

8

Cultures of Commuting: The Mobile Negotiation of Space and Subjectivity on Delhi's Metro

Melissa Butcher

Introduction

As part of Delhi's urban redevelopment aimed at creating a 'global city', new public transport infrastructure is being built. The Metro rail network, in particular, has become iconic of what local authorities and developers refer to as Delhi's 'cosmopolitan', 'world class' city status. To explore the possibilities and challenges of this new form of mobility within the context of Delhi's spatial transformation, this chapter presents findings from a qualitative study analyzing the movement across the city of a group of young people from diverse regional and socioeconomic backgrounds. For many, the Metro emerged not only as a means of transport, but also as a stage from which to consider and experience the city differently; it became a space for the improvised performance of identity and of boundaries of difference and exclusion. Interacting fields of power in the city are embedded in the disciplining scripts that impact on the possibilities of these performances, and on the relationships among passengers as well as between passengers and those in control of the Metro. These relationships also affect the negotiation of space based on young people's understandings of place, self, and collective identities. To navigate the Metro, and the habituated social scripts travelling within and around it, required the creative deployment of everyday competencies that also enabled the management of the unfamiliarity and inequality that mobility can generate.

Geography as a discipline has long focused on social performance, but in the chapter that follows field work is brought more explicitly into dialogue with the concerns of urban performance studies: terms like 'script', 'stage', and 'performance' are used to connote the multiple ways in which young people enact, adjust, and re-enact their relationships to one another within the rapidly globalizing spaces of metropolitan Delhi. In this sense, 'performance' is primarily understood here as a combination of Richard Schechner's iconic 'twice-behaved' behavior – behaviors undertaken again and again, modifying and refining en route, as we display ourselves to the world and encode the world for ourselves – and Judith Butler's 'stylized repetition of acts', with its important connotations of both social conditioning and political potential. Performance in this chapter therefore also functions, importantly, as methodology, following Diana Taylor's helpful distinction in *The Archive and the Repertoire* between performance *as event* and the process of analyzing a selection of events *as performance* (3). The performances within and around the Delhi Metro chronicled below are repeatedly enacted, refined, and adapted on the heaving platforms and surging trains that open the city to the possibilities of new urban relationships both underground and at street level.

'Delhi Metro is a world class metro'¹

Delhi is a city of almost 14 million residents living in an area of some 1500 square kilometers (Government of Delhi). Road congestion has become a major problem as a burgeoning middle class purchase cars: in 2006, more than 1000 a day were added to Delhi roads, joining a cacophony of taxis, trucks, motorcycles and scooters, auto and cycle rickshaws, bicycles, the occasional animal-drawn vehicle, and buses (Delhi Transport Corporation buses and the notorious privately operated BlueLine buses).

After decades of deliberation and debate, construction of the Metro began in October 1998 and the first train ran on 25 December 2002 (see Figure 8.1). Constructed and managed by Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC), the Metro has equal equity participation from the Government of India and the Government of the National Capital Territory of Delhi. It was largely funded, however, by a loan from the Japanese Bank of International Cooperation. Approximately three percent of its financing also comes from property development, which has led to arguments that a geographical realignment of the city is occurring as denser retail corridors form along Metro lines.



Figure 8.1 Delhi's Metro. Photo courtesy of DMRC

The Metro has not been without its problems. There were some 700 legal cases pending against it, relating largely to land redevelopment (Chopra; Dayal). Thirty slums and 4000 other structures (for example, businesses and houses), along with several temples and hundreds of trees, have been demolished to make way for the system (Acharya: 40, see Figure 8.2). It has been criticized by India's Comptroller and Auditor General for below-prediction ridership ('CAG raps Delhi Metro').² While it was estimated that the Metro carried four percent of Delhi's commuters, or 660,000 people per day, on approximately 60 km of track (increasing to 100 km by the end of Phase II), this represents only 21 percent of the DMRC's original projections. Despite the shortfall in ridership, the Metro is exceptionally crowded at peak times.

In spite of these challenges, the Metro has become more than just a rapid mass-transport system. It has become symbolic of a 'modern' Delhi. It has defied India's reputation for maladministration, claiming to be not only ahead of schedule but within budget (something disputed by critics of the network: see Roy). During the construction of the Metro unprecedented safety regulations were introduced (although there have been injuries and deaths). It has remained relatively clean. It is efficient and relatively inexpensive (ranging in price from 6–22 rupees, 8–30 pence), although fare rises have again been a source of criticism.



