sanctioned affordable housing project in Kosad on the northeastern peripheries of the city as a case of post-disaster resilience reconfiguration in the years following the 2006 flood. Kosad is one of South Asia's largest housing projects for displaced and relocated communities. It is inhabited by informal workers who predominantly come from ethno-religious minority groups. Cumulatively, these sites in migrant dominant labor geographies of Surat extend

critical opportunities to examine institutional spatial relations with racialized labor geographies in the context of resilience. In doing so, the selected sites and cases facilitate situated theorization of emergent climate-resilient urbanism.

Additionally, much of the institutional ethnographic research took place on the SMC premises and its extensions in the city. The SMC extensions were primarily ward-level offices, Anganwadi (state childcare centers), and other hybrid institutional spaces where state-affiliated social workers and labor officers frequently established offices and makeshift 'official' meeting venues used by Urban Community Development workers (UCD).

3.4 Data Collection and Analysis

3.4.1 Interviews

Interviews were one of the primary interpretive data collection methods used in this study (Braun 2021). I conducted semi-structured interviews and a few open-ended elite interviews with a range of actors broadly categorized into institutional (18), elite (11), migrant labor interviews (15), intermediaries and brokers (9), academic, and others (11) (Hendriks et al., 2007; Williams, 2012). On average, the interviews lasted 45 to 60 minutes. Interviews with institutional actors elicited responses from different institutional standpoints on resilience, including roles, vision, practices, approaches, possibilities, and challenges of integrating the resilience framework in local spatial projects and governance. Additionally, I interviewed core members from Surat's city resilience networks, such as the Surat Climate Change Trust (SCCT) and Urban Health and Climate Resilience Center (UHCRCE)[11], and private urban planning institutions that are headed by leading elite political and policy influencers in the city.

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[11] https://www.uhcrce.com/

To deepen my institutional ethnographic perspective, I interviewed representatives from relevant departments working on slum redevelopment, disaster management, affordable housing, social security, public health, and labor. The questions ranged from specifics of associations with resilience practices to aspects of learning, vertical and horizontal collaborations, and leadership within decentralized and semi-privatized forms of spatial governance. Most institutional interviewees were recruited through preliminary scoping and stakeholder mapping of institutional actors. The underlying assumption was that these actors were, in one way or another, influential or active in institutional resilience planning and practice.

3.4.2 Focus Group Discussions

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were a crucial part of understanding ongoing spatial reconfigurations linked to climate-economic processes in Surat from the perspective of migrant labor. I conducted a total of eight FGDs (less than 15 per group) combined with the Q-sorting method with migrant women from select informal labor settlements. These were held with support from local community mobilizers and ward resource persons such as UCD and *Anganwadi* workers. Each group comprised female participants from settlements that were qualitatively representative of the different ethno-religious communities in Surat's diverse textile labor geographies. Settlement heterogeneity in terms of social identity, migration, and mobility status was one of the core considerations during the participant recruitment process for the FGDs involving female migrants of mixed age groups. The gendered FGDs complement in-depth interviews with predominantly male migrant workers. The combination of gendered interviews and FGDs was an adaptive response to field circumstances during the pandemic but proved instrumental in generating valuable insights on gendered dimensions of labor mobility, life in the city, work and housing conditions, and spatial and political subjectivities.

The Q-sorting method is mainly used in qualitative research to tease out spatial subjectivities around complex and contested issues, such as relocation, intra-city displacement, and spatial politics, in the context of this study. Spatial subjectivities are vital in this study, as they yield key insights from the vantage point of racialized migrant labor geographies. Using insights from prior interviews with local practitioners and community leaders, I developed Q-sort cards and open-ended guides for FGDs. This method facilitated discussions on contextually relevant themes that later fed into the construction of spatial narratives.

Participants used these cards to score themes through small-group discussions. As the primary facilitator, along with the co-facilitators, I observed and facilitated these discussions. The subjective views elicited through discussion probes led to group ranking exercises (semi-quantifiable subjectivities), which further enriched small-group discussions. It was critical for facilitators to press on aspects that demanded collective deliberation.

Figure 3.4: A Q-FGD in progress in an informal Muslim migrant settlement

Source: Author's fieldwork

One example involves location-specific determinants and choices that impact women's mobility and workforce participation in a localized informal labor market. An important consideration for ensuring quality discussion is time allocation to different prompts within the constraints of the FGD format. Overall, while prone to subjective errors of judgment, I found that detailed briefing meetings with co-facilitators and informants before the session could address some design-related challenges.

Local support was crucial in facilitating FGDs in heterogeneous migrant settlements. Gaining access to members of different social groups within segregated labor geographies necessitates support from trusted community actors. Especially, when these migrant labor communities were still reeling from severe Covid-19 lockdown that had disproportionately affected them (personal observation). Thus, support from embedded community members was crucial in every stage of the process, from seeking permission from local ward leaders, recruiting and informing participants well in advance, and organizing and co-facilitating small group sessions.

3.5 Making Sense of Field Narratives

The analysis and interpretation of the primary and secondary materials followed the steps commonly used in interpretive research (Rapley and Silverman, 2011). After wrapping up fieldwork, while field instincts and memories were at their peak, I transcribed and digitized all interviews, FGD recordings, field memos, and relevant observations from my field diary verbatim using *Transcribe*. I then coded these materials using *NVivo*, following a semi-inductive approach that simultaneously aids reflexive interpretation of emerging patterns, relations, and a storyline. For other archival materials such as newspapers and gazetteers that could not be analyzed using available software, I resorted to manual coding.

The inductively derived themes (coding tree) focused on capturing different institutional and non-institutional standpoints on urban disaster risk and resilience, urban informality, labor, and migration. Overarching themes included 'climate governance', 'climate practices', 'cultural and institutional attitudes', 'spatial development', 'infrastructure', 'public policies', 'affordable housing', 'development narratives', and 'urban politics.' Additionally, key aspects of the local knowledge economy, such as 'networks', 'positionality', and current and future 'climate projects', were explored. Broader themes like 'citizenship', 'conflict', and 'violence' were also included to capture a wide range of contemporary issues in Surat, including riots, ethnic tensions, segregation, and displacement-induced violence. These themes function as text containers that facilitate relational analysis by emphasizing the overlaps and relations between different themes, sub-themes, and coded text (Campbell and Pederson, 2014).

The themes highlighted crucial aspects related to broader institutional resilience discourse and practices and framing of informality, including perspectives on labor migration, Surat's urbanization trends, formal governance, contemporary challenges, and development priorities. The goal was to keep the coding themes sufficiently broad but sub-categorized to capture different responses. Additionally, inductive coding and analysis revealed relationships between micro-situated observations and broader citywide trends and patterns. For example, policy and practice convergence between 'zero-slum' policy agenda, smart-resilient city and state-sanctioned affordable housing, and real estate expansion in peripheral areas such as *Kosad* and *Bhestan*. In small-sample coding, connections are easily visible, but NVivo further enhances this by highlighting texts to reveal subtle patterns, such as repetitive words and expressions, aiding the interpretation of broader underlying motivations.

What does institutional ethnography reveal?

Overall, the study employs an IE lens to analyze a wide range of interviews, public discourse, and relevant institutional materials. In practice, this means that the analysis focuses on individual positionalities and subjectivities within the defined institutional roles. It traces the evolving contextual understanding of normative resilience and its involvement in the institutionalization of resilience in different capacities. The perspectives that emerged from a close analysis of key institutional spatial actors, such as slum redevelopment, affordable housing, and disaster management cells, were definitive in informing subsequent follow-up interviews and analyses. The insights contributed to an understanding of normative spatial logic and resilience means in practice, and how they have come to be associated with urban (spatial) informality and migrant labor geographies.

Insights from these interviews suggest that resilience practices are evolving beyond formal institutions, engaging emerging influential spatial stakeholders in the city. These pointed to emergent associations with non-state spatial actors, such as city-based policy entrepreneurs, technocratic spatial planning bodies, private builders, real estate developers, and industrial associations. Further, guided by a strong technocratic narrative of economic resilience, the spatial relationship between labor and (economic) resilience was strongly articulated by non-state economic actors. For these actors, resilience offers opportunities to reconfigure and optimize the city's *laborscape.*

From the perspective of resilience governance, nuanced insights emerged on the significance of resilience for different departments and the capacities to align and deliver resilience goals and agendas. Consequently, the interviews pursued subjective articulations of what *doing the work of resilience* means for various institutional actors. I observed the ease with which institutional actors spoke about the institutional legacy of resilience and the key events, drivers, investments, and logic

that constituted the contemporary resilience narrative in Surat. However, when it came to articulating their constitutive role in resilience practice, the responses were relatively ambiguous and fuzzy. Ambiguity regarding specific roles in resilience practice illuminated vital aspects of the institutionalization of resilience practice in Surat (Chapter 4).

Additionally, from an ethnographic standpoint, resilience appears to be a discursive spatial tactic for many rather than an explicit practice. These perspectives further probe seemingly homogenous spaces, such as institutions, as subjective ethnographic sites that translate, contextualize, reject, or repurpose normative mobile discourses and the rhetoric of normative good. In other words, heterogeneity within institutional spaces holds promise and prospects for deeper transformations in meaning-making and practice that have the potential to reclaim emancipatory ideas.

The analysis further helped identify tensions and overlaps between the discursive aspects of resilience and its material practices within the institutional framework of the spatial management of risk and informality. Preliminary observations suggest that the dominant view of resilience is that it is a policy prescriptive tool that has enormous spatial potential in the rapidly urbanizing and industrializing context of Surat. My analysis reveals that few institutional voices have attempted to reframe the future of resilience, aligning core values and vision with the broader vision of 'Resilient Surat.' These observations indicate that while resilience is crucial for Surat's economic future in its current form, the evolving concept of resilience is equally important to ensure its continued relevance, as Surat redefines its politico-economic goals.

Specifically in relation to migrant labor geographies, these interviews illuminated institutional anxieties about an 'ever-increasing floating migrant labor population' in the city. Preliminary insights indicate that for key spatial actors in

SMC and beyond, resilience integrated into urban spatial and economic planning can simultaneously tackle informality, the 'threat of migrants taking over the city', and the untapped economic dividend of labor by spatially reconfiguring labor.

Writing as method: Tying it all together

Writing is a core aspect of research practice. This project came together as a narrative through iterative writing, numerous revisions, and the simultaneous evolution of my engagement with the larger puzzle I set out to solve. Qualitative researchers have stressed the critical role of writing in the interpretation and construction of narratives (Holstein and Gubrium 2012). This is particularly true in studies where ethnographic methods play a substantive role (see 'behind-the-scenes' narrative evolution in Clifford & Marcus, 1986). This study acknowledges the centrality of writing in the overall methodology, based on critical reflections on writing in urban research. Different stages of critical interpretation neither completely rely on how skilled the researcher is, nor on the generosity and forthrightness of respondents, but rather on the cumulative outcome of co-construction and 'strategic assembling' of narrative (Holstein and Gubrium, 2012).

This study relies on various forms of writing as the methodological process. These include detailed field inscriptions of oral accounts, field observations, and prompts chronicled as case/theme-specific memos, personal research diaries, and a process diary to track the research process and logistics as part of university data management protocols (Silverman, 2011). In retrospect, the practice of maintaining a research diary alongside analytical writing solidifies research observations, patterns, and potential leads for further exploration (Clifford and Marcus 1986; LeCompte and Schensul 2012). Others have echoed how writing as an iterative methodological practice bolsters subsequent stages of analysis and interpretation (LeCompte and Schensul, 2012). As a form of visualization, writing aids the iterative process of theorizing from field narratives. Additionally, the iterative process of

writing to make sense of the different constitutive parts of the larger narrative helped identify empirical leaps and gaps. These gaps have guided further inquiries from various sources, incorporating additional perspectives, and highlighted some limitations and the future potential of this research (Silverman, 2011).

3.6 Reflections and Discussion

3.6.1 Positionality; opportunities and challenges

During field research, the positionality of various actors, including their identities, beliefs, and experiences, interacts with each other, making knowledge production collaborative. Positionality in research implies acknowledging one's social location in relation to knowledge production and practice (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013). In interpretive ethnographic research, a researcher's positionality influences knowledge production and imparts a degree of reflexivity to the research process (ibid). Here, I briefly discuss superficial attributes that might have influenced field access and maneuverability among crucial networks and areas, and thus, knowledge production.

Having researched Indian cities, and culturally and professionally well-versed with the urban research context in India, I could leverage existing networks and experiential understanding of navigating the field to carry out this study. This was my first encounter with Surat. However, resources and prior immersive experiences significantly aided in the process of setting up a field support system and helped establish relationships with resource people and individuals who helped me, challenged me, and worked with me in Surat. During fieldwork, my intersectional identities, especially gender, ethnicity, and educational background, were crucial determinants of how well and how discerningly I could navigate the field.

My position as a cis woman from an upper-caste Hindu background granted me relatively easy access to both 'high' and 'ordinary' places in Surat. I was privileged

to have access to core institutional networks and elites who were central to institutional ethnographic research in this study. The intertwined production of access and privilege in research is unsurprising (Bourdieu 1988). However, what is worth thinking about is the implications it had for this study and, alternatively, what could have happened if my social position was different. The entire research design around core institutional elements of research practice owes significantly to opportunities of access and maneuverability.

Furthermore, affiliation with a prestigious institution based in the Global North also played a substantial role. This further reinforced what we already know about the discursive power of Global Northern research and academic cultures in postcolonial urban regions. This is particularly significant in Surat, where collaborations with researchers and organizations in the Global North are part of the city resilience agenda. Local climate and policy brokers actively sieze opportunities to build connections with a wide range of actors in the global climate knowledge economy, including myself, and what I represent as a PhD student in climate studies in Durham.

Privilege aside, as a woman researcher I faced challenges in navigating highly masculine industrial spaces and overall, culturally restrictive and surveilled research environment in Surat. Often, I sensed the male gaze on me during the field work. Often, in factories and industrial spaces where much of the ethnographic interviews took place, I was constantly aware of being watched or simply observed out of curiosity. My gender identity thus made the power differential between the researcher and the researcher slightly less unequal, at least in the context of industrial zones in Surat.

On the other hand, even in women-majority spaces, group discussions and conversations were often policed by male vigilantes from their communities who were skeptical of a 'female researcher from outside' talking to their women. Some

interviews with home-based textile workers from the eastern Indian state of Bihar had to be cut short. The responses of women expressing their desire and motivation to join the workforce made their male counterparts uncomfortable and visibly agitated on one occasion.

In other contexts, power manifested and shaped field engagement differently outside of the of the ethnic/gender construct. Initially, I started by interviewing migrant workers at their workplace. After interviewing a few migrant workers under the suspicious watch of the *seths* and interference from contractors who occasionally abused their workers, I amended my research plan. I frequently attracted attention in industrial settings for potentially exposing labor conditions and widespread labor rights violations in Surat's textile factories. I was often viewed with suspicion, being mistaken for a journalist, a civil society activist, or a labor rights lawyer, all seen as threats to the exploitative status quo in Surat's textile industry. Instead, I scheduled long migrant interviews during late evenings in migrant labor settlements. Consequently, conversations were far more relaxed and less self-censored.

3.6.2 Researching resilience amid a global pandemic

Field research during the Covid-19 pandemic heightened the sense of urgency in field narratives of resilience, particularly regarding dense informal migrant labor geographies whose vulnerabilities were compounded enormously by the pandemic. Despite the unexpected challenges in field research, it presents unique opportunities to explore resilience within the complexities of a crisis as it unfolds in real time. The entire field experience was profound and complex at many levels; it brought raw emotions and heightened anxieties of labor communities that were disproportionately impacted. Many of these observations were beyond the scope of this study but remain in my memory and more firmly in my field diary. This immersive experience allowed me to witness resilience in action, as resilience was once again invoked in times of

crisis, this time in relation to migrant housing, and raised concerns about the reverse migration of labor triggered by the lockdowns.

I also witnessed migrant communities self-organizing and being organized by hybrid migrant networks to provide for themselves by leveraging existing community resources and resilience. While some of these observations were incorporated into the analysis, many remained outside the scope of this research. Field work during the pandemic revealed deep faultlines in institutional crisis governance, public health systems, and attitudes towards racialized migrant labor and labor geographies. This could potentially inform future research on institutional attitudes towards public health and the city, particularly towards racialized labor geographies in industrial cities like Surat.

3.6.3 Challenges and prospects

I encountered deep interest and curiosities on field that were both affirmative and dismissive in nature. In that a range of knowledge actors and practitioners from different backgrounds expressed views on the importance and utility of such research studies in relation to southern urbanisms. Some stakeholders and practitioners emphasized the urgent need to invest in situated interdisciplinary research such as this. Many of these conversations to my surprise, saw merit in, and thus favoured critical policy research funded independently, that would facilitate autonomous knowledge production independent of local power elites and their influences on urban future through economies of networked knowledge and fast policy. Others expressed apprehension and dismissed possibilities of 'real' measurable progress stemming from such intellectual endeavors. Specially, in institutional realms, where I encountered the bulk of experts and policy elites with unwavering faith in technocracy and its knowledges and worldview.

To summarize, my diverse identities and experiences played a crucial role in shaping my field interactions, access, and relationships. There were both advantages and unique challenges and opportunities that required reflexivity and adaptability to effectively navigate diverse field contexts. Overall, the research benefitted immensely from such encounters and interactions, regardless of their alignment with my orientation and beliefs, and positionality. Perspective of all kinds, critical, generative, or neutral revealed insights into the larger relational economy of transformative thinking, policy, and practice in the urban. I reflect on the limitations of this research design in the final chapter.

4. MUTATION

The first of the three substantive chapters serves as a crucial entry point to contextualize emergent climate-resilient urbanism in relation to racialized labor and labor geographies in Surat. Mutation refers to the translation of resilience in practice. The chapter traces spatial logic and influences that institutional resilience in relation to labor and labor geographies in Surat. In doing so, the chapter responds to two specific aspects of mutation; why and how resilience resonates in Surat (logic), and how situated influences mediate institutional resilience practices in relation to informal labor in Surat.

Critical policy scholars have long conceptualized 'mutation' in relation to how mobile policy discourses such as resilience resonate and translate in situated contexts (McCann and Ward 2011; Peck and Theodore 2015). Mutation captures the intertwined aspects of mobility and change at the heart of policy translation in a situated context. Recent scholarship has further investigated the circumstances and contingencies that invoke transnational mobile policies in practice (Mabon, 2023; Tzaninis et al., 2023). These studies demonstrate the geographic adaptability of discourses such as resilience over a sustained period, and thereby explain why they travel and resonate widely. Resilience is amenable to being moulded to assimilation across a wide range of urban regimes (Leitner et al., 2018). Similarly, others have provoked a closer examination of situated rhetoric, practices, and logic that invoke resilience for strategic access to transnational resilience networks and capital (Burns et al., 2021). Analytically, mutation lends itself to interpreting the process of translation as a journey from resilience thinking to practice in Surat.

This chapter begins by tracing the genealogical roots of contemporary resilience in urban crises and risk governance. It then pursues a logic of risk that grounds resilience contextually across different geographies of risk. This leads to the role of risk in standardized resilience practices. Finally, I examine the situated institutional narratives and influences that have institutionalized resilience in Surat.

4.1. Approach

Overall, the chapter builds on genealogical insights and discourse analysis of key academic and policy thinking on resilience. The second half of the genealogical analysis focuses on Surat's institutional narratives and situated influences on resilience practice. This approach helps unravel dominant spatial logics and influences on how resilience is institutionalized as a spatial strategy in Surat. This sets the tone for subsequent chapters that examine resilience driven spatial reconfigurations in migrant labor geographies of Surat.

The first part of the chapter traces the evolution of normative resilience thinking. The objective is to distil the key logic and influences that have shaped standardized urban resilience frameworks and practices. Genealogical insights illuminate the connections between normative urban risk and resilience frameworks and their ideological underpinnings in the post-war reconstruction period. This section particularly sheds light on the ideological synergies between neoliberalism and the evolving notion of 'resilient cities', alongside narratives of crises and emergencies from the vantage point of the Euro-American world cities order. This section contributes to the understanding of discursive underpinnings of resilience in contemporary risk and crisis governance.

The second part of the chapter examines how standardized resilience frameworks interact with prevailing institutional legacies and the spatial narratives of risk in migrant labor geographies of the city. This supports the central organizing

idea of the chapter: how resilience is assimilated into prevailing spatial risk management strategies and what these strategies reveal about the interactions between resilience, labor, and labor geographies The observations support the broader thesis argument that top-down spatial reconfigurations play a crucial role in the institutional management of racialized labor mobilities and geographies amid ongoing climate-resilient restructuring.

4.2 Genealogical Perspectives on Resilience Thinking: Relevance in Contemporary Urban Practice

4.2.1 Applied urban resilience thinking

Resilience is often framed as a 'boundary object' in contemporary policy studies that explain its wide appeal and policy portability across different geographies and contexts (Westman and Castán Broto, 2022). Resilience genealogists often attribute the *perceived resilience* of normative resilience to its diverse roots in interdisciplinary traditions (Walker and Cooper, 2014; Meerow et al., 2016; Bourbeau, 2018). Related to this is the perceived mutability of resilience that often makes resilience a subject of critical scholarly debates (Anderson, 2015). Scholars from a wide range of applied and theoretical perspectives have attributed observed contradictions in resilience to inherent conceptual ambiguities and subjectivities that render it even more malleable in practice (Wardekker, 2018). This means that *where, how and who* infuses meaning into resilience determines *what* is made resilient, *how*, and in relation to *what*. However, despite its many critiques, resilience is rather resilient as a normative discourse (Anderson, 2015). The very characteristics that make resilience conceptually ambiguous and prone to critique, also make it adaptable to a wide range of institutional and policy contexts (Westman and Castán Broto, 2022). The global policy push for urban resilience and growing popularity in emerging economies is a testimony to this (Leitner et al., 2018).

In the following pages, I dive into the genealogical perspectives of resilience thinking in urban policy and governance (Rogers, 2014, 2016). These observations underscore the discursive influence of resilience on urban governance. Few scholars have traced the influence of discursive orientation in the situated contexts of institutional spatial practices and governance. Particularly in postcolonial southern urban geographies where resilience thinking is a technological import via policy mobility circuits rather than an indigenous construct. A key contribution of this chapter is to trace standardized resilience frameworks such as the ACCCRN and how they have been assimilated into the postcolonial city of Surat. I argue that this is vital to understanding why resilience is increasingly being deployed as a strategic spatial orientation amid the ongoing climate-economic reconfigurations in Surat and elsewhere.

4.2.2 Genealogical roots of urban resilience

The genealogical perspectives of contemporary resilience go back decades after the Second World War (Bourbeau 2018). Critical scholars of urban resilience have revealed its deep roots in the governance of emergencies and crises. These analyses find that ideas of 'resilient cities' have significantly shaped and in turn been shaped by governance of emergencies and crises for a long time since the post-war era (Grove, 2017; Bourbeau, 2018; Wakefield, 2020).

The convergence of resilience in urban governance as a strategic techno-political orientation emerged from geopolitical and economic instability and crises in the post-war decades that led to solidifying neoliberalism in economic policies, institutions, and governance (Walker and Cooper, 2011). Resilience emerged as a counterstrategy to mobilize economic and political recovery and restore regime stability in response to a wide range of geopolitical, ecological, and economic crises and threats to Western power and security (Walker and Cooper, 2011; Joseph, 2013). Furthermore, the impact of economic crises and perceived threats to Western

power and stability in the post-war decades significantly influenced discourses of 'societal vulnerability' and resilience, as highlighted by Walker and Cooper (2011), Reid (2013), and Chandler and Reid (2016). In short, the intertwined histories of ideologically synergistic strategies inextricably link resilience and neoliberal governance in geographies of resilience in response to a wide range of urban crises or risks (elaborated later).

Amidst the neoliberal restructuring of public policies, institutions, and governance, resilience became a normative ideal from the vantage point of governance and political regimes (Chandler, 2016). Several scholars have commented on the political exploitability of resilience in urban politics and governance (Amin 2013). The post war decades (II) witnessed events that raised doubts about the infallibility of the global order characterized by Western political democracy, international cooperation, and ethical standards embodied in neoliberal institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, and other Bretton Woods organizations (Bourbeau, 2018). These events further strengthened imaginaries of what and how resilience is to be achieved in a solidifying neoliberal environment. For instance, in the 1970s, several climate disasters occurred, such as long-lasting droughts in mid-Saharan Africa, acute food shortages in South America (e.g., the Peruvian famine) and Russia, and subsequent disruptions in crucial market commodities that are vital to industrial production (Davis, 2001). These crises made the Western geopolitical order far from invincible. This realization has had a profound impact on political attitudes and crisis management, leading to a focus on resilient states and regimes.

Similarly, the Arab Oil Crisis of the early 1970s highlighted the extreme volatility of essential resource supply chains (Newman et al., 2009). It became evident that both source regions containing vital resources and downstream industrial nodes of production require regime stability and protection (Newman et al., 2009). In their book Resilient Cities, Newman et al. (2009) highlighted the role of a singular

narrative of resilience centered on the oil crisis. They argued that this singular narrative enabled the state to mobilize emergency discourses and responses during the energy crisis that threatened the survival of Western metropolitan regions (ibid). The governance and security policies that emerged in response highlight the formative and enduring impact of Western power nodes in setting the global resilience agenda for cities worldwide.

To be vulnerable in the modern industrial capitalist world, therefore, was and still is, primarily a factor of economic disruptions and the subsequent ripple effects in social and political regimes (Bourbeau, 2018). Resilience, in this context, has emerged as a way of rethinking structural order and societal imaginaries (Klein, 2018). This entails reconfigured institutional narratives, governance, and the politico-economic ethics of global cooperation (ibid). The development of resilience narratives in the late 20th century provided a framework for addressing the conflicting ideas of self-sufficiency and global interconnectedness in pursuit of economic stability (Klein and Kimmerer, 2021).

From the 1980s onwards, the concept of resilience shifted to encompass racial and psychosocial issues (Ungar, 2011). Social resilience to chronic shocks, trauma, and fragility has been increasingly constructed as reliant on the individual and community resilience of racialized communities (Werner, 1993). Localized community resilience through targeted approaches across vectors of race, ethnicity, class, and gender was deemed effective against vulnerabilities and risks associated with urban decline, rising inequality, poverty, and the spread of diseases and crime (ibid).

Throughout the mid-1980s and the 1990s, resilience emerged as a central theme in discussions on urban environmental security, urban security, and disaster risk management and mitigation, primarily in the Global North (O' Brien and Reid, 2005). This has significantly influenced the governance of urban built environments, with a greater focus on monitoring and surveillance (Wakefield and Braun, 2014).

The convergence of interests such as the security and resilience of urban built environments drove national and subnational security networks, including state security agencies, to increasingly collaborate with urban planners and practitioners to plan and govern cities through a security lens (Coaffee, 2013). One outcome of this has been the intensification of surveillance and securitization logics in spatial planning and governance (Coaffee and O'Hare, 2008; Sharifi and Yamagata, 2018). Contemporary spatial governance and management of urban risks, hazards, and disasters guided by resilience thus demonstrate an amalgamation of logics around securitization, hegemonic status and status predominantly from a Euro-American world view (see O'Brien and Reid, 2005).

4.2.3 Significance of resilience in urban governance and practice

'Resilient city' represents a normative imaginary that is legitimized and invoked in relation to geographies of risk. For instance, in southern climate geographies which are arguably facing 'adaptation limits' in the face of irreversible losses and damages, resilience is gaining an even stronger mandate in spatial governance and management (Roger, 2016). This is partly a legacy of global policy mobility circuits that has brought resilience to many southern cities through networked climate urbanism (Bulkeley, 2013). And partly in response to emergent climate-resilient urbanisms that position resilience as a dominant governance strategy across diverse climate-economic geographies of vulnerability and aspiration. (Wilson, 2018; Harris et al., 2018). I elaborate on this later in relation to the underlying politico-economic logic of 'resilience dividend' that animates normative resilience imaginaries. The idea of 'resilience dividend' frames resilience as an investment the returns of which are tied to risk and crises that extend opportunities for investments in resilience. Risk and crises are then opportunities to 'build back better' and stronger predominantly from an economic standpoint.

In recent times, a substantial body of work has emerged in response to applications of resilience thinking in everyday urban governance of risk in poly-crisis contexts (Reid and Evans, 2016; O'Grady and Shaw, 2023). O'Grady and Shaw's (2023) description of diffused governance of emergency in the post-modern world indicates that resilience as an overarching governing logic gains even more salience when risk is ever more diffused and the question around crisis is not one of if it happens, but when and what. The governance of risk is perpetually activated. Resilience in formal governance then rationalizes a shift in investments to anticipatory governance from post-disaster governance and crisis responses.

The logic of resilience in anticipatory governance privileges 'resilient pathways' and institutional reconfigurations, anticipating crises arising from interacting, diffused, and mobile risk. The next section further develops this regarding spatial management and governance regarding framing of risk in the normative city resilience framework rolled out by ACCCRN cities, including Surat. Additionally, governance of diffused risk in relation to racialized migrant labor geographies and labor mobilities, through a Foucauldian lens provoke us to re-examine the inherent contradictions in hegemonic constructs of risk and resilience as previously argued (Rogers, 2014, 2016). The contradictions and tensions become clearer in the context of risk management in racialized informal labor geographies. The genealogical evolution of resilience thinking in urban contexts re-emerges as spatial logic in applied resilience practices, particularly within urban policy, planning, and governance. Spatial imaginaries anticipate and utilize urban crises as opportunities for predetermined reconfiguration. These imaginaries enable influential actors to view crises not only as inevitable, but also as opportunities for learning, self-management, and alignment with dominant visions (O'Malley, 2010).

4.3 The Logic of Risk in Normative Resilience

This section examines the centrality of risk in normative resilience. For a long time, institutional resilience practices have co-evolved with conceptualizations of risk (Ziervogel et al., 2017). The 'risk of something' that can potentially catapult into a crisis or disaster of sorts justifies sustained investments in resilience. Risk in institutional climate practice is framed as heuristic (Meerow et al., 2019). Unlike resilience, risk is tangible and quantifiable and enables anticipatory decision-making regarding the complexity of urban crises, disasters, and emergencies (see Blok, 2020).

Many of current critical interpretations of risk build on social theories of risk such Ulrich Beck's seminal work on 'risk societies' (Beck, 1992). These underscore the interdependencies of local-global risk in reconfiguring situated contexts. This also suggests that the institutional construction of risk narratives and priorities reveals the underlying power configurations and differentials in governing institutions and practices (Beck, 1992). Furthermore, these perspectives emphasize the political and embodied nature of global risks beyond heuristics (Beck 2016). In summary, risk narratives have strong potential for normative reorientation. Going forward, in situated context, such as institutional resilience practice in Surat, we further focus on risk metrics, spatial logic and institutional resilience practice.

