



# The home as workplace: a study of income-generating activities within the domestic setting

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1. An earlier version of this paper was presented at an international symposium on "Culture and Space in Home Environments", Istanbul Technical University and IAPS, Istanbul, June 1997.

2. The names of respondents have been changed.

*SUMMARY: Many studies of housing concentrate on the dwelling as a place of shelter for the household, as a unit of accommodation and as a key setting for social reproduction. However, in many parts of the world the dwelling is also a place of production: some or all of the household members may be involved in income-generating activities, ranging from small-scale, part-time tasks with few specific spatial demands, to manufacturing activities which may dominate the dwelling environment. This paper draws on a pilot research study into the housing implications of home-based enterprises undertaken in a squatter settlement in New Delhi, India. In addition to a questionnaire survey, detailed case histories of selected households' work and housing situations were recorded, and plans of dwellings drawn. Drawing on this data, the paper examines the spatial and social implications of income-generating activities and discusses how an analysis of the integration of non-domestic activities can inform and broaden our understanding of the meaning of home.*

## I. INTRODUCTION<sup>(1)</sup>

"I WAS MARRIED in Ferozabad and that's where I learnt about the trade (in bangles). My brother used to stay with a bangle maker and they learnt how to do it. There, in Ferozabad, there was no work, so what could we do? Things were so expensive and we had no income. We came to know about this place (Jahangir Puri, a squatter settlement in Delhi) through my husband's uncle who lived in the plotted area and, the first time I came, an aunt got us here as she came with bangles to sell. Then we took a room to rent and later managed to get a plot. We have now made this house ourselves, isn't that enough? People who live in *pucca* (good quality) houses on plots turn their faces away from people like us who live in *juggis* (squatter houses). But everyone has feelings. Yes, it would be easier if we had more space to work and store the bangles, and if we had the money we could buy more goods and then we could sell it to shopkeepers. But for a shop you need an advance of 1 lakh (100,000) rupees. Where would we get that from? We have no savings, it's just not possible to save. I work hard with my own hands, that's how we manage."

This is an extract from a recorded discussion with Nilofar<sup>(2)</sup> who lives with her husband in a one-room dwelling in the squatter settlement of Jahangir Puri in Delhi. The room is barely seven metres square and occupies the whole plot. Their home is also a place of work. Nilofar works long hours painting, finishing and sorting glass and metal bangles which are

worn on the wrist by both Muslim and Hindu women. When Nilofar and her husband rise early each morning, the mat on which they sleep is rolled up, thus clearing the room for laying out the bangles which are stored on the floor, hung from the ceiling or placed on a shelf. There is no other furniture. The handcart which Nilofar's husband uses to sell the bangles on the streets has to be loaded and unloaded each morning and evening as there is insufficient space to store it inside the dwelling. Instead, it is stored vertically outside the door. A high percentage of their neighbours also work and generate income within their homes, and throughout the cities of Africa, Asia and Latin America, the struggle to increase household income is intimately linked to the process of gaining and improving shelter.

"If there is one lesson for planners in the massive literature on slums and squatter community life, it is the finding that housing in these areas is not for home life alone. A house is a production place, market place, entertainment centre, financial institution and also a retreat. A low-income community is the same, only more so. Both the home and the community derive their vitality from this multiplicity of uses."<sup>(3)</sup>

Despite increasing research interest into income-generating activities in low-income settlements, the interrelationship between housing and income-generating activities is a subject which has received relatively little attention. The focus of existing studies has been largely on the economic implications of home-based enterprises with little attention given to how workplace and residential activities and spaces are integrated. However, three recent publications from the United Nations<sup>(4)</sup> confirm the need for research into these linkages and this paper reports on a pilot project which focused on the methodological aspects of research in this area.<sup>(5)</sup>

In low-income areas, the complex web of economic linkages which exists between home-based enterprises and housing allows all but the most destitute to eke out a living and have access to shelter. It is believed there is a symbiotic relationship between housing and home-based enterprises, as dwellers are able to consolidate their dwellings through the income earned; many households would not have a dwelling without their home-based enterprise and many enterprises would not exist without the use of a dwelling. Thus, housing plays an important part in the existence and operation of the informal economy in many countries.

