Hydraulic City

Anand, Nikhil

Published by Duke University Press

Anand, Nikhil.
Hydraulic City: Water and the Infrastructures of Citizenship in Mumbai.

For additional information about this book
https://muse.jhu.edu/book/64058

For content related to this chapter
https://muse.jhu.edu/related_content?type=book&id=2278308
I did not know that it was International Women’s Day until I walked through the basti and into the offices of Asha, one of the two community centers that I frequented during my fieldwork. Vishnu, a social worker and Asha’s president, was in animated conversation with two women from a mahila gath (Women’s Group), Sandhya and Lata, working through the logistical details of the event they had organized to commemorate the occasion. The event was a cooking contest, planned only two days prior with an officer from the Women’s Development Center, an NGO based in Mumbai. As I wondered about the symbolism of women cooking to celebrate Women’s Day, Sandhya and Lata busied themselves looking for judges. They settled on a couple of senior inspectors from the local police station, and the visiting anthropologist. Eager to eat, the policemen were there in half an hour. By then, other members of the women’s group had arrived and laid out the food, neatly labeled, on the table—kharvas, ghavna, beets, gajar halwa, jalebi, samosas. All of us milled about, excited by the preparations. Then, once the inspection was complete, the women, seated on the floor, brought small plates of food samples to the judges, who were sitting on chairs. Kebabs were among the more familiar foods, but all of them were truly delicious. The police asked questions of each contestant, their interrogation skills somewhat tempered by their ignorance of culinary techniques. Shortly after, they selected the winner, accepted honorific words and flowers, and returned to their offices, satiated.

Not all of Asha’s community activities were as sumptuous or as secular. But the small community’s calendar was remarkably full of “programs.” These programs made Asha’s work possible in at least two ways. First, they enabled Asha to work with NGOs on various campaigns—against sexual
harassment or in pursuit of ration cards, for example. Such programs not only drew different settlers to the center but also made Asha an important location in what its leaders called the “social field.” It was an important site for the circulation and cultivation of new (and often liberal) political subjectivities. Asha was a critical location at which different kinds of social and political imperatives were translated, received, and transfigured (Gaonkar and Povinelli 2003). On the day I visited, for instance, Women’s Day came to be celebrated by a group of women cooking for a jury of male police officers. On a different day, they organized a kite flying festival to protest sexual harassment and domestic violence, inviting city administrators and ward officials (see figure 11).

Second, these programs provided the space for Asha to invite, honor, and reproduce relations with officials in the city government (such as the police or city politicians). Honored by invitations to participate in its social life, politicians, administrators, and police were especially responsive to Asha’s requests throughout the year and came to know it as an organization that did “good work.” Through these programs and the relations they produced, Asha became a critical location enabling city saviors both within

---

**Figure 11.** Asha members participate in an event where they fly kites with messages against domestic violence.
and outside government to join with settlers and others who sought to access their services.

Asha is only one of several different community organizations in the settlements of Jogeshwari. Its success, like that of other groups, is contingent on the ways in which it can sustain and support the various cultural, political, and social needs of its constituents by drawing on relations with political actors, including administrators, politicians, and NGOs. Through this work, Asha’s workers and volunteers serve to delicately marshal, mediate, and manage the production of political subjectivities among the settlement’s residents. Asha’s workers would call this social work, or work that was of the “social field.” To do this work, they carefully deployed diverse languages of helping, friendship, patronage, and rights. In so doing, Asha not only became a key site for the making of personhood in the settlements. It was also a site where the contradictions of liberal citizenship, patronage, and friendship often collided and needed to be carefully resolved.

Between 2007 and 2009, I followed Asha’s leaders as they tacked between different kinds of “social work” in the settlement. I observed the innovative and precarious ways in which Asha’s workers not only facilitated access to near-term necessities in the settlements (such as water connections, schools, or hospital admissions) but also joined larger campaigns for structural change by claiming durable rights for many of the city’s settlers (such as disability rights and the right to water and food rations). Asha’s workers act as brokers, connecting the life needs of their friends, neighbors, and families to the biopolitical programs of the state.1 In this chapter I draw attention to these practices not only to demonstrate how brokers like those in Asha connect people to vital resources. Together with plumbers, Asha’s workers, in fact, are also called on to perform delicate acts of political arbitrage in Mumbai.2 They bring about important compromises that ensure the stability of structures of power and government, while also allowing settlers to make crucial, durable settlements in the city. The hydraulic public that settlers come to constitute through these infrastructural relations are not anonymous and undifferentiated. Instead, the hydraulic public that is brought into being here emerges through known relations of difference, kinship, and friendship.3

As discussed in chapter 2, residents in Mumbai mobilize a variety of social relations beyond those of liberal subjectivity—friendship, patronage, and citizenship—to get things done in the city. Subjects need to carefully manage the incommensurabilities between their divided relations that are cultivated through these exchanges (Strathern 1991). In this chapter, I attend to the struggles over conflicting forms of political subjectivity as they emerged at
a public consultation for water reforms. When Asha’s leaders and others mo-
bilized the languages of rights and protest at the meeting, they did so against
city councilors whose loyalties they had carefully cultivated over the years.
Their transgression produced a “moment of danger” (W. Benjamin 1969),
which revealed how the hydraulic regime is not stable but one in which di-
verse forms of personhood and political subjectivity are in active tension and
always in the making.