Figure 8.2 Metro construction, west Delhi. Photo by Melissa Butcher

The Metro has run customer service training programs for its staff and introduced 'community interaction' programs to explain the construction process to affected residents. As the Metro began to stretch further away from what is considered the cosmopolitan heart of the city and into the suburbs, the DMRC used *nukkad natak*s ('street plays') to generate awareness about how to use the Metro. Troupes of performers staged the benefits of 'smart cards', the use of associated new technologies such as escalators, and the dangers of crossing the yellow markers on platforms or flying kites near Metro lines (DMRC: 10).

Such performance-based actions became part of the Metro's embodiment of a role given to it by media, tourism, and political spokespeople as 'a catalyst for change, that is, the metamorphosis of Delhi into a modern, world class city' (Chopra: 11). Reports in the *New York Times*, for example, noted the hundreds of thousands of people who came out to 'joy ride' on the trains when they first began operating, 'to savor the efficiency, modernity and sense of progress the new system seems to generate' (Rohde). In 2007, *Business Week* noted that a 'well run subway is a marvel even in a first world city. In India where public works are often models of dysfunction, it's nothing short of a miracle' ('The miracle worker').

For the young people in this study, this 'miracle' became a site for the reproduction of Delhi (seeking an identity as a 'global city'), of the nation-state (as 'modern'), as well as of existing class, gender, and regional identities. In this sense the Metro could be seen as an example of what Jensen has termed an 'armature' ('Flows': 139): a technology of mobility, but one that is also a site for the reproduction of subjectivity. The permeable, often transitory, enclosures of an armature – rather than being a 'non-place' or 'empty meeting ground' (Urry: 194) – can be sites where relationships are renegotiated and identities (re)performed. Symes has also noted the 'theatricality' of the train as a performance space, with its mundane exterior hiding 'extraordinary complexities and deep scripts' (447). On the Metro, the understanding and performance of place, meaning, and culture is intimately connected to this quotidian mobility.

However, while Jensen argues that rather than just being 'passively shuffled across town', we are in fact 'linked-in-motion' on the subway or within similar armatures ('Flows': 149), I would add that this shared motion necessitates a degree of contestation and discomfort. The Metro is a fluid, diverse space, and within this space, within the moment of being enclosed with hundreds of others in a carriage that carries with it new codes of comportment, space is negotiated, distinctions are reinforced, transformed, and at times collapsed. Power relations are inscribed into technologies of mobility, the social organization that directs mobility, and the experience of mobility itself (see Lofgren; Symes; and Watts).

In particular, the relationship between the Metro and its users is situated within wider processes of urban reconstruction in Delhi, intersecting with global flows of capital, technology, and hegemonic discourses of 'modernity', 'development', and 'global cityness'. In accordance with dominant meanings associated with this terminology, authorities have attempted to change commuting practices embedded in the culture of Delhi – a crowded, economically and culturally diverse city – in order to bring them in line with desired new, 'modern' behaviors, including an emphasis on cleanliness, order, and quiet. Despite this official emphasis, to use the Metro is to enter into at times crowded and disruptive patterns of time and space (Watts; see also Letherby and Reynolds). It is an uncomfortable stage of transitory interactions between 'traditional' and 'contemporary' Delhi, with no real distinction between performers and audiences. Its relationships must be managed by individuals using their available skills and experience.

An understanding of commuter agency requires knowing how space and mobility are negotiated based on conceptions of place,

social order, and the power relations that underpin them. Uncovering these experiences in Delhi was done through qualitative and ethnographic field work with 23 young men and women (aged 16–22 years) from diverse regional and religious backgrounds, and resident in areas of Delhi broadly representing different socioeconomic backgrounds. They ‘mapped’ their movement in the city over a period of one month, using diaries, a blog, maps, and photographs, including thick description of their use of the Metro.³ The aim of this methodology, elaborated on by researchers such as Bagnoli and Inckle, was to encourage reflexivity with regard to space use, adjusting for different forms of self-expression by using different media, ‘and allowing a full participation of young people as authors of their autobiographies’ (Bagnoli: 27).⁴

The Metro appeared in their narratives not only as a technology that enhanced their mobility, but also as a space of interaction and exchange in which issues such as identity and modernity, difference and inequality, pleasure and discomfort were reflected upon and performed before an unsuspecting audience. Even when not using the Metro there was a diverse range of meanings and uses given to this infrastructure other than just as a means of commuting. It was a theatre that demanded the negotiation of space, often on unequal terms, and a site for the development and deployment of skills to manage those negotiations that at times challenged the expectations of the city’s proposed cosmopolitanism.