We can illustrate this with findings from a study in Lima.<sup>(6)</sup> This found that 68 per cent of respondents needed home-based enterprises in order to afford the dwelling and that 70 per cent of enterprises could not exist without the available dwelling space. The importance of the dwelling varied for different types of work but was particularly significant for women who combined household activities with income generation.<sup>(7)</sup> The research concluded that housing conditions would have been worse without home-based enterprises.

## II. FUNGIBILITY OF RESOURCES: MONEY, TIME AND SPACE

LIPTON<sup>(8)</sup> DISCUSSES home-based enterprises as "family mode of production enterprises" whose characteristics are as follows:

- the family controls most of the land and capital to which its labour is applied;
- most of the family's land, capital and labour are used in the enterprise; and

3. Laquian, A A (1983), *Basic Housing: Policies for Urban Sites, Services and Shelter in Developing Countries*, International Development Research Centre, Ottawa.

4. UNCHS (1989), *Improving Income and Housing: Employment Generation in Low-income Settlements*, UNCHS (Habitat), Nairobi; also UNCHS (1993), *National Experiences with Shelter Delivery for the Poorest Groups*, UNCHS (Habitat), Nairobi; and UNCHS/ILO (1995), *Shelter Provision and Employment Generation*, UNCHS (Habitat), Nairobi and International Labour Office, Geneva.

5. This paper is based on a research report: Tipple, A G, P Kellett, G Masters and S Krishnamurty (1996), "Mixed uses in residential areas: a pilot study", final report for ODA research project No 6265, Centre for Architectural Research and Development Overseas, Newcastle University and National Institute for Urban Affairs, New Delhi. The authors wish to thank Smita Krishnamurthy and the NUIA for their collaboration on the project and the UK Department for International Development (DFID, formerly ODA) for financial support.

6. Strassmann, W P (1986), "Types of neighbourhood and home-based enterprises: evidence from Lima, Peru", *Urban Studies* No 23, pages 485-500.

7. See reference 6, page 497.

8. Lipton, M (1980), "Family, fungibility and formality: rural advantages of informal non-farm enterprise versus the urban-formal state" in Amin, S (editor), *Human Resources, Employment, and Development, Volume 5, Developing Countries*, Proceedings of the Sixth World Congress of the International Economic Association, Mexico City, MacMillan, London.

- most of the labour applied is provided by the family.

He also stresses the advantages to home-based enterprises of being able to treat resources fungibly: they can be converted swiftly, conveniently and without loss from one use to another. Cash is the ideal fungible resource and money can be spent on improvements in living conditions or in working conditions (or both at the same time). Similarly, time spent on domestic activities can be converted into time spent on home-based enterprises as the ebb and flow of domestic work allows, and space can be used for a range of activities which may change throughout the day as well as seasonally. All these changes can be made with minimal cost and inconvenience.

Lipton<sup>(9)</sup> calls this extension of fungibility between the economic and domestic spheres “extended fungibility”. He offers small family shops as an example of where extended fungibility is vital in the survival and profitability of home-based enterprises. In a family shop, work and the reward for it can be flexibly picked up and laid down according to family convenience, all within a building which also serves as warehouse and home. The shop owner is probably earning less than he/she could in a formal shop or supermarket but he/she would be reluctant to give up the shop because it offers income and employment opportunities for the children and others in the family. Many women and children are not available for full-time employment but can divide their time between household chores, education and home-based enterprises. The aspect of extended fungibility which most interests us in this study is that of space. It appears that the distinction between reproduction (domestic activities) and production (economic activities) is not clearly drawn in most households in Africa, Asia and Latin America.<sup>(10)</sup> However, planning policies and land use regulations have been based on the separation of these two functions, and the formal sector, acting through the state, is seen as “...defending itself against externalities – whether they are unseemly sights and smells and (usually exaggerated) health hazards or family mode of production enterprises’ competitive challenges – ...through inappropriate rules on building, housing and trading.”<sup>(11)</sup>