Founding Asha

As we sat in his small community center one day, Vishnu, Asha’s president,
told me of Asha’s origins. He was in the tenth standard, he told me, when
riots and communal violence ravaged his neighborhood in 1992–93 (see
Hansen 2001). Along with some friends, he was inspired to do something
good for the area. As they sat on street corners eating *vada pav*, his friends
expressed a desire to “do something big” but had little idea of what this could be.
Vishnu and his friends’ ambitions found a home at an *ngo*, Vikas, that
was very involved in training youth in the settlements to claim their citi-
zenship rights in the 1990s. While attending workshops, leadership camps,
and other meetings that Vikas organized, Vishnu learned about the kinds of
work they could do, particularly in connecting residents in the settlement to
their state entitlements. Vikas’ workers also taught Vishnu about the different
institutional avenues open to settlers (Mandals, Sansthas) and the ways in
which these “community based organizations” (CBOs) could legally be con-
stituted. With the help and support of Vikas’ lead activist, Ramesh, Vishnu
and his friends created Asha and registered it as a welfare organization with
the state government’s charity commissioner.

Asha’s beginnings, like the beginnings of dozens of other social service
groups in the settlement, were small. Working at first without an office, Asha’s
three founders initially worked to mobilize resources for those in need. If
someone needed schoolbooks, a blood donation, or a water connection,
Vishnu would try to find *someone*—at an *ngo* or trust, or another more
powerful social worker—who could help. Over time, Asha became known
as an organization that did this kind of work. By networking and staying in
touch with other social workers in the area, Vishnu and his colleagues de-
veloped a keen understanding of individual settlers’ difficulties and struggles.

Soon *ngos* and trusts would come to Vishnu with various development
programs and resources. When a company wanted to donate a few sewing
machines, its representative called Vishnu to see if he would be interested.
Asha rented an “office space” in which it could offer tailoring classes to women as a means of generating livelihood. On the days that classes were not scheduled, the space was used for “leadership camps,” just like the ones that were instrumental in Asha’s creation. Asha’s volunteers invited “resource persons” from various city organizations and unions to speak at meetings, and they also invited their brothers, sisters, and friends, so that they too could learn about their rights, and the procedures and protocols through which they could formally access government programs—water, food rations, and livelihood assistance. This continued for many years.

Vishnu told me that Asha became “famous” after the floods of July 2005. Jogeshwari had been badly affected. As waters rose in the low-lying settlements, many abandoned their homes and retreated to those of friends and family. When they returned days later, many found their homes and belongings covered with sludge (keechad). Others needed help with food and water supplies, as the floodwaters had swept their provisions away. Vishnu said that he worked day and night with his friends, helping people clean out their homes. He spoke of how this work made him especially well known among women who were relegated the responsibility of recomposing households while their husbands went to work. The social networks his relief work produced were a condition of possibility for his setting up of women’s savings groups a few years later. By the end of 2008, Asha organized and maintained more than thirty active women’s savings groups in the area.

By doing this kind of social work—leading training workshops and helping people in need—Asha gained the attention of various politicians in the area, most notably the powerful city councilor. Faced with diverse kinds of requests, Vishnu and other Asha workers would frequently approach the councilor with their needs. By sympathizing and supporting the residents’ requests, not only did Asha and the councilor both gain the petitioner’s appreciation but Asha also became known as a center through which such things could be accomplished. To cultivate Asha’s loyalty and to house the aura of its good works closer to his offices, in 2006 the councilor built Asha its very own office. Since then, the councilor has worked closely with Asha, often honoring its requests with due consideration and support.

In building his and Asha’s reputation in this way, Vishnu has, over the years, become a specialist in the settlement, offering to fix people’s various problems by connecting them to the administrative, nongovernmental, or political patrons who can help them (Hansen and Verkaaik 2009). His ability to conduct this social work, all without any substantive funding from NGOs or development institutions, has been enabled by his familiarity with state
officials—a closeness developed through social work. It has also provided him with a basic livelihood. Following the steady decentralization of municipal garbage services in the settlements, Vishnu mobilized these relations to receive a garbage collection contract from the city. Vishnu does not go door-to-door himself. He has hired a few workers to do so and keeps a cut of the city contract to manage the employees and their work.