The do’s and don’ts of riding the Metro: power and mobility in Delhi

In line with official discourses relating to the role of the Metro in redefining Delhi as worthy of global city status, there was a palpable sense of pride expressed by some of the participants, connecting the Metro to a changing experience of the city:

Using the Metro so much in the past few weeks has made me feel very proud of it. It has been maintained very well and has made travelling around Delhi much more simpler.

(Shveta, high school student, north Delhi)

I think the Metro has changed Delhi, the way Delhi moves, a lot. It has made movement for youngsters like me a lot easier. I think the primary reason is that it’s so safe The whole concept of having a

rail service like this, an air conditioned rail service, an efficient system of transport, it sort of soothes you. It's good for us.

(Priya, college student, west Delhi)

Despite this positive reaction, however, the Metro has been criticized for deploying disciplining codes to ensure space-use within a particular hierarchical framework. A glance at the list of official 'do's and don'ts' that attempt to regulate journeys reveals an emphasis on a certain order that has become tied to a cosmopolitan imagination originating in 'Anglo-American' models of urban planning (see Table 8.1). Given that the Metro was built as an entirely new public transport system to Delhi, it could be argued that some level of instruction was necessary. It might even be thought of as comforting rather than disciplining to receive instructions on how to use the Metro, such as: 'The train stops for 30 seconds only.' However, other rules insist on particular forms of comportment and etiquette: to 'consider the comfort of your fellow passengers', to not jump barriers or cross lines, to make way, to move on, to stand on the left, to queue.⁵ The consistent onboard announcement, 'Don't sit on the floor of the carriage', along with restrictions on the size of packages brought on board, are reminiscent of Herbert's argument that it is blockages in the flow of the city that cause unease. Incompetent Metro users give themselves away by obstructing movement.

Delhi Metro's code of conduct attempts to construct a certain subjectivity in line with how a population in a modern city should behave, as the DMRC's managing director, E. Sreedharan, has noted: 'The Metro will totally transform our social culture giving us a sense of discipline, cleanliness and enhance multi-fold development of this cosmopolitan city' (qtd in Joshi). The 'do's and don'ts', therefore, become part of a tradition, according to Symes (446), of railways playing a significant role in 're-engineering the urban sensibility' predicated on ideas of modernity, social advancement, and self-improvement. However, all is not so new in this transformation. The DMRC also plays a role in replicating the city's normative social obligations of space use, situating its commuters within the extant cultural framework of a highly stratified city. In a script that denotes a desire for 'better civic standards' (DMRC: 9), the code removes traces of behavior that are considered transgressive and out of place: for example, paan spitting, sitting on the floor, carrying large sacks, eating strong-smelling food.

These may seem pragmatic exclusions in a crowded city, but they are also the signs of a laboring class in Delhi that is being removed from

Table 8.1 Delhi Metro's official list of 'Do's and Don'ts'.

'[F]or the safety of all the passengers Delhi Metro asks [commuters] to follow simple "Dos and Don'ts".'

Do's	Don'ts
Do limit your baggage to 15 kigs, not exceeding 60 cm (length) × 45 cm (breadth) × 25 cm (height) in size.	Don't bring eatables inside the station premises.
Do use the dustbins.	Don't bring pets inside.
Do stand on the left side of the escalators and while moving keep to the right.	Don't smoke.
Do move away from escalators immediately after use.	Don't carry firearms.
Do make way for the physically challenged.	Don't travel without your smart card or token.
Do remember that the train stops for 30 seconds only.	Don't jump over the ticket barrier.
Do show your tickets to Metro personnel, when asked to	Don't share your card or token with another person on the same journey.
Do consider the comfort of your fellow passengers.	Don't cross the yellow line on the platform.
Do abstain from drunken and unruly behaviour.	Don't step onto the Metro tracks.
Do take care of your valuables.	Don't travel on the roof of the train.
Do contact Metro Police for assistance.	Don't try to force the doors open.
Do contact female security personnel in case of any problem (for lady passengers)	Don't deface or put up posters inside the Metro station or train.
	Don't step on the Tactiles meant for the visually impaired.
	Don't use the lift, it is meant for the physically challenged.
	Don't sit on the floor of the carriage [onboard announcement].
	Don't befriend strangers [platform announcement, 25 January 2009].