4.3.1 Normative risk frameworks: Global and national

The Hyogo Framework for Action, adopted in 2005, has led to increased institutional support and integration of disaster risk reduction (DRR) objectives into urban policy and program frameworks compared to other strategies to build urban resilience. Sustained and growing influences of global disaster risk reduction and recovery discourses have led to unequivocal support for institutionalized resilience planning to prevent, mitigate, and reduce disaster vulnerability across national, state, and local levels in India (Mechler et al., 2019). Global risk frameworks recognize that risk

is contextual; culture and local dynamics matter in shaping narratives of risk and the responses thereof (Beck, 1992). Institutionally, this recognition of context and local factors translates to institutional and legislative frameworks and processes to integrate risk management into prevailing national and state policy and programmatic landscapes (See Hyogo framework policy, UNISDR, 2015).

Currently, there are several global frameworks that foreground risk-based approaches to building urban resilience. Prominent frameworks include the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the New Urban Agenda, and the Paris Climate Agreement. There is a growing push for enhancing synergy between these frameworks in the interest of institutionalizing risk and resilience in urban governance.

In India, the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) is the apex body for Disaster Risk Management (DRM). It was set up under the Disaster Management Act of 2005[7] to institutionalize DRM. Headed by the Prime Minister of India, the NDMA lays down policies, plans, and guidelines for Disaster Management, guided by normative objectives around integrating disaster management into development planning. India's revised National Disaster Policy Framework and ambitious resilience vision build on Hyogo and other recent developments in global risk discourse. The federal model of DRM is an extensive disaster risk governance network comprising national, subnational, and local level development ministries, departments, knowledge partners, and implementation agencies. The overall governance framework of DRM seeks to integrate institutional approaches to prevention, mitigation, preparedness, and response mechanisms into development planning across all levels. Central to the implementation of these approaches are 'regulatory, techno-legal, and techno-financial models for risk management.' (see NPDM, 2009).[8]

For cities and urban regions specifically, the influence of risk discourses on resilience is far more diffused and entangled with mobile climate discourses and policy agendas emanating from different geographies and scale. Policy influences on urban resilience practices are harder to distinguish, given the ubiquity of contemporary city-scale resilience discourses and networks across geographies of climate policy influence. Therefore, it is understandable that risk and resilience logic emanate from different geographies and networks of influence. These are intertwined with situated logic and agendas, local politics, and development interests that can potentially be subsumed by resilience as an overarching imaginary.

Some of the leading international organizations and risk-driven policy agendas that underpin resilience processes include the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the UNFCCC COP21 Paris Agreement, Habitat III New Urban Agenda, World Bank City Resilience Program, Sustainable Development Goals, and city networks such as ICLEI, C40 Cities, 100 Resilient Cities (100 RC), and the ACCCRN (The Resilient Cities Network 2021; The Rockefeller Foundation, 2021; UNFCCC, 2021). The Rockefeller Foundation further promotes urban initiatives to "help cities around the world become more resilient to the physical, social, and economic challenges that are a growing part of the 21st century", including climate change, as a key issue that urban resilience can tackle (Rockefeller Foundation, 2021).

Additionally, worth mentioning is the emergence of transregional multilateral resilience coalitions shaped by the global risk-based frameworks mentioned above. In 2019, the Charter for Global Disaster Resilient Infrastructure was endorsed by many national governments, UN agencies, and development banks, such as the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, and other prominent multilateral regional banks. The charter's outcome was the establishment of the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI), whose secretariat is currently based in New Delhi[9]. The idea of building 'resilient states' through infrastructural investment further

reveals the strategic interdependence of resilience and the growth of the global climate financial economy (CDRI).

Figure 4.1: Dimensions of infrastructural resilience
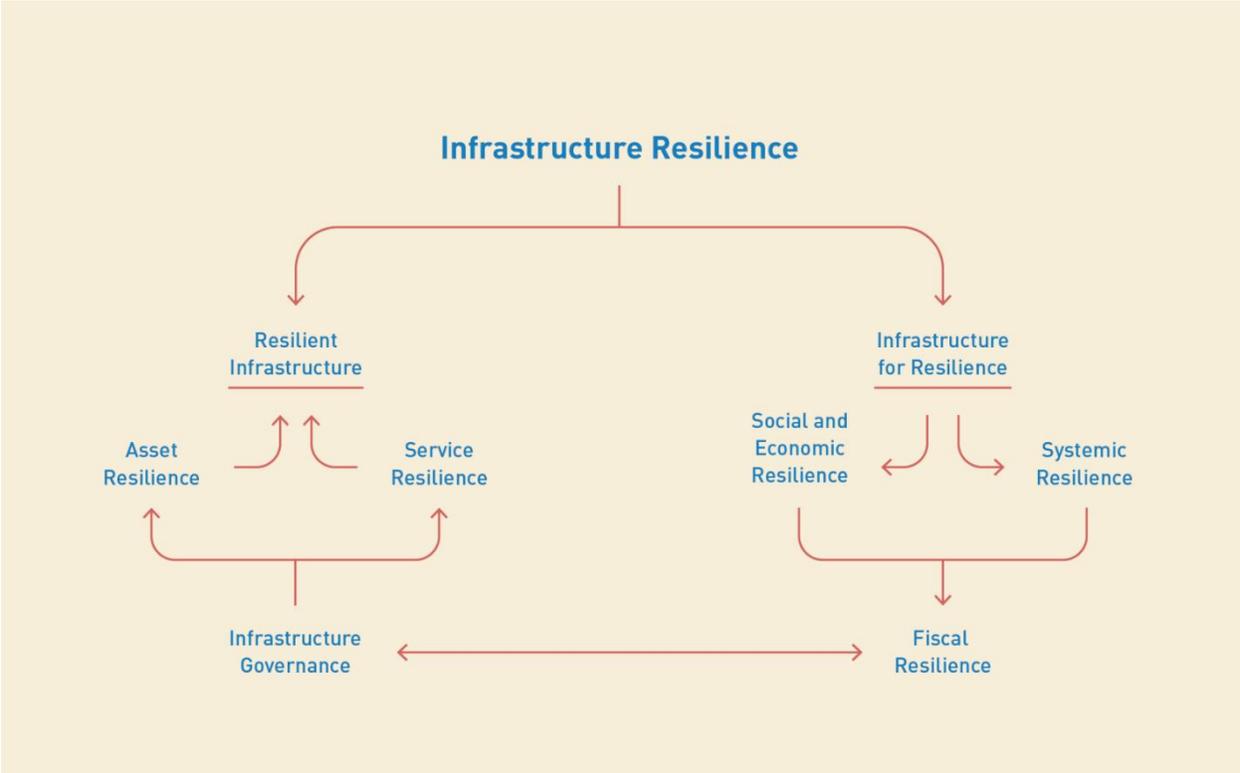
Source: CDRI, 2023

As the world's largest lender in climate finance, the World Bank's strategic engagement in 'Countries Experiencing Disaster Risk' further highlights the strategic role of risk in mobilizing climate finance for urban resilience and adaptation processes (World Bank, 2022). Since 2008, the World Bank's climate adaptation support mainstreamed through DRR frameworks, has framed 'climate change as a corporate priority'. The World Bank's expanding climate portfolio of countries and regions supported by climate and development finance from the World Bank, had put a greater emphasis on resilience.

The 2022 evaluation report of the World Bank's strategic fiscal investments in DRR reflects a concerted shift from 'post-disaster recovery to pre-disaster development' (World Bank, 2022). For instance, the share of the World Bank's DRR funding in pre-disaster projects steadily increased from 50 to 80 percent in the fiscal period between 2010 and 2020 (ibid). Support for disaster recovery measures dropped from 30 percent to 0 percent in the same fiscal period [10]. The shift towards risk mitigation and adaptive and resilient urban sectors, economy, governance, further streamlines risk and resilience strategic investments and climate finance to urban infrastructure. For instance, the latest fiscal evaluation report claims that "investing in DRR has strong economic and social benefits and is essential for achieving climate change adaptation" (UNDRR, 2019).

The rationale for investing in resilient infrastructure builds on the reduced costs of recovery, losses, and damages incurred in the future due to disasters and post-disaster crises (Hallegate et al., 2019). The global integration of policy, financial, and discursive frameworks for disaster risk reduction (DRR) for cities and urban regions implies that risk will play a central role in shaping institutional resilience practices in the years to come (see World' Bank's Climate Change Action Plan 2021-2025).

For cities such as Surat, emergent resilience imaginaries with a heightened emphasis on infrastructure suggest that institutional resilience practices are likely to engage more deeply with situated spatial actors, logic, and the overall political economy of urban spatial processes (elaborated in Chapters 5 and 6). The CDRN and other emerging resilience coalitions further predict a greater role of techno-political and techno-legal processes in facilitating institutional resilience practices and spatial governance.

To conclude, despite the particularities of climate geographies and situated logics, resilience is gaining traction as a consolidating force. Calls for investments in

resilience, particularly in climate-vulnerable geographies in the Global South frame resilience as an overarching governing orientation. This is well captured in recent global campaigns such as the 'Race to Resilience' launched by the UN (UNFCCC, 2021).[11] Increasingly urban regions are responding to incentives and motives that call for increased alignment and assimilation into normative resilience processes (UNFCCC, 2021). Regardless of the underlying logic and processes, resilience is presented as an overarching vision that helps meet climate targets and development goals while ensuring economic growth.

The logic of risk subsumed in global risk frameworks provides a scaffolding for resilience practice. Risk-driven logic equips institutional resilience practices to address a wide range of ex-post and ex-ante urban crises and disasters amid growing complexity. Furthermore, the dominance of DRM in resilience in recent decades has further recast resilience as spatial imaginaries, with infrastructure as a core component of resilience practice. Going forward, infrastructure becomes a core component of Surat's institutional resilience practices. The infrastructural focus further indicates the deepening relations of institutional resilience practices with key spatial forces, such as labor geographies and politics. In the next section, I build on aspects of infrastructure-driven spatial reconfigurations in the next chapter. Before evaluating the city resilience framework in Surat (below), it is crucial to recognize that Surat's resilience practice should be viewed through the lens of risk-driven spatial logic. Risk legitimizes the spatial agency of resilience to reconfigure climate geographies within the framework of spatial risk management.

4.4 Institutional Resilience Practice

"Resilience is based on the shifting relationship between scales, and between autonomy on the one hand and connectivity on the other"

- Alan and Bryant, 2011 in City Resilience Index, The Rockefeller Foundation

This quote is emblematic of the ideological and pragmatic tensions that animate Rockefeller's normative resilience. It captures the concomitant interplay between scalar influences and the tensions between autonomy, situated, and transnational influences in shaping institutional resilience practices in Surat and elsewhere. The following sections elaborate on these influences while contextualizing Rockefeller's standardised resilience framework in Surat. A closer look at standardised resilience frameworks sets the context for examining what aspects of resilience practice get assimilated into prevailing institutional spatial practices, how and why. Institution in this study refers to formal institutional actors such as the SMC and its citywide networks, relational norms, and logics that constitute urban spatial practice more broadly. Practice facilitates a more dynamic and reflexive understanding of institutional spatial interventions in situated context (see Seo and Creed, 2002). In doing so, one appreciates that institutions and their discursive material practices are produced through negotiation by social actors and the situated relations that constitute them, as well as external forces.

For instance, ACCCRN's resilience framework envisioned integrating the normative resilience agenda into Surat's institutional practices aligned with the city's contextual priorities (ACCCRN, 2013). However, the initial phases of iterative knowledge exchange, consensus building, and influencing strategies, guided by Rockefeller's adaptation of the Shared Learning and Dialogue framework (SLD), were critical enablers of institutional assimilation of resilience (Chu, 2016). These strategic processes engaged key urban actors in Surat to facilitate institutional alignment and assimilation of resilience through iterative learning events across cities and regions, thereby fostering leadership, transnational knowledge exchange, and enhancing the capacities of city climate institutions and networks (ARUP, 2015). Recognizing situatedness and negotiations as crucial generative processes that shape institutional practice is key to contextualizing institutional resilience practice in Surat.

Based on interviews with former City Resilience Officers (CRO) from Surat and Pune, I found that these collaborative practices have been highly influential in shaping the city's resilience agenda, as well as a strategic tool for negotiating emergent climate-economic opportunities and adaptation agendas with urban elites beyond the institutional realms. Alongside shaping situated institutional processes around resilience, transnational dialogues are thus part of a wider urban resilience agenda, institutional network and consensus-building visions.

4.4.1 Standardized resilience framework

4.4.1.1 Why standardize?

While the mutability of resilience makes it widely applicable and strategic, it also makes it challenging to translate into practice (Wardekker et al., 2020). Furthermore, owing to a wide range of interpretations as discussed earlier, policy and contextual translation are often found to be siloed and ambiguous (Meerow et al., 2014). Interviews with prominent city resilience actors, who act as key knowledge and policy brokers, revealed that Rockefeller's multi-phase approach to institutionalizing a standardized resilience framework encouraged local actors to build capacity and develop knowledge and resources to align with global normative urban climate processes that follow similar standardized risk-driven frameworks. The initial phases of the ACCCRN in Surat entailed the consolidation and alignment of local networks, resources, and institutional processes to operationalize the Surat city resilience plan. Standardization aims to streamline resilience practices and reduce conceptual ambiguities and siloed interventions across cities and urban regions, where Rockefeller and other global actors play pivotal roles in climate-economic restructuring. Rockefeller's city resilience framework, for example, promotes resilience as an integrative policy directive framework that can work across scales, contexts, and politico-cultural institutional arrangements. Additionally, the

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framework places a premium on urban capacities to anticipate and respond to latent and dispersed risks, including climate risks that are yet to be articulated (Blok 2018).

The Rockefeller's City Resilience Index (CRI) was designed as a framework to help resilience stakeholders convene around a common understanding of resilience. According to the Managing Director of the Rockefeller Foundation, the CRI allows cities to "baseline what matters most to make cities more resilient" (City Resilience Framework, 2015). The framework was primarily intended for municipalities and urban local bodies, such as the Surat Municipal Corporation (SMC). However, as stated in the City Resilience Index, "the primary audience for this tool is the municipal government. But the framework, indicators, and variables are also intended to support dialogue between other stakeholders who contribute to building more resilient cities globally" (Rockefeller Foundation).

One of the aims of the resilience framework was to build institutional capacities, knowledge, and infrastructure to a wide range of urban risks and crises including climatic and non-climatic events. The CRI and comparable resilience frameworks promote standardized risk assessments to build anticipatory risk management capacities through existing channels of spatial and urban planning. The ability to anticipate and mobilize institutional actions is crucial for achieving (adaptive) urban governance (Davoudi 2012). According to the RF resilience framework, institutional urban planning and city governments are best placed to accomplish this. Going forward, we see how particularities of urban risk and contextual logic and narratives further mediate how frameworks such as CRI are assimilated into institutional practice and spatial governance in Surat and elsewhere. Situated examination of institutional assimilation of resilience also highlights elements of standardized resilience framework that resonate with situated spatial practices and priorities (See below).

Figure 4.2: Resilience pillars to practice

Source: Surat City Resilience Strategy, 2017 [12]

4.4.1.2.1 The City Resilience Plan

Surat city resilience plan for instance, indicates that several of its *resilience pillars* or priorities intersect with urban informality and labor migration among others (See Surat City Resilience Strategy, 2011). In Rockefeller's resilience framework, resilience pillars refer to key domains or priorities in customized city resilience plans. These pillars provide a comprehensive framework for cities to strategize, monitor, and measure progress. Surat's city resilience strategy recognizes affordable housing

[12] See report here:
 https://resilientcitiesnetwork.org/downloadable_resources/Network/Surat-Resilience-Strategy-English.pdf

as a key area of resilience practice that links several of its pillars- 'Infrastructure and Environment', 'Health and Wellbeing', and 'Economy and Society'. Surat's resilience strategy aims to expand affordable housing for vulnerable low-income migrants to counter spatial informality and disaster risk and to reduce the socioeconomic vulnerability of migrant labor populations.

Figure 4.3: Affordable housing as a key pillar in Surat resilience strategy

Source: SRS, 2017

Although comparable across partner cities, resilience pillars in city resilience plan are customized to city risk profiles and priorities. For instance, I elaborate on how resilience practice oriented towards specific disadvantaged social groups such as

migrant labor among others, evolved alongside situated narratives of spatial vulnerability and urban crises in relation to labor. The relationship between situated logics and resilience practice is thus central to understanding how institutional resilience priorities such as housing overlap with geographies of migrant labor geographies.

The convergence of resilience in institutional practices around specific vertical and horizontal linkages in governance, further corresponds to co-evolving normative understandings of urban vulnerability (IPCC,2022). In the last few years, especially with the emergent framing of 'climate resilience development' and other resilience synergistic urban development and policy processes, resilience as an overarching governance logic or a cross-cutting policy agenda reveals the ongoing policy shifts in resilience. This has been in the making for a long time in urban policy and practice. For instance, resilience as an organizing logic is applied in urban spatial planning and disaster governance best captures this "prepare and plan for, absorb, recover from, and more successfully adapt to adverse events" (TNA, 2012 in Sharifi, 2019).

Over the last few years, shift positions resilience as an overarching urban orientation to facilitate policy synergy and complementarity in different urban climate actions and governance including climate mitigation, adaptation, and sustainable development goals. This has enhanced the strategic role of resilience as an overarching spatial strategy in the ongoing economic restructuring of cities and urban areas in emerging economies (Allam et al., 2019; Ziervogel et al., 2022). At national and subnational scales, this translates to a stronger spatial mandate for resilience across different climate spatial plans and processes (Lu and Stead, 2013; case of Cape Town in Simpson et al., 2023).

4.5 Making Resilience in Surat

Figure 4.4: Flood-affected Surat

Flood affected citizens in Surat
Photograph Credit: TARU, India

Source: TARU, as featured in Surat City Resilience Strategy

As the title suggests, this section traces situated influences and logic that have institutional resilience in relation to informal labor and labor geographies in Surat. I contextualize Surat's institutionalization of resilience against Surat's contemporary narrative of becoming a leading coastal textile economic geography that includes vast heterogeneous racialized informal migrant labor geographies. As discussed previously, the contextualization of resilience practice in relation to labor builds on the recognition that risk is relationally constructed and contextually defined (Pelling et al., 2024). I build on relevant events and narratives of crises and disasters that have shaped institutional spatial perspectives on resilience and informal labor and labor geographies. The following pages expand on key conjunctures in Surat's resilience narrative. These include significant past events that have shaped

institutional narratives and public memory of urban crises. Momentous events in Surat's resilience narrative include the plague epidemic of 1994 (elaborated below), recurrent localised and citywide floods, and widespread disease epidemics such as HIV/AIDS and other public health concerns. In public narratives these events are strongly linked to informal migrant workers and labor geographies.

These events coincided with the post-economic liberalization period that brought about structural reforms that significantly transformed Surat's informal labor markets, social demography, and its overall geography. Surat's high rate of urbanization is predominantly due to internal migration (Tumbe 2018). The mass influx of circular migrant labor from rural hinterlands to work in Surat's mechanized power looms and other labour-intensive production processes within the hierarchical informal labor market is a significant aspect of Surat's contemporary economic history (Streefkerk , 2001; Tumbe, 2018).

Additionally, these economic reforms galvanized spatial transformations in labor-intensive economic regions, such as the textile geographies of Surat. Economically, Surat has gained much from labor migration in terms of the availability of cheap labor. The steady expansion of prime economic sectors, such as textiles, diamond polishing, gemstones, petrochemicals, and more recently, construction and real estate, is primarily driven by informal migrant labor from districts in Gujarat and other states of India.

However, despite the economic gains, the city is part of a larger sociocultural milieu and geography that is highly segregated on ethno-communal lines and continues to enclave and spatially isolate migrant labor geographies from the rest of the city. Consequently, labor geographies in Surat appear heterogeneous on the outside but remain deeply fragmented and homogenous. This spatial legacy of enclaving migrant labor is part of Surat's contemporary institutional narratives of risk, albeit in the form of underserviced informal settlements. However, beyond

informality, the narratives reveal structural and systemic failures in economic and social assimilation of migrant labor.

4.5.1 Making of institutional resilience in Surat: Narratives, events, and public memory

The selection of Surat as one of India's pioneering 'resilient city' in the ACCCRN in 2008, following the devastating flood of 2006, officially marks the beginning of Surat's institutional resilience practice. Surat's participation in the ACCCRN represents a pivotal moment in its mobility in transnational networked climate economies (Harris et al., 2017). However, as a postcolonial city with a long history of urban growth, decline, and revival, remnants of past resilience accounts remain in Surat's institutional memory (Interview with a Senior Public Health Officer). In many respects, public accounts of resilience predate the institutional narrative of resilience (elaborated later). In an interview, the Chief Resilience Officer explained why Surat made a strategic choice for the Rockefeller Foundation's multiphase ACCCRN. "Surat's institutional history of dealing with numerous disasters, including floods and major epidemics such as The Plague of 1994, were key considerations for its selection." This meant that there were preexisting networks, institutional memory, and an orientation towards crisis and disaster management that made Surat a strategic choice to pilot and scale Rockefeller's resilience program.

As per public accounts, Surat owes its innate resilience to numerous encounters with episodic events, such as floods, disease outbreaks, riots, and violence (Mennings, 1997; Yagnik and Sheth, 2005). Archival sources and public accounts from old newspapers have defined Surat as 'resilient' in the face of numerous crises and periods of shock and decline. Despite numerous shocks and periods of decline, Surat has always managed to bounce back, unlike other colonial port cities in the region. Interviews with resilience officers further resonated with the sentiment that

the city is inherently resilient because of the resilience and spirit of the *Suratis* or, the city's residents.

By reinforcing the idea of resilience as an essentializing trope of Surat's culture and its people, there is a risk of externalizing community resilience to individuals and groups that may not possess the capacity, autonomy, and resources to bounce back to the degree required. Studies have shown that narratives that normalize essentializing ideas such as resilience do more harm than good by externalizing the burden of resilience on individuals and communities who are structurally more vulnerable to intersecting risks.

Additionally, overtime such narratives erode existing and latent capacities of resilience in communities and places that are already vulnerable and structurally disadvantaged. Studied have demonstrated how this trope perpetuates siphoning off resources from communities in need to elsewhere, and disinvestment in social and material infrastructure resilience that would enable communities and individuals to mobilize resources effectively in times of crisis (Parthasarthy, 2015).

Parallels can be drawn from other informal labor geographies in Mumbai and Manila in the context of compound risk and informality. Popular narratives that tend to externalize resilience to disadvantaged groups and individuals rest on the assumptions of social cohesion and internal community resources. However, by foregrounding racialized labor and labor geography perspective in institutional resilience practice, one is tempted to unsettle the normative assumptions around spatial risk and informality. I elaborate on this through the case of Kosad later (Chapter 6). Furthermore, considering climate impacts and climate-economic reconfigurations, fragmented and involuntary labor mobilities, including forced displacements and relocations, further challenge such narratives and celebratory rhetoric of resilience of the poor and historically disadvantaged groups. The following pages further illuminate the shaping of institutional resilience practice through

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discursive events that represent key conjunctures in Surat's contemporary resilience.

Plague epidemic of 1994

On September 25, 1994, *The New York Times* raised an alarm over a suspected pneumonic plague outbreak in Surat. Media coverage of the crisis quickly became global. Initial media coverage and reports released by the World Health Organization (WHO) International Plague Team and concerned local authorities in October 1994 were vague and sparked speculation and political discord. WHO Director General Hiroshi Nakajima issued a statement that 'there is plague in Surat but cannot be confirmed'. The *New York Times* report attributed the initial confusion to the public statement issued by a top state government official, the Chief Minster of Gujarat, who was quoted saying that the disease outbreak 'cannot be the plague' and could be pneumonia. The initial lack of confirmation caused widespread panic. This led to a mass exodus of both migrant labor and capital from the city.

As the financial capital of Gujarat, Surat was thrown into turmoil because of political unrest sparked by the escalating public health crisis. The situation reached the national capital, New Delhi, as news of both political and health crises spread. The economic impact of the departure of migrant workers and capital was most severely felt by key economic sectors, such as the textile and diamond manufacturing industries. As the situation worsened, businessmen and industrialists began relocating to Bombay (now Mumbai). International pressure reached new heights, pushing city authorities and frontline workers in the limelight to control the situation. Media reportage at the time showcased polarised debates on matters of responsibility and accountability. Additionally, they (domestic media) highlighted accusations of excessive international interference in sovereign matters.

Figure 4.5: 1994 Plague – Infected residents at Surat Medical College

Source: India Today Group

While international media coverage repeatedly highlighted India's lack of preparedness, strategy, and dismal state of public health infrastructure, domestically, the public health crisis was perceived as a threat to national security, dignity, and reputation (Gartett, 2003). The political framing of the epidemic as an attack on state autonomy has been extensively discussed by public intellectuals and the media, providing valuable insights into the situation. Consequently, Surat's position as a legitimate actor in the global economy was undermined. Among the many immediate repercussions on Surat's economy and status, the flight of big businesses, capital, and labor inflicted lasting damage that took many years to recover (Personal interview, CSS). Surat's narrative of resilience prior to the Rockefeller Foundation's ACCCRN initiative reflects themes of status and pride.

The psychological trauma of the plague epidemic, public humiliation, and indignity still reside in the collective memory of the city. Interviews with urban practitioners and senior residents across the city revealed how the crisis was perceived as an assault on Surat's' reputation. Collective indignity led the SMC Commissioner S.N. Rao, to swiftly mobilize action, "He is known as the man who gave Surat a much-needed face-lift" (Interview with a public health official, September 2021). Their accounts suggest that collective shame and economic decline drove the city government to initiate a planned recovery on a massive scale after the 1994 plague outbreak. "Surat unwittingly became the center of unwanted attention, just as Wuhan did in the early stages of the pandemic as the epicenter of the Covid-19 virus" (Interview with a senior government official, September 2021). The interview with a senior government official who worked with Surat's Disaster Management Cell drew parallels with Wuhan's sociopolitical position as the epicenter of the global pandemic. Drawing references to Wuhan, he elaborated on how, in the aftermath of the 1994 plague, Surat was in the limelight for all the wrong reasons that led to economic decline and isolation.

However, Surat's trajectory changed dramatically as the city leadership managed to curb the spread of the epidemic before escalating to a global crisis of pandemic magnitude. The local leadership's poor governance, civic life, and sanitation practices generated negative publicity. This damaged Surat's economic prospects in both domestic and international markets. The city Commissioner, S.N. Rao, took matters in his own hands. According to Surat's residents, Rao demonstrated exceptional leadership. He led a major city revival campaign, which attracted substantial local media coverage.

A Muslim shopkeeper (almost 80 years of age), resident of old city Rander in Surat, mentioned during an interview: "He was very strict, he (RAO) did not tolerate any indiscipline and indifference towards the surroundings. I was a young mother when he (the SMC Chairman) scolded me once for allowing my children litter outside

our house. Back then, we lived in a slum-like area. He was vigilant, and he trained his officers to move around, be vigilant, and take notice… We need strong leaders like him who care about the city and do not shy away from working hard. Mr. Rao would not excuse any one or any community."

SN Rao has gone down in Surat's history as a *heroic* public figure for "demonstrating Surat's ability to recover and bounce back stronger" (Personal interview, CRO, November 2021). The massive recovery and revival of Surat's key economic sectors within months marks a key event in Surat's resilience legacy. The recovery process entailed mass demolition of slums across the city. "There was strict instruction from the top to clean up the city." The culture of mass slum clearance at a city-wide scale came to be associated with economic recovery and resilience in institutional practice in the aftermath of this event.

Additionally, Surat's public health system was strengthened to work alongside departments responsible for slum clearance. Today, both these institutional entities and associated practices are core members of Rockefeller city resilience framework for Surat. Surat is the only city in India where the city climate resilience unit, 'Urban Health and Climate Resilience Centre' has a strong public health component[13]. This is due to the legacy of the public health crisis in the early 1990s, which led to selective investment in institution building and capacity development of certain urban institutions, individuals, and networks (personal interview with UHCRC Director). Today, these are core institutions and influential members of Surat's Resilience Strategy. Similarly, the slum upgrading cell and housing departments are key actors in institutional resilience planning. These departments offer existing spatial instruments to manage and control the spatial growth of informal settlements on which the city resilience strategy rests (Karanth and Archer, 2014).

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[13] https://iihs.co.in/knowledge-gateway/urban-health-climate-resilience-a-case-of-surat-city-india/

Unusually heavy rainfall caught Surat off-guard in August 2006. More than seventy percent of city was submerged for days[14]. The high intensity yet localised floods across the city were caused by water from the nearby catchment area of the Ukai dam that was built in 1972. Several nearby villages and sections of the city have experienced severe flooding on multiple occasions because of the incomplete construction of sluices and embankments at critical points in the catchment[15]. As per the official account, despite significant efforts in hazard control and flood management infrastructure in Surat prior to the 2006 flood, many parts of the city remained underwater for days. Thousands of people were stranded, with little assistance from the state (City Resilience Plan, 2011)[16].

Widespread outbreaks of water-borne diseases and other serious contaminants broke out, which took several months to address. The aftermath of the flood disaster became a major public health crisis for Surat (Interview with Senior Public Health Official, November 2021). Due to past crises, institutional memory helped city officials cope to some extent, but this was not sufficient. "Public health institutions, including Surat Medical Hospital staff, had previous experience in dealing with recurring floods and frequent outbreaks of the Bubonic Plague. They possess necessary knowledge and strategies. However, hospitals were understaffed and underequipped with the necessary infrastructure. Overall, the social infrastructure was poor and remained underfunded. Consequently, informal workers and settlements were most severely affected. Moreover, the city authorities were overwhelmed, and they were slow to deliver essentials such as drinking water, food,

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[14] https://reliefweb.int/report/india/india-gujarat-floods-situation-report-30-jun-2005-900-pm
[15] See the Down to Earth report that provides a detailed investigation of how the disaster unfolded.
https://www.downtoearth.org.in/environment/citizens-reports-indict-gujarat-government-for-surat-floods-6606
[16] chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://niua.in/csc/assets/pdf/water/City-Resilience-Strategy-Surat.pdf

and medicines to the most affected in informal settlements (Interview with senior public health and climate experts, UHCRC).

Figure 4.6: Citizen volunteers carrying out rescue operations amidst the flood

Source: ACCCRN 2013

Over a decade after the flood, the initial phases of the ACCCRN upgraded the citywide risk and vulnerability map of Surat. Flood risk and hazard mapping are ongoing practices in which the SMC continues to monitor risk in low-lying zones of the city. However, upon interviewing flood mappers who work closely with Surat's resilience team, we discovered that not much has changed in terms of spatial risk and vulnerability of the textile industry and numerous migrant labor geographies that are clustered around. In other words, the flood vulnerability map suggests that specific areas and zones in key labor geographies and textile zones are still at risk to

a comparable degree (Karanth and Archer 2014). Maps and other spatial instruments that were produced more than a decade ago are still relevant and are the predominant basis for resilience planning in Surat. This implies that Surat's spatial risk profile has remained largely unchanged over the last fifteen years of the ACCCRN-initiated resilience practice (personal interviews).