Thus, Vishnu and Asha’s workers mobilize diverse forms of the state’s development apparatus to make life possible in the settlement by working with both civil and political associations. They practice an art of mediating, managing, and arbitrating the city’s social services. Their art as urban specialists requires a particular kind of knowledge. Thomas Blom Hansen and Oskar Verkaaik call this kind of charismatic, caring, and somewhat invisible authority “infrapower” (see also Foucault 1995). For Hansen and Verkaaik, infrapower is “a web of connections and structures of solidarity, fear, desire and affect that traverse communities and neighborhoods. These are connections that are neither fully visible to an outside gaze, nor officially codified, but also neither concealed nor secret. . . . Infrapower is a rhizomatic connectivity that spirals in and out of formal organizations, formal economies, formal politics and bureaucratic structures of government and policing” (2009, 20).

As Vishnu builds Asha into a credible, brick-and-mortar community center, what sustains the organization is its situated knowledge of the locality, its ability to facilitate connections between residents of the settlement, the various “programs” of government and nongovernmental organizations, and the friends, relatives, and associates they employ. As “people in the know,” Asha’s workers are vital links for settlers—a social infrastructure of relations that runs through the market and the state and enables their life in the city (Elyachar 2010).

While social workers and lower-level party officials provide critical urban services to settlers, the proliferation of different banners in every settlement makes it abundantly clear that there are many potential helpers in the community, many of whom are associated with political parties. For many living in settlements, affiliation with political parties has not only increased their access to development projects, water lines, or lucrative city contracts. As one rickshaw driver explained to me while proudly displaying his party identity card, such affiliations also increased their social standing in a city that marks settlers as dirty, marginal bodies undeserving of citizenship or respect. In such a world, to belong to a political party is to command a form of respect or authority that settlers otherwise have difficulty claiming. For many denied access to the privileges of class, accessing political parties is often a critical
way to gain dignity, social goods and biopolitical services in the settlement and in the city. Political parties provide a network of support, in terms of not only social standing but also economic inducements, dispositions, and favors that come with being part of a powerful political formation.

In exchange for this patronage, party workers are expected to mobilize the bodies of their friends, associates, and others whom they “helped” to support the party in different social and political programs (see also Bedi 2016). A leader of the Shiv Sena women’s group, for instance, told me that she was obliged to bring between twenty and fifty people to its political rallies whenever party officials asked her. Similarly, it was her group’s responsibility to identify ten students in the area who could receive Shiv Sena “scholarships”—textbooks and notebooks at the start of each academic year. As grassroots political workers, such leaders gained importance by brokering party patronage of these events and endowments with the loyalty of their friends and neighbors in the settlement (Hansen 2001; Scott 1969).

Name Recognition

To honor and further make visible its respect for and connection to various politicians, Asha, like other groups, often erected large billboards honoring party leaders on its outer walls. In a topography of political authority, the boards frequently displayed a headshot of the leader at the top, followed by midlevel officers, with junior leaders and social workers pictured below. A ubiquitous feature of the urban landscape in Mumbai, such “banners” were ostensibly put up during certain key festivals (Diwali, Dassera, Id, etc.) to communicate the best wishes of the party leader to the public. But as evidenced by their form, these banners were also intended to identify and honor the various workers and saviors whom the public could approach for help if necessary. The billboards’ intended audience was not just the public but also the party leaders themselves—they served as political symbols that represented the good wishes and loyalties of the leaders’ subordinates. Banners were a source of continuous anxiety and tension among the social workers I encountered during my fieldwork. Who should be on the banner and who should not were questions constantly debated and worked through at meetings. The result (see figure 12) would be a visible map of the social networks that workers such as Vishnu depended upon to obtain resources for the city’s settlers.

Even though being associated with political parties allows social workers to draw on and claim their extensive resources, most especially when they
have state power, not all social workers in the settlement like to work “full time” for political parties. At Asha, Vishnu was widely seen as being “close” to the Sena, and was seen by many to be dependent on the patronage of Sena’s councilors (who built him the community center). Many of the women in Asha’s savings groups were also loyal to the Sena. But Vishnu did not like the reputation of corruption and cronyism that came with party membership. When I spoke with him, he constantly reminded me that Asha was an autonomous institution that would work with a wide range of neighborhood groups and political parties.

There were many reasons Vishnu may have insisted on this. Social organizations not affiliated with political parties were more respected by residents because of their independence from party machines. They could also approach a wider network of potential donors and supporters in NGOs and trusts. Further, it was not convenient to be in a party that was not in state office. Not affiliating with the Sena allowed Vishnu to work with leaders in other political parties should the government change. Therefore, as a sort of compromise—of both belonging and remaining unaffiliated—Vishnu

**Figure 12.** A political party banner displaying the topography of social work and political authority of the party in an urban neighborhood.
would participate in events organized by a range of leaders across the political spectrum. By performing his loyalty for a variety of different groups, he would seek to maintain his connection with many of the settlement's saviors. This would enable him to maintain a “full house” of potential strategies to meet the center’s diverse needs and those of its affiliated women’s groups (Ferguson 1999).