Policy makers and commentators have often been highly critical of home-based enterprises from a range of standpoints, and it is certainly true that the isolation and lack of visibility of home workers can allow the exploitation of home-based enterprise owners by factories and middlemen, and of the workers by the home-based enterprise proprietors. This is especially evident in outworking systems, where an industrial establishment employs workers to carry out processes in their homes, ostensibly as self-employed entrepreneurs but, in reality, as dependent workers or disguised wage earners. There is rarely any guarantee of future work, so sudden bursts of activity are coped with for fear of losing out when times are slack.<sup>(12)</sup> Furthermore, as many workers are responsible for making only a small element of the whole product, job satisfaction and task variation can be almost completely absent. Workers tend to be exploited through very inadequate wage levels, frequent lengthening of the working day and lack of safety, security and the right to organize.<sup>(13)</sup> An example of such exploitation on a very large scale is given by Bose<sup>(14)</sup> who reports that 100,000 lace makers in Narsapur in India, generating 90 per cent of the state’s export earnings, received only Rs 0.56 (about UK £0.04 at 1982 rates of exchange) per day for fine skilled work.

However, in many places, control over home-based enterprises is virtually impossible because, by their very nature, they blend into the resi-

9. See reference 8.

10. Hays-Mitchell, M (1993), “The ties that bind. Informal and formal sector linkages in streetvending: the case of Peru’s ambulantes”, *Environment and Planning A* 25, pages 1085-1102.

11. See reference 8, pages 223-4.

12. Bose, M (1990), *The Urban Informal Sector Revisited: Some Lessons from the Field*, Institute of Development Studies, Falmer, Sussex.

13. Young, K (1981), “Domestic outwork and the decentralisation of production: a new stage in capitalist development?”, paper presented at the ILO Regional Meeting on Women and Rural Development, Mexico, August 24-28, 1981; also see reference 4, UNCHS/ILO (1995).

14. See reference 12.

dential environment as much as possible. Thus, in spite of official disapproval, poor households continue to establish and operate home-based enterprises. We must remember, though, that the concentration of work in factories and workplaces separate from the home, and the consequent introduction of separate residential and commercial/work zones, had little momentum until the Industrial Revolution.<sup>(15)</sup> This has led to the emergence of what Ahrentzen<sup>(16)</sup> defines as a an ideology of “separate spheres”, “...a belief that domestic and public life are separate physically and experientially” and that a key practice in maintaining this ideology is the emphasis on the home as the private domain for the family.<sup>(17)</sup>

The absence of home-based enterprises in many dwellings demonstrates that they are not a universal solution to even part of the income-gathering function of households. Some households are content with, or prefer, the separation of work and home. However, others sacrifice considerable areas of their living space to accommodate the paraphernalia necessary to earn a living, even to the extent of having machinery in the living room, sacks of goods behind the bed and relatively unpleasant processes (for example, the sorting of garbage) taking place near eating areas. The balance between dwelling as desirable living space and as workplace is likely to vary depending on the income and aspirations of the household and their neighbours, the profitability and nature of the economic activity, alternative opportunities for making a living and many other variables.

### III. THE AIMS OF THE PILOT PROJECT

IN AN ATTEMPT to begin to understand the phenomenon of home-based enterprises in low-income neighbourhoods, we carried out a pilot study in New Delhi as a preparation for a proposed larger international survey.<sup>(18)</sup> The pilot survey had the following aims:

- to define a set of variables which, when examined, would describe the causes, nature and extent of mixed uses in residential areas both from a housing point of view and for their economic implications. The study would include both a quantitative analysis of discrete variables and a qualitative examination of people, places and activities;
- to carry out preliminary analysis on the data collected to establish appropriate methods of questioning and data-gathering, minimum sample sizes, suitable methods of analysis and likely outputs such as estimates of costs and benefits, employment and income, etc.;
- to establish hypotheses to be tested and provide inputs for policy-seeking data collection and analysis in a main survey.

### IV. THE SURVEY SITE OF JAHANGIR PURI

IN CONJUNCTION WITH the National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA), the squatter settlement of Jahangir Puri in Delhi was selected as the pilot survey site. In addition to good connections with workers from the Urban Basic Services Programme (UPSB) who were based there, it presented a range of home-based enterprises operated by people who were evidently of low income.