Figure 4.7: Flood affected areas in 2006 overlapping with textile production zones
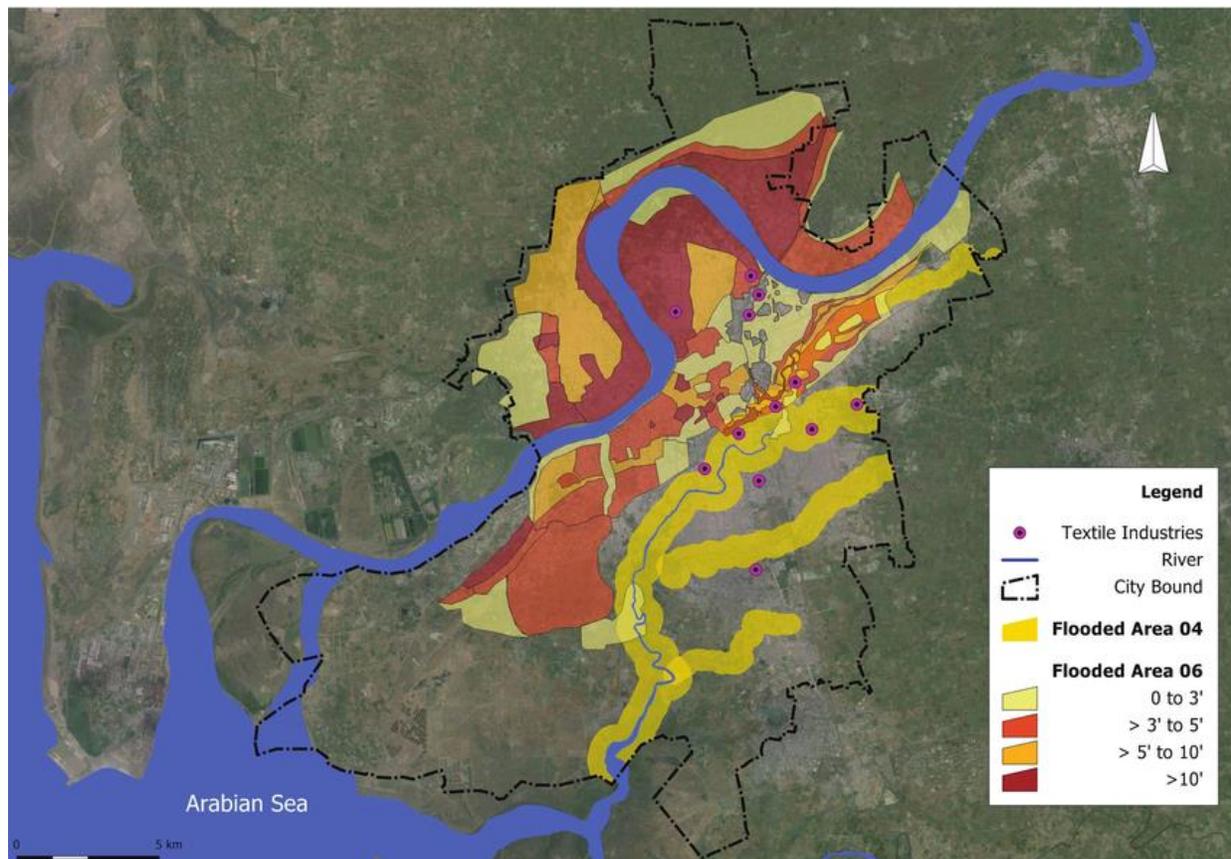
Source: Bahinpati et al., 2017

Not much has changed since the institutional resilience practice in contemporary spatial risk profiles and the nature of vulnerability in Surat. However, spatial reconfiguration of vulnerable migrant labor populations through mass evictions represents a more dynamic aspect of spatial risk management in the city. The textile industry's location is one reason why the spatial risk profile remains

unchanged compared with the spatiality of 'vulnerable' groups at risk. The growth of the textile industry and migrant informal labor geographies are closely intertwined (see Chapter 1). "Easy affordability of land and access to water from the river were crucial factors in shaping the geography of labor and textile industrial zones in Surat. Previously, these zones were on the periphery, making them ideal for the textile processing and dyeing industries. As the city expands, these zones have become centrally located, land and property values have gone up" (Personal interviews with an urban sociologist at CSS).

Figure 4.8: Current flood-prone zones and risk zoning
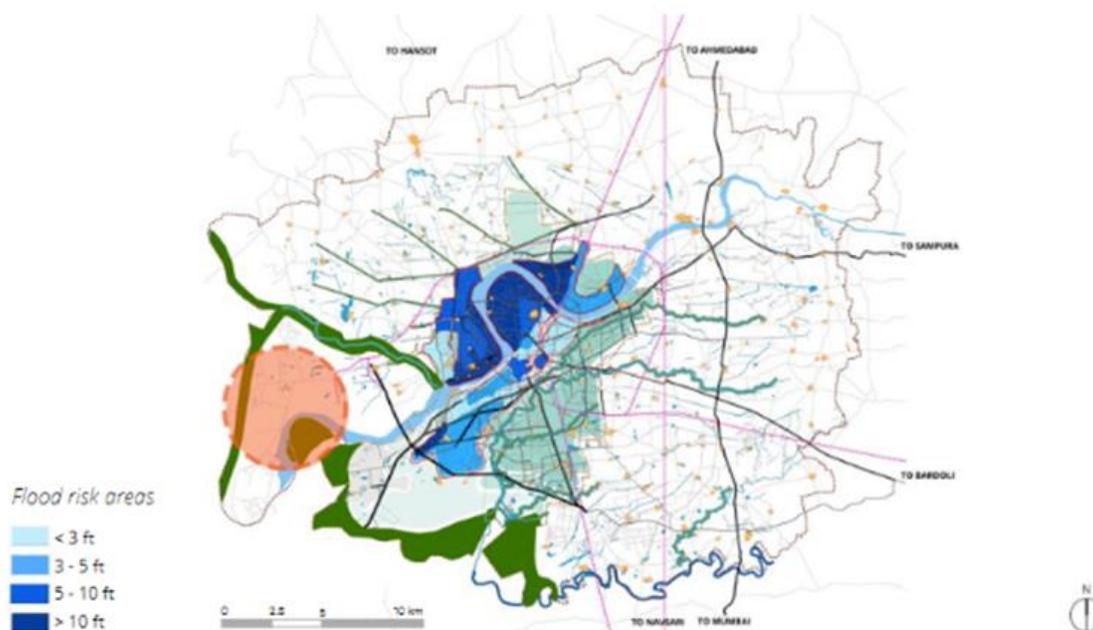
Source: Surat Development Plan, 2020

Due to proximity to the Tapi River, many parts of these zones are prone to seasonal and localized flooding (Fig. 4.5). However, labor-intensive production and manufacturing units in these zones are crucial drivers of spatial informality and labor geography in these parts of the city. The spatial entanglement of informal labor and the textile economy challenges resilience practices to fundamentally alter labor geographies through the spatial management of risk. Rather, institutional spatial

practices address localized risk by weighing it against the zone-specific localized demands of informal labor. Consequently, the spatial reconfigurations we observe in relation to key labor geographies in textile production zones appear to manipulate risk by relocating informal labor populations rather than addressing the structural-spatial roots of risk in these zones. I will discuss this in detail later in relation to situated influences and spatial logic that shape institutional approaches to informal labor geographies.

Figure 4.9: Flood embankment built after the 2006 flood

Source: Author's fieldwork

Infrastructural adjustments such as flood embankments and flyovers, were built to reduce the overall exposure and vulnerability of the textile and other industries to disaster risk. However, as the city vulnerability map suggests, spatial

risk is predominantly concentrated in migrant labor geographies in the textile zones of the city. Furthermore, institutional resilience practices respond to static spatial risk profiles that do not adequately capture dynamic vulnerabilities driven by spatiotemporal mobilities of risk. For example, spatial fix approaches through infrastructural resilience practices have addressed localized risks to textile zones of the city. However, this approach does not consider the spatial reconfiguration of risk and vulnerability emplaced elsewhere, as the geographies of informal labor are reconfigured through displacement and relocation.

Consequently, the institutional resilience narrative identifies migrant labor geographies as 'risk containers' that legitimize spatial measures to manage and govern risk by reconfiguring these parts of the city. This indicates how risk as an anticipatory measure legitimizes sustained institutional monitoring and top-down spatial management of informal labor geographies. The detailed cases in Chapters 5 and 6 demonstrate how the risk-driven enforcement of spatial reconfigurations is often coercive and leads to involuntary relocations and intra-city displacement. This has been found to alienate migrant working groups and further marginalize labor as a key spatial stakeholder in participating in resilience-building practices.

Overall, the two events summarized in this section are indicative of chronic and periodic risks that justify sustained resilience investments in the key labor geographies of Surat. These represent two events that have directly shaped Surat's institutional resilience narrative and spatial approaches to risk and crisis management. Since the introduction of the standardized risk framework by Rockefeller, local scholars and climate networks have led to several spatial assessments of disaster risk and vulnerability to inform institutional resilience actors and practices (Personal interview with Deputy CRO). However, the risk narratives and graphic representations are largely dominated by spatial informality. As mentioned earlier, these representations tend to mask informal labor as the context

that foregrounds economic drivers of spatial risk into the broader evolving narrative of economic resilience.

It is worth emphasizing that urban flooding in underserviced low-lying informal labor geographies is not unique to Surat, nor is their institutional response (Pathak and Mahadevia, 2018). For example, In Mumbai, Parthasarthy (2015) highlighted that merely relocating informal workers without addressing the underlying causes of spatial informality is unlikely to reduce urban vulnerability. Relocations and evictions continue to be modus operandi in response to disaster risks and crises across Southern cities (Leitner et al., 2022).

However, Surat, like other ACCCRN cities, illustrates a shift in urban climate narratives and practices by emphasizing resilience as an overarching spatial strategy. In Surat's flood risk management, as observed elsewhere, spatial processes addressing various aspects of climate vulnerability and impacts are becoming increasingly indistinguishable. While this may be justified as a move towards integrated spatial planning and greater synergy in urban climate governance, this has spurred local concerns about accountability, climate capitalism, and spatial injustice (Long, 2021; Friedman, 2023). For example, across informal southern contexts, disaster recovery measures and forced relocations are increasingly framed as climate-resilient and adaptive measures (Pathak and Mahadevia, 2018; Leitner et al., 2022).

Notwithstanding the adaptation and development co-benefits, some of these measures could potentially yield (Boyd et al., 2022). However, based on my observations in Surat and other locations, I argue that reorienting resilience as a spatial strategy for climate-economic restructuring without structural changes in institutional governance could have adverse consequences. This could weaken spatial discernment, representation, and informed decision-making regarding urban climate complexities in the Global South. This will likely exacerbate climate inequity and

spatial injustice in southern cities and urban regions. It is urgent to reconsider institutional and governance structures to ensure resilience serves beyond a strategic alignment tool and does not thwart adaptation potential or exacerbate existing vulnerabilities (Mikulewicz, 2019). Considering the enhanced spatial currency of resilience in emerging southern economies, it is imperative to ensure that resilience (a) does not undo decades of progress in local adaptation and progressive development and (b) enables a situated understanding of resilience-building practices and accountability measures to prevent trade-offs of climate-resilient infrastructure development from ac4.5cumulating as risk in urban margins and already vulnerable labor geographies.

4.6 Situated Influences on Institutional Resilience Practice: Institutional Legacy and Technopolitics

This section examines the key influences of urban techno-politics on institutional resilience practices in relation to labor. This is significant in contextualizing institutional resilience as a spatial management strategy at the city scale. An influential spatial stakeholder, the excerpt from the interview with the president of the South Gujarat Chamber of Commerce and Industries, highlights key concerns around labor spatiality and mobilities that can be spatial managed through planned resilience. The insights tease out an aspect of negotiation in institutional resilience practice around top-down reconfiguration of labor through affordable housing. Additionally, this section reveals how technocratic approaches to spatial risk management are mediated by dominant politico-economic interests and urban policy elite.

4.6.1 City chamber of commerce and institutional resilience practice

"The SGCCI is an influential urban stakeholder in Surat. For any spatial project to be scaled and yield good returns on investment, our support is essential. Whether it

is climate-related projects or development, the chamber has the resources and connections to support innovative solutions to contemporary challenges in Surat"- CRO and ex-President of the SGCCI

This quote elucidates the important role played by the SGCCI in shaping Surat's contemporary development pathways including climate-resilience processes. The SGCCI represents the city's economic elites and business classes among others.[17] The SGCCI is not only an important stakeholder in Surat's urban affairs and governance but also equally invested in urban politics (Jacob and Jacob, 2022). The SGCCI's role in urban techno-politics involves fostering economic growth and ensuring state policies and governance favor Surat's key business and industrial sectors. This is the legacy of modern Gujarat's history of economic elites and capitalists championing urban development by forming symbiotic alliances with the state (Tambs-Lyche and Sud, 2015).

The SGCCI is a core member that drafted Surat's city resilience strategy, along with other local actors (primary interview, CRO). Given that the SGCCI represents the economic interests of most businesses and industries in the region, their involvement in resilience planning is considered essential (Chu, 2017). City chambers of commerce have traditionally been central actors in Rockefeller's entrepreneurial urban resilience model (100 Resilient Cities, 2016). This harks back to the core principle of 'resilience dividend' that underlines many of the contemporary urban resilience pathways where Rockefeller's resilience discourse has directly or indirectly influenced local climate-resilient agendas and technocratic approaches.

Consequently, many aspects of Surat's resilience strategy in terms of the resilience agenda and action are aligned with the spatial needs and interests of the SGCCI. This is due to an important economic stakeholder in the region and its deep

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[17] https://sgcci.in/about/

influence in urban politics and policies in Gujarat. Additionally, the City Resilience Officer, who was appointed by the city corporation and led the process of institutionalizing resilience across multiple phases of the ACCCRN, was the President of the Chamber of Commerce at the time of his nomination and throughout the entirety of his tenure. The institutional overlaps further made the strategic alignment between resilience practice and SGCCI feasible in the interest of the city's economic resilience.

Interviews with chief climate advisors from recently selected resilient cities revealed insights into the role of deep inroads and their influence on the state machinery that facilitates the selection of cities as well as the institutionalization of resilience. These firsthand accounts and insights from recent studies suggest that the initial gateway to potential model resilient cities is through local urban elites and influential networks. Strategic influence in state policies and practices are central to the success of model climate resilient cities (Personal interviews with CRO-Pune, Fainstein, 2018). As a result, climate policy gatekeeping by city elite networks and intermediaries is increasingly prevalent in Surat and elsewhere. Therefore, many transnational climate networks in Surat replicate the institutional model of Rockefeller's ACCCRN.[18] This model privileges influential spatial stakeholders over other spatial stakeholders, such as labor associations and trade unions, which have comparable stakes, but not as much discursive power and influence.

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[18] Today, city chambers of commerce are more powerful and influential in urban climate-economic transitions than ever before. This is well captured in international formations, such as the international collective of city chambers of commerce, which will increasingly drive climate-economic urban transitions (UNFCCC, 2021).

4.6.1.1 Affordable housing to 'spatially fix' labor: Spatial anxieties around 'unfixed' mobile labor

The excerpt below speaks to a longstanding concern that textiles and other labor-intensive industries have had about migrant labor spatiality and intra-city mobilities. This is significant because it illuminates the spatial anxieties surrounding migrant labor and labor mobility in the city. And further demonstrates how labor spatiality is a key logic that is increasingly influencing institutional resilience practice in Surat's labor geographies (I build on this in Chapter 6). Nearly 70 percent of Surat's textile workers are migrants from other Indian states. Despite recent attempts to incentivize migrant textile workers to permanently settle in Surat, a disproportionately high percentage are circular migrants. This means that migrant social groups from different regions of India have cultural roots elsewhere.

Additionally, given that a large proportion of these communities are part of the internal remittance economy, decisions to invest in the city are determined by remittances as a key behavioural, economic, and cultural driver (Massey et al., 1998). Many workers I interviewed opted for migrant dormitories or informal hotels managed by fellow migrants with significantly lower rents. This enables them (predominantly single men) to remit a larger portion of their income to support their families and finance unviable agrarian livelihoods in their native villages (Personal interviews with Bihari migrants). Interviews with migrant workers discussed elsewhere in the study revealed that interstate migrants are not looking to relocate permanently. Their decisions to invest in the long term are shaped by fluctuations in the regional informal labor markets.

For instance, during an interview, a Bihari power loom worker mentioned, "There are better opportunities in the textile industry down South in Andhra Pradesh. Many migrant workers in Surat's textile industry are considering moving

to Andhra Pradesh, as their living conditions and pay are better. Moreover, they had shorter work shifts and more on-site housing provisions."

The local power loom association president also confirmed that the southern textile industry is a growing competition that attracts experienced migrant workers from Surat and elsewhere. Due to the circular and seasonal mobilities among these heterogeneous migrant groups, Surat's industrial associations have been demanding a long-term solution to permanently settle the migrant workforce in the city. Migrant workers from the eastern states of Odisha and Bihar migrate to their native villages during local festivals, religious and family ceremonies, elections, and whenever possible, to replenish cultural and political ties in native villages and towns. "We have a lot of Oriya and Bihari workers. This is disruptive for us (power loom sector) and other production units in the textile industry (Personal interviews, Ved Power loom Association Manager)." Additionally, the Manager explained that worker recruitment is highly informal, and network mediated. "Even though there are labor contractors to supply workers when needed, this constant uncertainty around labor availability has made the power-loom sector very insecure. There have been instances where a small argument or fight could trigger workers to move to another factory" (Personal interview, Manager).

The excerpt below is from an interview with the SGCCI president. It further highlights ongoing negotiations to integrate migrating working communities into state-affordable housing schemes to tackle volatility in informal labor supply chains.

"We realized that the textile industry is not too keen on affordable rental housing but rather permanent ownership. This is because of the volatility in labor supply throughout the year. The industry's demand for affordable housing for migrant workers is to reduce labor uncertainty by permanently grounding them here. Annually, during the Raja Parba festival in Orissa, a substantial proportion of textile industry workers and Oriya migrant workers temporarily return to their native

villages. Every year, these communities are away for a duration of one to three months. Additionally, North Indian migrant workers take a whole month off during Diwali. The industry has suffered tremendous economic losses since the last wave of the lockdown. A huge portion of the migrant workforce left the city. We are trying to incentivize them to come back."

I asked my informant what their current demands were from the SMC and how they expected resilience practices to accommodate them. He indicated that there was potential for the affordable housing industry to integrate non-domicile migrant labor communities. The state can channel various affordable housing schemes to zone-specific migrant working groups to spatially configure labor according to industry requirements. "The industries are demanding for state housing policies that facilitate the integration of migrant workers into long-term owner-occupied housing. The aim is to encourage these workers to relocate permanently to Surat. At the end of the interview, he stressed that for "Surat to be a resilient city, the first and foremost important policy area to manage the floating labor population better, we need to make better use of housing policies to stabilise labor by zone, this would ensure better control over labor" (Personal interview with SGCCI President, November 2021).

Consequently, the SGCCI has intensified its demand for affordable housing for migrants, using existing state-sanctioned housing schemes. The prime motivation is to optimize informal labor geographies and regulate labor mobility according to zone-specific demands. He further added that the domestic work sector is growing rapidly in Surat and requires better housing for migrant families so that migrant women can meet the growing demand for paid domestic and care work. The SGCCI, along with another key spatial actor in the city, the Surat Builder's Association (SBA), negotiated with the local government to facilitate the domicile transfer of migrant labor communities through state social welfare and community development networks (Interview with Surat Migration Cell, November 2021). This would make a

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significant population of informal working classes eligible to apply for low-income affordable housing schemes. According to the SGCCI and SBA, this would help both industries recover from the economic slowdown caused by the pandemic. They further justify housing for migrants as a resilience measure amid the Covid-19 pandemic

Overall, this case illuminates the logic of 'spatial fix of 'migrant labor' for economic recovery and resilience of key industries in Surat. This is an example of how local techno-politics negotiate institutional resilience practices to spatially manage migrant labor geographies driven by differential spatial stakes in labor. I further develop this in Chapter 6 on affordable housing.

4.7 Discussion

This chapter traces the institutionalization of resilience in relation to Surat's informal labor geographies. The broader aim was to examine spatial logic and situated influences on institutional assimilation of resilience in prevailing spatial practices. There are two broad analytical components of this chapter that capture the mutation or contextual translation at every stage from resilience thinking to resilience practice in Surat's labor geographies. Broadly, these analytical aspects resonate with mutation at every stage. This includes the genealogical roots of urban resilience in global crisis and risk governance, and its translation into a discursive spatial strategy supported by normative risk frameworks. Following this, normative risk is translated into standardized resilience frameworks, which are then contextualized within Surat's risk geographies. Finally, components of resilience practice evolve in situated contexts, shaped by spatial logic, narratives and actors. The following elaborates on key insights from each section in relation to the broader thesis on resilience as a spatial strategy for managing informal labor and labor geographies.

4.7.1 Discursive underpinnings of urban resilience

The discursive underpinnings of resilience thinking are crucial to understanding how resilience resonates and mutates in situated contexts, such as Surat in this case. Thus, the first half traces that the discursive underpinnings of resilience in neoliberal urban risk and crisis governance have shaped the hegemonic vision of the 'resilient society' (Chandler, 2014). Against this background, dominant neoliberal resilient urbanism has evolved and travelled across urban geographies of risk through global policy mobility circuits (Bulkeley 2013). The discursive orientation of resilience in contemporary risk governance appeals to a wide range of urban risk geographies. Consequently, resilience is resonant across a wide range of urban geographies, where contextual risk translates to resilience in the spatial governance of risk and crisis.

Additionally, ongoing discursive shifts in resilience in anticipatory risk governance are particularly relevant to these risks in situated contexts. For instance, in the context of embodied labor geographies in Surat, risk is entangled with informal migrant labor geographies. Resilience as a spatial strategy in anticipatory risk governance further entrenches the logic of securitization and technocratic risk management in informal labor geographies. Going forward, this is key to understanding how the discursive-material spatial currency of resilience animates infrastructural reconfigurations in labor geographies and the spatial management of racialized labor.

4.7.2 Institutionalizing resilience in Surat

In conclusion, this chapter finds that the spatial logic of risk in relation to informal labor geographies is institutionalized in relation to the dominant spatial interests in migrant labor spatiality for economic securitization. Spatial informality, as both constitutive aspects of urban risk and crises and economic security and resilience in terms of labor, animate the ongoing tension in Surat's institutional resilience

practice. Situated genealogical insights illuminate why and how prevailing spatial legacies of resilience and urban crises in relation to labor interact with ACCCRN's standardized resilience practice. The centrality of economic resilience through technocratic spatial risk management in relation to informal labor has solidified through specific conjunctures in Surat's resilience legacy. For example, the illustrative case of the 1994 plague outbreak highlights the role of public memory and narrative in shaping contemporary resilience practices. The situated genealogical insights reveal continuity in contemporary spatial actors, narratives, and logic in the spatial management of informal labor and labor geographies in Surat. For example, in both the 1994 and 2006 floods, the public health outbreak and economic loss were strongly linked to informal labor geographies in one way or another.

Institutional responses in the aftermath of the 1994 plage reveal the consolidation of spatial approaches to managing risk in informal labor geographies through containment, but also reveal the economic tensions that were induced by the flight of capital and labor. Additionally, negative publicity damaged Surat's economic prospects and reputation in both domestic and international markets. Therefore, the adoption of technocratic spatial approaches to fix Surat's informal labor geographies formed a cohesive spatial practice for crisis management, economic recovery, and resilience. Likewise, in the aftermath of the 2006 flood, spatial approaches to recovery and resilience included mass spatial reconfigurations of informal labor geographies. This was achieved through systematic removal of informal settlements, spatial technologies, and infrastructure for flood disaster management. This is discussed in detail in Chapter 5 on spatial approaches. However, in this chapter, these events are important to contextualize how institutional memory, and spatial narratives have shaped dominant attitudes towards resilience practices in relation to informal labor geographies.

5. APPROACHES

"Sunne mein aaya hai, yahan ki bhi zameen ab mehengi ho rahi hai. Ab kabhi bhi hamein yahan se bhi hataenge…"

"Apparently, the land prices are going up here as well. It is just a matter of time; they will again move us from here …"

-   Ashraf bhai, a Muslim resident of Kosad Housing project

The aftermath of the 2006 flood is a crucial conjuncture in Surat's resilience practice. As mentioned previously, the aftermath of the disaster drove significant spatial transformations across the city, particularly in Surat's textile labor geographies. This event marked the initiation of Surat as a partner city in Rockefeller's ACCCRN and, subsequently, many such transnational climate networks. This chapter builds on the aftermath of the 2006 disaster, which motivated city authorities to institutionalize resilience into prevailing spatial practices. Going forward, I focus on key spatial approaches to reconfiguring informal labor geographies of risk in Surat.

As in the previous chapter, there are two parts of the analysis. Broadly, this can be understood as representing spatial relations and tension between formal institutions and informal labor geographies from a top-down and bottom-up perspective. More fundamentally, the two parts illuminate spatial subjectivities, relations, and processes in informal labor geographies that solidify resilience as a strategic spatial labor management strategy. Illustrative cases and observations pertain to micro-labor geographies, primarily in the city's northern and central industrial zones. These observations are significant given the solidifying role of resilience in reconfiguring racialized labor in emergent climate-resilient urbanism in

Surat. Situated approaches to negotiating reconfigurations provide crucial insights into the differential spatial politics and governance of labor amidst ongoing climate-economic restructuring and evolving labor geographies. This provokes thinking beyond the strategic spatial role of resilience in managing racialized labor geographies but also in relation to the majoritarian politics of Hindu nationalism.

In the first section, I examine institutional spatial approaches to disaster-affected and vulnerable labor geographies. Going forward, the power to legitimize spatial reconfiguration in relation to racialized labor emerges as a key aspect of resilience in spatial practice. The second and third sections of this chapter examine spatial reconfigurations in select micro-labor geographies. Observations on spatial approaches and reconfigurations illuminate the differential spatial interactions and institutional logics at play in relation to the segregated micro-labor geographies in the textile zones of Surat. The term "micro-geography" is used to describe segregation in Surat's labor geographies along the lines of intersectional social differences, such as ethnicity, caste, religion, and citizenship status in some cases.

Furthermore, Lefebvrian ideas suggest that attention to 'micro' facilitates a deeper appreciation of lived experiences of spatial change. This is particularly important here, as understanding spatial approaches of labor to ongoing spatial reconfigurations is just as important (Lefebvre, 1991; Yarker, 2017). Furthermore, the focus on micro-labor geographies inevitably enhances attention to everyday southern urbanism in terms of labor-spatial interactions, negotiations, and politics.

5.1 Context

5.1.1 Harnessing 'resilience dividend': Spatial investments in labor geographies

Since 2006, SMC has steadily invested in critical resilience infrastructure. Guided by the city resilience strategy, SMC has strengthened investments in disaster preparedness, preventive, and disaster-resilient infrastructure. This involves the ongoing expansion of urban and regional early warning networks, flood embankments, smart-resilient city investments in strengthening rapid transport systems, multilane flyovers, and bridges that link key economic zones with high-income residential and financial districts. These investments are being ramped up to minimize economic losses due to mobility disruptions caused by localized flooding, density and traffic (Personal interviews with the Chief Transport Officer, Smart City).

Additionally, the city government is expanding strategic alliances with emerging multilateral climate-resilient disaster networks to further strengthen the climate-resilient infrastructure. "Investments in resilience yielded positive economic outcomes for Surat, which is actively involved in over 15 global and regional resilience networks. We have support from the local government to build Surat's reputation as a progressive city that will lead by example" (Personal interview, CRO). Given Surat's dominant disaster orientation in resilience investment decisions, I asked him about investments in climate adaptation and resilience. He explained how Surat's approach to resilience focused on economic resilience from the beginning. Memberships in global and regional climate-economic alliances have been economically generative. These create incentives and new financial channels for strengthening climate-infrastructure-led development, contributing to economic resilience and creating green economic opportunities. For example, the recently launched CDRI and World Bank's Resilient Cities partnership focus on climate finance aligned well with aspirational cities on the west coast, such as Mumbai and Surat (Personal interview).

Additionally, connected to disaster resilience infrastructure are institutional spatial approaches to managing informality and risk through eviction and planned relocation. Infrastructural development and spatial reconfigurations in informal spaces are often intertwined processes that are geographically concentrated in and around Surat's key labor geographies. Logistically as well, planned relocations have often made way for infrastructural developments. Consequently, planned relocations are more widespread compared to alternative approaches to in situ risk reduction through the regularization of informal settlements, capacity building, and physical risk reduction (Fawaz, 2023).

Therefore, after the 2006 flood, the SMC executed a citywide slum clearance drive in areas that concentrated migrant labor. As per senior officials in the Department of Housing and Slum Upgradation and Development, previous floods were equally, if not more devastating; however, the scale of post-disaster recovery measures was different (based on interviews with key department representatives at SMC). This was primarily possible because of developments in urban rejuvenation policies and programs at the time. One of the main reasons behind this was the "availability of a granular database of slums created a year before the flood", along with reforms in key urban sectors and local governance as part of India's largest urban renewal mission launched in 2005 (JNNURM or the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission launched in the 12th Five-Year Plan period) (personal interview, elaborated later).

Slum demolitions and evictions rooted in colonial-era spatial practices of racial segregation continue to be prevalent in Indian cities (McFarlane, 2008). In institutional lexicon, the term 'slum' refers to densely populated, structurally vulnerable informal settlements in institutional lexicon (Bhan, 2016).The vulnerability of slums is perpetuated by the interconnected aspects of spatial legality, tenurial security, urban property rights, citizenship, spatial inequality, and economic informality of the working classes (Roy, 2016; Banks et al., 2020). Moreover,

structural barriers in informal work and habitat, along with entrenched cultural and institutional boundaries, limit the mobility of racialized working groups in differentiating intersectional social identities. Spatial informality is structural and systemic and runs deeper than formally recognized in dominant institutional approaches to 'curbing' or managing informality in Indian cities (McFarlane, 2012; Krishna et al., 2020). Urban policies often fail to address the root causes of spatial informality (Roy, 2016). In the context of spatial risk management in informal labor geographies in Surat, the case of Kosad (elaborated later) demonstrates how often these approaches merely relocate and redistribute spatial risk and informality.

5.1.2 Legitimizing mass evictions in resilience practice

A year before the 2006 flood, the federal government (Ministry of Urban Development) introduced a pioneering urban flagship program called the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM).[19] Aligned with program directives, the SMC conducted a comprehensive survey of slums in Surat in 2005 (Personal interview, Slum Department). The survey gathered information on the demographic, socioeconomic, and housing situations, as well as the sanitation facilities and area-specific characteristics such as caste, ethnicity, religion, and residential status of the informal dwellers. The primary goal of JNNURM was to provide Urban Local Bodies (ULB) with soft loans or grants to facilitate effective decentralization as per the provisions of the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act.[20]

Constitutional and policy reforms in urban governance have facilitated targeted spatial interventions in informal labor geographies in Surat. These include

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[19] See current JNNURM projects in Surat
https://www.suratmunicipal.gov.in/Departments/JnNURM#:~:text=The%20government%20of%20India%20has,Service%20to%20the%20Urban%20Poor.
[20] Access reports on effectiveness of the JNNURM reforms can be accessed here:
http://yojana.gov.in/From-74-CAA-to-SMART-cities.asp

basic service provision, infrastructure upgrades, and numerous ongoing planned relocations. Over the decades, a growing body of research has examined the facilitative role of these reforms in privatizing essential service provisions and structural conditions (Veron, 2006; Chattopadhyay, 2017; Sharma, 2020). In addition to its role in creating an enabling environment for the (neo) liberalization of urban spatial governance and planning in Indian cities and urban regions (Mawdsley, 2009; Menon, 2022).