Vishnu was conscious that he needed to maintain Asha’s identity, and hosted politicians from various parties as chief guests at a wide range of “cultural programs”—health camps and devotional prayer meetings, as well as song and dance performances. Following the events, Asha’s members would excitedly share their thoughts about why certain leaders had come, while others did not. They would take pictures with the leaders who attended—shaking hands, and exchanging roses and other gifts that marked their relationship. These acts demonstrated that the leaders of various political parties supported Asha’s work. They also produced Vishnu’s own status in the area as a big/good man.

Not all of Asha’s programs had material benefits or were linked to political parties. Asha also maintained ties and relations with several NGOs and groups beyond the settlement. For instance, Asha worked with Maitri—a prominent city NGO focusing on gender rights. During the time that I conducted fieldwork, Maitri’s dynamic outreach worker (who lived near Vishnu) collaborated with Asha to organize a health camp (cosponsored by the city health department), a collective protest against domestic violence and sexual harassment, two trainings for women’s livelihood programs, and a scholarship program for twelve promising female students who were to attend college. Finally, Asha maintained good relations with officers in the social service wing of the municipal administration. Because of these relations, Asha has successfully obtained benefits from different government programs—small business loans, grants, and other endowments—for the forty-two women’s savings groups that are now associated with the organization.

Interpenetrated by the relations of civil and political society and joined by NGOs, political patrons, and social movements, Asha’s work challenged any easy distinction between state and society on the one hand, and political and civil formations on the other (Gupta 1995). Its success lay in being able to combine the various contradictory elements of diverse political agendas to forward its work of connecting settlers with critical urban services. Yet the precariousness and limits of infrapower were particularly evident when settlers tried to negotiate their citizenship rights with city councilors.
Organizing Publics

When I arrived in Mumbai in 2007 to do fieldwork, the “social field”—comprised of NGOs such as Vikas, and community groups (community based organizations, or CBOS) such as Asha—was busy organizing itself into a credible opposition to the Municipal Corporation’s Water Development Improvement Project (WDIP). Two years earlier, the water department had commissioned a World Bank–financed study on ways to “improve” water supply in K-East ward. As the city’s largest ward, K-East ward housed a population of over one million residents, most of whom lived in settlements. Recognizing the “improvement program” to be a thinly veiled attempt to privatize water distribution in the city, NGOs and CBOS organized a wide-ranging opposition to the reforms under the banner of the Water Rights Campaign. Through participation in the campaign, Asha, along with its mahila gaths and youth groups, had worked hard to alert settlers about the reforms being undertaken at the Municipal Corporation. They performed street plays on the issue, and went door-to-door, explaining the privatization initiative and relating it to the privatization of electricity distribution. This struck a chord among many in the settlements. They were only too familiar with the problems of escalating rates that accompanied the privatization of electricity and were concerned about the same thing happening with water.

In addition to discussions with community residents, youth and women’s groups were also delegated the responsibility of meeting with councilors to communicate their opposition to the reforms. Yet they had difficulty engaging with councilors on matters of the city’s water policy. These difficulties, and the NGO rights trainings and workshops that preceded and followed them in Mumbai, require us to reconsider how NGOs engage with political parties and political questions in the city.

I attended my first Water Rights Campaign meeting during the monsoon of 2007. The meeting, which took place at a small community center next to Asha’s, was attended by both NGOs and CBOS. The NGO workers, like me, were the only ones who arrived early by arriving on time. An hour later, close to 8:00 in the evening, the meeting began. The room was filled with about thirty people from different NGOs and local settler organizations. The meeting began with NGO workers updating the group about their discussions with city engineers and labor unions regarding the current state of the reforms. They reported that following strident opposition from state employees, World Bank consultants had been, in their words, “put on the back foot.” The consultants were no longer proposing a management contract for
a private operator and were instead proposing that the city water department manage smaller contracts. Ramesh, Vikas’ senior activist (who was also Vishnu’s mentor), told the group that these milder recommendations from the consultant were due to be presented at the third consultation in a few months. It was important for the CBOS to not only organize people to come to the meeting, he said, but also to put pressure on their city councilors to oppose the reforms. Saying this, he circulated some written materials to the group. In so doing, Ramesh and the other NGO workers sought to bring information to community groups in keeping with the idea that in a democracy, the informed electorate would have a say in the laws that govern them by making their opinions known to city legislators.

But while the settlers’ groups were comfortable with the language of water rights at the NGO meeting and also in our conversations, they knew that their councilors did not necessarily see or hear them as the rights-bearing subjects imagined by proponents of liberal democracy. “They don’t want to talk,” a leader of one youth group complained. They insisted that an NGO worker accompany them to the meeting and articulate their demands—someone like Ramesh, who was both comfortable with the language of rights and not as subject to the councilor’s discretionary power. “How can we say what’s wrong?” one of the women affiliated with Asha complained. “The councilor is one of those people who answers our questions with another question. He doesn’t talk properly. . . . That is why we want you to come with us.”