The settlement’s environment is very poor and crowded, with space at a premium. Dwellings are small (often only two and a half metres wide

15. See reference 6, page 498.

16. Ahrentzen, S (1989), “A place of peace, prospect and ... a PC: the home as office”, *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research* Vol 6, No 4, Winter 1989, pages 271-288.

17. See reference 16, page 272.

18. The main international comparative research project is currently underway. The research is coordinated by CARDO at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne in close collaboration with research teams in Pretoria (South Africa), Delhi (India), Surabaya (Indonesia) and Cochabamba (Bolivia). The project is funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and their support is gratefully acknowledged.

and maybe three metres deep) and vary from very small indeed (one tiny room) to only two or three rooms. A minority have a second storey. The streets are narrow and irregular in width and there are few open spaces. Drainage is a problem as the site is relatively flat and, in places, the drains are badly blocked. In addition to the occasional water pumps, there are pipes protruding from the ground at intervals along the streets. These are illegal connections to the mains which terminate in open pipe ends only 150-200 millimetres above the ground. The health ramifications of these open pipe ends is potentially serious, particularly given the presence of household waste, sewage and animals. The whole area is covered in a "cobweb" of wires leading to illegal connections to the electric power lines on the main road.

A majority of dwellings are built of brick, some to a good standard. Where there is a second storey, access is either by a steep and narrow staircase or by a crude ladder with widely spaced rungs, which is frequently placed externally to save on internal space. The housing is self-built and owner-occupied. Most households (median of five persons) live in one or two rooms with a median of 16 square metres of floor space and eight square metres of dedicated living space (i.e. only about two square metres per person). Fewer than 20 per cent have any water or toilet provision in the house. Notwithstanding the extreme difficulty of collecting income data from very poor people, it is clear that the households in Jahangir Puri are very poor (our data suggested incomes of about Rs 2,000 per month or UK£150 at purchasing power parity). Most claimed to be financially "comfortable" but it was obvious from the interviews that their comfort was extremely precarious. Only a short illness, a small family crisis or a downturn in business could set them back considerably. At the median, our sampled households drew 75 per cent of their income from the home-based enterprises. Indeed, 60 per cent had no other income. In our sample of 52 households with home-based enterprises, 72 men and 36 women were provided with employment and only ten were not relatives of the household head.

## V. STORIES OF WORK AND HOME

THE LITERATURE ON low-income contemporary housing in Third World cities has focused almost exclusively on the more pragmatic issue of shelter and has largely ignored the concept of housing as home.<sup>(19)</sup> Conceptual studies of home have been selectively biased towards middle-class households in northern countries.<sup>(20)</sup> However, the anthropological literature on largely pre-literate societies is rich both in analytical and conceptual terms. Levi-Strauss and Gudeman are perhaps the most influential theorists on the role of house in society and economy and they have "...urged anthropologists to consider the house not only as an actual entity that structures social interactions but also as a source of core symbols that constitute those interactions."<sup>(21)</sup> In a seminal study on the domestic economy in rural Colombia, Gudeman and Rivera<sup>(22)</sup> describe how "...all material practices are organized through the house, and the lexicon for them comes from the vocabulary for the physical dwelling: the house as shelter is metaphor for the house as economy."

This suggests that we need much more sensitive antennae when attempting to unravel some of the interlinkages between "working" and "living", between the domestic economy and income-generating

19. Huttman, E (1993), "The homeless and 'doubled-up' households" in Arias, E G (editor) *The Meaning and Use of Housing: International Perspectives, Approaches and their Applications*, Avebury, Aldershot, pages 457-478.

20. Despres, C (1991), "The meaning of home: literature review and directions for future research and theoretical development", *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research* Vol 8, No 2, page 102.

21. Grinker, R R (1996), "Reconstructing the house in anthropology", review article in *American Anthropologist* Vol 98, No 4, December, page 856.

22. Gudeman, S and A Rivera (1990), *Conversations in Colombia: The Domestic Economy in Life and Text*, Cambridge University Press, page 2.

processes. Perhaps one of the key lessons to be learnt from such social scientists is the significance of language: the way activities and objects are described and valued. Hence, in this study, an attempt was made to engage in conversations with a series of households in order that they describe their work and homes. This produced a number of useful case histories in which respondents recounted their experiences in response to a series of questions and prompts.