Source: <http://www.delhimetrorail.com/commuters_guide.aspx> (accessed 05 July 2013).

public space (see Drudy and Punch for their critique of a similar process in the regeneration of Dublin). Labor that smells of sweat does not have a visible place in a world class, cosmopolitan city. Siemiatycki argues that the Metro is 'striving to inculcate a pattern of public behaviour that accompanies [Metro authority's] vision of modernity', one that 'prioritizes the pleasures of the affluent and the profitability of multinational corporations over the needs of the city's poor' (288). Accordingly, Metro stations, metallic and concrete, complete with open-plan layouts, automated turnstiles, CCTV, and artwork, project an image of progress, order, cleanliness, and security. The sleek trains with automatic doors, air-conditioning, and digital signs are a 'tangible embodiment of the future' (Siemiatycki: 285), distancing the city from the rural, the poor, the undeveloped. The Metro is also responsible for transforming areas near its stations – for example, the regeneration of Central Park and Connaught Place – increasing the sense that the city as a whole is changing as a result of the network.

Some young people in this study, like Shveta, may agree with the social division of commuters observed by Siemiatycki. She sees 'the crowd of people who travel by Metro [as] conservative, middle-class Delhites'. Priya suggested that the 'choicest crowd gets down at Barakhamba Road [a central city station]'. She notes that people here are 'very business-like. Very serious. Ready to take on the world'. Yet, while power is explicitly exercised by the Metro in the DMRC's attempts to regulate behavior, the outcomes of interactions with fellow commuters, and with the network itself, are not always guaranteed to follow an expected choreography. The Metro's newness and its engendering of affective responses of discomfort to new technologies, new seating arrangements, and new proximities generate ambiguity. As a result other forms of power, embedded in subjective understandings of social order and identity, are exhibited by passengers themselves, some of whom improvise as they move along.

In transit: negotiations of space and subjectivity

Many of the young people in this study did not need a list of 'do's and don'ts' to orient their behavior. Power relations explicit in the Passenger Rules were also entrenched in the implicit conventions of interpersonal negotiation and space use to which they were accustomed. The unconscious scripts of cultural practice that choreograph commuters are always embedded in existing frames of reference and structures of meaning. Accordingly, fellow travelers were compared against these young people's own benchmarks of what constitutes a permissible use

of space, reiterating the need for order and reflecting their own sense of self and place in Delhi in the process.

Transgressions were often met with reactions of disgust or displeasure. Ananya, for example, a Bengali university student who had lived in the city for only seven months at the time of the study, compared people's behavior in Delhi to her memories of Kolkata. She censured young women for not giving up a reserved seat on the Metro when asked to by an elderly man. Shveta picked up a can that someone had thrown on the stairs at Civil Lines station, and expressed displeasure at the breaching of rules by a group of young people who sat on the floor 'in spite of the announcements on the train' not to do so.

In these negotiations of space use identity is enacted, and difference – one's own and that of others – is noted and reinforced. Jensen makes the connection explicit in his argument that 'there is a link between the way we travel through the city and the way we perceive ourselves (and want others to perceive us)' ('Facework': 158). There is a sense of necessity in this playing of roles, however, as a means to manage the crush of bodies that force some kind of interaction. There is also a need for trust, that each will play his or her part to avoid the discomfort of physical and social collisions.

Selvaraj, a university student originally from south India, was himself an outsider, not only different ethnically to the majority north Indian population but also from an academic family who had lived overseas (in Japan). He positioned his fellow commuters, creating distinctions between his own ideas of taste (for example, the amount of rings one should wear) and those of others:

There was another man sitting across in the train – middle-aged, short, fat, pot bellied, bulged face, sober expression on face. He had a small travel bag with some airline tag on it. Even yesterday I saw a similar figure in the train, who boarded from Kashmere Gate. This one had rings on all his fingers except his thumbs. Some fingers had two rings on them! The one whom I saw tonight preferred a seat reserved for ladies though there were other empty seats. Now, these are the characteristics by which I identify a 'pukka' Delhi-based businessman. Delhi citizenship is obviously assumed. I have found them in: long distance trains, railway stations, flights. Rarely in posh places such as five star hotels.

Positions of difference were often couched in terms of the possession of knowledge that had itself social distinction. Knowing the 'rules' of

appropriate space use on the Metro was linked by extension to knowing how to use, and therefore belong to, the space of a modern, cosmopolitan city. Priya connected being a 'good citizen' with following the 'rules' when confronted by the inevitable crush of passengers trying to board and disembark at the same time. Despite having been born in Delhi, she disassociated herself from the city's 'roughness' and incivility in her recognition of the correct use of space. When observing an elderly man stepping out of the train to allow new passengers in, she noted: 'That's a rare, courteous habit. One doesn't get to see it in Delhi too often'.