In articulating their discomfort with addressing their councilor as a rights bearing constituent, settlers revealed the ways in which they are sometimes seen and read by politicians in the city. Councilors, like other elected political representatives, seldom consulted with their constituents on matters of policy. This is not to say they did not engage with their constituents. They were in close touch about provisioning for different necessities—water, food, schools—or arbitrating local disputes such as marriages, property matters, or employment. They were simply not accustomed to listening to them on matters of making laws or policies. For this, the city’s councilors were used to hearing from the city’s NGOs and (more senior) state politicians in the city.

While NGOs are often staffed by middle and upper class residents, this is not always the case. Ramesh’s biography demonstrates how he was not always an NGO worker and he was not only an NGO worker. In 1984, when he was thirteen, Ramesh came to Jogeshwari from a village in Satara to live with his uncle. At the time, Jogeshwari was at the city’s frontier and was well known for its milk dairies. His uncle started a milk dealership, and Ramesh helped his uncle with this work. He would distribute milk between 5:00
and 7:00 in the morning before going to school. He worked in the business all the way through college. In the meantime, his uncle made it big—he bought property and cars. At this point, Ramesh left home to start out on his own because he had “fulfilled his debt” to his uncle for providing for him.

Ramesh stayed with a friend for a number of years. They worked together on starting a youth group in the settlements. A mutual friend’s sickness was what brought them together. “We had a friend . . . [who] is now a big BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] leader . . . He was sick . . . He had surgery, so we got together to help him. We made a small group, gave it a name and began to help each other,” he told me one afternoon. Soon after, they began talking of other ways to provide assistance in the settlements. As they came from the same school, they immediately thought of giving back to their alma mater by setting up a library for its students. “Then the headmistress, who was working with us—she began to question our proposals . . . so we thought why make it for one school, we’ll do it with other schools.” In 1998, as they were building another library, the young men came into contact with political groups. Leftist and Dalit leaders began providing them with a political education—teaching them about political ideology and urging them toward broader social engagement. “In 1998 we were introduced to Sambhaji Bhagat. He told us what communism is, what politics is, what the youth of today should do, what globalization is,” Ramesh told me, speaking of his political awakening.

Ramesh was involved as a full-time activist with the youth group between 1994 and 2000. During this time, they worked on citywide campaigns for housing rights, gender justice, and a range of other social issues. They worked on campaigns to fight the demolitions in Borivali National Park, a few miles from their homes (see Zérah and Landy 2013). On occasion, they were beaten by the police. At other times, they were threatened by politicians who were complicit in the city’s reterritorialization under the sign of capital. Ramesh told me that he did all of this work without a paid job. He depended on his friends for three to four years to put him up and feed him. Realizing that this could not be a long-term strategy, he joined the NGO Vikas in 1998, first on an activist fellowship (between 1998 and 2000) and finally as staff in 2000. Now, Ramesh is a full-time worker in Vikas’ urban development program, working on a series of community development and mobilization projects. The Water Rights Campaign was one of his projects.

As a settler-turned-rights-activist, Ramesh’s biography points to the powerful ways in which settlers have learned the language of rights in the city: through communist organizations looking for new members and NGOs deploying the framework of rights to make demands for housing. In some
ways, his work and that of other NGO workers cultivated from the settlements destabilizes assumptions that NGOs and “civil society” are populated only by the middle and upper classes. It also troubles contemporary theorizations of politics that frequently identify in NGOs the cause of the withering away of the state and of political citizenship. Ramesh’s biography reveals the way in which ideas of rights, justice, and entitlements engaged by demands for a public system are not discourses that come from “outside” but are threads of an ongoing conversation between NGO activists, state officials, and residents in Mumbai’s settlements.

Nevertheless, the settlers’ reluctance to articulate policy demands directly to their councilors was troubling. It drew on histories of activist campaigns in India, where the “head work” (the work of policy, and debating the intricacies of privatization) was the domain of middle-class NGOs, while the “body work” (the work of assembling large numbers of people to oppose privatization) was left to politically marginalized groups (living in the settlements).

Yet, in this instance, Ramesh eagerly wanted Asha’s members to do the head work of speaking to the councilor, and it was Asha’s members who were reluctant. For them, the problem was not necessarily that NGOs led from the front in discussions with technocrats and engineers but that unless NGOs attended meetings with councilors and other representatives, their concerns would not be treated with any seriousness. Councilors would see them as “local” women from the settlement, they said—women who could not know about “bigger” things. Articulating gendered divisions of political labor, Rajni tai, a long-time Asha member, pleaded to Ramesh: “Only people like you will do. We don’t have the language [bhasha] to engage this.” At the meeting, Ramesh looked a little embarrassed by the way Asha’s members recognized their own marginality. They were highlighting the fact that despite the many rights trainings that he had organized for them, there was still much work to do for settlers to see and claim their rights to the city.