The qualitative discussions generated data largely in the form of texts transcribed from the tape recordings and verbatim notes, supported by detailed field notes of observations made during the interviews and visits. Such texts comprise residential and work histories of respondents selected from a range of different situations, both domestic and economic. The similarities and variations between cases help elucidate and flesh out the main themes of the analysis. For example, Ramlal and his two brothers, wives and children form a working, as well as a domestic, unit: they polish and varnish coat hangers. Here, he describes how they organize the money between themselves:

“Well, suppose some work has to be done at home, or suppose you have to build a house or something, then all will get together and pool the money.”

“Does this include everyday expenses like oil, vegetables and cereals?”

“Well, whoever goes to the bank to cash the cheque, on the way back gets the rations, etc. The amount left is given to me, I put it in the bank or send it home (to the village) or whatever extra is required then I buy it. If the painter brother has some work on the site, then from that money he buys whatever he needs and gives the rest to me. Whoever of the family is here buys the rations and the others cook and eat separately.”

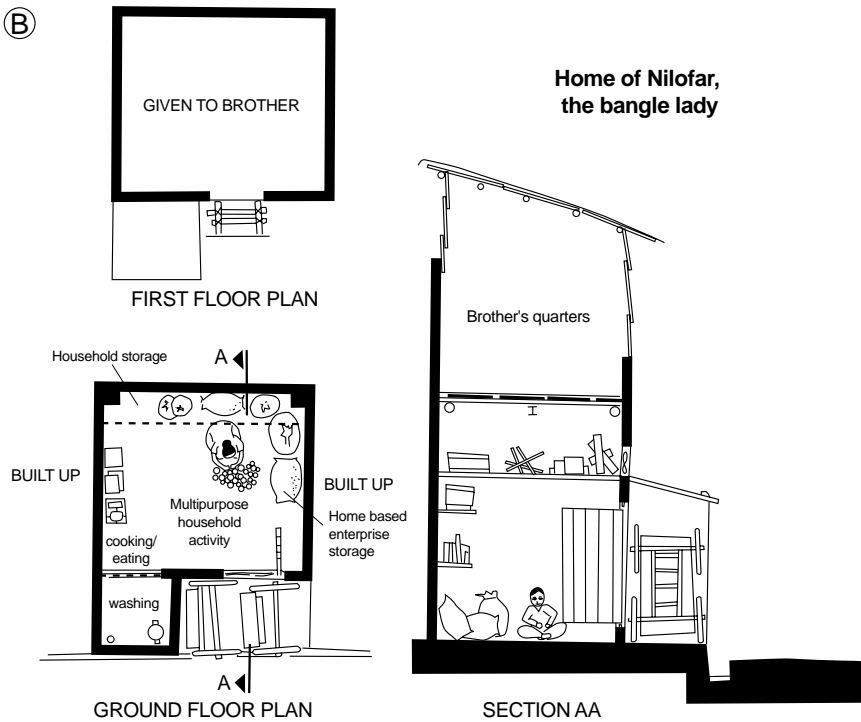
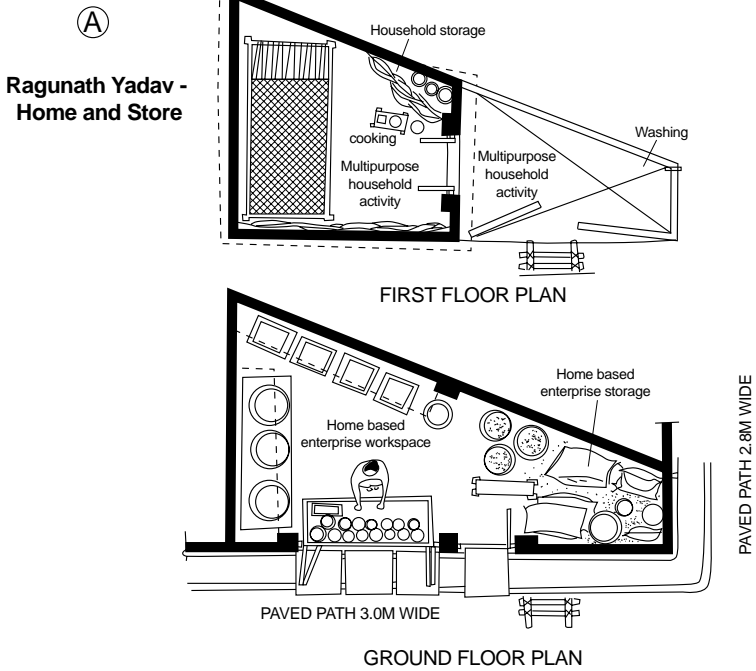
## VI. DISTINCTION BETWEEN HOME AND PLACE OF WORK