Although decentralization in spatial governance and planning is not the primary focus of this study, it remains significant. The decentralized governance framework influences the broader political economy of urban climate governance, including the rise of technocracy and elite capture of spatial planning and policies in Surat and other urban areas (Menon, 2022; Stehle et al., 2022). The importance of urban (climate) governance is evident in institutional spatial practices in how it structures spatial agency and capacities to align spatial plans with climate-resilient agendas and mobilize resources. Many of these governance reforms have empowered SMC to envision large-scale spatial development and infrastructure projects aimed at financializing the economy (Personal interviews with urban economists, CSS). As land becomes scarce, such land-based infrastructural developments are being increasingly contested (Sud 2022). To facilitate infrastructure-driven growth, cities such as Surat reconfigure land under informal use and racialized labor geographies.

Against this institutional context, this section traces the normalized spatial risk management and governance through mass evictions in the Surat post 2006 floods in the remaining section. The mainstreaming of governance reforms in spatial practices in the JNUURM (2005) years, coupled with a standardized resilience framework, led to massive spatial reconfigurations in Surat. In the following pages, I will focus on specific institutional spatial approaches in relation to racialized labor geographies in the decades after the 2006 flood. These strategies resulted in significant spatial reconfigurations across Surat's key textile labor geographies.

Additionally, these spatial reconfigurations have been challenged and resisted by many migrant groups relocated to peripheries. Some of these accounts of resettlement housing projects reveal how different migrant groups negotiate spatial reconfigurations (discussed later). These labor narratives further provide insights into emergent spatial labor associations in relation to spatial politics (Chapter 6).

5.2. Mass Evictions and Relocation in Labor Geographies

After the 2006 flood, the Surat Municipal Corporation (SMC) intensified its efforts to clear informal settlements across the city. Mass evictions across the city affected nearly 45,000 informal settlement dwellers (Bhatt, 2015). Informal settlements along the west bank of the Tapi River and the Nehru and Makai bridges were targeted for relocation. Together, these accounted for one of the largest planned citywide evictions and resettlement efforts undertaken by city authorities (Personal interview, SMC officer). Thousands of families and individuals in low-lying settlements were relocated to state-sanctioned housing projects further north and south of the city in *Kosad* and *Bhestan,* respectively. Many were displaced without being resettled.

The 2006 flood remains etched in collective memory, urban space, and artefacts. It was particularly critical to Surat's textile economy. It caused widespread disruption and economic loss in many parts of the city and brought textile production to a standstill due to slow recovery and labor shortages (see Bahinpati et al., 2017). During interviews with residents from informal settlements in the north of the city, where the flood waters were stagnant for days, respondents often pointed to old buildings and structures that still bore the marks of the 2006 flood. The SMC spearheaded recovery interventions including involuntary eviction and relocation of informal labor communities from dense informal settlements that in predominantly Muslim majority labor geographies (Personal interview, HLRN activist).

In the years after the 2006 flood, many of the evicted informal working communities were relocated to state-sanctioned affordable housing projects in Kosad and Bhestan, almost 10 to 15 km (about 9.32 mi) away from their original location (Bapu Nagar). During the focus group in Kosad, residents narrated how the relocation process was ad hoc and coercive. Many families were fragmented across different relocation sites. Interviews with community leaders and migrant workers from Kosad further elaborated on the effects of 'network losses' on the economic and social resilience of informal migrant working communities (Balachandran et al., 2022). Amar, a young rickshaw driver from Kosad, expresses the daily challenges he faces in finding work. "We struggle on a regular basis to find work", he says. "Unlike the city, there are very few labor contractors operating in this part... not many reliable contractors who can get us decent work. Unless we start something of our own at home, there's very little for us to even get by."

Amar's struggles resonate with the experiences of many others who consider themselves economically uprooted from vital opportunities and economic networks. This is particularly relevant for racialized minority groups for whom close-knit socio-spatial networks are indispensable for economic and social security.

Communities in the informal textile economy have historically relied on spatial networks for work, income stability, solidarity, and cohesion within the informal economy (as will be elaborated later). These networks are central to their survival, but their importance also challenges institutional spatial practices that are legitimized by risk management practices. Previous studies have shown that urban relocation and resettlement are rarely black or white (Ghertner, 2014; Sultana, 2014; D'Alisa and Kallis, 2016; Cotroneo, 2017). At the core of most relocation and resettlement projects, unresolved issues of coercion and accountability persist, often rooted in prevailing power asymmetries (Sultana, 2014).

Interviews and FGDs with relocated groups, discussed in detail later in this chapter, reveal the tensions and contradictions inherent in relocating informal, racialized working classes into 'formal housing.' These narratives highlight the crucial role of spatiality in marginalized labor geographies, where the agency of labor is heavily mediated by the socio-spatial networks in which they are embedded (detailed in the next section). The spatial reconfiguration that comes with relocation to the city's margins reinforces both spatial and social marginalization of informal labor (Gellner, 2014; Caldeira, 2017).

These perspectives challenge the institutional assumptions behind the 'successful' model of relocation and affordable housing aimed at enhancing economic resilience. More critically, they echo the experiences of many who have found that moving to Kosad has fragmented and alienated informal working communities from the vital socio-spatial networks essential for their 'informal resilience.' These insights into the intertwined socio-spatial processes of labor marginalization in the already exploitative geographies of informal labor contribute to a broader understanding of multidimensional urban inequality in southern cities (Chatterjee and Jodhka, 2017; Thieme et al., 2017; McFarlane, 2019).

5.2.1 Gendered labor perspectives on relocation

Insights gathered from gendered Q-FGDs, and interviews reveal the distinct ways in which labor marginalization impacts women following relocation. Migrant women from various ethnic groups in *Katargram* voiced concerns about the inadequacies in social infrastructure, particularly the urgent need for improved childcare facilities (Anganwadi), reliable access to drinking water, and better local healthcare services. For daily wage workers, the lack of secure childcare options presents a significant obstacle to their participation in the workforce. As Shamli, a home-based worker, articulated, "These settlements are made for male workers, but if women are to live and work here, we would need safe and accessible childcare systems."

The lack of adequate social infrastructure further exacerbates economic marginalization of working women. This indicates that investments in social infrastructure in climate-resilient economic restructuring of labor needs to account for social infrastructure that underpin labor mobilities and capacities to work. These infrastructural gaps are not merely inconveniences but fundamentally constrain migrant women's capacity to participate in the labor market to maintain financial stability.

For migrant women in Kosad further north, who face the dual challenges of social marginalization as minority Muslim working women and isolation from labor markets, the relocation has been particularly devastating. Many expressed frustrations at their inability to access even home-based work opportunities. Despite coming from relatively rigid patriarchal cultures, many women were able to negotiate working outside the home due to their proximity to gendered labor markets, such as domestic work and small units within textile manufacturing. However, the relocation has severely compromised their autonomy in economic and financial decisions. For example, quotes from FGDs held in Kosad illustrate how the relocation has exacerbated economic distress among working women post-relocation:

"We were doing *mazdoori* (daily wage labor), mostly *dhaaga*-cutting [thread cutting and bead work] and embellishing. After moving here, most of us lost our jobs. The Seths would throw us out even if we were half an hour late. Conveyance is a big problem here… looking at another woman in the group, she said, *sabke mard utna door jaane bhi nhi dete* [not everyone's husbands are okay with women of the household traveling that far to work every day]."

Another older woman narrated how she used to make 2,000 rupees a month. It wasn't enough to run the house, but it helped with rising food and medicine prices. Now, there is no breadwinner in the household. "I am a widow; I lost my husband 15 years ago. My son lives separately and did not want to move to Kosad. There is

nothing here for young men. I make my own living by doing thread cutting. I am somehow able to get by."

Individual interviews with women from Kosad further revealed how the loss of work has exacerbated women's vulnerability to social issues such widespread domestic abuse, abandonment, ill health, and household gender inequality. In the case of Kosad, a housing project for relocated communities (elaborated later), gendered economic resilience was severely compromised. This is largely due to the erosion of women's economic autonomy and social well-being due to spatial and social marginalization.

Saleema, a vegetable vendor, articulated the challenges of post-relocation life, highlighting the struggles with corrupt intermediaries and local officers regarding housing instalments. "We feel more unsure and tenure insecure here than we did in Bapu Nagar (slum) in the past", she said. Saleema explained that many residents like her were not provided receipts for their monthly instalment payments, leaving them without the documentation to prove they have been fulfilling their financial obligations under the social housing scheme. "We are yet to finish paying the instalments on this house that has been allocated to us... I have spent 60,000 rupees on my own. It's a 400-rupee monthly instalment… Recently, an official who used to collect these instalments fled with all the money… it was crores of rupees… And after that, we stopped paying our instalments out of fear. And after some time, they asked us to resume our payments… They let us know that the corrupt official was no longer here… they told us, "You will get your proper receipts, the functionary will come every week." Despite these reassurances, many residents, traumatized by multiple evictions and displacements, continue to struggle with feelings of insecurity regarding their legally entitled ownership of flats in Kosad.

These narratives of insecurity, corruption, and marginalization illustrate how post-relocation struggles extend beyond the economic sphere, deeply affecting the

social and emotional well-being of relocated women. Many migrant women described feeling trapped in ghetto-like conditions, even after relocation to 'formal housing.' Kosad's reputation as an 'urban slum' with communal tensions exacerbates the challenges for women seeking work as domestic helps in nearby gated residential blocks. This situation reflects the formation of labor spatial subjectivities, shaped not only by the location of relocation but also by the perceived injustice of racialized evictions and the creation of segregated labor enclaves (Lipsitz, 2007; Sherif and Sinke, 2018). FGDs and follow-up interviews revealed that even after resettlement into supposedly more secure 'formal housing', migrant working groups continue to face corruption, harassment, and intimidation, underscoring the ongoing struggles of these communities.

In addition to the challenges of rebuilding viable economic lives after resettlement due to spatial isolation and network loss, the capacity of labor to reconstitute themselves as economic actors in the informal economy is diminished. This is because of constrained mobility and reduced opportunities to gain social capital through visibility and participation in community-building processes, which were previously facilitated by hybrid state networks led by state extension workers (UCD workers), trade union representatives, and civil society groups (elaborated in Chapter 6).

To summarize, this section traces how racialized evictions and relocations, driven by institutional narratives of risk, have reconfigured labor geographies after the 2006 flood. These discussions underscore the critical role that gendered labor mobilities play in navigating the limited economic and social opportunities available for migrant women in the informal economy (Harris White and Gooptu, 2001). Spatial isolation from prime labor markets has disproportionately affected their ability to participate in the textile industry, compounding their financial instability. The institutional and labor narratives of post-disaster relocation illuminate spatial contestations at the intersections of spatial risk reduction and the heightened

economic and social marginalization of informal working communities. Diverse ethnic minority groups revealed crucial insights into the gendered dimensions of mobility and social infrastructure-spatial links that are glossed over in institutional resilience narratives.

The next section explores institutional spatial approaches to reconfiguring informal labor geographies of risk. I use the case of Kosad to illustrate how state-sanctioned affordable housing, as a key component of institutional resilience practice, shapes spatial reconfigurations. It is important to further understand the different micro-spatial logics that govern institutional spatial relations with labor geographies through housing as a spatial practice.

5.3 Institutional spatial approaches to resilience: Housing the marginalized on the margins

On 25 November 2021, I visited the Kosad Awas Project, one of India's largest affordable housing projects, to conduct focus group discussions and interviews with resettled informal labor communities. This visit was my third to Kosad and was organized with the help of a local NGO, community organizers, and my field assistant. Before these visits, I had been warned that Kosad is a challenging place. This warning was consistent with the views of various institutional actors throughout my fieldwork in Surat. By this point, I was able to appreciate why senior urban practitioners, including a Public Health Advisor at the Surat Climate Change Trust and prominent public figure in Surat, described the situation in Kosad as 'jatil' or complex.

Figure 5.1: Kosad Awas Project

Source: Author's fieldwork

Talking about relocation in Kosad and other predominantly informal Muslim settlements inadvertently triggered a deluge of reactions, memories, and narratives. This was not surprising given the historical context of racialized evictions and segregation which are connected to the broader politics of othering and Muslim *ghettoization* in Indian cities, particularly in Gujarat (Laliwala et al. 2021). For Ashraf, a respondent from Kosad, and others who experienced the violent riots before the Gujarat pogrom, the systemic marginalization of Muslims through planned relocations is a continuation of their ongoing exclusion. This issue reflects a broader pattern of spatial marginalization disproportionately affecting Dalit and Muslim working class (See 'creeping apartheid' in Yiftachel, 2009; Wahid, 2019). Interviews

with older residents from other minority labor areas in the old city revealed that the collective trauma and fear from the Gujarat riots were intentionally perpetuated through the seemingly neutral urban property market and relocation projects. Muslim workers frequently reported discrimination in the informal rental housing market and often had to rely on ethno-communal networks even for short-term rentals (as indicated in interviews with Bihari Muslim workers).

Located in the periphery of the northern zone, the Kosad Awas project is one of Surat's largest resettlement initiatives, supported by the Economically Weaker Section (EWS) housing scheme. This project is often cited as a model due to its scale and the number of families it has accommodated, following the displacement of over 45,000 people due to citywide slum demolitions. The current inhabitants of Kosad are families who were evicted from major informal settlements, including *Nehru Nagar, Subhash Nagar, Bapu Nagar*, and *Iqbal Nagar*, which were situated along the west bank of the Tapi River and under the two main city bridges, Nehru and Makai. A community leader from the relocated population expressed frustration with the resettlement:

"They say that we were relocated here to save us from recurrent monsoonal floods. Seasonal flooding was a challenge and the 2006 flood was a major one. But surely that would have affected every settlement there... why were only some of us forcefully removed while others continue to live there? We do not see relocation as a solution as many of the core issues in our day-to-day lives are unresolved and have worsened. I know the local corporator there. There is more to it. It is also about personal favors and vendetta ... I have documents to prove... you come with me to *Dhastipura*, I will show you, around twenty households had permission to live there but at a mandated distance from the riverbank. Our houses don't get flooded anymore but look around here, there is nothing here for us. You call this a better life for us?"

Even more than a decade after the relocation, frustration and apathy among the residents of Kosad remain palpable. The area looks run-down, isolated, and is often described as an 'urban slum' by its inhabitants. "We heard rumors that they were coming for us. We had no idea where we would be sent. "Something about housing 10 kilometers away in Kosad was circulating", said Iqbal, a former resident of Bapu Nagar. Representatives from local NGOs have pointed out that local authorities abandoned the relocated communities after resettlement. Residents' concerns about their quality of life, basic services, and employment remain unresolved, with little hope for future improvements. Umesh Bhai, a member of the labor extension wing at the NGO Aajeevika, mentioned in a pre-field interview that these communities are politically and culturally disengaged and do not provide essential services to local industries. He emphasized that this neglect arises from their perceived economic and political irrelevance. However, to integrate effectively into the informal economy and political sphere, racialized minority working groups need spatial privileges. These include visibility, access to networks, and opportunities. This was echoed by respondents from another civil society organization that works with migrant informal workers.

A senior field officer with decades of experience in labor organizing across precarious labor geographies in several western Indian states noted that the biggest challenge in Kosad is "restoring people's faith in institutions and state-affiliated processes." He emphasized that this is particularly challenging due to decades of trauma and deep-seated political apathy among these disadvantaged groups. Labor organizing can potentially play a significant role in structuring coherent voice and presence in claims-making and negotiating platforms available for informal labor and migrant workers. This is particularly important in the case of spatially uprooted working communities that can use state and non-state resources available to workers through trade unions and other sources to collectively negotiate spatiality and infrastructure. Negotiating from the standpoint of organized labor is often more effective than approaching it from the perspective of diverse disadvantaged social

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groups. The often-overlooked potential of informal labor organizing in state-sanctioned housing and relocation projects, which ties into economic resilience. This becomes more apparent later where I examine the situated spatial strategies that migrant workers use to negotiate concerns around spatiality.

5.3.1 Micro-segregation and social cohesion: Implications for community resilience and resilience practice

Figure 5.2: An FGD in Kosad with community leaders and other members

Source: Author's fieldwork

Residents from different communally segregated blocks in Kosad shared their experiences of micro-segregated housing in Kosad Awas project. According to the

interviews, the social interactions and community life in the settlements prior to the relocation were more fluid. By this they meant that the cultural practices and intersectional ascribed identities that differentiate different social groups in the informal labor settlements were not spatially entrenched. The settlements were mixed and enabled inter-group interactions and the formation of a collective identity as workers and residents of a particular area (Based on personal interviews with Rasheeda Ben, Community Leader).

To understand the barriers to reclaiming a collective identity in Kosad, I further pushed on the notion of collective identity. I learned that there are many barriers that psychologically and socially impede the different ethnic and religious groups to collectivize around common objectives or a common identity in Kosad. A significant barrier is the stigma attached to Kosad itself. In public discourse, residents of Kosad are often labeled as slum dwellers from "disturbed" parts of the city — surplus racialized populations that needed to be relocated. This perception of being collectively viewed as the racialized 'other' runs deep in the psyche of Kosad's residents. During interviews and focus group discussions, phrases like "kisko fark padta hai" (why would anybody care?), "hamare jaise ke saath aisa hi hota hai yahan" (people like us get treated like this only), and other expressions of being sidelined as a standby pool of workers repeatedly surfaced. These sentiments have hindered the formation of a collective sense of place and identity beyond semi-organized communally groups within Kosad.

From the residents' perspective the enforced (top-down) segregation in emerging housing projects for informal labor groups exacerbates animosity and cultural tensions between different social groups. For individuals and families who were involuntarily relocated from various settlements across the city, their sense of place and collective identity is fragmented across the different labor geographies they previously inhabited. Even a decade after the relocation, young men like Aslam still visit informal slums in the city to reclaim a sense of belonging. Like Aslam, many

residents of Kosad, both old and young, are grappling with the consequences of relocation. Their ongoing struggles with spatial identity and belonging directly affect how they view themselves, their place in the city, their economic lives, politics, aspirations, and overall spatial subjectivities. I elaborate on spatial subjectivities and spatial politics in post-disaster reconfigured labor geographies in the next chapter.

For Rasheed Ben and others, questions about work and income security often led to broader conversations about loss of place attachment and the daily struggle to survive — all in reference to the labor geographies they once inhabited. This projected a sense of alienation and economic limbo since the relocation, which has shifted focus away from current priorities and possibilities into a zone of nostalgia and fatalism.

Similarly, interviews with migrant workers from other ethnically segregated labor enclaves in Bamroli echoed these concerns. These accounts suggest that a lack of community cohesion, along with inter-ethnic conflict and suspicion, undermines the overall security of all workers within these settlements. Substantial evidence suggests that segregation and the politics of difference, particularly regarding migrant working classes, is structurally perpetuated to prevent solidarity across various identities and cultural differences (Berger, 2014). This dynamic is observed in both transnational and internal labor migration, where the axes of social difference may vary, but the spatial logic of segregation as a tool of spatial power and labor management remains clear. Indeed, spatial segregation of heterogeneous labor geographies is one of the spatial technologies of control in postcolonial urban geographies.

5.3.1.1 Implications for risk and resilience amid climate-resilient economic transitions

At the micro-scale of labor geographies in Surat, the loss of cohesion and its impacts on community resilience and social vulnerability highlight serious concerns about the depoliticized spatial logic of risk in contemporary resilience practices. This situation

prompts critical questions about which spatial relations, entities, functions, and processes are being made resilient amidst ongoing climate-resilient economic reconfigurations, and which are being compromised. The adverse effects on racialized labor are significant, and it is essential to examine how top-down spatial management perpetuates vulnerability to various climatic and non-climatic risks. The diminished ability of distinct spatial labor groups to build resilient communities in the face of climate-economic restructuring exacerbates these concerns.

Om Prakash, a middle-aged man from Bihar and a resident of *Bamroli,* described how ethnic tensions in close quarters breed suspicion and disharmony. This environment undermines cohesion, solidarity, and the formation of resilient labor associations — elements crucial for migrant workers in Surat's precarious informal labor market. Furthermore, the loss of cohesion at the micro-scale disrupts the socio-spatial continuities and flows essential to informal work, particularly in textile manufacturing. According to Om Prakash, the systemic production of distrust and conflict erodes the workers' ability to fulfill their roles effectively. From a security perspective, despite his privileged caste-gender identity, Om Prakash observes that the fostered inter-ethnic conflict within the settlement feeds the perception of migrant workers as dangerous and reinforces spatial segregation.

Additionally, the recent revival of the Disturbed Areas Act (DAA) highlights a politically motivated push to reinforce racial segregation, particularly affecting Surat's textile labor geographies. The term "Disturbed", as defined by the DAA, deepens negative stereotypes and biases against Muslim minorities, enabling discriminatory spatial practices (Laliwala et al., 2021). This act perpetuates institutionalized marginalization and intersects with modern urban policies to enforce racial segregation (Tejani, 2023; Barua, 2022). Local activists and journalists report that the stigmatization associated with the DAA negatively impacts decisions on affordable and social housing, worsening socio-economic disadvantages for minority working classes (Jaffrelot and Gayer, 2012). By shaping long-term urban

planning and resource allocation, the DAA entrenches spatial segregation and limits housing access.

This systemic exclusion undermines Surat's resilience and disaster risk management strategies, exacerbating vulnerability and reinforcing marginalization in racialized labor geographies. The DAA's impact on urban spatial planning further intensifies spatial vulnerability and marginalization, challenging efforts to address spatial informality and risk in minority geographies. Thus, the concurrent use of exclusionary policies like the Disturbed Areas Act (DAA) and resilience-focused risk management in Surat's informal labor geographies highlights fundamental contradictions in institutional spatial strategies. On one hand, the DAA entrenches segregation and marginalization, reinforcing systemic biases against marginalized communities. On the other hand, urban resilience strategies and housing policies are purportedly designed to address spatial vulnerability in informal labor geographies. Moreover, such spatial strategies fundamentally undermine the concept of inclusive urban citizenship. Spatial exclusion through acts like this entrenches spatial vulnerability and restricts potential political channels for minority labor communities to engage effectively.

5.4 Situated Narratives of Reconfigurations in Post-disaster Labor Geographies

This section shifts the focus from institutional spatial approaches in informal labor geographies to the situated spatial narratives of labor. It centers on spatial subjectivities, specifically exploring themes of mobility, autonomy, and spatial agency as they inform the analysis of labor's spatial politics. By juxtaposing spatial subjectivities with dominant spatial politics, the discussion reveals how socially differentiated labor geographies are subsumed within urban politics, mediated by specific spatial relations and contexts. Kosad serves as an illustrative ethnographic case throughout this chapter. While labor experiences in Surat's racialized informal

labor geographies share commonalities, Kosad provides crucial insights into the interplay of dominant urban politics, racialized margins, and emerging capitalist dynamics within climate-resilient labor reconfigurations (further elaborated in Chapter 6).

Insights from the FGDs and migrant interviews in Kosad highlight the spatially intertwined dynamics of labor security and resilience within the specific context of Kosad. These perspectives underscore the significance of situated spatial relations, particularly in relation to infrastructure, mobility, and socio-spatial networks and visibility. In Kosad, these elements are crucial cornerstones of resilient labor life-worlds. The spatial dimensions of labor relations and subjectivities are crucial for identifying which aspects of resilience in labor geographies need to be reconsidered amid emergent climate-resilient urbanism.

Figure 5.3: A close-up view of the blocks in Kosad where FGDs and interviews were held

Source: Author's fieldwork

Initially reserved, Ashraf eventually opened up during the interview. Reflecting on life in Kosad over the past decade, he remarked "It was never about housing the displaced… was it? Why bother rationalizing something that we all know was never in our interest?" Here, "our" referred to minority working classes like himself. Ashraf pointed to the group of women from the earlier focus group discussion (FGD) and added, "There is only so much our collective rage… our efforts can do." Ashraf and others who had faced multiple forced displacements had much to share. Rasheeda Ben, a prominent community leader from Kosad's Muslim-majority block, displayed visible agitation during the FGD. Her resolve to share their stories post-relocation was notable. Her commanding presence and determined demeanor explain why the Kosad community chose her as their representative.

After the FGD, we delved into her role as a community leader and political mobilizer. When asked about her motivation, she expressed a desire to "revive the vitality of collective life in Kosad and instill a sense of hope and viable futures" for her people. This yearning to restore a lost way of life underscored a shared sense of nostalgia and loss among many residents. Rasheeda explained that, despite their previous life in slums, both men and women had more autonomy and resources. Relocation to Kosad had disrupted their strong informal networks and limited their mobility and participation in the city's economic and cultural life. "Now, most of our youth are unemployed… there are no schools, no education, and nothing to look forward to. Drug addiction is a huge issue here… it is consuming our children, and we feel unsafe in our homes. It is unsafe for women and girls to walk around in the evening."

Another participant echoed this sentiment during the FGD, stating, "Even though we are no longer in slums, we are worse off today", a sentiment that others nodded in agreement with. Many residents of Kosad felt coerced into buying one-bedroom flats in the Awas Yojana housing scheme, feeling misled by promises of a dignified life. "We were promised a life of dignity after living in 'slums' for all our

lives", noted one FGD respondent. However, daily realities have not improved as expected. "Relocation to Kosad has eroded our capacity to seek work, labor, and move forward in life", another participant remarked. Residents continue to face dismal living conditions despite being in a 'housing society'.

Kosad's relocated communities struggle with ongoing institutional neglect since their move. Ashraf expressed concern, saying, "We have heard rumors that we will be relocated again." Fears are compounded by rising real estate prices in Kosad, driven by the completion of a major transport corridor, the ring road, which may prompt further displacements (Interview with Beena Ben, a local shopkeeper). Despite these uncertainties, residents persist in their fight for essential services like safe drinking water, primary healthcare, waste management, and security —services they have been denied for over a decade. The provision of these services, such as water supply, is managed through a public-private partnership (PPP) model, with local private companies and intermediaries handling delivery. As Rasheeda Ben pointed out during the FGD, "Drinking water supply has been a major problem from the beginning. Both brokers and companies frequently change, and we do not know who to register our complaints with or follow up."

Often, community representatives trying to mitigate these challenges find themselves entangled in a complex network of private subcontractors and intermediaries, whose institutional obscurity impedes any form of accountability. The residents reported resorting to informal political brokers, who often exploit distress and helplessness to cultivate political patronage. In acute situations, Rasheeda Ben and other leaders also privately source water from broker-mediated local water mafias. This demonstrates how socially marginalized groups on urban peripheries, constrained by limited options, can become entangled in exploitative patronage networks. Reliance on such networks exposes governance gaps in urban margins and highlights the contextual drivers of coercive assimilation into dominant politics, which will be elaborated later.

Rasheeda Ben further described feeling robbed of the lives and vital labor networks and relations that they had built incrementally over the years, only to be pushed out of the city as surplus labor. Despite the uncertain legal status of their former informal settlements and the negative connotations associated with 'slum,' residents of Kosad still express a deep sense of belonging when reflecting on their previous lives. This nostalgia is coupled with growing anger and resentment among younger working men and women, which community leaders Like Rasheeda Ben are trying to channel politically. These leaders are using this discontent to reinforce the community's political alliance with the dominant party, the Hindu nationalist BJP.

Looking at the younger, more voracious members of the group, Ashraf said somewhat dismissively that they needed a fight bigger than they could handle. He then quipped "perhaps it helps to forget the mundane hassles and boredom of living here." To Ashraf, this presents a critical paradox of marginalized communities engaging politically with parties that have historically victimized them. Despite this alignment often being driven by a need for visibility and recognition, it reflects a broader strategy by which these communities attempt to reclaim dignity and negotiate their position within a politically and economically marginalized context. This political engagement, while potentially contradictory, is seen as a necessary tactic for gaining influence and addressing their dual marginalization from both structural discrimination and informal labor conditions. For residents of Kosad and across India, such alignments are a pragmatic response to negotiating systemic neglect and politicized social differences in informal labor geographies. When successful, these alignments allow minority communities to negotiate more effectively with elected officials and authorities. This strategy, commonly employed by informal labor communities, helps them navigate and leverage their position within the hybrid urban political machinery (Auerbach 2019).

Referring to their collective experiences of life post-relocation in Kosad, the conversations gravitated toward the everyday struggles and the exhaustion that has

set in from having to negotiate and fight for the most basic needs. This constant battle has eroded their capacities to 'bounce back' and move forward — critical elements of resilience, regardless of how one defines it. Informality is deeply embedded in labor geographies, where institutionalized formal housing often attempts to impose reconfiguration. Kosad exemplifies how a lack of recognition for local informal economies — where laborers act as spatial agents — can perpetuate informality even within supposedly 'formal' affordable housing structures.

Moreover, the exclusion of labor from legitimate forms of formal and informal employment means that informal institutions and shadow networks play a critical role in providing essential security, services, and social infrastructure. These networks are often tied to forms of political clientelism, further complicating the landscape. Detailed interviews with community leaders, such as Rasheeda Ben, highlight that political realignment with the dominant regional party (BJP) has become a strategy for marginalized groups to regain political leverage. This approach resonates with the long-standing clientelist politics in Indian cities, particularly within informal urban contexts (Bharathi et al., 2024).

The next section further develops this in relation to situated spatial approaches to negotiating reconfigured labor geographies. The collective sense of being continually pushed to the margins — socially, economically, and spatially — underscores how Kosad represents the intersection of racialized labor geographies and urban margins. This intersectionality highlights the complex ways in which systemic neglect and political realignment shape the precarious lives of Kosad's residents (Bharathi et al., 2024)[21]. The decisions to engage in situated politics or not are shaped by the collective spatial subjectivities of minority groups in Kosad. Community leaders are essential in representing the spatial subjectivities of minority groups and shaping localized negotiation strategies. They translate these

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[21] This study demonstrates how spatial segregation in informal geographies mediate strategic emplacement of public goods and services within the broader framework of political clientelism.

perspectives to external actors — such as researchers, civil society members, and aid workers — ensuring that voices from the margins are amplified. This highlights the critical role these embedded actors could play in informing climate-resilient reconfigurations by drawing on labor's contextual experiences of navigating emergent spatial vulnerabilities and opportunities, offering insights beyond those provided by generic civil society representations.

5.5 Negotiating Reconfiguration: Constrained Agency and Labor Autonomy

Building on the situated narratives of post-disaster reconfigurations in selected labor geographies, this section examines situated negotiations of labor. Recognizing the autonomy of labor allows an understanding of how labor geographies are reconfigured by and simultaneously reconfigure dominant spatial imaginaries. The section builds on illustrative insights from interviews and life histories with migrant leaders and community representatives from Kosad and other micro-labor geographies.

5.5.1 Negotiating from below

Interviews with Rasheeda Ben and two other prominent community leaders from Kosad offered valuable insights into how communities in Kosad have been coping with the challenges that arose during the FGD. To address the spatial disadvantages in Kosad that limit workers' access to market opportunities, Rasheeda Ben emphasized how community leaders are intensifying their efforts to build and strengthen relational networks through co-ethnic labor associations in prime textile labor geographies. This shift highlights the increasing recognition of the role of relational agencies in navigating spatial vulnerabilities. The pandemic further exacerbated gaps in market access and job security, prompting a strategic shift to utilize existing networks more effectively. As a result, some women in Kosad have started securing home-based contract work through these connections. This marks a significant though ongoing effort to address their spatial and economic challenges.