**Making Connections**

Affiliated with Asha through their savings group, Sunita tai and Rajni tai also attended the campaign meeting. Working together over the years, they knew both Ramesh and Vishnu well. Through the meeting, Sunita and Rajni registered their disapproval for the reforms and offered whatever help they could to mobilize people to protest water privatization. While Sunita and Rajni
came to the meeting to learn and oppose privatization, they also had a specific grievance they came to address: their settlement was not receiving water from the public utility that they were explicitly defending. After the meeting, they stayed behind to speak to Vishnu and Ramesh about how this might be remedied. I was amazed by the efficacy and familiarity with which each knew what they had to do. They wrote out a letter on Asha’s letterhead and called one of the councilor’s assistants to set up a meeting. This was the first step, I learned later, in the process to get a new water connection.

This was not the first time that Sunita and Rajni’s settlement had water problems. In Mumbai, water services for settlers are in a state of constant flux. Years earlier, when they had first moved to the city, they had obtained a water line after facing significant difficulties. At that time, Vishnu had helped them get a water connection. Since then, that line too had gone dry. This was not an uncommon situation for many living in the city’s settlements. For a range of political and material reasons, their infrastructure is increasingly prone to blockage and leakage. Annual hydrological cycles, population increases, main line leakages, shifting demography, and unanticipated cluster developments constantly compelled city engineers to tinker with and alter the water system. They were always rearranging the pipes, pressures, and water timings to cope with changing and growing demand. “Slum connections” are thinner and frequently run above the ground. They are more prone to breakage and leakage and are especially vulnerable to changes in pressure. With constant rearrangements, residents in connected settlements such as Sundarnagar frequently find that their connections—struggled for and negotiated years before—slowly go dry. As a result, when lines stop working every five or so years, settlers need to find ways to make renewed connections to the public system.

I gained an appreciation for this cyclical and historical process when, upon their invitation, I visited Sunita tai and Rajni tai’s savings group meeting one day. While we waited for other members to arrive, Sunita told me about how the group was formed. They too owed their existence to Vikas. This was the same NGO Ramesh worked for and the one that trained Vishnu. They spoke of how Vikas helped form the group and taught them how to save money. They were trained by NGO activists to make applications, learn of their rights and the responsibilities of officials in various state departments (water, sanitation, roads, garbage), and also to understand the repertoires they needed to get officials to respond to their requests.

Sunita pointed out that years before, when they were formally denied water services by the rules of the city government and the councilor expressed
an inability to help, it was a worker who took them in a big group to the water department’s headquarters to get their application passed. Following up on previous conversations, I asked Sunita and Rajni whether their most recent water request—for a new line—had been approved. I was pleased to learn that though it took some time, the councilor had eventually put a new line in the settlement. Armed with Vishnu’s letter, they had met the city councilor to seek his help in solving their water difficulties. In recounting the meeting to me, Rajni tai said: “We told him, we don’t want money. Our vote is worth one lakh rupees [approximately US$2,000 in 2008]. We only want to use that amount now. Because we don’t have money. So he put the pipe [in], and took advantage of it. In four to five places he put [in] a ‘T’ connection [to divert water elsewhere].”

I was slightly surprised by the ways in which Rajni spoke of her meeting with the councilor. Rajni did not consider the meeting as a place to demand water as a right. But neither did she speak of the meeting with the councilor as though she were a supplicant. Whether she was as explicit at the meeting as she was with me in our interview, I cannot be sure. But throughout our conversation, she argued that the councilor was obliged to give them a new line because they gave him their votes. He owed his position to their votes. It was now his obligation to hold up his end of the exchange, by helping them with their water connection. Not only did Rajni and others in the mahila gath want his permission to lay the water line, but they also expected him to fund its procurement. Rajni demanded that he step up to his responsibility to help them. She articulated a very justified and a very transactional understanding of citizenship, framed around the exchange of a water pipe. Rajni was unambiguous, warning the councilor that his votes (and voters) were on the line. In the weeks that followed, the councilor did respond. He laid the line, but not before diverting some of the resulting water to other constituents.

As Mukulika Banerjee (2008) reminds us, settlers and other relatively subaltern populations are only too aware that the funds politicians access for development projects are being misappropriated by their elected representatives. Yet this does not preclude settlers from claiming a fair (if also unequal) entitlement to these funds. Rajni clearly saw her vote as entitling her to a share of the councilor’s funds. She did not want to be paid directly, but she did claim that the money be put in service of their settlement. Rajni saw her vote as entitling her group to the finances and favors of the councilor. This transaction, enabled by certain democratic rights (namely universal suffrage), does not produce, in and of itself, a citizenship right to water. Instead
it produces a moral and political relation through which the councilor is obliged to help settlers—a relation that is partially effected both by the vote and also by relations of patronage.

Representing Democracy

Councilors also recognize their obligation to work on water services. Several councilors and their party workers identified water services, together with drainage and small roads, to be their primary area of responsibility. “Water, gutter, passage,” councilors would tell me when I asked them of their responsibilities. During elections, expanded water services are a ubiquitous campaign promise.15 Politicians frequently point to reliable water services in the settlements they rule as evidence of their efficacy. Indeed, while walking through settlements, settlers would frequently show me water lines, identifying them with particular city and state politicians. “This is Waikar’s line,” I would hear, or “This is Shetty’s line.” Named after the politician who sponsored the connection, the lines connect critical service infrastructures with the person (and sometimes the political party) who brought the line to the settlement. Signage on water tanks, toilets, and other water infrastructures frequently advertised the politician who commissioned the works. In Mumbai, therefore, water connections represent a very personal development, one that is produced by charismatic authority as much as it is pressured by votes.