THE QUANTITATIVE QUESTIONNAIRE proved to be inadequate in attempting to encourage respondents to distinguish between the concepts of “home” and “workshop”. This is perhaps understandable because, for the majority, most of the limited space available is used for a wide range of domestic and income-generating tasks. This high intensity use within confined spaces is possible because the “...spatial and chronological symbiotic interaction of activities creates a greater effective space than exists physically.”<sup>(23)</sup> The plans drawn to show the position of furniture and fittings proved helpful in indicating the space available at the time of the survey but could not indicate the diurnal and seasonal variations which are fundamental to the effective use of the space. In future work, the range of activities and their variation over time should be plotted, preferably with the direct participation of the respondents, using an earlier drawing of the dwelling’s base plan. Such a plan, combined with the respondent’s participation during its drawing, would provide an ideal basis for a discussion on how space is used, the possible conflicts over usage, how space is valued, how it is optimized and, perhaps, provide insights into how limitations of space affect income generation and standards of comfort and privacy. The combination of graphic recording techniques with recorded discussions should prove effective in demonstrating some of the complexity of layered activities.

However, some respondents made a clear distinction between their

23. Payne, G K (1974), “Functions of informality: squatter settlements in Delhi”, *Ekistics* 224, July, page 64.

Figure 1 Use of space in two of the households



home and place of work. It appears that this is easier where there are two physically separate buildings or where the dwelling has two storeys. For example, in a metal cutter/folder's household, it was explained that the first floor was used for domestic activities during the day, because the metal cutting activities on the ground floor were considered dangerous for the small children. Here, activities were separated by allocating specific spaces. In another example, Sudarshan Das, who works as a tailor, was asked about the two separate rooms which he and his wife have:

"No, that is my *jhuggi* – that's where I sleep, there I cook, there I eat. This is the shop. All day, till 10 o'clock at night I stay here, that's my duty. I open the shop at 10:30 in the morning. My apprentice sleeps here. I'm teaching him to work."

In contrast, Nilofar and her husband have only a single room where all activities take place; to attempt to distinguish between domestic and work space is therefore meaningless. Many households make intensive use of external passages, alleys and streets, whereas for others there are constraints on their freedom of movement: Nilofar, who is a Muslim, explained that she does all her work within the enclosed dwelling which, inevitably, must become extremely hot during the summer months and is dark much of the time.

In the small rubber-making workshop of Mulk Raj, there is virtually no furniture or fittings of a domestic nature and it therefore appears to be exclusively a place of work. However, despite the possibility of using another dwelling for sleeping, away from the fumes and cramped space of the workshop, at night the workshop becomes a dormitory.

"Children *walas* sleep there and we sleep here. I sleep here – beds are put there and they sleep there. The children *walas* sleep there at the back. And we also have one more shack. My wife has gone home now to the village but when she comes I sleep there with her. When she's not here then everyone sleeps here, otherwise the other place is locked."

This is an atypical example in that the household has more than one dwelling place. Most households must use very confined spaces very intensively and flexibly in order to maximize every possible opportunity. Interestingly, the flexibility in use of space is echoed in some of the furniture. A common feature of most dwellings is the charpoy: a simple, wooden framed bed strung with sisal. However, it is much more than a bed: many domestic and income-generating tasks are carried out sitting on the charpoy during the day and evening or it can be used as a stall to display wares for sale. Hence, it is used round the clock for a range of activities. Such intensive use and flexibility of time, space and objects is characteristic of such places, in contrast to the specialized, focused and single function, and the separation of activities and spaces in more affluent contexts.