These rules expressed in young people's judgments were embedded in the larger cultural framework within which the Metro operates: hierarchical, patriarchal, and monitored through the disciplining technology of surveillance, by other commuters as much as by security officers. Even transitory, fleeting interactions must still be observed in case transgressions should generate harm or anxiety. Symes's study of student commuting in Sydney describes young people as 'free' from the gaze of parents and teachers, but the direction of eyes on Delhi's Metro monitors the movements of gendered, ethnic, aged, and classed difference. Selvaraj, dressed in the global youth cultural uniform of jeans and t-shirt, with a goatee and stud in his chin, cannot avoid surveillance just as he surveils others. Even though he cannot quite hear what people are saying, he 'feels' people staring at him in the Metro, making comments. Shveta has to travel most days by Metro to her secondary school in south Delhi. On the train, she feels eyes gazing at her legs that show beneath her skirt.

It could be argued, however, that at times the sense of surveillance in the Metro is of a different quality to that 'outside'. Anindita Datta's 2009 work with Muslim women found a sense of comfort among her interviewees in the secure space of the Metro.⁶ It afforded them anonymity. Datta argues that the enclosed public space of the Metro was felt to be similar to the protection provided by the *chador*, despite the fact that it is a space at times of intimate bodily contact between strangers. Perhaps as a response to that contact, at times participants in this study actively sought out people 'like them' at stations and on regular Metro journeys, looking for other students or friends as if for a space of comfort.

While the Metro as armature has become a site where normative forms of difference and social order are reproduced in the performances of commuters, encircling people in inevitable stereotypes as a means to simplify a complex, diverse city, there is also at times pleasure in this contact. The Metro is a source of 'joy riding', a space that allows

for the excitement of newness. It is a site where young people gather, reappropriating the concourses as a stage to express inchoate youth cultures. The push and pull of diversity within the Metro creates chance encounters that challenge assumptions about fellow passengers. Noting how conversations can 'randomly start up', Selvaraj met a man onboard whom he had seen once before at university offering math tutoring. They began a conversation and he discovered that the man also played slide guitar (Hawaiian) and keyboards ('Casio'). Selvaraj expressed surprise that the man, who had been dressed 'simple but a little shabby' when they first met, turned out to be 'a man of mathematics and music'. In the space of the university campus, he was teased by his friends after they saw him talking with this man. In the anonymity of the Metro, on his own in a crowd, he could pursue a conversation without judgment.

Moods and memories, both congenial and disagreeable, are evoked by the physical infrastructure and the conditions within the stations and the carriages; the Metro's affective power can subsequently impact the enactment of roles within these spaces. For example, the Metro became invested with a sense of sadness for Ananya after a weekend spent travelling around the city with her boyfriend, who had then returned to Mumbai: 'The metro stations were not appearing nice to me' as they had done for the previous two days. Daania, a young woman from a low-income resettlement colony in north-east Delhi, remembered the Metro as a source of pleasure because she liked the crowds and the 'foreigners' who travelled in the same carriage. Given the restrictions on mobility for young women from her neighborhood, difference became something sought-after for her. She did admit to feeling 'scared' by some of the technology, though, as did three other young women in this study from the same neighborhood. Commuters created traffic jams at the bottom of escalators and at the entrance and exit of automatic turnstiles as they observed how others stepped on and off, in or out of them. Despite information campaigns by the DMRC, there are still reservations and uncertainties about using the system, which, in Tejas's case, was also inflected by his assessment of his place in Delhi as an outsider, someone residing in a low-income settlement and from a Tamil (south Indian) background:

When I went to [university] first time by metro I afraid, because it was new to me. First, I thought that it is very luxurious to me and going on metro is prestigious to me also because when a person go by walking and suddenly one day he is in the horse and riding it, what type of feeling that person had on that time. Same feeling is

to me also when I decided to take metro. ... When I entered the metro station I didn't know from where it will leave and how I can get out of it. ... and in between when I see the crowd I think they are superior to me and look like they know all information which I didn't. But this is wrong presumption of mine. Because, one gentleman came near to me and asked that 'from where I can catch the metro for Dwarka'. That time I realize most of them are like me and no need to be afraid about it because all [was] new to [everyone], just we have to learn.

As a result of their use of the Metro, Tejas and Daania could both reimagine their place within a changing city (and country for that matter) that consists, as Amin and Graham suggest, of 'the co-presence of multiple spaces, multiple times and multiple webs of relations' (417–18) – be those global, local, national, or regional. These connections coalesce in transitory spaces such as the Metro, only to fragment and converge in other times and places. However, while Tejas may learn the codes of the Metro and therefore participate in modern Delhi, perhaps even re-engineering his sense of self in the process, this self-image cannot be sustained in other spaces where social boundaries are reinforced by skin color and clothes, accent and mother tongue. When the Metro was a system new to everyone, incompetence in using its automatic turnstiles, for example, was initially at least classless, raceless, and genderless; barriers to accessing established spaces in the city, however, were (and remain) harder to cross. Despite the mobility – in all senses of the term – offered by the Metro, there can be limited room to move for some.