Each of Mumbai’s over two hundred city councilors represents an electorate of approximately sixty thousand people. With most of their voters coming from settlements, councilors find themselves responsible for large numbers of residents, many of whom form a perpetual line outside their offices to address a range of concerns, including urban services (road repair), family disputes (abusive husbands), as well as construction projects (such as home expansion). To conduct their work more effectively, councilors themselves rely on a series of intermediaries to advise them which people have “genuine” problems. They depend on independent social workers such as Vishnu or their own party workers to screen and recommend cases that require their most expedient attentions.

I learned more about the importance of party volunteers in a conversation with Ismail, a city councilor. In one conversation, Ismail began by speaking of the importance of good relations with city engineers and the importance of talking to them properly. “Relation ke upar depend hai,” he told me, speaking of how councilors can work with the city administration. “It depends on the relation.”
Yet getting things done not only depended on the degree to which his projects were supported by the city administration. Ismail also spoke of the importance of having a good support network within his political party: “For any man to work, he must have a circle. My eyes and ears are the Youth Brigade [the party’s youth wing]. It is through them that work gets done [Inke madhyam se kaam banta hai]. Because of this work, they build their name/respect [izzat] in the basti. If they are our people, the work gets done quickly [phata-phat]. Anyway, anyhow, the work must get done.” Therefore, while Ismail mediated access between the administration and the community, his volunteers were critical in helping him accomplish this. In the fissures between making work and doing work, Ismail drew on the help of junior party workers (his “circle”) in the settlement. This not only gave his workers respect—izzat—in the settlement but also produced them as future leaders. Doing good work spread the “good name” of the party, Ismail told me. A good name was critical to the party’s success in city elections as well as those at the state and federal levels.16

In the interview, Ismail had suggested that the work of the youth brigade was not only necessary to actually oversee the implementation of the works projects. The youth were also his “ears.” As such, they were tuned in to the local talk of the area, and could assess whether the people who were to be helped were loyal and deserving subjects. Alluding to their political loyalties, he said, that work is done quicker if they were people loyal to his party. If not, would he be able to secure their loyalties if he did the work? The unspoken assumption, of course, was that if not, the work might take longer (or never get done at all).

In Mumbai, politicians eagerly compete for the political loyalties of their subjects through direct, known, and personal interventions. Councilors play close attention and respond to the political loyalties of their subject populations in choosing which of their petitioners will be extended the councilor’s considerable local area discretionary development funds.17 Conversations I had with lower-level party workers confirmed this. “If we have twenty-five proposals, we will only take up the five that are important to us and for which there is no dispute with other residents or political parties,” a councilor’s deputy told me one day. He spoke of the difficulty in mediating such proposals and, more importantly, in getting credit for development works, particularly when the settlement has many potential saviors, each clamoring for attention. “Many times, people from different parties want to work on and try and get credit for the same projects. Fights often break out between people on different sides.” The party worker is often reluctant to take up
works projects that are claimed by other leaders and volunteers. If it seems like doing something would be a lot of headache (jhanjhat), then he will stay clear of those projects. Skipping over projects whose political outcomes are uncertain or contentious, party workers prefer to focus on projects that will provide them with “respect” and loyalty without too much trouble, either with rival political interests or with the law.

Back in Sundarnagar, Rajni and Sunita had done their work well. They had succeeded in convincing the politician of their loyalty, and the councilor installed a line at his own cost. This had spared Sunita and Rajni’s group the difficulty of raising the money for the pipeline on its own. But the work was still not complete. The councilor had laid a new line in the settlement, but the pipe would not be of very much use until it was actually connected to the city’s water system. To do this, the group had to approach the engineers in their water department. Unfortunately, the junior engineer did not immediately fulfill their request. Sunita explains:

We had such problems. Twenty to twenty-five women would go in the morning, to the Andheri office, to ask the engineer to make the connection. The engineer would ask, “Why are you coming here in a morcha? If one or two of you would come your work would be done.” But no. We went with twenty to twenty-five women every time, that's why our work got done. . . . We said we are a mahila mandal with water problems, do our work! [The engineers] began nit-picking, saying, “Not today, tomorrow!” That way many days passed. [Finally], we asked them, “Are you going to do the work or not, tell us straight!” . . . We said, “Just as every day matters for you, it matters for us. Why are you sitting in this chair [position]? Because you are sitting in this chair you have to do our work.” That way we answered his answers [talked back].