## VII. IDENTITY: CASTE AND GENDER

IDENTITY IS A key dimension of home. We gain part of our identity through our home and, in turn, our home reflects aspects of ourselves.<sup>(24)</sup>

In the Indian context, caste is an ever-present element in defining identities and, in this research, we were interested to see how far it might affect the type of occupation followed, on where people lived and how home-based enterprises are integrated into the dwelling. Sanjay Kumar is from a vegetable grower caste and his ironing work has a lower status than his

24. Dovey, K (1985), "Home and homelessness" in Altman, I and C M Werner (editors), *Home Environments*, Plenum Press, New York and London, page 40.



traditional work. This has a direct affect on where he believes it is appropriate to live and work, leading in his case to a separation of activities. His relative poverty means that he must compromise on the type of work he will consider doing: a dilemma which he resolves by location. Instead of living where he works, he rents a tiny room in an adjacent formal settlement (which he refers to as his colony).

“Since I don’t belong to this caste of dhobis I can’t do this work in my colony. People don’t know that I do this job. See, no work is small or big anymore. Work done in an honest way – that’s important, as long as one is not lying, cheating and stealing. But, given a chance, I would change my work. Only my immediate family know what I do, my other relations don’t know. Look, necessity makes you do anything, even if you don’t want to do it. But time makes us do it. There is nothing wrong in hard work, you should never be afraid of hard work. It all depends on your income. I never thought I’d come down so much but time makes you do this. Time makes you do everything.”

In most societies, gender affects directly both work and home, usually leading to less freedom of movement and choice for women.<sup>(25)</sup> In the case of Nilofar, the bangle maker introduced earlier, there is a very sharp distinction by gender even though both husband and wife work as a team. Her work takes place exclusively within the home: painting, washing, selecting, packaging, etc., whereas her husband goes out every day, pushing a hand cart to sell the bangles. In some cases, men and women work in completely different occupations. In addition, there are considerable changes in activities over time, some reflecting seasonal opportunities, others taking place in response to changing circumstances.

## VIII. METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

THIS PILOT STAGE demonstrated the potential for learning by listening to and recording the stories of the key protagonists which, combined with sensitive observation, can generate good quality data. Interestingly, it seemed easier to encourage people to talk about their work than their homes and, consequently, the pilot data on dwellings and, specifically, on the relationship between the dwelling and income generation has not been explored as fully as had been anticipated. Undoubtedly, longer periods of fieldwork, particularly if the researcher is able to adopt the role of participant observer, should correct this imbalance. However, such approaches would require the researcher to be skilled in the language of the respondents.<sup>(26)</sup> Greater use could be made of visual prompts such as photographs and plans of the dwellings as aids to more focused discussions. Further opportunities to learn from respondents will also occur at such key times as when a dwelling is being extended or when new types of work are adopted. The integration of income-generating activities within the home must inevitably entail processes of negotiation between various parties over the allocation of resources, particularly space, time and labour. During times of change, we can expect to learn from the process of re-negotiation and observe how potential conflicts and demands are resolved.

In contrast to the brief illustrative analysis of the pilot study discussed in this paper, the analysis of planned future studies will be more fully integrated using a combination of qualitative, quantitative, spatial and photographic data. Such an approach offers possibilities for validation by

25. Moser, C and J Peake (editors) (1987), *Women, Human Settlements and Housing*, Tavistock, London.

26. Neither author is conversant in Hindi. They are therefore particularly appreciative of the work by the two Indian researchers, Smita Krishnamurthy and Abhay Jah.

cross-checking data from different sources in a process of triangulation.<sup>(27)</sup> We would aim to include a mixture of detailed qualitative case studies of individual households or kinship groups whose situation is particularly illustrative of the main points, as well as briefer examples from a range of cases where short illustrative quotations and observations may be more appropriate. Where possible, direct quotation (in translation if necessary) of the actual words used by respondents will be encouraged because direct speech is acknowledged as being particularly authentic and persuasive<sup>(28)</sup> as well as providing insights into how situations are conceptualized by the respondents. This research would attempt to examine the symbiotic relationship between domestic and work activities and these personal accounts should prove especially compelling in the attempt to understand motivations and decision-making. We expect to be able to identify the key relationships, issues, constraints and opportunities as interpreted by the low-income protagonists themselves and hence to be able to propose policy options which are both realistic and responsive to the views and aspirations of the poor.