These networks are crucial not only for accessing much-needed economic opportunities but also for facilitating vital informal channels of communication and politics at the micro-scale. Building alliances with politically active and economically strategic labor settlements in the city's prime economic zones is highly valued. As Umesh Bhai, a Kosad resident and mechanic, noted, "When city officials and corporators ignore you, abandon you, and make you invisible, you must find alternative ways to make yourself count." Whether these approaches will improve prospects for Kosad's residents remains to be seen. However, they indicate that, contrary to the widespread narrative of political apathy, Kosad's residents are beginning to exercise their constrained spatial agency to negotiate their conditions and find the necessary tools and language to do so.

The interviews with migrant workers across various settlements underscore the crucial role of location in informal economies, which are structured around situated material-spatial relations. For instance, Ramesh, who once worked as a contractual employee in factories, lost his relatively stable job after relocating to Kosad. Now, he drives an autorickshaw on lease. However, due to Kosad's location, driving an auto in the area is not a viable long-term option. In his previous job, Ramesh had the flexibility to choose shifts that suited him or to switch to another factory if mistreated by the owner or not paid on time. Now, his options are severely limited, leaving him with little to no choice. Young working men in Kosad face even fewer options and have little agency to negotiate the terms of their informal work when hired by labor contractors from outside the area.

Similarly, Mishra Ji, a former textile worker from Gorakhpur, now runs a small mess for migrant power loom workers in centrally located *Katargram*. He emphasized how vital location is for informal migrant workers, as the hierarchical informal labor market is deeply embedded in spatially based social norms, relations, and capital that influence labor recruitment, retention, and mobility within and beyond specific markets in the city. Drawing from his own experience in the informal

textile labor market, he explained how his relationships with Seths, contractors, and superintendents enabled him to borrow credit, change jobs, and eventually start his own business. His mess now attracts migrant clientele from the same factories where he once worked.

Academic scholarship has long underscored the relevance of migrant networks and sociological associations in domestic and transnational migrant geography (Rigg, 2007). At the scale of labor geographies in cities and urban regions, these detailed observations on intra-city reconfiguration, labor spatiality, and mobility reinforce the argument that spatial configuration is critical to the dynamics of micro-labor geographies. By focusing on the spatial context of relational processes within labor geographies, we can better understand how spatiality contributes to the resilience of networked informal labor practices. For instance, many men in Kosad remain trapped in exploitative ad-hoc daily wage work. Building and maintaining labor-broker networks are crucial for informal workers. To shift from precarious ad hoc work to more secure informal salaried work, workers must integrate into informal labor market networks operating within specific urban labor geographies. Labor geographies in *Kosad* and *Bhestan* lack the robust networks of brokers and labor contractors that typically mediate informal labor supply and negotiate hiring terms for migrant workers with varying skills.

In contrast, relatively stable labor geographies, where institutional efforts focus less on infrastructural reconfigurations and more on consolidating a stable labor pool for zone-specific demands, offer alternative spatial approaches for migrants. Interviews with migrants from these established labor geographies in the northern central zones provided valuable insights. Shashikant, a prominent Oriya migrant leader from *Bamroli* — a densely populated textile zone in Surat with workers from Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar — was particularly eager to discuss the social lives of workers in his community. As a second-generation migrant in Surat, Shashikant has evidently prospered. In recent years, he has successfully united

influential Oriyas in Surat to form a relatively class-agnostic cultural association with migrant Oriya workers. His dedication to creating a cultural platform that fosters a sense of belonging among Oriya migrants from rural hinterlands was evident during the interviews.

Figure 5.4: Bamroli Oriya migrant settlement

Source: Author's fieldwork

Even though the rate of enrolment and participation of informal workers has been underwhelming, he and his collaborators are hopeful that it will pick up. "It is a bit disappointing that the association is most active during political rallies and events when our platform is utilized by local BJP leaders to consolidate the Oriya migrant worker base." However, Shashikant aspired for this association to be more

than a political vehicle. "Although I do not have a problem with shaping the political consciousness and politics of our workers", he would be happier for the association to unite *Oriyas* around a shared cultural heritage and identity in a foreign land which has very little to offer to marginalized workers from the rural hinterlands of Odisha.

Additionally, FGDs in these settlements revealed that, despite facing similar precarity in informal labor geographies, workers have some access to active trade unions due to more stable contracts in nearby textile factories. Interviews with labor representatives and legal aid workers from unions, such as the Gujarat Shramik Trade Union (GSTU) and the All-India Trade Union Congress (AITUC), indicate that, although evolving labor laws and diminishing union power pose significant challenges, some efforts to organize persist at the settlement level. These unions are often focused more on settlement-specific issues rather than the broader precarity of informal work.

"Labor associations from certain informal settlements (requesting anonymity) that supply workers to factories notorious for violating hours and abusing workers frequently seek advice", explained a union leader from GSTU. Workers commonly seek assistance with issues related to casual contracts, informal lending practices by Seths, conflicts with labor superintendents in the diamond and textile industries, rental housing problems, inadequate or non-compensation for workplace accidents, occupational hazards, poor working conditions, and insufficient safety provisions for female workers (based on personal interviews). This highlights how labor associations, by addressing both economic and spatial informality, reveal critical gaps in current climate-resilient reconfigurations and underscore the need to integrate spatial vulnerabilities within broader economic frameworks.

5.5. Hybrid Spatial Approaches: Micro-spatial Platforms and Gendered Labor Autonomy

This section examines emerging spatial approaches in labor geographies, where institutional presence is more enabling and follows a hybrid community approach to deliver place-based development to migrant groups. I examine labor approaches in relation to state-facilitated Self-help Groups (SHGs) and *Mahila Samitis.* These perspectives provide a comparative understanding of institutional approaches and local responses across key textile labor areas, such as *Katargram, Ved, Udhna, and Bamroli.* Women's self-help groups (SHGs) and Urban Community Development (UCD) facilitated *Mahila Mandals* serve as powerful examples of community-led platforms that shape migrant spatial subjectivities and gendered autonomy. These platforms illustrate how micro-labor geographies in Surat influence and are influenced by such initiatives. The following insights highlight how these institutional and community-driven approaches influence migrant relational agencies and sociality in prime textile labor geographies.

5.5.2.1 Self-help groups and migrant economic resilience amid crises

Women's self-help groups and local Mahila Mandals are facilitated by the local NGO *Navsarajan* in these informal labor geographies. These are powerful examples of hybrid migrant labor platforms. These relatively autonomous labor platforms undertake various economic, cultural, affective, and community-building roles to build the social resilience of migrant labor communities. While SHGs primarily focus on mobilizing capital, they also play a crucial role in social mobilization and welfare support within migrant labor settlements. In Surat's dynamic informal urban environment, SHGs not only foster financial inclusion and micro-entrepreneurship among migrant women but also offer vital support in other areas. During FGDs, women shared how SHGs provided solidarity during personal crises, assisted victims

of domestic abuse or harassment, and delivered training in adult literacy, welfare scheme awareness, and family health.

Shyama Ben, who has led the Mahila Mandal in *Katargram* for nearly a decade, highlights the importance of cultivating a strong sense of community in diverse migrant labor areas. She emphasizes that fostering ownership and autonomy within Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and Mahila Mandals is crucial for their effectiveness. To ensure community ownership, she organizes internal training for members to take on leadership roles and uses a peer nomination process. She believes that "sharing responsibility promotes ownership and addresses the diverse concerns of various social groups within the community." However, despite the democratic design of these platforms, they do not always represent all migrant groups uniformly. This variation is influenced by factors such as co-ethnic participation, spatial demographics, neighborhood social dynamics, and the proximity and reputation of the local Urban Community Development (UCD) office, where meetings are generally held. Insights from new SHG members in *Katargram* revealed that these factors significantly affect the inclusiveness and effectiveness of these community-led initiatives.

Despite the challenges of retaining SHG membership, particularly among migrants due to the unpredictable nature of informal work, these groups have successfully fostered lasting friendships and support networks. "Many women in these groups have found business collaborations and self-employment ideas through SHG meetings and events", said Shyama Ben encouraging others to speak up. Some women took out loans to supplement their household income with home-based work, such as mask-making, during the pandemic. "We deliver masks in bulk to a nearby wholesale market and get paid the same day", shared a long-term SHG member.

These small ventures, such as mask-making and business collaborations, significantly strengthened the economic resilience of informal migrant households in

Surat's textile industry, which had been severely impacted by Covid-19 (based on the FGD). In another predominantly Muslim settlement, women benefited from Navsarjan's Mahila Samiti-led upskilling and training programs for home-based workers in the absence of state welfare. These platforms are crucial in supporting marginalized labor geographies facing risks such as eviction, displacement, social marginalization, and economic precarity. Interviews and FGDs with women, primarily home-based textile workers, highlighted the vital role these platforms play in creating opportunities for migrant women from different social groups in central labor geographies.

Figure 5.5: A Q-FGD in progress with a group of SHG members supported by Navsarjan in an informal settlement

Source: Author's fieldwork

The growing number of migrant members in the Mahila Mandals testifies to the value that migrant workers place on community-led associations (personal interview). These migrant-driven platforms not only demonstrate the potential to

bolster economic resilience of precarious informal migrant households, but also serve as powerful vehicles for mobilizing community action around gendered labor aspirations, social norms, challenges and opportunities for self and community development. However, to enhance inclusive and equitable outcomes, especially in heterogeneous migrant labor geographies, integrating a spatial design perspective into these neighborhood platforms is crucial.

5.5.2.2 Facilitated self-provisioning

"We look out for each other; together, we have done so much", shared a Muslim woman from a settlement behind Surat's Millennium Market. In this predominantly Muslim community, situated precariously behind Surat's largest textile market, Navsarjan and CDS extension workers have been deeply involved in community development. This settlement, which had previously faced violent demolition and displacement, now thrives on a strong sense of solidarity among its residents, CDS workers, and Navsarjan representatives. For nearly a decade, Navsarjan has been working closely with this community, focusing on the incremental improvement of physical and social infrastructure in one of Surat's most marginalized micro-labor areas. For instance, despite the settlement's lack of piped water access, residents attribute this issue not to tenure insecurity, as often assumed, but to ongoing rivalries with local political networks that control water distribution in informal settlements along the railway lines.

In contrast, settlements on the other side of the railway enjoy easier access to drinking water, illustrating the uneven distribution of resources and the complex socio-political dynamics shaping the lived realities of these communities. Moreover, political intermediaries play a crucial role in shaping socio-spatial illegalities. This demonstrates how situated urban political forces strategically leverage illegality to structure power dynamics within micro-labor geographies.

To address ongoing water insecurity, Navsarjan representatives facilitated an agreement between neighboring settlements to collectively access and store water from a public piped supply. Members of both settlements worked on a shared internal storage and distribution system. Although not entirely reliable, this community-facilitated system is more cost-effective and feasible than relying solely on exploitative water mafias. 'We are proud of our collective achievements over the years', stated an Anganwadi worker. Nagima, a proud mother of the two, pointed to an auto-constructed room with a tin roof like the rest of the settlement. She explained that they had constructed an *Anganwadi* (nursery) for their children that doubles up as an office for SHG meetings and community events. Despite the settlement's dilapidated exterior resembling that of other slums, she expressed pride in their cohesive community, whose members supported each other through thick and thin. A few months after fieldwork, during a follow-up interview with a Navsarjan representative, I found out that the settlement had been razed to the ground. The houses and lives that the community had painstakingly constructed for over a decade were demolished, and the families were displaced once again.

These cases illustrate the influence of neoliberal resilience strategies on informal labor geographies, where the state shifts the burden of social welfare and development onto heterogeneous migrant labor communities, thereby evading its responsibility for equitable governance. Labor communities are compelled to self-provision within the constraints of structural precarity, utilizing contextual resources, hybrid networks, and localized governance systems. They self-organize through civil society groups, community-based organizations, and brokered arrangements to navigate spatial-structural challenges. However, this offloading of state duties exposes the limitations of neoliberal resilience, as these adaptive efforts ultimately highlight the persistent vulnerabilities and marginalization entrenched in informal labor geographies.

5.6 Discussion

5.6.1 Spatial reconfigurations of risk-labor geographies: Institutional approaches to resilience

The first section of this chapter examines institutional spatial approaches to reconfiguring labor geographies of risk following the 2006 flood. By engaging with institutional spatial narratives and perspectives, this section underscores the entanglement of risk, informality, and the economic value of labor within Surat's textile geography. Spatial risk in informal labor geographies is both structurally and spatially intertwined. The economic and reproductive value of labor in these geographies is intrinsically linked to spatially localized industries, such as textiles and domestic work, especially in Surat's central and northern zones. These insights reveal contradictions within institutional spatial risk management when analyzed through the lens of informal labor geographies and their governing spatial logics. A critical barrier to addressing spatial informality and risk is the production of exploitable labor, which is itself a product of spatial and material informality (Richmond, et al., 2018). Consequently, spatial risk management faces a dual challenge: addressing spatial informality to manage and mitigate risks without disrupting the localized networks that depend on these informal labor geographies (Banks et al., 2020). This conundrum legitimizes resilience as a dominant spatial strategy that guides infrastructural reconfigurations in overlapping geographies of risk and labor.

Building on the previous chapter, this section further explores infrastructural approaches in Surat, including disaster-resilience infrastructure, such as the Tapi river embankment and city-wide early-warning networks, as well as climate-resilience infrastructure for economic resilience investments in transit-oriented development and rapid transit infrastructure. A crucial pillar of resilience practice is addressing spatial informality through affordable housing and infrastructure in labor

geographies. Recent developments have reinstated the centrality of affordable housing within the framework of climate-resilient urbanism, as described in Chapter 6.

However, affordable housing is also critical for contextualizing institutional spatial approaches to reconfiguring labor geographies and spatial risk. The analysis reveals that resilience-guided spatial approaches often result in the redistribution and peripheralization of spatial risks through emerging housing projects on the outskirts. Rather than fundamentally addressing spatial vulnerability, these approaches often involve the spatial relocation of racialized labor geographies. Kosad exemplifies this through its experience of risk reproduction via relocation to mass-affordable housing on the periphery — a pattern observed elsewhere in state-sanctioned mass housing relocations in Chennai and Mumbai (Coelho et al., 2022).

5.6.2 Labor of 'informal resilience': Approaches to negotiating spatial reconfiguration

The second part of the chapter focuses on labor perspectives, examining the lived realities of spatial reconfiguration and its impact on labor spatial subjectivities amid ongoing climate-resilient transformations. Across various micro-labor geographies, the loss of informal socio-spatial networks and restrictive labor mobilities emerge as significant adverse outcomes which further entrench labor vulnerabilities. Additionally, spatial reconfigurations tied to imposed ethno-religious segregation — ostensibly to maintain cultural harmony — often disrupt social cohesion, exacerbating inter-group tensions and intolerance. In networked informal labor settings, such tensions erode capacities to organize, build cohesion, and foster community resilience, which are essential for managing everyday precarity.

Residents of Kosad and Bamroli report that micro-segregation within labor settlements, reinforced by institutional practices, exacerbates inter-ethnic and communal tensions. This directly influences the economic and social security of

informal labor populations by reinforcing cultural boundaries that undermine social cohesion. Crucially, community resilience and economic security in informal labor geographies depend on cohesion that transcends communal divisions.

The spatial narratives from Kosad further illustrate the intersection of spatial politics — particularly Hindu nationalism — with resilience practices through affordable housing. Kosad exemplifies how institutionalized discriminatory politics in spatial practices reproduce spatial informality and risk. Instruments such as the Disturbed Areas Act and institutional racism against disadvantaged intersectional social groups, including Muslim minority groups, perpetuate segregation within labor geographies (Jaffrelot, 2007; Bharathi et al., 2021).

This chapter concludes by analyzing situated spatial approaches to managing spatial reconfigurations within diverse micro-labor geographies. It elucidates how labor communities adapt to and negotiate these changes, emphasizing the role of contextually embedded relations, hybrid networks, and transactional logics. These factors are pivotal in shaping how communities address spatial disadvantages and leverage reconfigured opportunities related to mobility, visibility, and security.

Findings demonstrate how spatial approaches are significantly influenced by the specific micro-contexts of reconfigured labor geographies. These contexts not only shape spatial insecurity and opportunities but also determine the platforms and resources available for labor communities to strategize. Key platforms include hybrid clientelist political networks, broker-mediated private provisions, NGO and UCD-facilitated self-help groups (SHGs), and trade unions. Despite the diversity in vulnerability and resource availability, a common feature across these spatial approaches is the inherent capacity of labor communities to engage in self-governance. This capacity enables them to manage risks and address the political and economic factors driving informal labor relations within their micro-geographic settings.

The chapter reveals that while labor geographies exhibit significant capacity to assert agency and navigate the precarity imposed by neoliberal spatial policies, the practice of self-governance in racialized labor contexts — facing persistent risks of eviction, dispossession, and threats to social reproduction — often underscores an extension of neoliberal resilience practices. I further elaborate on this in the concluding chapter of the thesis.

However, observations also suggest that amplyfying labor's organizing potential through existing legal and governance platforms such as labor laws, trade unions, and hybrid spatial platforms is possible by integrating spatial and economic informality and differentiated citizenship norms structuring vulnerability into the discourse on spatial risk and resilience governance.

6. ASSOCIATIONS

This chapter explores emergent spatial associations in relation to the governance of labor geographies. Building on previous chapters that examined the institutionalization of resilience within Surat's informal labor geographies, this chapter focuses primarily on state-sanctioned housing as a key resilience practice in Surat's labor geographies. Conceptually, 'association' refers to the convergence of spatial actors, institutional practices, and logics in the management and governance of informal labor and labor geographies (e.g., Truelove, 2019). Empirically, 'associations' capture both the emergent institutional spatial relations with emergent affordable housing for migrant informal workers, and the situated hybrid migrant labor associations within reconfigured informal geographies. The illustrative cases highlight the associative capacities of hybrid networks in context of micro-labor geographies that govern and are governed by changing institutional-labor spatial relations.

The chapter underscores that housing as a form of institutional resilience practice facilitates spatial management and governance of informal labor mobilities and labor geographies. Overall, the ongoing strategic alignment with the regional affordable housing market highlights how resilience is increasingly becoming infrastructure-centric amidst climate-economic shifts in the city. Going forward, affordable housing and infrastructure development are likely to solidify infrastructural dominance in climate-resilient urbanism in Surat. Given the focus on spatial relation with labor, that chapter emphasizes spatial associations and contextual drivers that mediate how resilience facilitates institutional governance of migrant labor.

6.1. Background and Structure

Institutional alignment with prevailing state-sanctioned affordable housing policies and programs is a key element of resilience practices in Surat (see Chapter 4). Housing is a critical spatial-structural process that significantly impacts the informal labor market, racialized labor mobilities and geographies. It also mediates overall labor interactions in urban politics, culture, economy, and governance by situating labor as a key spatial actor in the city. Thus, the convergence of resilience and housing in racialized labor geographies grants substantial discursive and material power to urban institutions to reconfigure, manage, and govern informal migrant labor in Surat. This chapter argues that resilience-housing associations in labor geographies reveal under-theorized and under-examined relationships between climate-resilient urbanism and informal labor. This is particularly relevant given the rise of affordable and state-sanctioned financialized housing models, and resilience practices driven by climate-resilient infrastructure logic in Surat and other Indian cities (see Chapter 4 on Mutation).

Building on the infrastructural orientation in spatial reconfigurations discussed earlier, this chapter examines situated labor associations in reconfigured labor geographies. It advances critical urban climate scholarship by exploring how racialized assimilation of intersectional social differences is integrated into dominant institutional imaginaries of climate-resilient cities in the Global North and South alike. For instance, Ponder's (2021) comparative assessment of climate finance in majority-Black cities highlights how financial exploitation is normalized through climate bonds mobilized by the 'global urban resilience complex,' which profits from legacies of inequitable race relations in contemporary North American cities (ibid). Majority-Black cities, as margins in the world-city hierarchy, illustrate complex climate-capitalist relations of extraction and the long-term implications of financialized urban resilience within the framework of racial capitalism (Ponder, 2021).

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The latter half of the chapter further contributes to a nuanced understanding of the constrained agency of labor in geographies reconfigured by climate-economic resilience practices, which are likely to intensify soon. Despite differences in urban contexts, conceptual and analytical parallels across climate-resilient urban geography emerge due to similar institutional processes and approaches driving financialized global climate resilience. These intersections with global urban margins and structurally disadvantaged labor geographies highlight the broader relevance of these dynamics.

6.1.1. Chapter Structure

This chapter is structured as follows. The analytical theme of associations is applied to spatial associations at two intersecting levels. These include spatial associations in housing-infrastructure relations from the perspective of institutional resilience practice and contextual emergent labor associations in reconfigured labor geographies. The first section examines the institutionalization of resilience practice through state-sanctioned affordable housing and infrastructure relations in labor geographies in the case of Surat. The second half examines emergent migrant labor associations across select labor geographies in the core textile production zones of the city (see Chapter 3).

Overall, the chapter provides empirical observations on emerging spatial associations, focusing on infrastructure-housing dynamics and situated labor associations. It highlights the different spatial logics driving these associations in relation to racialized labor geographies. The chapter concludes with a discussion that integrates these observations. It illustrates how emergent associations within institutional resilience practices are reinforcing resilience as a city-wide spatial strategy for governing migrant labor geographies.

6.2 Framing 'Housing' in Institutional Resilience Narrative

Affordable housing is key to Surat's resilience agenda. It is thought to address the multiple intersecting climate and socioeconomic risks that are exacerbated by spatial informality (see Chapter 4). To understand the ongoing discursive and material reconfigurations in labor geographies related to state-sanctioned affordable housing projects and resilience, it is crucial to contextualize them within prevailing urban housing discourses. This approach helps in situating the deepening institutional associations with affordable housing, spatial reconfigurations, and emerging associations in informal labor geographies. Surat, currently the eighth largest city in the country, exemplifies the strategic relevance of the resilience-affordable housing market. It is positioned as an emerging market for speculative real estate, driven by increasing public demand for differentially priced housing (Das and Sahu, 2019; Mukherjee and Véron, 2023).

The institutional resilience narrative identifies 'housing' under chronic stress due to high levels of migration and urbanization (see Surat City Resilience Plan, 2011). The narrative frames 'migration' as a key driver of multiple chronic stresses that exacerbates pressures on public service infrastructure, public health, transport, solid waste management, and expansion of informal settlement which in turn compounds climate risks and vulnerabilities to urban floods, heat and other cascading risks of informality (ibid). For city authorities, investments in affordable housing amounts to long-term investments in urban resilience, as it addresses multiple interrelated risks and drivers of spatial informality in Surat's migrant labor geographies.

The official resilience narrative positions migrants as a primary source of stress on public infrastructure and housing (Surat City Resilience Plan, 2011). City officials further attribute challenges in social cohesion and living standards to Surat's 'floating' migrant population, which is perceived as a threat to the cultural hegemony

of *Suratis* (Personal interview with the CRO). As previously discussed, resilience objectives are integrated into prevailing institutional spatial approaches and logics that delineate, reconfigure, and manage spatial risk in informal labor geographies. These enduring spatial strategies, which seek to mitigate chronic stress and risks associated with informal labor geographies are institutionally aligned with normative urban risk-resilience frameworks (Chapters 4 and 5). By legitimizing the ongoing reconfigurations of migrant labor geographies throughout Surat, resilience framework reinstates existing urban spatial planning and zoning practices, leading to the eviction, demolition, and eradication of informal settlements. Consequently, displaced and evicted populations are relocated to peripheral areas and zones designated for low-income and affordable housing projects.

Additionally, long-standing public perceptions and discourses around the figure of the migrant as the 'racialized other' feeds public anxiety about urban crime and violence, culturally, reinforcing spatial politics of segregation and enclaving of migrant labor geographies (based on interviews with employers and personal field observation). Scholars observe that cultural tropes like 'cultural difference' and 'vegetarianism' as proxy for heteropatriarchal upper caste politics of Hindutva, are used to justify spatial exclusion concerning racialized labor and minority geographies in the city (Tejani, 2023). Hindutva's cultural politics is depoliticized through narratives of food, clothing, and aesthetics, increasingly becoming an insidious force in contemporary racialized spatial politics, marginalization, and urban segregation in Gujarat (Yagnik and Sheth, 2005). The perceived threat of the racialized other is part of Gujarat's linger communal history and finds its way into institutional practices and spatial policies through institutional networks, elite capture, electoral politics, and public discourse (Lobo, 2022).

These key discursive and cultural influences that animate resilience and affordable housing practices in relation to racialized labor geographies are also reflected in how migration is framed in spatial policy narratives. Despite the obvious

non-linear relationship between economic resilience, labor informality, and informal labor geographies, normative risk and resilience discourses, many academic studies on climate-migration linkages tend to perpetuate the monolithic framing of migrants (Paprocki 2020; Parsons and Nielson, 2021). Consequently, normative approaches to resilience and increasing adaptation in southern cities tend to reproduce practices that either victimize or valorize migration and migrants. This poses the risk of overstating or understating migrant agency and stakes in relation to spatial approaches that seek to facilitate, enable, and govern mobilities and migration, decontextualized from its situated spatial embeddedness and identity of labor.

The depoliticized framing of migration in urban climate discourses has been criticized for reproducing similar normative agendas. These agendas denaturalize 'migrant subjects', who are governed in emerging adaptation and resilience regimes. This framing is detached from the political economy of labor, which is likely to interfere with how migration is approached in 'climate regimes' (Baldwin, 2022).

Furthermore, decontextualizing migration from informal labor economies in geographies like Surat perpetuates siloed spatial approaches to spatial risk and resilience in informal labor geographies. By this, I mean that spatial approaches to mitigate risk are primarily viewed through the lens of migration, while reconfigurations to redistribute migrants, such as housing, seem driven by the spatial logic of labor. Rarely do the two perspectives — migration and labor as situated spatial actors — converge in policy practice. This thesis observes that one of the fundamental sources of contradictions in resilience outcomes in Surat's key economic labor geographies arises from the discursive split between the figure of the 'migrant' and labor in normative resilience narratives.

Additionally, relevant to this chapter of spatial association of labor is the recognition that labor foregrounds itself as a rightful subject in urban policies and institutional structures that are beholden to citizens, regardless of socio-economic

status, domicile, and social positionality. On the other hand, the 'figure of the migrant' is frequently misrepresented in public discourse and policy narratives. This misrepresentation is susceptible to the politics of racialization, othering, political and social exclusion, and dehumanization (Baldwin 2022).

However, counterforces to decontextualized framings of migrants in resilience narratives emerge from key institutional spaces and economic elites reliant on Surat's diverse migrant labor. For example, significant economic stakeholders, including major urban industrial associations such as Textile, Power Loom, and City Chamber of Commerce and Industries, have a vested interest in labor spatiality. Consequently, they support migrant housing policies aimed at spatially configuring and managing labor for long-term economic resilience (as discussed later).

It is essential to reiterate the core ideology of the 'resilience dividend' that undergirds Rockefeller's urban resilience framework (see Chapter 4). The latent benefits of resilience investments concerning labor geographies shape institutional approaches to spatial resilience. This chapter further explores how resilience associations with affordable housing leverage the spatial logic of risk within the neoliberal framework of climate-resilient infrastructure.

6.2.1 Institutionalizing affordable housing in resilience practice

Affordable housing has long been integral to urban resilience. The ACCCRN's city resilience framework, initiated in 2008, incorporated elements of an extended state narrative on housing crises and institutional practices to risk associated with informal housing and the urban poor within its framework (Personal interview, City Resilience Officers, Surat and Pune). As previously mentioned, institutional alignment with affordable housing thus plays a significant role in fostering urban resilience, primarily because of the spatial risk-informality and economic resilience

potential associated with the labor-housing nexus within the official discourse on resilience.

Given that resilience has been assimilated into prevailing institutional policy and program architecture that addresses spatial informality, disaster, and chronic risk in labor geographies through evictions and relocations to state-facilitated housing, the 'work of resilience' is to consolidate spatial instruments and actors in housing to manage and govern spatial risk and informal labor geographies. National and subnational housing schemes for the urban poor were identified as pathways to the urban resilience agenda (Surat Resilience Strategy, 2017).

The Covid-19 pandemic further highlighted the complex interplay between health risks and climate vulnerabilities that were exacerbated by high population density, inadequate housing, and chronic infrastructural deficiencies. Additionally, the pandemic underscored governance challenges related to informal labor geographies in Surat and other cities and urban regions in India. Interviews with newly appointed external-facing officers in the Surat Migration Cell, as well as other officials in Surat Municipal Corporation, revealed that institutional discourse on affordable housing gained renewed prominence during the later stages of the pandemic (Personal interviews).

The officer from the newly established 'Migration Cell' emphasized that, despite affordable housing being a core aspect of resilience practice, the city resilience plan has yet to develop a clear roadmap for affordable housing specifically for migrant informal labor populations. According to the officer, the prioritization of affordable housing for migrant workers has been insufficient. However, with the economic slowdown in the textile industry and increasing pressures on city authorities to address the housing crisis for labor during the pandemic, this issue has returned to the policy agenda with renewed emphasis. Interviews with senior officials from the Affordable Housing Department at the Surat Municipal Corporation (SMC) also

confirmed that affordable housing saw a resurgence of interest during the later stages of the pandemic (Personal interviews). The pandemic's impact on the migrant-driven informal economy has underscored the essential role of affordable housing investments for Surat's economic resilience. As highlighted in previous chapters (4 and 5), this situation illustrates how resilience strategies are invoked in response to various crises and risks in relation to informal labor geographies. This reinforces top-down spatial narratives and structural reconfigurations in Surat's prime labor geographies aimed at broader urban (economic) security.

Overall, state-sanctioned affordable housing increasingly constitutes a strategic element of institutional resilience practices, addressing various dimensions of informal labor spatiality. This shift reflects the dominant spatial logics that shape institutional spatial practices and governance related to risk and labor. This development is particularly pertinent given the numerous climatic and non-climatic vulnerabilities that characterize underserviced informal settlements, including the threat of eviction and displacement (The Wire, 2022). However, a critical consideration in the policy-linked restructuring of labor geographies is the need to recognize the deeply intertwined aspects of economic informality and vulnerability. If these issues are not comprehensively addressed, they will persist within policy-driven approaches to formalize housing for informal migrant populations.

The previous chapter illustrated this through the case of Kosad, where despite over a decade of residing in formal housing, migrant labor groups have progressively faced economic and social marginalization. This example underscores the critical importance of affordable housing policies for resilience, highlighting the need for these policies to extend beyond merely addressing spatial risks and labor insecurity. However, emergent housing policy-driven reconfigurations in labor geographies must also account for spatial reproduction of risks and the persistent economic informality and social vulnerability of informal migrant workers in *formal* housing (as illustrated in Chapter 5).