Using the Metro as an urban stage, the young people in this study managed both difference itself (ethnic, class- and gender-based) as well as different ideas of space use, both through performances of self and through the overt classification of others along the lines of existing social scripts. However, these cultural competencies do not always engender positive engagements, or transcend social positions. Tejas may allude to his ability to 'learn' skills on the Metro that enable him to flow through the city more easily, perhaps to overcome some existing barriers, but these skills ultimately become a means to *manage* existing discomfort and inequality rather than easing cultural distance in the world above ground. As a result, the performances of identity and belonging seen among this group of young people are, paradoxically yet provocatively, contesting the meanings of 'cosmopolitanism' operative in Delhi as it seeks to become a 'world class' city.

Navigating difference in the 'cosmopolitan' city

According to Symes, urban inhabitants develop a 'grammar and rules for dealing with their engagements with the city and transport systems' (446–7). The first generation of Delhi Metro users, like Lofgren's nineteenth-century travelers, have 'had to develop new skills for keeping distances, marking territories or making contact' (342). More importantly, in the context of a hierarchical city, skills have been needed to manage new interactions with difference, both technological and social, inevitably generated within the Metro, as noted above.

While researchers such as Siemiatycki have criticized the Metro for its focus on 'the affluent' (280), Metro officials point out that a diverse cross-section of Delhi's population now uses the network (see Chopra), although different lines at different times of day can tend towards particular constituencies (for example, white-collar office workers and bureaucrats converging on the government district of Patel Chowk; laborers converging on the market area of Chandni Chowk). The competent, regular business commuter must mix with the housewife, the student, and the transient migrant arriving in Delhi for the first time at Kashmere Gate, the station nearest the interstate bus terminal. There are 'quick glances, body signals, and swift movements' (Lofgren: 339), but in an example of cultural relativity, competence on Delhi's Metro is not related to queuing as much as to speed of entry and ability to slip into a seat.

These, and other skills deployed to manage spatial negotiations in the Metro, are expressions of what Datta has called 'everyday cosmopolitanism' (353) (see also Kothari): that is, mundane competencies of negotiation and flexibility with specific history and context. Regular Metro riders are used to navigating diverse urban spaces and, in particular, I would argue, to managing situations of unfamiliarity and inequality that mobility can generate (see also Lofgren). Massey has also referred to this complex 'repertoire of skills' (152) that urban populations develop in the process of working out who belongs in a city.

These capacities appear to be developed in interaction with the technology, as well as with others. For example, friends and family are used as a means to learn how to use the Metro. In 2004, when Hemish began his first year at university, the Red Line to the campus opened:

But it was somewhat very alien to these things because in [regional India] there is nothing like that. For 10, 14 days I was just going here [the forecourt of the station (see Figure 8.3)], I was just roaming here, but I was not having the courage to enter, it was difficult to enter.



Figure 8.3 Vishwavidyalaya Station, north Delhi. Photo by Hemish (study participant)

A friend from Nigeria also studying at the university finally convinced him to try: 'For outsiders it's still a bit strange place. If you don't have any experience of metro still it is uncomfortable, especially those escalators.'

To manage these affective responses of discomfort when physically crowded, feeling 'out of place', or faced with the transgressive behavior of others, participants in this study deployed several competencies including verbal barbs and physical interventions such as pushing bodies and body parts out of the way to reclaim space. At the same time, knowing the limits of these physical interventions – that is, knowing the boundaries of transgressions to avoid further conflict – was another key skill required on the Metro. Participants demonstrated embodied adaptation as a competence that includes: adjustments of posture when the train is crowded; the adjusting of dress; and the making of the self smaller by young women so as not to draw attention to themselves. They found interstitial spaces in which to sit or stand in order to avoid being disturbed. Shveta, for example, preferred 'standing in a corner' of the train when it was crowded to avoid stares. Selvaraj also found a niche, 'the two-seater one next to the door, just before the space between two compartments'.

Hiding, covering, becoming 'invisible', or becoming 'smaller' appear as part of what Robins has described as the experiential process of living in the city. But this concept of 'experience' is rooted in everyday practices that include managing inequality and discomfort, positions of difference, unsettled meanings, and the ambiguity that is generated in mobility, diversity, and shifting boundaries of modernity and 'global living' in Delhi. This may not be the cosmopolitanism that the city authorities attempt to encourage or portray, but I would argue it is a cosmopolitanism based as much on an understanding of one's own place in a diverse space as it is about, as Hannerz suggests, the 'ability to make one's way into other cultures, through listening, looking, intuiting and reflecting' (239).