## IX. SOME CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

THROUGHOUT THE WORLD, there is a clear trend towards radical economic restructuring leading to greater privatization and reliance on the free market. Such processes are recognized as having a devastating impact on large proportions of the urban poor<sup>(29)</sup> which, combined with the continuing increase in urban populations, must inevitably mean that more and more low-income urban households will have little option but to generate income from within their own resources and networks. We can, therefore, expect to see increasingly innovative survival strategies from the poor which will undoubtedly include an increase in home-based enterprises within low-income residential areas. The research reported in this paper recognizes the importance of further research into the housing impact of such economic activities and has identified some of the methodological challenges to be resolved.

In addition, this research should also help inform our conceptual understanding of the meaning of home. In many cultures, the sacred dimensions of home are clearly recognized.<sup>(30)</sup> In the situation described in this paper, these barriers are potentially crossed by the introduction of the profane world of work into the sacred domestic sphere. This is particularly true where the work carried out requires interaction with others beyond those who form part of the household or close neighbours: customers, dealers, delivery people, etc. Similarly, privacy within the household and between households may be compromised by the presence of work activities. In many cultures, the dwelling (or significant parts of it) are regarded as being within the female domain,<sup>(31)</sup> therefore, the extended presence of male members of the household within the home must inevitably affect gender roles and relationships within households.

The circumstances described in this paper are, in some respects, close to rural models of production and consumption, with a strong emphasis on household subsistence, closely interlinked to kinship networks. In turn, patterns of residence echo those where the dwelling plays a key role in structuring not only social interactions but also economic ones. Many studies emphasize a key role of the home as a provider of security. In these contexts, we can interpret the economic activity in this way also: such

27. Hammersley, M and P Atkinson (1983), *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*, Routledge, London, page 198.

28. Slim, H and P Thompson (1994), *Listening for a Change: Oral Testimony and Development*, Panos, London, page 1; see also Kellett, P (in press) "Voices from the barrio: oral testimony and informal housing processes", paper accepted for publication in *Third World Planning Review*.

29. Green, D (1995), *Silent Revolution: The Rise of Market Economics in Latin America*, Cassel, London/Latin American Bureau.

30. See reference 24, page 45.

31. Stea, D (1995), "House and home: identity, dichotomy or dialectic?" in Benjamin, D (editor), *The Home: Words, Interpretations, Meanings and Environments*, Avebury, Aldershot, page 188.

work provides the fundamental sustenance without which the household would perish. The home thereby becomes not merely a container of human life but an essential shelter for those life-sustaining activities.

In rural areas, home and workplace are frequently combined and intimately interrelated. In other contexts, the workplace itself, even if separate spatially from the dwelling, may be regarded as having some of the characteristics of home. Rapoport suggests that "...for work oriented people, the workplace may become home."<sup>(32)</sup> We have mentioned how personal and group identities result both from the home and occupation. In many urban areas, such identities can be separate and discrete. Where the place of work is also the place of residence, such identities are reinforced. In turn, these may be strengthened by residence patterns which echo clustering by kin, as well as place of origin and caste (often defined by occupation). Home of course is not merely the dwelling but the neighbourhood also. In places where work and residence are located in the same place, the neighbourhood gains in relative importance.<sup>(33)</sup>

We therefore need to broaden our conceptual categories to include income-generating activities as valid and normal within the domestic environment. Within the literature on housing, there are implicit value judgements suggesting a natural and appropriate separation of domestic and work tasks and, more importantly, planning norms enshrined in zoning laws insist on the separation of manufacturing, retailing and commercial uses from residential areas. This paper has challenged such assumptions and suggested that recognition of the symbiosis between domestic and productive activities can enrich our understanding of the meaning of home and could lead to more sensitive and supportive policy responses. These could, in turn, lead to healthier communities and encourage economic development.

32. Rapoport, A (1995), "A critical look at the concept 'home'" in Benjamin, D (see reference 21), page 36.

33. See reference 16, page 277.

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