6.3 Institutional Associations with Affordable Housing: Emergent Spatial logic and Actors

This section contextualizes the reconfigurations in institutional resilience practices by examining the emergent spatial associations driven by specific logic, actors, and motivations underpinning the connection between resilience and affordable housing, particularly concerning informal labor and labor geographies. Here, I also explore the discursive material shifts in institutional spatial practices resulting from the strengthened associations between resilience and affordable housing in terms of scale, ideology, and politics.

6.3.1 Infrastructural reorientation in state-sanctioned affordable housing for resilience: Policy viability and implications

The core of institutional resilience practice lies in the logic of spatial risk and its mitigation through infrastructural-spatial approaches (Chapter 4). Urban research has traditionally recognized the complementary spatial relationship between housing and infrastructure in situated spatial reconfigurations (Caldiera, 2017). However, housing has seldom been framed as infrastructure in the academic literature until recently (Wilson, 2016; Lemanski, 2022). This recent framing acknowledges that housing and infrastructure resonate in their spatially situated processes and effects. For example, both serve as spatial containers and facilitators of socio-material relations and flows, mediating human and non-human urban processes that shape spatial constructs of relative value across economic, social, affective, and cultural registers of urban life (Lemanski and Massey, 2023; Kanoi et al., 2022).

When housing is considered as an assemblage of physical networks (water, energy, sanitation) and human networks (community), or as a 'material-symbolic' assemblage within critical infrastructural studies, it aligns closely with the concept of infrastructure (Wilson, 2018; Lemanski, 2022). In policy narratives, however, the

logic and motivation underpinning this shift in framing differ slightly. I will elaborate on this later. Nevertheless, the shift in state-sanctioned housing models, such as Affordable Housing being reframed in infrastructural terms, will have significant spatial implications. These implications will particularly affect racialized labor geographies, where resilience is governed by the intersecting infrastructural-spatial logics of housing and infrastructure development. I will expand on this later in the chapter.

The inclusion of affordable housing in infrastructure-oriented resilience practices is driven by financial and business motivations to diversify climate investments into networked green infrastructure (Vale et al., 2014; see Morris and Diaz, 2020 in Louisiana). This approach is evident in policy discussions across both emerging and advanced economies. Broadening the categories of 'resilient infrastructure' extends the geographic and policy reach of global and regional climate-economic markets, thereby influencing a wider spectrum of urban spatial policies and infrastructure development pathways. Insights from an interview with an innovation policy advisor indicate that in cities like Surat and Pune — both Rockefeller Resilient Cities — urban local bodies, including municipalities and municipal corporations, are increasingly exploring opportunities to diversify strategic climate-economic investments within affordable housing markets (Personal interview at SuratiLab)[22]. Moreover, integrated infrastructural planning — such as the coordination of housing and transport — presents strategic opportunities for consolidating and structuring financial streams, strengthening climate-economic networks, and reconfiguring climate-resilient spatial imaginaries (for example in Pune)[23].

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[22] SuratiLab is a policy start-up to finance innovative policy experiments. It is affiliated with the Surat Municipal Corporation: http://www.suratiilab.org/
[23] See for example Pune's resilience city plan:
 https://resilientpune.home.blog/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/resilient-pune-draft-strategy_view.pdf

This evolving approach raises a critical question: What does this shift mean for housing as a form of resilience practice in relation to informal labor geographies? This reframing has significant implications for institutional resilience, as it brings new actors, spatial logic, and processes into play. As a result, the spaces and places impacted by resilience practices are being reconfigured — or are likely to be — based on these evolving dynamics. Understanding these changes is crucial for anticipating how resilience strategies will reconfigure urban environments, especially in this context of informal labor mobilities and geographies.

6.3.2 Policy-market conundrum: Laboring affordable housing

The political and policy push for the urban affordable housing market stems from the Union government's flagship program for affordable housing, "Housing for All" (HFA), and its policy equivalent, the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY), launched in 2015. The HFA was one of the strongest mobilizing electoral agendas in the BJP's manifesto, frequently used as a political instrument for electoral gains in regions where the BJP holds sway or makes strategic advances. For example, affordable housing was a key agenda in the BJP's 2014 election manifesto and instrumental in their landslide victory (Jaldi, 2024).

As the 2024 Lok Sabha (national parliamentary) elections approached, affordable housing gained renewed momentum. The Union budget unveiled in early 2024 revealed a substantial 66 percent increase in the Urban Infrastructure and Development Fund (UIFD) to finance PMAY, a move expected to benefit the ruling party in BJP-controlled regions such as Gujarat (ORF, 2024)[24]. One objective of this revived welfarist agenda within the HFA, leading up to the 2024 election, was to extend housing credit and ownership to historically and structurally disadvantaged caste, ethnic, and minority groups. However, to "effectively scale affordable housing

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[24] See the latest ORF report on housing budget changes introduced in the current financial year. National Budget 2024-25: Urban development at priority No.5 (orfonline.org)

for resilience, incentives must be institutionalized to make financing mechanisms and land procurement viable and profitable for private developers", emphasized the President of Surat Builder's Association during the interview. This underscores the need for aligning policy frameworks with market dynamics to ensure the success of affordable housing initiatives within resilience strategies.

The "Housing for All" (HFA) initiative provides a policy framework designed to foster structural changes and promote financial partnerships for both state and central public-private housing initiatives. This includes state-sanctioned affordable housing schemes that are aligned with climate-resilient and smart city visions. A notable example of structural change in partnership funding for climate-resilient cities is the recent reform in the financing model by the Housing and Urban Development Corporation (HUDCO), the largest state techno-finance body. These reforms build on HUDCO's long-standing role in financing integrated housing and infrastructure development to address basic service deficits for the urban poor and to expand affordable housing stock (Chiquier and Lea, 2009). The financial instruments and budget outlays managed by apex financial and regulatory bodies like HUDCO demonstrate ongoing shifts towards climate resilience in the financialization and governance of urban affordable housing and infrastructure.[25]

For city governments like the SMC, financial viability hinges on affordable land and collaboration with local real estate developers. As a housing expert in a local urban planning department noted, "The HFA sets housing targets, but state and city governments are responsible for achieving these targets. The main challenge is securing developable land, which determines housing shortage and affordability." City governments must facilitate land use conversion and incentivize private developers to scale affordable housing in contested labor geographies shaped by competing political and economic interests.

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[25] Visit HUDCO smart-city website for more on this:
https://hudco.org.in/Site/FormTemplete/frmTemp1PLargeTC1C.aspx?MnId=260&ParentID=35

Despite the policy alignment of federal housing discourse with climate-resilient cities, significant tensions arise from the political economy of land and labor relations, particularly in housing for informal labor. As the Deputy CRO remarked, "Achieving economic resilience through a state-sanctioned housing market that involves numerous non-state actors is a massive undertaking." These tensions mediate ongoing negotiations between institutional associations and affordable housing for resilience. Therefore, the primary challenges facing the SMC and real estate developers include securing affordable land and offering incentives, such as tax cuts per unit of production and reductions in material costs, to make housing accessible for economically disadvantaged yet strategically vital informal labor populations.[26] The success of the 'Housing for All' initiative largely depends on the ability of local authorities' to encourage commercial real estate developers to invest in low-income housing. However, as the President of Surat's Builder's Association pointed out, profit-driven developers are not sufficiently motivated by current incentives.

Under the public-private housing model, the Surat Municipal Corporation (SMC) and Surat Urban Development Authority (SUDA) actively collaborate with a network of private real estate actors, who are increasingly diversifying into the city's relatively new affordable housing market, with support from the Builders' Association. These projects strictly adhere to spatial plans, zoning laws, and institutional mandates concerning the allocated land parcels in tenement plans. However, "Coordination and regulatory compliance remain significant challenges", as noted by the president of the Surat Builders Association (SBA).

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[26] Similar observations from comparable informal geographies have been captured in ongoing land-housing structural reform debates: https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/549221572382742218/pdf/Unlocking-Ethiopias-Urban-Land-and-Housing-Markets-Synthesis-Report.pdf

A similar shift can be observed in Cape Town's state housing program, which has transitioned from a welfarist public redistribution initiative to being framed as a financial asset with instrumental economic value (Charlton, 2013). This market-driven approach has transferred more responsibility to local governments and municipalities, requiring increased coordination with the private sector and resulting in similar tensions (ibid). The SBA thus advocates for a more institutionalized role in resilience, particularly in housing policies, to better align with the interests of real estate developers and builders in the city. "Leading builders and real estate actors must work with institutions such as SMC and SUDA to develop sustainable affordable housing solutions that address the problem of informal settlements", the SBA president emphasized.

Additionally, the social conundrum in affordable housing for resilience, increasingly shaped by the infrastructure development model, presents numerous ethical and political contradictions within informal labor geographies. Despite the welfarist rhetoric in affordable housing policy discourse, the industry's viability often hinges on its ability to extract profits from the most marginalized and racialized beneficiaries — such as migrant laborers — while maintaining a facade of social welfare outcomes. As highlighted in a recent study, this contradiction forces us to reconsider the simplistic assumptions that underlie the integration of resilience into existing institutional structures and housing policies, which often perpetuate "business-as-usual" models of development (see Bhattacharya and Stern, 2023).

Recent reports and minutes from the Central Sanctioning and Monitoring Committee (CSMC) on the PMAY website underscore significant challenges, including low occupancy rates, beneficiary cancellations, and the widening gap between project targets and actual successes in affordable housing partnerships with commercial real estate developers. In contrast, beneficiary-driven models, such as in-situ redevelopment, are more effective at helping informal workers formalize housing ownership.

Interviews with key stakeholders reveal the significant pressure to boost ownership rates in affordable housing projects, despite the evident low demand among the target groups. A senior official from the Affordable Housing Cell remarked, "We are under intense pressure from multiple fronts — central government policy targets, the needs of real estate developers struggling with under-occupied projects, and the Surat Municipal Corporation's ambitious 'slum-free' Surat agenda." The official further elaborated, "Demand from the target groups is lower than expected, which complicates efforts to meet occupancy targets and fulfill policy objectives."

These interviews also highlighted the severe impact of the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic on the real estate sector. "The pandemic has hit small and medium developers hard, especially those who only entered the affordable housing market as recently as 2019", the official highlighted. "The financial strain from low occupancy rates and delayed projects is compounded by the ongoing market uncertainties."

These interview excerpts reveal a critical tension between policy mandates and market realities, intensifying the challenges of implementing affordable housing for resilience in Surat. It highlights a fundamental contradiction within resilience practices: while they are designed to bolster the economic and social resilience of migrant working populations through market-based solutions, these efforts are frequently undermined by the very market-driven logic and vested interests they depend on. The profit-driven model of affordable housing is fundamentally incompatible with the complex economic and social realities faced by Surat's migrant labor communities. The spatially mediated interplay of economic feasibility and social sustainability has resulted in persistently low occupancy rates, underscoring the limitations of market-centric approaches to house marginalized informal labor populations (Zhang et al., 2018).

To address the low occupancy rates in affordable housing projects, the Surat Municipal Corporation (SMC) has intensified its efforts to promote ownership among residents of informal settlements. "We are focusing on expanding affordable housing for lower and middle-income groups to accelerate post-COVID economic recovery in the real estate sector", stated a representative from the Affordable Housing Cell (Personal interview). However, despite these efforts, insights from earlier interviews with residents in Kosad suggest that formal housing remains largely unviable for most informal migrant workers even at subsidized rates (as illustrated in Chapter 5). This is because the success of such initiatives hinges not just on affordability but on aligning with the localized informal economy, where labor is economically embedded.

Effective relocation strategies for mass affordable housing must integrate the spatial viability of labor with financial feasibility to support the economic stability of informal migrant communities. Interviews with migrant workers in Bamroli reveal concerns about income losses due to the peripheralization of labor, which could restrict both immediate and future economic mobility. Jadhav who recently filled out an application for the housing scheme said looking concerned, "If we are pushed to the outskirts, our options to diversify income might get reduced… it could affect long-term prospects for our children too." Another worker added, "Without our community's support, we could easily fall into debt." The loss of these networks, which often serve as a vital safety net, could increase financial vulnerability and lead to exploitative debt cycles. Therefore, maintaining these networks through thoughtful housing strategies is crucial for sustaining economic stability.

As discussed in Chapter 5, the push to formalize housing for Surat's diverse migrant populations through mass relocations risks inducing involuntary and exclusionary displacements, as seen in Kosad. Such relocations can disrupt social networks and lead to political marginalization, undermining broader goals of economic and social stability. For informal workers, affordability is shaped by a complex interplay of economic and spatial factors, with financial viability being only

one aspect. When these factors are not adequately addressed, barriers to accessing affordable housing can threaten the economic stability of vulnerable populations (Barnhardt et al., 2017). Building on this the next section examines situated labor associations in reconfigured labor geographies.

6.4 Labor Associations: Situated Experiences and Relational Politics

This section examines the role of labor associations within resilience-reconfigured labor geographies. These associations have emerged both organically and through strategic coordination with institutional hybrid actors, shaped by the specific demands and contexts of micro-local geographies. The first part of this section focuses on the illustrative case of Kosad, which provides insights into the emerging labor associations and politics at the intersection of affordable housing, racialized labor geographies, and mobility.

Insights from this contribute to the broader narrative of climate-resilient urbanism in relation to labor and labor geographies in two keyways. First, it highlights the connection between climate-economic institutional associations (such as affordable housing) and the spatial marginalization of surplus racialized labor through the relocation of evicted communities from strategically important labor geographies to peripheral areas like Kosad. Second, observations from various micro-labor geographies reveal how constrained labor associations are assimilated into dominant spatial politics through hybrid and indirect forms of spatial governance.

The analysis reveals contradictions in the assumption that formal housing for labor will address spatial risks associated with informality. Instead, formalizing housing for informal labor often results in merely adding potential new beneficiaries from migrant labor geographies without addressing the entrenched risks and vulnerabilities associated with labor and spatial informality, which persist in post-relocated communities. Moreover, this approach tends to expand Surat's emerging

affordable housing market, particularly in peripheral areas where property markets are relatively less competitive and favorable. While these markets appear to offer viable housing solutions, they may inadvertently reinforce the marginalization of relocated communities, thus perpetuating existing spatial inequalities.

As illustrated previously, the semi-formalization of labor geographies through housing could alienate and disrupt life-sustaining informal spatial relations, networks, and geographies. This ultimately leaves the so-called 'formalized' labor geographies in a more precarious state (Chapter 5). I further elaborate here on how it has left racialized labor geographies ambiguously positioned between formal and informal systems, unable to fully assimilate into either. This ambiguity significantly impacts the everyday governance of informal labor and labor geographies, as illustrated below. These insights underscore the broader argument of resilience as a spatial strategy to manage and govern informal labor geographies.

6.4.1 Brokered labor associations: Kosad

Uma Kant, a land rights activist and member of the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL), argues that local authorities often disregard relocated informal communities after eviction because "most communities that are evicted are perceived to be migrants." He highlights that "on average, less than twenty percent of those evicted constitute local voters", rendering these communities electorally insignificant and, therefore, expendable in the eyes of elected representatives. This perceived insignificance not only justifies their eviction but also makes minority labor communities more vulnerable to being relocated and pushed further to the margins.

This marginalization is further entrenched by an exclusionary urban citizenship regime that disproportionately impacts migrant working communities. These regimes shift the burden of asserting rights onto migrant subjects, who must navigate a tortuous process of urban citizenship amid growing political nativism

(Aajeevika 2015). Through the denial of basic security, informal migrant labor populations are indirectly coerced into transferring their electoral rights to the city in exchange for access to basic state-sanctioned social security (Based on field interviews). As one Bihari migrant in Bamroli expressed, "We have to choose between keeping our rights in our native region and getting basic rights in the city. If we want a place to live and some security here, we have to give up something back home."

However, I observed that this perceived insignificance often motivates labor associations to reconfigure their embodied spatial value, shifting the perception from one of dispensability to one of usefulness and political relevance (elaborated below). These labor associations strive to assert their constrained agency and challenge the narratives that marginalize these labor geographies. In doing so, it is worth examining how these reconfigured labor geographies engage within the urban political landscape.

6.3.1.1 Racialized subjects and non-choice politics: Hybrid associations in Kosad

Current residents of *Kosad* comprise communities from major slums such as *Nehru Nagar, Subhash Nagar, Bapu Nagar*, and *Iqbal Nagar*, formerly situated along the west bank of the Tapi River and under the *Nehru* and *Makai bridges*. Interviewees from these evicted settlements recounted the trauma of enduring constant eviction threats and tenure insecurity. They further explained how residents from low-lying settlements felt more threatened by the local authorities than by the flood itself. Local authorities and corporators often weaponize flood risk because of their physical vulnerability to use evictions as a threat, harass different communities, and settle personal scores, explaining a female respondent during the FGD. They believe that the risk of floods is one of the most convenient hazards or "asaan tareeka" to evict and displace migrant labor communities.

Likewise, studies from other southern cities have reported the exaggeration and misuse of climate risks to further dispossess and relocate the urban poor. For instance, narratives from informal geographies in other southern climate-sensitive cities such as Manila, Jakarta, and Mumbai reveal comparable perceptions of seemingly benign evictions driving extensive involuntary relocations to urban peripheries (Texeira and Edelblutte, 2017; Alvarez and Cardenas, 2019). This demonstrates the widespread discursive power of climate-resilient spatial imaginaries in legitimizing top-down spatial reconfigurations in prime and peripheral urban labor geographies in southern cities. While these observations do not invalidate urban floods as a significant climate risk, they instead raise critical questions about which other vulnerability narratives and risks are being overshadowed, invalidated, or delegitimized in the public discourse.

Visibly isolated from the rest of the city, Kosad offers little incentive for labor groups to make it their home (see Chapter 5). The poor design and layout of Kosad, resembling a decaying labor enclave, have led it to be referred to as an 'urban slum.' These dismal living conditions have left residents agitated and frustrated. "Despite numerous complaints about the poor state of waste management, sewage, and drinking water, nothing ever seems to change around here... we are bound to feel frustrated; it seems like no one cares about us at all", said a respondent during the FGD.

Residents of Kosad expressed significant concerns about the growing issues of drug abuse, addiction, high dropout rates among children, crime, and unemployment among the youth. One resident lamented, "It's becoming harder and harder to keep our children safe and out of trouble." They also highlighted the lack of affordable healthcare, the prevalence of water-borne and skin diseases, rising mental health issues, and a general lack of security for women as part of the everyday struggles of life in Kosad (based on the interviews). The persistence of these problems has deeply influenced the spatial subjectivities and approaches to negotiating life in Kosad (see

Chapter 5). As elaborated here, the emerging spatial associations with political intermediaries, brokers, and other crucial actors are rooted in the narratives of collective struggle and the lived realities of Kosad.

Amid these challenges, Rasheeda Ben, a community leader in Kosad, underscores the difficulties faced by poor minorities in Gujarat: "We are poor minorities, we need political connections for the most basic things, such as clean drinking water, our safety, our children's security." She highlights that many families in the community have been displaced multiple times and have learned not to trust political representatives who visit only with the agenda of securing votes. When asked why she joined the BJP, Rasheeda Ben emphatically explained, "Politics is only as useful as we make it... for people like us, it is for our survival." Her role as a community leader and mobilizer is driven by a firm belief that political relevance is crucial for securing the collective future of poor, racialized minorities in Surat. "People like us are left even more marginalized in the absence of a political voice and visibility."

This resonates with the political dynamics described by Eric Swyngedouw, who defines the political as relating to those who "do not count", and the latent forces that animate 'political society' in geographies of powerlessness (Chatterjee, 2011). However, Rasheeda Ben and other community leaders often struggle to foster a sense of community in Kosad. She explained that after being evicted from various slums and assigned flats through a lottery system, "this was hardly a community", but rather an assortment of families from different racialized labor geographies. This fragmentation has significantly weakened the social connections and networks of migrant groups, whose material and social security rely heavily on social cohesion and access to opportunities and safety nets through these networks, especially in the absence of formal state support.

To revitalize economic opportunities, women in Kosad took the initiative to form Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in collaboration with the Urban Community Development (UCD) program to support home-based work and micro-businesses. However, the initiative faltered as widespread distrust toward externally facilitated interventions spread among residents. One resident shared how, despite their willingness to invest in these ventures, many women faced pushback from their own families. As unemployment rose and drug addiction among children spiked, it became even harder for entrepreneurial women to establish home-based businesses or seek work outside.

These broader social issues — such as young people being lured into organized crime, drug trafficking, and smuggling — add another layer of difficulty. Salma Ben, a young widow and mother of two who runs a corner shop in Kosad, described how teenagers are regularly abused by the police for petty theft, despite the police often colluding with local gangs. This environment of distrust and fear has made it increasingly difficult for women to create stable economic opportunities and organize themselves effectively.

Despite these obstacles, Rasheeda Ben has emerged as a credible leader within her community after recently joining the BJP. Working for the BJP was not Rasheeda Ben's first choice, nor would it be her last if the political landscape were more plural, tolerant, and less polarized (Jaffrelot and Verniers, 2020). She switched party affiliation to the BJP, hoping for better representation of her people. Rasheeda Ben believes that her negotiating power has increased since aligning with the ruling party, stating, "My negotiating power is more now that I am aligned with the party at the center (BJP) and not with the opposition." As a Muslim woman leader, she finds it challenging to negotiate with political intermediaries and brokers for basic services, such as safe water and healthcare. However, she hopes that her association with the Hindu nationalist party (BJP) will enhance the bargaining power of Muslims

and protect them from routine harassment by local police, contractors, and numerous brokers.

Amar Bhai, a Marwari shopkeeper and community leader from a nearby Hindu-majority block, pointed to the entrenched corruption in broker-mediated services like water and sanitation as one of the most challenging aspects of life in Kosad. As he offered me a bottle of water, he shared concerns similar to those of Rasheeda Ben, discussing the difficult choices they face when dealing with water mafias and corrupt officials for "basic rights that nobody should have to negotiate with the state as citizens." To make matters worse for mobilizers, many residents of Kosad are politically inactive; they are either unregistered, appear fatalistic, or have resigned entirely from electoral politics (based on personal interviews with community leaders). Yet, out of desperation, residents are left with no choice but to get sucked into messy everyday politics of negotiating basic rights such as drinking water, "public goods that should not be politicized in the first place" (Interview with a local NGO representative). Community mobilizers put in just as much work to persuade community members and internally mobilize as they negotiate with various external political intermediaries and brokers for crucial services and infrastructure.

Despite years of spatial alienation and neglect, which have hindered the development of a cohesive political discourse in Kosad, Rashida Ben and other community leaders are working to establish their legitimacy as political actors. They are leveraging their evolving hybrid political associations within the racialized labor geographies of Kosad. As one community leader expressed, "Establishing our legitimacy hasn't been easy; it's a product of years of struggle and negotiation in these marginalized spaces." However, barriers arise from the differential histories of eviction, the fragmented socio-spatial fabric of Kosad, and the institutional marginalization of the housing enclave (Awas). These challenges hinder the formation of a cohesive political community and disrupt sustained efforts to improve living conditions for Kosad's residents.

To conclude this section, Kosad's semi-formalized labor geographies reveal how resilience strategies, closely tied to infrastructure and housing, can politicize migrant labor geographies. The ambiguous provision of basic services, combined with economic insecurity and marginalization, creates environments, where contested and brokered service networks, emerge. Kosad presents a façade of formality through state-sanctioned affordable housing and its inclusion in official spatial planning. However, the persistence of economic informality and unclear governance of infrastructure and services renders Kosad vulnerable to hybrid modes of self-management. These conditions expose residents to exploitative, and at times, illegal forms of self-provisioning.

Kosad's case further illustrates that affordable housing, as a tool for managing informal labor geographies, plays a crucial role in ongoing climate-resilient economic reconfigurations. While these efforts have addressed spatial informality through mass relocation and infrastructure development, the persistent informality in service provision entrenches self-governance modes that politicize everyday life. Under constant threats to basic security, attempts to organize and strengthen political associations in Kosad often reflect a politics of desperation and limited choices.

Resilience, as a spatial strategy, reconfigures racialized migrant labor geographies, steering them to align with dominant spatial politics. The case of Kosad demonstrates that in this process, resilience not only facilitates but also consolidates these geographies into existing clientelist politics, where segregation, spatial networks, identity, and location mediate access to services and infrastructure. These dynamics shape local political subjectivities and practices. Fundamentally, this raises critical questions about the role of resilience strategies in potentially homogenizing political diversity within migrant labor geographies by assimilating these communities into prevailing spatial practices and logic. It also prompts reflection on what this might mean for the future of urban politics in the context of majoritarian regimes of climate-resilient urbanism.

In contrast, the next section examines migrant labor associations within reconfigured labor geographies that exhibit different spatial logics and experiences of assimilation into institutional governance and urban politics. The section draws on spatial narratives and interviews from micro-labor geographies within the central textile production zone. In this zone, migrant labor settlements display relative spatial security and privileges, largely due to their cultural alignment and political homogeneity, which facilitate smoother assimilation into institutional spatial governance. The illustrative case highlights how labor assimilation in these reconfigured geographies operates under a different spatial logic of integration, shaped by the interplay between institutional spatial practices, institutional governance, and resilience as a spatial management strategy. Unlike other labor geographies marked by contested and brokered service provision, these 'assimilated' geographies benefit from relatively stable and predictable governance. Ultimately, this comparative analysis of differentially reconfigured migrant labor geographies raises important questions about the role of resilience in the spatial management and governance of racialized labor.

6.4.2 Labor associations in 'assimilated' migrant labor geographies: Governance by cultural assimilation

Sameer Bhai, a community leader and mobilizer from Ved Industrial Estate, explains, "I was born and raised in Surat. Most families and even short-term renters are migrants from neighboring districts of Maharashtra. We speak Gujarati as fluently, and sometimes even better than Marathi. We are familiar with the local customs and culture and have been groomed to assimilate so as not to be perceived as outsiders." This quote is emblematic of migrant social groups that are relatively well-integrated into Surat's politico-cultural milieu. Due to shared cultural heritage and political history, migrant social groups from neighboring districts in Maharashtra are culturally and linguistically better assimilated into Surat.

Sameer Bhai's involvement in community organizing began early, influenced by his father's role in informal organizing work for the BJP. His father started as a party extension worker or a *karyakarta or sevak* (community worker) in the industrial enclave near Udhna Estate, focusing on mill and factory workers. His father's reasons for joining the BJP were shaped by his migration from rural Maharashtra; party politics offered a credible and long-term means to navigate a turbulent economic transition in the region.

Regional political and social unrest, particularly affecting working-class populations due to deindustrialization and the rise of ethnonationalism across Maharashtra, led to massive outmigration from economically backward, drought-prone rural areas of the state into neighboring states like Gujarat. His father's association with local ward leaders, factory, and industrial associations in *Udhna* Estate was foundational to incrementally securing land titles and leases that span almost two generations. "Growing up, we moved around from one *jhoppad patti* (slum) to another. It takes time to find a foothold in the city", Sameer Bhai recalls. "I am continuing the social work that my father started, and I hope my son will eventually join too. It ensures that the community we have built here can call this their home. It is hard and takes a lifetime. But we are *Suratis*, never shying away from hard work."

The overall security and cultural assimilation of settlements in Ved are evident from its materiality and tenured status. Sameer Bhai describes how the security that households in Ved enjoy today has been built over two generations alongside the formalization of tenure. Residents benefit from steady, incremental investments in public infrastructure and welfare schemes, supported by locally elected BJP representatives, influential factory owners, and industrial members of the local textile association who are invested in homogenous migrant labor communities. Sameer Bhai points to a recent road inauguration nearby, recounting his involvement from overseeing construction to managing local VIPs for the inauguration.

Figure 6.1: Interview with community leader, Ved

Source: Author's fieldwork

A growing number of residents from Sameer Bhai's settlement are beneficiaries of various urban welfare schemes. He explains "This indicates that more migrant households are either settling long-term or contemplating it. This is a good indicator of social mobility among migrant households." More migrant households benefiting from state welfare schemes further indicates that there are more registered voters in Sameer Bhai's settlement. For Sameer Bhai, this means that a larger migrant electorate can be mobilized around issues such as infrastructure upgrades, migrant cultural associations, streetlights, public toilets, transport, and specific schemes for adult literacy and children's education.

Migrant communities in Ved are primarily employed in textile manufacturing and power loom factories in the Ved industrial zone. They attribute much of their spatial security to the local Textile Owners' Association in Ved, which negotiates on their behalf for long-term labor security in the factories. Due to the overall stability and security against eviction, even non-permanent migrant families tend to invest more in community infrastructure, such as public toilets and private schools. He explains that the long-term implications of migrant investments in the settlements

where they live often lead to stronger investment in public goods from the state (Auerbach, 2019).

Additionally, local community leaders and BJP *karyakartas,* such as Sameer Bhai, actively work to consolidate the majority Hindu migrant vote within Marathi-dominant informal settlements for the ideologically aligned BJP. This, in turn, instills greater confidence in migrant families, encouraging them to invest in and participate in local cultural and political associations.

6.4.2.1 Assimilation through 'party politics and cultural citizenship: Settlement level view

Party politics, as described by Sameer Bhai in prime textile labor geographies, serves as an extension of democratic electoral politics in Surat. This observation aligns with recent work on machine politics, which explains the extensive operations of clientelist and political patronage networks in informal labor geographies across Indian cities — a form of grassroots political mobilization and new welfare politics (Auerbach and Thachil 2018; Goodfellow, 2020). In Surat's heterogeneous labor geographies within prime textile zones, the consolidation of settlement-level associations in exchange for enhanced spatial security, public goods, and infrastructure illustrates the extensive grassroots spatial consolidation of ideologically and culturally congruent migrant labor communities into the BJP's expansive clientelist networks (Auerbach and Thachil, 2018).

This grassroots political mobilization in Surat highlights the intersection of spatial reconfigurations and labor associations within post-disaster urban environments. For instance, the differential integration of racialized labor geographies into institutional spatial practices reveals how these communities negotiate their spatial insecurity, vulnerability, and privilege. These negotiations are not just about survival but are also instrumental in shaping the broader process of

homogenizing informal micro-labor geographies. These dynamics underscore how spatial reconfigurations are tied to the specific politico-economic logics of resilience and urban governance in different parts of the city (e.g., Kosad and Ved).

Stevenson's critical analysis of cultural citizenship in cosmopolitan working-class societies provides a framework for understanding these processes. Stevenson argues that 'cultural citizenship', as a protracted social process, transcends the narrow politico-legal paradigm of citizenship, emphasizing the importance of shared norms, practices, meanings, and identities in the slow assimilation of migrant communities (Stevenson, 2003). In Surat, the assimilation of labor geographies, as described by Sameer Bhai, is not just about securing legal rights or formal citizenship but also involves the gradual incorporation of cultural and social identities into the dominant urban milieu. This process is mediated through both formal political structures and the more informal migrant hybrid associations of patronage and clientelism.

The politicization of cultural differences across racialized labor geographies reveals how differential inclusion and exclusion are spatially encoded. Community mobilizers like Sameer Bhai and Rasheeda Ben highlight how the varied experiences of spatial assimilation impact the material security and political agency of racialized 'others' within different micro-labor geographies. These insights raise critical questions about the role of resilience strategies in potentially homogenizing political diversity within migrant labor geographies. They also prompt reflection on how these strategies might influence the future of urban politics in the context of majoritarian regimes that prioritize climate-resilient urbanism.