What is seen, then, in the relationship between the Delhi Metro and its commuters is a reframing of the meaning of cosmopolitanism on a mobile urban stage. A disjunction appears here between urban planning that focuses on an elite model of cosmopolitanism with a concomitant sense of a hierarchical social order, and the organic development of cosmopolitan competencies in everyday interactions that manage inequality and difference but are not always enough to avoid conflict, judgment, surveillance, and shame. As these young people's narratives show, when confronted by 'others' at times there is little desire to go beyond established, comfortable parameters of normative expectations. Sensitivity to difference is engendered and behavior is modified in order to avoid discomfort in the Metro's shared spaces – but not necessarily in order to engage with difference.

More ephemerally, I would argue that the capacity to *imagine* the self in new spaces such as the Metro – being able to navigate its sleek turnstiles and codes of comportment, for example – is also part of the development of this organic cosmopolitanism. The presence of Tejas, for example, in the Metro, his pride in it, counters Shveta's observation that it is only 'middle-class' people that use the system. The process of redefining the meaning of spaces such as the Metro, shifting inner worlds in the process, is intimately connected to imagination: that is, to the making and enacting of imaginary connections to new opportunities, to new social roles, to new affiliations. Participants who in their movement circumscribed particular meanings and/or understandings of their own identities and those of others – through appropriating or rejecting spaces and modes of transport as worthy of their presence or for people 'not like us' – must deal with the fact that the Metro is more inclusive than their residential enclaves. Their relationships with other passengers must, in turn, also be different, even if only in transit.

Conclusion

Delhi's Metro reveals interacting fields of power: tensions between those in control of the Metro (who set the 'rules') and passengers (who follow or ignore them), and among passengers themselves. Disciplining codes imposed by both the Metro authorities and its passengers attempt to regulate the use of the Metro, to situate it within a hegemonic frame of 'modernity' and a rhetoric and aesthetics of 'world city' cosmopolitanism. Social boundaries are continually redrawn in stereotyped judgments based on normative readings of others' bodies and their behaviors. Seeking out others 'like them', identifying others with similar tastes, disparaging those that are different through shaming: all were part of the transitory connections these commuters made in the Metro.

The improvised use of space by young people in this study was a means of imaginatively contesting the scripts of cosmopolitanism generated in official city and Metro authorities' discourse. Yet their performances were also marked by the tension between release and restraint. Depictions of identity more often reasserted boundaries of social order, extending from existing, subjective understandings of place and space use. Therefore, while I would agree with Jensen that the quality of interactions in the transitory spaces of armatures such as the Metro are underestimated ('Flows': 149), I would also argue that constraints still exist. Armatures are embedded in cultural frames of reference and constructed in ways that necessarily reproduce a certain order, despite authorities' apparent interest in change.

Interactions within and around the Metro are often inflected by underlying affective responses to difference (that of others) and to the experience of being different oneself. These differences for participants in this study required the enactment of particular roles and the deployment of particular competencies to assist their navigation of the city. The knowledge of space use became part of this process of translating difference, reifying borders, but also part of a repertoire of skills and the discovery of ways to flow through diverse urban spaces, to absorb the friction that the presence of difference can create in spaces that are designated as unfamiliar or unavailable.

I emphasize here that it is not just a different 'other' per se that must be managed, performed, and performed *for* within the crowded public spaces of the Metro, but a different *city*, with shifting rules of social mobility situated within a confluence of change brought about by the global mobility of people, capital, technology, and ideology. This has implications on daily life, on expectations, on imaginations of the

future, and on an individual's place in the city. In its interstitial spaces, and in the processes of circulation the Metro engenders, boundaries are contested through 'random', fractured, accidental encounters and through the deliberate, conscious claiming of space. The lack of social and urban mobility for some is relieved for a moment by the pleasure of being among 'the foreign', 'joy riding' to experience 'the crowds' for curiosity's sake. Rather than raising the specter of Park and Burgess's fears for social cohesion as a result of urban mobility, it could be argued that imaginative capacity can be facilitated by engagement with diverse, performative spaces, even transitory ones.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Vrinda Chopra for her research assistance for this paper, and to the DMRC for their kind permission to reproduce Figure 8.1.