6.5 Discussion

This chapter explores how resilience operates as a spatial management strategy within racialized migrant labor geographies, focusing on the cases of Kosad and Ved. Resilience, far from being a neutral or passive framework, actively reconfigures these

labor geographies, steering them to align with dominant spatial politics. Through these illustrative cases, I argue that resilience strategies not only facilitate but also consolidate these geographies into existing clientelist political structures, where segregation, spatial networks, identity, and location are crucial in mediating access to services and infrastructure. Central to this discussion is the constrained agentic role of migrant spatial associations, which must navigate these reconfigurations within the limits imposed by broader political and economic forces.

6.5.1 Resilience and spatial reconfiguration: The role of affordable housing

One of the key points in this chapter is how affordable housing is instrumentalized for spatial management of informal labor geographies. The case of Kosad exemplifies this dynamic, where mass relocation and infrastructure development aimed at addressing spatial informality have paradoxically entrenched informal modes of service provisioning. The persistence of economic informality and the ambiguous governance structures in Kosad have necessitated a hybrid mode of self-management. In Kosad, accessing services through broker-mediated channels has exposed residents to exploitative and sometimes illegal forms of service provisioning.

While affordable housing is often presented as spatial solutions to risk and informality, they embed labor geographies into dominant patronage networks. In Kosad, resilience strategies have effectively aligned the community with dominant political structures, reinforcing a politics of desperation and limited choices. This case illustrates that resilience, as a spatial strategy, is not merely about mitigating risks; it actively reshapes the socio-political landscape, reinforcing existing power dynamics within clientelist frameworks. In this constrained environment, migrant communities in Kosad must navigate the limited agency they possess, leveraging their spatial associations to negotiate basic services and infrastructure. These associations, though operating within a constrained political environment, mediate incremental improvements in living conditions. Overall, the local hybrid associations

highlight the interplay between structurally constrained labor geographies and constrained spatial agency of labor articulated through hybrid associations.

6.5.2 Spatial consolidation in Kosad and Ved

This chapter further highlights how resilience strategies consolidate labor geographies into clientelist networks, using Kosad and Ved as illustrative cases. In Kosad, this process is particularly evident in how labor communities align with political intermediaries associated with the BJP, who provide access to essential services in exchange for political support. The spatial reconfiguration of Kosad has not only facilitated this alignment but also entrenched the overall dependency on clientelist practices, where access to infrastructure and services is mediated by spatial consolidation of migrant political support.

The case of Ved offers a contrasting yet complementary example. Here, migrant labor communities integrate into Surat's politico-cultural milieu through cultural assimilation, supported by their shared linguistic and cultural heritage with the local population. As Sameer Bhai, a community leader in Ved, notes, this cultural alignment has enabled these communities to secure long-term spatial security and more stable access to public goods. The assimilation process in Ved is not just about survival; it represents a strategic alignment with dominant political forces, facilitated by incremental investments in infrastructure and the patronage of local industrial actors and influential members of the Ved Textiles Association.

In both Kosad and Ved, migrant labor associations, despite their constrained agency, play a critical role in shaping the local political landscape. In Kosad, these labor associations often find themselves in a reactive position, navigating the demands of clientelist networks to secure basic services. In Ved, the relative privilege afforded by cultural and political alignment allows these associations to engage more proactively, negotiating for long-term security and community investments. These

dynamics underscore the complex interplay between structural constraints and the agentic capacities of migrant labor associations within resilience strategies.

6.5.3 Spatial politics and clientelism in Kosad and Ved

Further discussion examines how resilience strategies reinforce clientelist spatial practices in both Kosad and Ved. In Kosad, the alignment of migrant labor geographies with the dominant political party has resulted in spatial stratification, where access to public goods and infrastructure is contingent upon political loyalty and proximity to power. This dynamic perpetuates existing inequalities and politicizes everyday life, turning basic services into tools of political control.

Conversely, the case of Ved demonstrates how cultural assimilation into dominant political and cultural frameworks can lead to more stable and predictable governance. Here, resilience strategies have successfully integrated labor communities into the broader clientelist network, where their cultural and political alignment with the ruling party enhances their access to resources and services. This process, while seemingly beneficial, still reflects a managed assimilation that aligns with the broader objectives of resilience as a spatial strategy. In both cases, migrant labor associations, though constrained, actively engage with and adapt to the spatial and political environments in which they operate. Their actions reflect a form of constrained agency, where they negotiate the terms of their inclusion within these broader networks, attempting to secure the best possible outcomes within the limitations imposed by systemic structures.

In conclusion, this chapter reflects on the broader implications of resilience as a spatial management strategy, particularly through the cases of Kosad and Ved. By consolidating labor geographies into existing clientelist networks, resilience strategies contribute to the homogenization of political diversity within migrant labor communities. This raises critical questions about the role of resilience in shaping the

future of urban politics, especially within majoritarian regimes that prioritize climate-resilient urbanism.

In sum, the chapter demonstrates that resilience, when deployed as a spatial strategy, operates not only to reconfigure but also to consolidate labor geographies within existing spatial power structures. The cases of Kosad and Ved highlight how resilience strategies can reinforce existing spatial-political order through the complex interactions of affordable housing, cultural assimilation, informal governance, and clientelist politics. The constrained migrant labor associations highlight the nuanced ways in which labor communities negotiate their inclusion within dominant spatial politics in informal labor geographies reconfigured by resilience.

7. CONCLUSION

This research set out to examine the intersections of resilience and labor in postcolonial southern urban geographies. As the concept of urban resilience continues to fascinate critical scholars, it raises the question: is there anything left to write, think, or engage with regarding resilience? My apprehensions were similar as I began exploring how resilience reconfigures southern urban geographies. However, resilience quickly captivated me as a way of thinking and organizing logic in times of acute change. In a climate-changing world, despite its limitations and critiques, resilience offers a framework for climate actors, decision-makers, policy practitioners, civil society groups, and others to articulate the innate desire to carry on and thrive, no matter the circumstances. *I thought something is compelling about resilience*, even as I remain deeply uneasy about its implications.

Conceptually, like adaptation, resilience in the urban has endless possibilities owing to its vast relational potential. However, one notices that despite the boundless conceptual possibilities, urban resilience is invoked and practiced in rather limited ways. Urban resilience is rooted in crisis and emergency orientation. For the most part, the negative framing of crisis, and emergency and the fear-based rhetoric sets the tone for how, why, and where resilience is invoked. And so, one notices the deeply intertwined relationship between resilience, crisis, and emergency thinking. Consequently, resilience is deeply intertwined with crisis and emergency thinking. For resilience to be a driving force in southern climate urbanism, the urban risk landscape must be well-defined and seen as imminent in the collective urban imagination. What could be more urgent than most cities and urban regions in climate-vulnerable geographies existing in a perpetual state of crisis and risk?

The increasingly loud discourse around urban resilience, to my mind, stems from a deeper anxiety and attachment to the idea of the city and the urban. The notion of cities at risk in a climate-changing world taps into anxieties about losing the normative worldviews, culture, and sensibilities that the city and the urban, as both identity and process, represent. The potential loss of these aspects in contemporary societies threatens the very bedrock of modern life.

The stakes are particularly high for the global South which is urbanizing faster than ever and in complex ways (Parnell and Oldfield, 2014). Climate threats in southern cities and urban regions are deeply intertwined with economic anxieties about progress, aspiration, mobility, accumulation, and growth—an inherently urban narrative (Castree, 2023). Given this context, where does resilience stand in contemporary southern cities and urban regions? What does the unfolding of increasingly aggressive climate-resilient urbanism reveal about resilience and urban labor geographies, particularly racialized labor mobilities?

As previous work has noted, the discourse of resilience is resilient. It is resilient not in its own accord as a mobile boundary policy object, but as a relational idea that appeals to aspects of the urban that need to be made resilient. It brings us back to the point that despite demonstrating boundless possibilities, resilience is invoked and acted upon in urban climate practice in a rather limited manner. This prompted me to think about what the practices and work of resilience reveal about relations and processes in the urban South that cities are driven to build resilience into. Conversely, what relations and processes are essentialized as resilient and thus routinely overlooked? In this research, to understand this, I pursue resilience as a relational practice and politics, that reveals insights into labor geographies and racialized geographies of relative value. In this study value is embedded in spatial relations of resilience practice and labor. In some senses, value underpins the ontological underpinnings of resilience practice in southern urban geographies of labor.

Against this brief context of resilience, I now discuss the research questions and findings in conversation with the broader argument of this thesis. This study aims to understand how resilience reconfigures the informal labor geographies of Surat. And how labor as a constrained agentic force negotiates emergent climate-resilient urbanism. How resilience and labor intersect amidst ongoing climate-economic shifts in emerging economies is critical on multiple contextual, processual, and geographic accounts. Consequently, the entanglements of resilience and labor have implications for numerous constitutive logics, relational practices, and the geographies in which they are grounded.

Geographically, labor in southern urban geographies such as Surat and elsewhere, is spatially produced by and reproduces urban spatial informality. The interactions of resilience practice and labor are thus mediated by spatial practices and logic that embed labor as a constitutive force in urban informal geographies (Vasudevan, 2015). Additionally, Surat and other southern urban geographies are *southern* in relation to the Global North, and the historic hierarchies, urban histories, and spatial legacies that make southern climate geographies distinct topologically in contemporary global networked climate processes including resilience.

Furthermore, Surat's contribution to the understanding of emergent climate-resilient urbanism and labor is also shaped by its particularities. The particularities that matter in the context of resilience practice and labor derive from urban institutions, politics, and culture. And so, one is cognizant that not all situated influences on resilience practice and labor may readily extend elsewhere even within comparable geographies. However, it certainly contributes to a plurality of interpretations and ways of doing climate-urbanism scholarship in complex and contested southern urban geographies. While Surat's unique resilience legacy and climate-resilient urbanism may be specific to its context, the underlying spatial relations and logics that link the universal categories of resilience and labor have broader implications that extend beyond the city's geographical boundaries.

This dissertation contributes to emerging scholarly critical scholarly and practice debates on climate-resilient urbanism in the intersection between infrastructure, labor geographies, and resilience in urban governance. By examining critical relational dimensions of contemporary infrastructural resilience practice in southern labor geographies, this study contributes to under-examined dimensions of climate urbanism. This chapter summarizes key insights and provocations that could inform future inquiry on climate urbanism and labor intersections. The chapter is organized as follows: the first part of the chapter summarizes substantive findings aligned with the broader thesis argument. The second part of this chapter elaborates on conceptual insights and contributions. This is followed by a discussion on methodological insights, limitations, and reflections on future research. I will conclude by discussing key takeaways for policy and practice.

7.1. Finding and Empirical Contributions

7.1.1 Mutations in resilience and labor geographies

The first empirical chapter, "Mutation", argues that the discursive alignment of standardized resilience with prevailing institutional spatial orientation to risk governance shapes how resilience is institutionalized in climate-economic geographies. This chapter demonstrates this in the case of Surat, focusing on the institutionalization of resilience in relation to key informal labor geographies. "Mutation" is the central analytical theme that facilitates a relational analysis of different stages of discursive-material translation of resilience and policy alignment in institutional spatial practice.

The findings reveal how the standardized resilience framework interacts with institutional legacies and spatial narratives of embodied risk within urban informality, racialized labor mobilities, and migration. This contributes to a

contextual understanding of the integration of resilience frameworks into prevailing spatial practices for disaster risk and crisis management in informal labor geographies. Additionally, the findings emphasize that risk-driven spatial approaches legitimize ongoing climate-resilient reconfigurations in migrant labor geographies. The chapter further elaborates on the central argument of the thesis, highlighting how top-down spatial reconfiguration facilitates the institutional management of racialized labor mobilities and geographies amid the ongoing climate-resilient restructuring of vital labor geographies. In the following pages, I discuss how broader findings from this chapter connect to the main argument of the thesis and contribute to new ways of thinking about resilience.

7.1.1.1 Discursive underpinnings of urban resilience

The discursive underpinnings of resilience thinking are crucial to understanding how resilience mutates in situated urban contexts. The first half traces the discursive influences of resilience in neoliberal risk and crisis governance in the production of the hegemonic vision of the 'resilient society' (Chandler, 2014). The discursive orientation of resilience in contemporary risk governance appeals to a wide range of climate-vulnerable and aspirational climate-economic geographies. Consequently, resilience resonates across a wide range of urban geographies, where contextual risk management approaches align with resilience as an overarching spatial strategy in contemporary urban risk and crisis governance.

7.1.1.2 Institutionalization of resilience

The chapter then shifts focus to the institutionalization of resilience in Surat. The chapter illustrates how historical spatial legacies of resilience, shaped by events such as the 1994 plague outbreak and the 2006 floods, continue to influence contemporary resilience practices. These historical events, deeply embedded in public

memory, highlight the ongoing tension between economic resilience and the management of informal labor geographies in Surat. These illustrative cases demonstrate the continuity of spatial actors, narratives, and logic in contemporary institutional resilience practices.

The insights reveal how the spatially intertwined production of risk and informality in labor geographies foregrounds resilience as a spatial security orientation. This orientation has a dual objective: disaster risk management and economic securitization through the spatial reconfiguration of labor. Spatial informality emerges as both a source of urban risk and crisis and a critical component of economic security and resilience.

Additionally, as a spatial strategy in anticipatory risk governance, climate-resilient economic approaches reinforce economic securitization and promote the technocratic spatial management of risk geographies. This highlights an important aspect of the spatial legitimacy afforded to institutions to govern informal labor geographies. Chapters 5 and 6 build on this foundation to examine the different ways in which resilience facilitates institutional access to and management of racialized labor geographies in response to Surat's evolving labor-geographic demands. This is crucial for understanding the discursive-material spatial currency of resilience in the spatial management of labor. Overall, the chapter contributes to the broader understanding of resilience as a spatial strategy for managing informal labor geographies. It emphasizes the complex historically rooted spatial interactions between standardized resilience frameworks and situated influences in Surat.

7.1.2 Approaches

The second empirical chapter traces institutional spatial approaches to reconfiguring labor geographies and examines situated labor approaches to negotiating ongoing climate-resilient reconfigurations. This dual scale of analysis addresses institutional

spatial approaches to risk-prone labor geographies and the hybrid labor strategies that emerge to negotiate and reconfigure these geographies from the ground up. The chapter primarily builds on two spatial case narratives; Kosad and Ved to unpack different spatial logics and negotiations that link these institutional spatial approaches to different micro-labor geographies. The broader argument of this chapter is that institutional spatial approaches are shaped by contextual politico-economic spatial logics, and hence the observed differences in spatial strategies across different migrant labor geographies.

This chapter uncovers critical insights into institutional spatial approaches informed by resilience within Surat's labor geographies. These highlight the complex interplay between spatial risk, economic informality, and labor that complicate and diversify spatial approaches to different labor geographies. Key findings correspond to resilience and spatial reconfiguration of risk, informality, and labor; spatial negotiations and approaches to reconfiguration; and finally, observations on hybrid spatial approaches to the governance of migrant labor.

7.1.1. Interplay between risk, informality, and labor in urban resilience

The chapter underscores how intertwined production of risk and informality within labor geographies drives institutional resilience strategies. The chapter highlights that as a spatial strategy, resilience goes beyond disaster risk management. The ongoing climate-resilient spatial reconfigurations cater to evolving economic securitization goals of zone-specific dependencies on migrant labor and racialized labor geographies. Legitimized by spatial narratives of risk management and zero-slum city aspirations, institutional resilience practice has normalized mass evictions and relocations to tackle spatial informality and risk. However, mass evictions and relocations of informal labor populations in urban margins and economic peripheries merely redistribute risk and spatial vulnerability. As observed in Surat, often these

measures fail to address the structural and systemic roots of spatial risk in the racialized labor geographies of Surat.

This highlights the inherent complexities and spatial contradictions in risk management in informal labor geographies. In other words, the logic of economic securitization driving resilience spatial approaches can only superficially address spatial informality as long as key industries like textiles remain deeply reliant on informal labor geographies. Consequently, to tackle spatial informality, resilience strategies reconfigure risk geographies by peripheralizing surplus labor. While other informal labor geographies are managed using differential spatial strategies. This contribution underscores the complexities and contradictions in managing informal labor geographies while attempting to maintain economic resilience.

7.1.1.2 Labor perspectives on spatial reconfiguration and resilience

The chapter provides nuanced perspectives on the aftermath of spatial reconfiguration from the vantage point of informal labor. The findings reveal an overwhelming sense of alienation and loss of socio-spatial networks as dominant drivers of erosion of 'informal resilience' in informal labor geographies are being reconfigured by climate-resilient practices. The socio-spatial underpinning of informal resilience in networked labor geographies is fundamental to ongoing social reproduction and viability of labor (Sanyal, 2014; Roy, 2016).

Additionally, spatial risk management practices that dislocate labor from networked social infrastructures risk causing irreversible damage to social cohesion. This has implications for the constrained spatial agency of labor to internally mobilize, as observed in the case of Kosad and Bhestan. The findings suggest that this progressively weakens the internal community structures and resources that help informal labor communities build long-term resilience against everyday labor precarity and other structural vulnerabilities in informal labor geographies.

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Consequently, despite institutional efforts to semi-formalize migrant labor geographies through state-sanctioned affordable housing policies to mitigate spatial risks, risk travels and accumulates in the peripheries. This stems from the entrenched socio-spatial vulnerability of informal labor and labor geographies no matter the location. Economic informality and spatial informality are deeply intertwined in geographies of risk, addressing one without the other simply spatiotemporally prolongs risk, and by extension the need for resilience.

Additionally, findings also highlight how discriminatory and racialized spatial instruments coalesce with disaster-resilience planning. This further entrenches the spatial vulnerability of certain ethnic minorities within Surat's segregated urban landscape. The findings highlight the need for deeper insights into institutional ethnographic and cultural drivers of climate-resilient spatial processes that may be instrumentalized to advance politically motivated spatial agendas in majoritarian regimes.

7.1.1.3 Hybrid approaches and self-governance in labor geographies

Finally, illustrative cases highlight the capacity of informal labor communities to self-organize and self-govern. They do this by drawing on hyper-local, broker-mediated networks for basic service provision. These communities also politically mobilize, aligning with dominant clientelist and political patronage networks. Additionally, they collaborate with hybrid labor and community organizations to negotiate every day and chronic spatial vulnerabilities and stresses.

Despite the challenges posed by neoliberal spatial policies, labor communities demonstrate informal resilience by leveraging platforms such as trade unions, self-help groups, and broker-mediated networks. This contribution highlights the potential for informal labor communities to navigate and resist the precarity imposed by institutional spatial practices. However, a key mediator of informal resilience is

spatially governed logic for cooperation, solidarity, and negotiation which are increasingly fragile to spatial fragmentation amid climate-resilient economic restructuring.

However, overall, I observe that the situated practices of self-governance within informal labor contexts indicate that spatialization of resilience consolidates neoliberal governance of urban margins and labor geographies. While racialized labor communities exhibit agency and adaptability, their efforts to manage risks and vulnerabilities are shaped by the broader neoliberal spatial agenda.

The chapter advocates for amplifying labor's organizing potential through existing legal and governance platforms, such as labor laws and trade unions, to better integrate spatial and economic informality into a cohesive discourse on spatial risk and resilience governance. It suggests that innovative possibilities to temper and potentially reverse the adverse effects of neoliberal resilience practices could emerge from the very racialized labor geographies undergoing climate-resilient restructuring. Informal socio-spatial labor networks and hybrid organizations highlight numerous situated spatial and structural levers for the holistic inclusion of labor as a key consideration in climate-resilient planning. A crucial aspect that spatial practices at the design stage should consider is the politico-legal dimension, which risks instrumentalizing climate-resilient practices to entrench differentiated urban citizenship regimes. The final empirical chapter titled 'Associations' elaborates further on this.

7.1.3 Associations

The final empirical chapter, "Associations", examines the emergent spatial configurations around resilience practice in labor geographies in Surat. The chapter examines how state-sanctioned affordable housing facilitates differential spatial management of informal labor geographies. The findings uncover the situated

politico-economic influences in spatial resilience practices. These myriad political and economic micro-spatial logic suggest that resilience is far from a 'neutral' spatial practice. The politicized and instrumental dimensions of resilience practice are visible in how it reconfigures heterogenous labor geographies to cater to the demands of a hierarchical informal labor market. On the other hand, emergent hybrid associations and negotiation strategies reveal insights into how spatiality mediates different modes of governance and politics in migrant labor geographies. The key findings are summarized below:

7.1.3.1 Resilience and spatial reconfiguration: The role of affordable housing

The chapter elaborates on the solidifying role of the state-sanctioned affordable housing market in spatial management of informality in post-disaster labor geographies. Affordable housing is framed as a spatial strategy to contain and reconfigure migrant labor spatiality to align with zone-specific labor requirements. The ongoing mass evictions and relocations illustrate various micro-spatial logics driving the post-disaster redistribution of different intersectional migrant social groups through state-sanctioned housing. These spatial nuances are evident in housing practices that adhere to prevailing codes of segregation.

Illustrative cases from *Kosad* and *Ved* help substantiate this. Migrant narratives and spatial subjectivities highlight how semi-formalized housing to address spatial informality has paradoxically entrenched precarious forms of self-provisioning and governance. The persistence of economic informality and ambiguity in infrastructure and service provision in housing projects like *Kosad* has led to hybrid modes of self-management. Some of these hybrid associations risk pushing informal migrant working communities into vicious cycles of exploitation and illegality. The findings also suggest that connotations of illegality and criminality associated with racialized housing projects tend to reproduce market exclusion and structural vulnerability of minority labor geographies, as seen in the case of *Kosad*.

7.1.3.2 Spatial consolidation and migrant politics

The two cases pursued through the lens of situated migrant labor associations further illuminate how spatial practices such as housing map onto city-wide intricate broker patronage networks and BJP's extensive grassroots politics of clientelism in informal labor geographies. In differentially constrained informal environments such as *Kosad* and *Ved*, the motivations of collective mobilization are different. Often, the lack of formal conduits into mainstream claims-making and politics drives racialized labor groups to negotiate basic security in exchange for a spatially homogenous political clientele. The case of Kosad highlights that the state's absence in providing basic security and infrastructure serves as an equally potent spatial strategy for politically homogenizing migrant geographies, comparable to the more direct forms of control seen through party extension workers in Ved and Bamroli.

Across informal labor geographies, migrant labor associations, despite their limited autonomy, play a critical role in shaping the local political landscape. In *Kosad*, these associations often find themselves in a reactive position, navigating the demands of clientelist networks to secure basic services. In *Ved*, the relative privilege afforded by cultural and political alignment allows these associations to engage more proactively, negotiating for long-term security and spatial investments. These underscore the complex interplay between spatial constraints, relative privilege, and constrained agentic responses of migrant labor groups to negotiate spatiality. Overall, my findings suggest that institutional approaches to resilience practices in labor geographies are mediated by hyper-local dominant economic and political logic. To understand how resilience facilitates spatial management of socially diverse informal labor, it is crucial to engage with dominant spatial influences in informal geographies

7.2 Conceptual Contributions and Provocations

7.2.1 Resilience and urban techno politics

Conceptual insights from urban STS highlight how urban technopolitics and institutional spatial narratives shape resilience practices in racialized labor geographies and urban margins. This study demonstrates the valuable contributions that urban STS thinking can make to critical urban climate studies, particularly in contextualizing the discursive-material dimensions of resilience in Surat. A compelling example is the mutation of resilience from a risk-oriented narrative to one where situated spatial climate-resilient reconfigurations (re)frame urban risk and crises as economic opportunities to harvest. In doing so, STS thinking in climate-resilient urbanism engages multiple spatial logics and narratives to contextualize how the 'resilience dividend' manifests in the situated spatial reconfiguration of risk. This approach also highlights the connections between ongoing resilience-driven spatial changes and the emergence of climate-economic opportunities.

7.2.1.1 Imaginaries and narratives in climate-resilient urbanism

The study demonstrates the centrality of institutional narratives and spatial imaginaries in shaping situated climate-resilient urbanism. Imaginaries operate as collective social constructs that lay the foundation for envisioning resilient urban futures. Whilst narratives legitimize these visions and assimilate them into prevailing institutional spatial approaches. In this regard, observations reveal how the future of urban resilience is often backtracked and shaped by present-day narratives and broader socio-political agendas such as ethnonationalism and specific visions of economic growth. This contributes to a nuanced understanding of the underlying discursive and cultural drivers of resilience as a techno-managerial approach to risk management. It also highlights the potential for climate-resilient

narratives to reinforce existing inequalities or to shift pathways toward more equitable urban futures.

7.2.1.2 Technopolitical regimes and urban resilience narratives

Critical intersections of urban techno-politics, institutional narratives, and resilience advance the understanding of the influences of situated techno-politics on institutional resilience practice. By foregrounding infrastructure and STS in the conceptualization of institutional resilience, this research suggests that infrastructural resilience is both shaped by and actively shapes local techno-politics. This interaction also influences the evolving spatial logic and narratives of resilience within specific urban institutional contexts (Westman and Castán Broto, 2022).

This research thus amplifies critical calls for the need to unpack resilience technocracy in urban climate governance (Long and Rice, 2021). Additionally, such a perspective also illuminates the generative work of resilience in reconfiguring contextual power relations and situated techno-politics in cities increasingly opening to emergent forces of climate-resilient urbanism. Additionally, this study notes that techno-political shifts across scales facilitate the visibility and mobility of southern urban climate geographies within global climate-economic restructuring and politics. A key contribution to urban STS scholarship is its exploration of how normative climate frameworks mediate reflexive shifts between global STS and urban climate techno-politics.

Additionally, the study builds on postcolonial and southern urban perspectives within urban STS. These perspectives challenge the dominant Anglophone underpinnings of resilience thinking. In doing so, these critique the flat ontological assumptions that underpin much of the mainstream urban resilience discourse. Building on these, this study advocates for a more contextually-sensitive approach that recognizes the urban climate particularities in the Global South. By

foregrounding context, relationality, and local agentic actors like labor, the research advances efforts to decolonize climate studies and reimagine climate justice (Chu and Michael, 2019; Crawford et al., 2023).

7.2.2 Urban infrastructure and labor geography

The dissertation foregrounds the role of infrastructure as a central logic and practice in climate-resilient reconfigurations and spatial governance. Through a critical lens of infrastructure prevailing spatial politics and resilience, this study identifies specific infrastructural relations in labor geographies that demand closer attention in resilience discourse. For example, the infrastructural nexus between affordable housing and disaster infrastructure in resilience practice tends to undermine micro-social and service infrastructures that are critical to 'informal resilience' in reconfigured labor geographies. Insights from Surat and other cities implore a critical re-examination of infrastructural solutions beyond a techno-managerial approach to spatial risk management.

Observations from Surat and other cities suggest that infrastructural practices reconfigure spatial risk. Infrastructural configurations in resilience practice demonstrate the potential to mitigate or exacerbate spatial vulnerabilities in marginalized and informal labor geographies where structural vulnerability and spatial risk are disproportionately concentrated. The study highlights the strategic role of infrastructural practice in the spatial reconfiguration and mobility of risk across uneven labor geographies. The study argues that core infrastructure spatial relations and governance should be re-examined from the perspective of infrastructural afterlives and situated perspectives from micro-geographies these seek to reconfigure.

Additionally, the study enhances the understanding of how resilient infrastructure is being integrated into existing practices and governance. For

example, ongoing efforts in Surat to combine climate-resilient disaster infrastructure with market-based economic resilience infrastructure, such as affordable housing and rapid mobility and transport, highlight the broader strategic role of resilience in spatial management and governance through infrastructural practices. This invites southern urban scholars to critically examine the emergent climate-resilient infrastructural assemblages that are beginning to shape pathways for climate-resilient urbanism in emerging economies

Amid the dominant role of resilience in spatial management and governance, this study contends that existing risk-driven frameworks are not adequately equipped to guide infrastructural decisions — especially when considering how risk travels, mutates, and is absorbed in historically marginalized and structurally vulnerable urban geographies. This is particularly relevant in informal labor geographies, where diverse labor mobilities and planned approaches to managing informal labor render risk rather diffuse and dynamic. The spatial entanglements of infrastructure, risk, and vulnerability therefore require a closer examination to appreciate spatial logic and agents that differentially stabilize, entrench, and reconfigure risk in climate-reconfigured urban geographies.

Moreover, recognizing that resilience practice unfixes and diffuses spatial risk, it is worth reframing risk as an embodied intersectional component of historically disadvantaged and vulnerable social and economic geographies. In doing so, infrastructural spatial fix approaches that often perpetuate 'risk capitalism' will likely face accountability for reproducing vulnerability, particularly in climate-reconfigured urban margins and racialized labor geographies.

In cities like Surat, where power dynamics and resource distribution are deeply uneven, infrastructure emerges as a key discursive-material practice of governing informal labor geographies. This perspective disrupts the dominant narrative that furthers an apolitical stance on resilience. Instead, the findings

underscore the deep spatial entanglements of resilience with urban politics and spatial contestations around labor geographies. The research thus emphasizes the crucial connections between infrastructure and micro-spatial logic within labor geographies.

Further deepening this analysis, the study explores shared visions of what resilient infrastructure should embody — and their influence on resilience practice amid growing influences of neoliberal policies and governance. In global resilient cities, where the influence of urban elites is crucial to the success of 'resilience', a significant conflict of interest becomes apparent when examined closely.

The spatial logic of risk is often manipulated for instrumental gains and strategic industrial alignment, especially in urban regions like Surat, where spatial risk directly reconfigures a key economic actor, migrant labor. As this study and others have noted, over-reliance on institutions embedded in politico-economic networks perpetuates the uncritical assimilation of resilience strategies that privilege dominant politico-economic interests over others. This underscores the need to understand how resilience strategies are negotiated within institutional spaces.

This further raises important questions about the processes of deliberation and negotiation that are central to the institutionalization of resilience. What is considered successful institutionalization, and why? Should the relative lack of contestation and spatial tensions within institutional spaces where resilience and other climate practices are developed be a cause for concern? Does the ease of institutionalization and its alignment with the global resilience agenda — as seen in Surat with Rockefeller's ACCCRN framework — indicate potential design flaws that make resilience susceptible to elite capture? And how the lack of deliberation informs future institutional configurations to address the spatial representation of stakeholders, such as labor and other marginalized geographies, who need to be

recentered in institutional resilience planning for climate-resilient urbanism to be truly equitable.

Therefore, in addition to contributing to a growing body of critical climate studies on technocratic resilience planning and governance, this study calls for the need to reconfigure institutional networks and actors entrusted with the role of institutionalizing resilience. It observes that accountability and equity-oriented spatial approaches to infrastructural resilience could emerge from hybrid labor associations and leadership. These associations could be organized to inform climate-resilient shifts across a range of spatially entangled aspects of economic informality, informal governance, and infrastructural deficits in marginalized labor geographies.

The dissertation also advances relational approaches to urban infrastructure studies, particularly in the context of climate-resilient economic reconfiguration of labor geographies. Infrastructure is framed as not merely an instrument of resilience but an active relational practice that reconfigures spaces where resilience operates. By exploring the interactions between infrastructural practices and labor geographies, the research reveals the complex interdependencies that shape spatial subjectivities and politics in labor geographies.