Notes

1. See <http://www.delhimetrorail.com/about_us.aspx#World_Class_Metro>.
2. Care needs to be taken with these statistics, however, as they are disputed. Metro representatives argue that the whole network, including feeder buses, needs to be in place before accurate ridership figures can be assessed.
3. Eleven young women from a resettlement colony in northeast Delhi took part, but social expectations in this community limited their mobility. Using street directories was not appropriate in their case; instead, many of the women drew 'maps' of the streets in the Colony in which they lived and through which they moved. Photographs, in conjunction with discussion of the maps produced, elicited rich results from the young women in the resettlement colony, some of whom had lower levels of literacy than the participants from middle and upper socioeconomic groups.
4. As an experiential, reflexive, multidimensional approach, this methodology was particularly appropriate for use with young people, although the journal component may have been a factor in the difficulty recruiting young men (only three of the participants were male).
5. Lofgren's list of 'do's and don'ts' for conduct on Denmark's rail network includes comparable bans on 'noisy or troublesome behaviour' (346). Transport for London has a similar list of forbidden activity including minimizing noise, not eating 'smelly' food, and keeping feet off seats.
6. This information is based on Datta's 2009 research project, 'Remapping leisure: A gendered exploration of third space in Delhi'. Findings are as yet unpublished.

Works cited

Acharya, R. 'Indian railways: Where the commuter is the king.' *Japan Railways and Transport Review* 25 (2000): 34–45. Print.

- Amin, A., and S. Graham. 'The ordinary city.' *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 22.4 (1997): 411–29. Print.
- Bagnoli, A. 'Between outcast and outsider: Constructing the identity of the foreigner.' *European Societies* 9.1 (2007): 23–44. Print.
- Butcher, M., and M. Thomas. *Ingenious: Emerging Youth Cultures in Urban Australia*. Melbourne: Pluto Press, 2003. Print.
- Butler, J. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. London and New York: Routledge, 1990. Print.
- 'CAG raps Delhi Metro for shortfall in ridership.' *Deccan Herald* (n.d.). Livemint.com. Web. 13 Aug. 2012.
- Chopra, V. 'Building a brand: The Delhi Metro, a case analysis.' Unpublished Master's thesis, London School of Economics. 2008.
- Datta, A. 'Places of everyday cosmopolitanisms: East European construction workers in London.' *Environment & Planning A* 41.2 (2009): 353–70. Print.
- Dayal, A. *A Journey to Remember*. New Delhi: Delhi Metro Rail Corporation, 2008. Print.
- DMRC. *Annual Report 2009–10*. Delhi: Delhi Metro Rail Corporation, 2010. Print.
- Drudy, P. J., and M. Punch. 'Economic restructuring, urban change and regeneration: The case of Dublin.' *Journal of the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland* 29 (2000): 215–87. Print.
- Goffman, E. *Relations in Public: Microstudies of the Public Order*. New York: Basic Books, 1971. Print.
- Government of Delhi. 'Population of Delhi – As per census 2001.' Web. 10 Aug. 2009 <delhigovt.nic.in/dept/economic/stat/statistics.asp>.
- Hannerz, U. 'Cosmopolitans and locals in world culture.' *Global Culture: Nationalism, Globalisation and Modernity*. Ed. M. Featherston. London: Sage, 1990, 237–51. Print.
- Herbert, S. 'Contemporary geographies of exclusion I: Traversing skid road.' *Progress in Human Geography* 32.5 (2008): 659–66. Print.
- Inckle, K. *Writing on the Body? Thinking Through Gendered Embodiment and Marked Flesh*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007. Print.
- Jensen, O. B. 'Facework, flow and the city: Simmel, Goffman and mobility in the contemporary city.' *Mobilities* 1.2 (2006): 143–65. Print.
- . 'Flows of meaning, cultures of movements – Urban mobility as meaningful everyday life practice.' *Mobilities* 4.1 (2009): 139–58. Print.
- Joshi, S. 'Delhi Metro is quake proof.' *The Hindu*, 4 February 2001. *The Hindu: Online Edition of India's National Newspaper*. Web. 13 Aug. 2012.
- Kothari, U. 'Global peddlers and local networks: Migrant cosmopolitanisms.' *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 26.3 (2008): 500–16. Print.
- Letherby, G., and G. Reynolds. 'Making connections: The relationship between train travel and the processes of work and leisure.' *Sociological Research Online* 8.3 (2003). Web. 13 Aug. 2012.
- Lofgren, O. 'Motion and emotion: Learning to be a railway traveller.' *Mobilities* 3.3 (2008): 331–51. Print.
- Massey, D. *For Space*. London: Sage, 2005. Print.
- 'The miracle worker of the Delhi Metro.' *Business Week*, 14 March 2007. *Business Week Online*. Web. 8 Feb. 2009.
- Park, R. E., and E. W. Burgess. *The City: Suggestions for Investigation of Human Behaviour in the Urban Environment*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1925. Print.