Finally, the dissertation highlights the need to re-politicize the role of infrastructural logic and practice in resilience discourse. It argues that infrastructural climate-resilient practices need to be understood as constitutive of and configured by prevailing spatial politics and situated power relations. Infrastructural practices often carry the legacies of social and spatial inequalities, and in resilience strategies can either reinforce or undo structural inequalities. Therefore, this research calls for a critical examination of the political dimensions of infrastructural resilience, focusing on how infrastructural practices are institutionalized within resilience strategies and how resilience is integrated into existing infrastructural planning.

7.2.3 Laboring infrastructural resilience practice: key insights

The vantage point of informal labor geographies unsettles the dominant paradigm of urban resilience practice that builds on the notion of 'resilience dividend'. The notion of 'resilience dividend' is not a problem in itself. Rather how the dividend is reaped and legitimized in relation to constrained spatial agents such as racialized labor offers vital cues into future of climate-resilient urbanism in emerging economies. The spatial encounters of infrastructural reconfigurations in racialized labor geographies facilitate a relational inquiry at the intersections of resilience and labor. The conceptual depth of urban infrastructure literature, which addresses the duality and deeply embedded spatial relations of infrastructure, combined with critical theorization of constrained spatial agency and labor autonomy, contributes to a dynamic yet tense understanding of resilience in the spatial management and governance of labor.

The study demonstrates through illustrative cases how infrastructural orientation in emergent climate-resilient urbanism can entrench or mitigate racialized vulnerabilities in labor geographies and urban margins. Additionally, observations on infrastructural-labor relations in reconfigured spaces in the aftermath of the 2006 flood disaster reveal the unequal distribution of spatial privileges and capacities within intersectional labor geographies mediated by resilience.

This research significantly builds on urban infrastructure studies to conceptualize infrastructural logic and spatial relations in emergent climate-resilient infrastructural processes. Empirically driven theorization of infrastructural politics and place-making adequately anchor observations on the discursive-material dimensions of climate-resilient spatial reconfigurations in this study. Sophisticated place-based research on urban infrastructure offers a canvas of analytical tools that help translate a relational inquiry. Conceptual applications of infrastructural spatial logic and embeddedness extend nuanced sensibilities to tracing the differential

spatial relations of resilience practice in heterogeneous labor geographies. Additionally, critical insights from a wealth of southern urban infrastructure studies on spatial informality and governance help ground climate-resilient infrastructural practice firmly in southern urban geographies.

The blending of the two offers immense potential to critically observe and anticipate spatial fix and speculative underpinnings of infrastructure in emergent climate-resilient urbanism. Particularly in the micro-geographic context of labor, where emerging infrastructural logic, practices, and actors are introduced into the existing spatial dynamics driven by structural and locational factors of vulnerability and risk. For example, in this study, affordable housing and infrastructure development in resilience practice opens climate-vulnerable labor geographies to a changing set of spatial logics, policy practice and discourses on affordable housing and infrastructure. Therefore, in addition to urban informality and structural marginality, labor geographies are exposed to a wider range of spatial agents and stakes that reconfigure everyday spatial subjectivities and governance of informal labor.

Additionally, the intersection of urban infrastructure studies and labor in climate-resilient shifts highlights overlooked aspects of spatial liminality, contingency, and flux. The micro-spatial drivers that mediate how informal labor geographies self-organize into autonomous spatial politics around infrastructure provoke deeper analysis in the context of neoliberal governance. Furthermore, this calls for spatiotemporally extended analyses of infrastructure-labor geography relations amid a climate-resilient restructuring of urban geographies.

7.3 Methodological Contributions

7.3.1 Approach and design

This dissertation foregrounds relationality as a core methodological approach. This approach privileges the examination of relational intersections of climate-resilient reconfiguration, urban informality, and migrant labor geographies within the wider context of urban spatial logic and processes. Relationality is integral to the overall study design. It unearths overshadowed spatial relations and processes to contextualize emergent climate-resilient urbanism in relation to a critical yet underexamined situated spatial actor, labor.

As demonstrated in this study, this approach challenges underlying normative assumptions in climate-resilient urbanism policy and academic debates. By foregrounding specific spatial relations, particularly surrounding labor, this approach reinstates the need to reexamine risk, resilience, and informality from different spatial vantage points. In doing so, the analysis grounds resilience in Surat and underscores the spatially intertwined production of spatial informality, risk and racialized labor geographies. Moreover, the spatial centrality of constrained agentic processes around labor mobilities and geographies unsettle the dominant spatial fix approach in contemporary climate-resilience urbanism.

7.3.1.1 Institutional ethnography: Strengths and limitations

The combination of IE and spatial case narratives was particularly well-suited for this inquiry. The deep contextual insights obtained from IE and qualitative methods in specific micro-labor contexts were compatible with the scale, perspective, and relational design of this study. IE offers opportunities to theorize from a situated context at the intersections of institutional structures, norms, and practices and their everyday manifestations in spaces and places influenced by the concerned

institutions. However, the approach has certain limitations that concern generalizability and replicability of insights. It is suitable for an in-depth contextual understanding of institutional practices and motivations to understand Surat's evolving climate-resilient urbanism. While the methodological design itself can be replicated in other climate-resilient cities, the methods and analysis will need to be contextualized and interpreted accordingly.

To develop a generalizable research design using these methods, a meta-ethnographic framework and systematic case review would be desirable (Huang et al., 2024). This would enable a more geographically and institutionally diverse understanding of emergent climate-resilient practices, logic, and approaches in comparable urban contexts. Other key considerations include the ability to discern institutional and individual agency and subjectivities during interpreting institutional standpoints. To compensate for the potential overshadowing by institutional positionality of individual agency, the researcher must revisit textual material, interviews, narratives, and other methods of capturing institutional ethnographic perspectives a few times from different angles.

Furthermore, the over-reliance on institutional sources and perspectives raises the risk of biases in interpretations. In this study, this was overcome to an extent by diversifying spatial perspectives and by combining other case narrative methods to privilege non-institutional thinking from the perspective of labor and other key spatial actors in Surat. Finally, as with most ethnographic methods, especially in institutional studies, navigating power dynamics and positionality poses complexities in interpretation. It is crucial to avoid letting institutional perspectives overshadow the researcher's judgment.

7.3.2 Limitations and opportunities

Overall, the research design was reflexive and adaptive to the changing circumstances of the field. Despite all efforts to pursue this research with methodological rigor, there were limitations in the design that are important to recognize. These observations are important to re-evaluate and enhance the research design to develop this work beyond a doctoral thesis.

Institutional ethnography has more scope in Surat's variegated landscape where non-institutional actors play a significant role in influencing spatial policies and agenda. The ethnographic and elite interviews were limited by the sampling strategy. Despite exploring various stakeholder perspectives and spatial relationships to resilience and labor, I realized that a broader network for institutional ethnography would be valuable to capture the emergent and hidden spatial actors influencing climate-resilient planning in Surat amid evolving research and policy contexts. Preliminary interviews with climate brokers in Surat and other cities like Pune revealed an emerging horizontal network of City Resilience Officers and influential brokers. The cross-learning and strategic negotiations within and between cities to align climate economic priorities and climate-resilient agenda offer the generative potential to scale down climate influencing, governance, and politics within new porous extra-institutional spaces of climate-economic restructuring.

Additionally, due to field circumstances, mobility, and resource constraints, the ethnographic trail of trade union leaders, community extension workers, and migrant contractors and brokers was cut short. While I interviewed a few of these stakeholders to understand their views on resilience planning and labor, there is much scope for deepening this engagement. Going forward, I would pursue this angle to examine opportunities for reimagining the institutional design of resilience from a labor-centric view as well as a deeper spatial conceptualization of differential vulnerability within labor geographies into the research design.

7.4 Conclusion and key takeaways for policy and practice

This chapter summarized key empirical, conceptual, and methodological contributions of this study to climate urbanism scholarship and other sub-fields that have informed this study. Overall, this study highlights situated intersections and spatial logic that govern climate-resilient economic transition in emerging southern economies. The study emphasizes the interplay between scalar influences of normative resilience and situated influences and counter forces that animate the coupling of resilience and racialized migrant labor geographies.

The relational approach to resilience as an embedded spatial process argues that one of the dominant influences of resilience in emergent climate urbanism would be in spatial management and governance of labor. Therefore, the study calls for a critical perspective shift in viewing emergent climate-resilient economic practices as gradually solidifying into differential spatial governance regimes. Approaching resilience as a spatial management and governance practice in situated contexts would contribute to how emergent climate-resilient urbanism is likely to reconfigure situated economic relations, spaces, institutions, and agents to align with global and regional climate-economic transitions.

7.4.1 Infrastructural climate-resilient practices

This study urges urban climate practitioners and policy studies to critically consider the spatial connections and footprints of climate-resilient infrastructure and infrastructure for resilience beyond immediate and chronic spatial risk management. This is particularly important to stress in climate urbanism scholarship and policy literature that often underappreciate the critical role of urban climate-resilient infrastructural practices in city-wide networked spatial agents, agenda, logic and networked processes such as labor spatiality, politics, and mobilities.

Therefore, in addition to framing infrastructural solutions in policy through the lens of anticipatory risk governance alone, it is vital to consider at the outset how these solutions could reinforce prevailing structural deficits and governance of networked informal geographies of risk. For example, the study highlights key considerations that resilience practitioners need to consider when aligning with existing policy routes to affordable housing for the urban poor.

There is a greater need to examine how infrastructural practices interact with economic and spatial informality in contemporary labor geographies. This research illuminates some of the complexities that unsettle infrastructural resilience assumptions. However, to build a comprehensive and contextually informed understanding of climate-resilient urbanism in emerging economies, it is important to pursue relational inquiry at the intersection of infrastructural resilience practices and labor geographies in different urban political regimes.

The research also underscores the importance of considering ethno-racial spatial logic in urban governance. I argue that this is particularly important in cities and urban regions marked by racial, ethnic, and caste segregation, where spatial logic plays a pivotal role in the management and governance of labor. This is to facilitate a place-based reframing of resilience as spatially intertwined co-constructed infrastructural practice and governance, that could potentially yield contextual levers of policy restructuring and spatial reforms to make climate-resilient urbanism more inclusive and equitable in situated contexts.

7.4.2 Beyond economic resilience and deliberation in resilience planning

Finally, the dissertation demonstrates some of the inherent contradictions in global urban resilience discourses that privilege economic resilience over all else. Throughout the study, substantive insights highlighted some of the inherent contradictions and the challenges that reveal themselves in situated contexts of translating normative resilience. For example, the ongoing fragmentation of racialized geographies of labor that are integral to the economic and social-political life of the city only perpetuates reasons for invoking even more aggressive forms of authoritative resilient urbanism. Therefore, in amplifying calls for fundamentally rewiring climate-resilient urban practice, with humility, I reckon we need to reconsider institutions, actors, and approaches to institutionalizing climate-resilient pathways. A closer examination of cultural and ethnographic understanding of urban institutions, legacy, narratives and aspirations, and networks of influence would be a good starting point. To conclude, I reiterate the need to create spaces for critical deliberation, beyond elite deliberation within and across networked climate urban knowledge and practice spaces.

To enforce deeper accountability measures, it is vital to infuse ethics of humanism into institutional vision and build capacities accordingly to ensure that urban emergent climate imaginaries do not perpetuate historic injustices and are inclusive and just. This calls for reconfiguring practices and power configuration of those entrusted with resources and power to translate climate-resilient changes in situated contexts. Perhaps, it is time to not rush into climate-restructuring of southern urban geographies and margins, applying the same economic fundamentalist approaches that got us here in the first place. The attention to spaces and places in racialized labor geographies ruptured by economic fundamentalism is a testimony to this. To unshackle the potential to heal and reconfigure in marginalized and vulnerable climate geographies, resilience as we know it is perhaps fundamentally at odds with the normative good it sells. This dissertation is a small step toward reclaiming climate-resilient imaginaries from the perspective of the overlooked yet fundamental aspects of southern urbanism, migrant labor.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Preliminary conceptual sketch of resilience and labor in policy and academic discourse
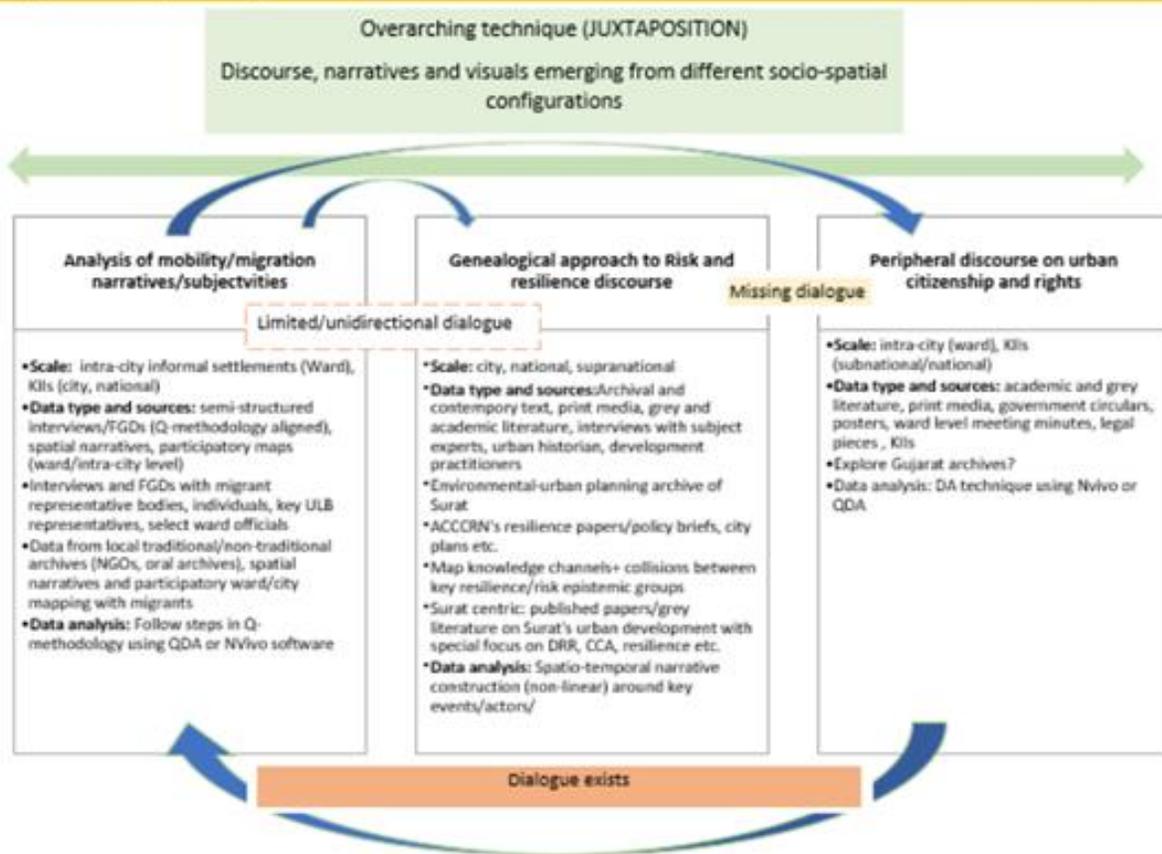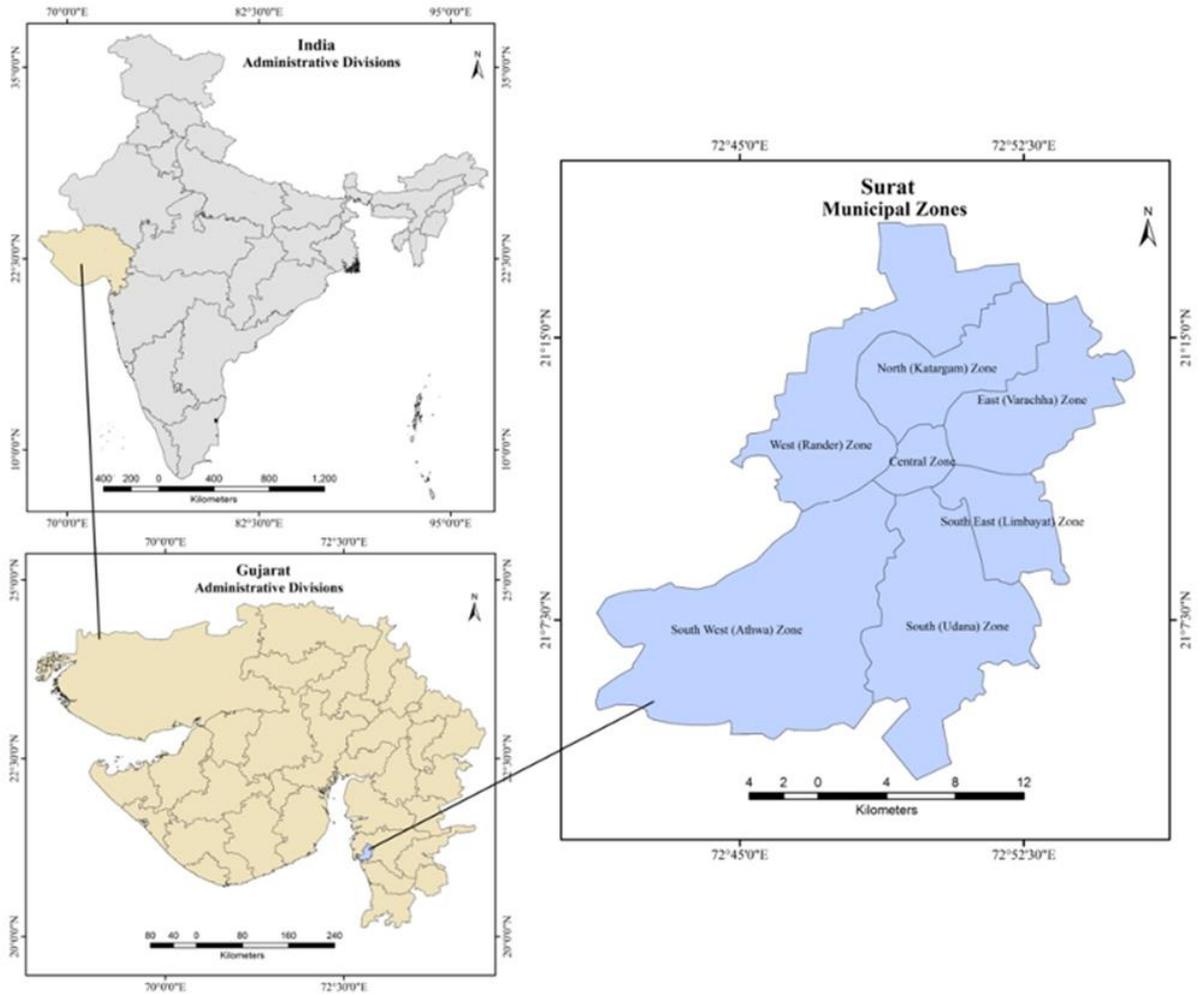
Overarching technique (JUXTAPOSITION)

Discourse, narratives and visuals emerging from different socio-spatial configurations

Analysis of mobility/migration narratives/subjectivities

Limited/unidirectional dialogue

- **Scale:** intra-city informal settlements (Ward), KIIs (city, national)
- **Data type and sources:** semi-structured interviews/FGDs (Q-methodology aligned), spatial narratives, participatory maps (ward/intra-city level)
- Interviews and FGDs with migrant representative bodies, individuals, key ULB representatives, select ward officials
- Data from local traditional/non-traditional archives (NGOs, oral archives), spatial narratives and participatory ward/city mapping with migrants
- **Data analysis:** Follow steps in Q-methodology using QDA or NVivo software

Genealogical approach to Risk and resilience discourse

Missing dialogue

- **Scale:** city, national, supranational
- **Data type and sources:** Archival and contempory text, print media, grey and academic literature, interviews with subject experts, urban historian, development practitioners
- Environmental-urban planning archive of Surat
- ACCCRN's resilience papers/policy briefs, city plans etc.
- Map knowledge channels+ collisions between key resilience/risk epistemic groups
- Surat centric: published papers/grey literature on Surat's urban development with special focus on DRR, CCA, resilience etc.
- **Data analysis:** Spatio-temporal narrative construction (non-linear) around key events/actors/

Peripheral discourse on urban citizenship and rights

- **Scale:** intra-city (ward), KIIs (subnational/national)
- **Data type and sources:** academic and grey literature, print media, government circulars, posters, ward level meeting minutes, legal pieces , KIIs
- Explore Gujarat archives?
- **Data analysis:** DA technique using Nvivo or QDA

Dialogue exists

Appendix 2: Ward level map of Surat

Fig. 1 Location of the study area

Source: Kumari etal., 2020

Appendix 3: Secondary analysis for site selection

*Table 1: Selection of zone and identification of neighborhoods*

Zones	Flood Risk	Area/ Settlement	Ward No.	% slum hh	Density per sq km	Municipal election seat (social group) (SC/ST/OBC/GENERAL)
**Central	[OBJ]	Rander	26-27	12.21784307	49971	ST-Female
South West	High to moderate	Athwa(Athwagate slum?)	13	10.35658572	**3105**	General
South	[OBJ]	Bhestan/Udhna	54,56	10.67058802	11253	General
*South East	High	Limbayat/**Udhna (Sahara Darwaja)?**	51, 56	19.29661213	**38390**	General
East (zone A and B)	[OBJ]	Varaccha	49?	9.104371242	30303	General
*North	**High**	**Katargram**/Fulpada	42,43	9.542770159	**19392**	General
**West	Moderate to normal	Jahangirpura/ **Adajan (17)**/Rander (16)	64, 27	6.068949263	**8288**	OBC

Data source: Flood risk and hazard vulnerability (Bahinipati et al., 2017, Bhat et al., 2013, and data from 2011 Census available on SMC website
*Highest relative SC/ST pop
** Relatively older parts and currently showing trends in degrowth in slum population (percentage) and clusters. Evidence forms ongoing slum clearance, resettlement and rehabilitation processes suggest a 'cleaning process' underway that is increasingly expanding and concentrating slums towards southern and eastern parts of the city. Over the last decades, the city has certainly gained a more segregated texture. The logics of segregation are multiple; some of it will be investigated in due course of time as part of field exercises.

*Appendix 4: Percentage of migrant population and households by select zones (km)*
by zone
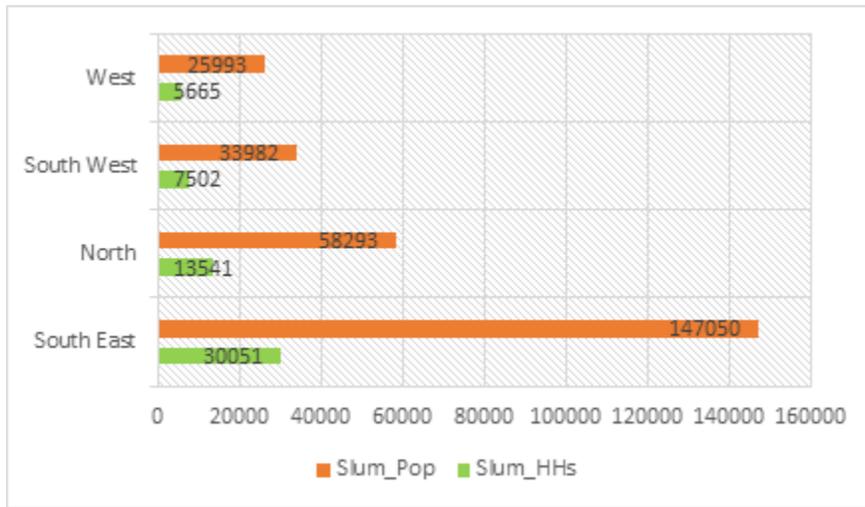
*Appendix 5: Percentage decadal growth by zone*
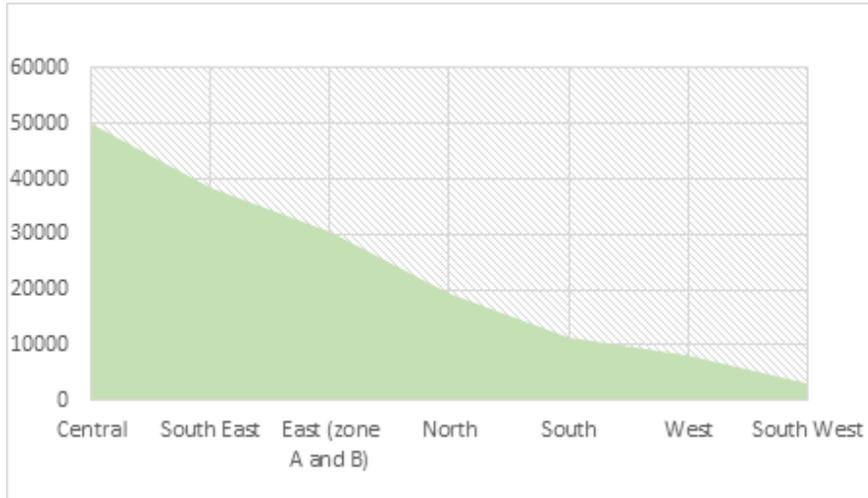
Migrant distribution within the city is heavily skewed towards the south and north (Fig 2). Migrant numbers both in absolute figures and number of households in the South East zone exceed those of others by a huge margin. The pattern is observable in the overall density gradient of the city as well (Fig. 3).

The zones have been selected along a gradient to facilitate a comparative analysis of slums from across the spectrum: very high migrant density area, moderately high and low density area. Further, the decadal growth chart (Fig 3) suggests a continuing trend in this direction as well. These baseline figures and trends corroborate as well as compliment observations gleaned from historical and contemporary accounts of Surat's development and centrality of industrial capitalism (particularly textile), migration and spatial planning in that.
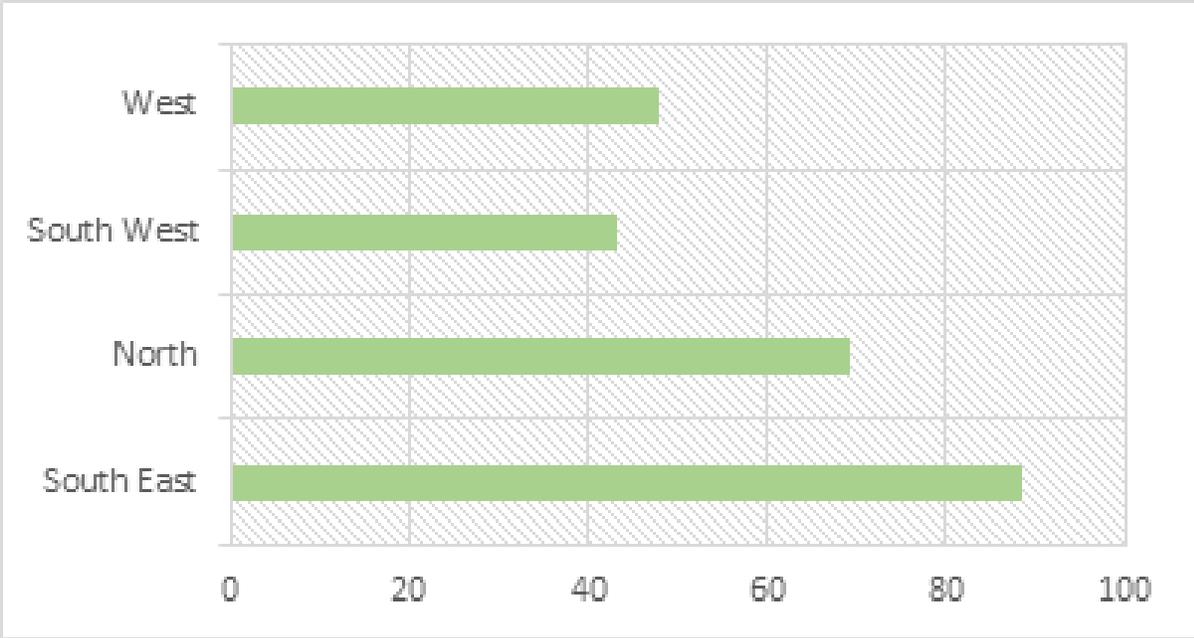
Appendix 6: Housing, mobility and resilience
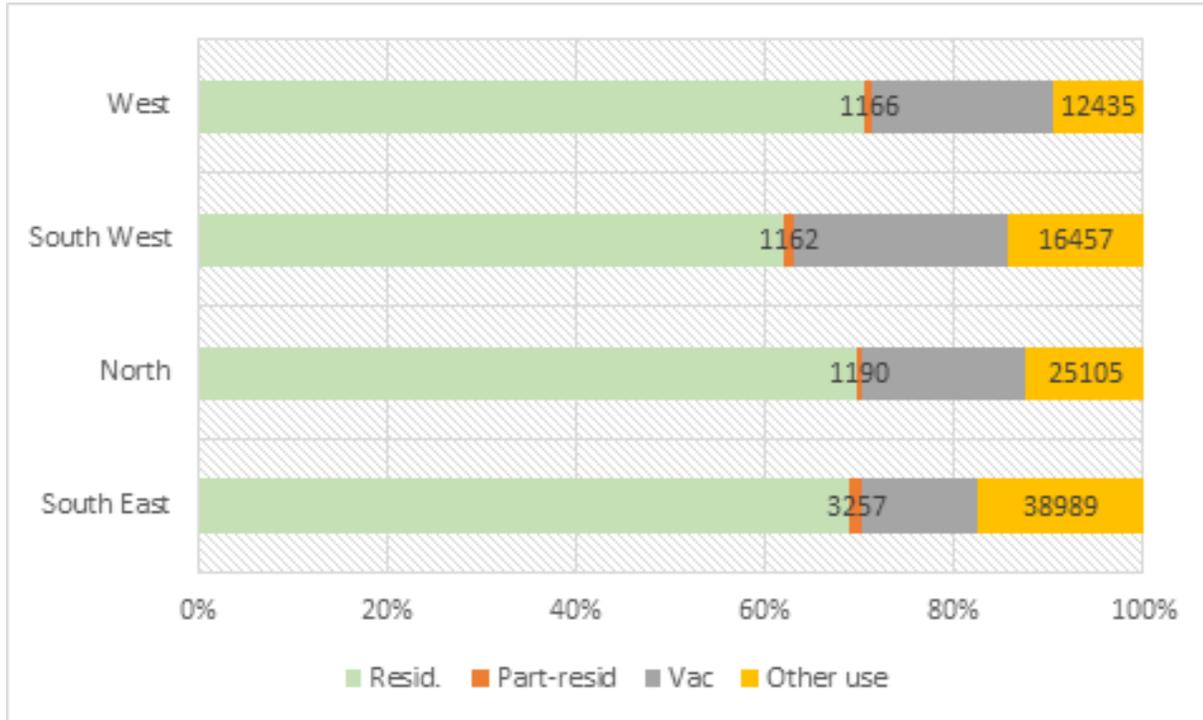
Note: The figures above give a sense of the spatial distribution of housing across the broad categories of use (residential, part-residential, vacant and other use) (Fig 4.). As expected, the trends follow similar observations on density and migrant population and are highest in southern and northern parts of the city. Particularly, 'part-residential' or mixed use, and 'other use' which are relatively higher in the chosen zones and especially so in Southeast and Northern zones of the city.

APPENDIX 7: Sample of Q-method score cards

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