In their years of working in the mahila gath, Sunita and Rajni tai had learned the rituals of claiming hydraulic citizenship. Knowing that engineers frequently ignored the requests of individual settlers unless they went and made noise in a large group, they took many women with them every time. Doing so, they knew, might make it easier for the engineer to respond to their demand than to ignore them. Pressured by their numbers, the engineer had tried to remind the women that he had “bigger” concerns to look after—that his responsibility was not to their small, particularistic problem. Yet Sunita did not make a claim as a supplicant or a shouting member of political society. She responded by equating her difficulties with the engineers. Trained well through Vikas’ rights trainings and workshops, she spoke the language of an
entitled, rights-bearing citizen—one whom the city engineer was employed to serve. Unlike the intimidation they expressed in meeting with councilors (who asked questions of their questions), here Sunita answered the engineer’s answers.\textsuperscript{18}

Effectively required to request new water connections periodically, Sunita and Rajni were both familiar with the processes and procedures necessary to obtain such connections when we met. For them, the rituals of hydraulic citizenship needed to be reiterated every few years. It was not a onetime event (as the languages of housing recognition and regularization would suggest). Instead, hydraulic citizenship emerges as a set of entitlements that needed to be constantly reclaimed and maintained by navigating the rituals of rights and entitlements that established their belonging to the city.\textsuperscript{19} Crystallized in the discretions of the councilor and the demands of the engineer, this was citizenship that was habitual and always in the making. “We have learned how to talk in the city,” a settler told me one day as we spoke of the ways she accessed urban services. To get water, she needed to constantly make herself known to city authorities, to claim belonging and entitlements through the language of rights and of supportive, voting clients.

The hydraulic public, therefore, is not an anonymous population of undifferentiated, rights-bearing citizens but a set of intimately known and negotiated relations between settlers, social workers, and councilors. Here lies the importance of Asha’s work, and the work of several community organizations based in the settlement. Letters, documents, and “activities,” such as the cooking contest at Asha on Women’s Day or the antiprivatization meeting, provide the grounds not only for social-political connections to be made and maintained between settlers and community organizations, and between community organizations and NGOs, but also for the continual learning, testing, and performance of new languages of entitlement. When performed correctly, social connections and new discursive formations are critical to accessing water and other urban services. Nevertheless, these languages are not always mutually compatible, and they may fail as often as they succeed.

The Trouble with Rights

On November 13, 2007, the Municipal Corporation organized the third public consultation for reviewing its proposed water reforms. In part, the consultation was a ritual of participation required by World Bank projects. It was a liberal ritual of urban governance, one that called upon “civil society” to take part in governmental processes by providing input (Rahnema
The third consultation for water reforms was scheduled only months earlier. It was made necessary by proceedings at the second consultation, where activists of the Water Rights Campaign demanded that the water department give them time to review the reforms being proposed at that meeting. Invested in the processes of participation, the consultant and commissioner had acceded to the request and promised to hold a third consultation where NGOs and civil society organizations could provide their input a few months later.

Yet even before the third meeting could take place, the Assistant Commissioner of the city had already announced the launch of a new program—Sujal Mumbai [Good Water Mumbai]—which drew on many of the reforms recommended by the study to restructure the water department’s operations. This upset the activists a great deal and they resolved to protest these decisions at the third meeting. When the date of the third consultation was announced, therefore, NGOs and CBOS worked through the Diwali break to ensure that people showed their concern by attending the meeting.

I was impressed when I arrived at the auditorium on the day of the meeting. There were at least two hundred residents from the settlements in attendance. Kicking things off with a protest outside the gate, they moved into the auditorium soon after the meeting began. Engineers, academics, and consultants I had been working with occupied the first five rows of the auditorium. My friends and colleagues from the settlements I had also been working with occupied the back of the hall. Conscious of my visibility and positionality, I took care to sit in the middle of the auditorium, right next to professors, it turned out, from the Indian Institute of Technology.

The consultation was long and tedious. It began with the consultant, speaking in English and serially translated into Marathi, making the case for water reforms. His introduction was followed by a PowerPoint presentation by the chief hydraulic engineer. The engineer’s presentation was far less fluent. Stammering through his talk, he looked to the PowerPoint presentation to guide him as to what he should say next. I could not help noticing that many of the slides were lifted and pasted directly from the consultant’s report I had seen earlier. It seemed almost as if the chief engineer was learning of the reforms through the act of reading the PowerPoint slides. As he halted and hesitated, not quite confident about the reforms being proposed, the assistant commissioner—a smartly dressed, confident bureaucrat who was posted as a powerful projects commissioner in the BMC—sought to rescue the talk by filling in program details where the chief hydraulic engineer omitted them.
The Assistant Commissioner spoke the World Bank’s language of water regulation comfortably, highlighting words and meanings that the engineer had overlooked on each slide. His familiarity with the slides, and his conviction about the need for reforms, made it abundantly clear that the water reforms were his initiative. Nevertheless, after about an hour and a half of hearing officials present the reforms, someone from the audience shouted out from the audience, asking when they might be allowed to speak in this “consultation.” Many murmured in support. The engineer droned on.

The audience’s discontent broke into a full-scale disruption when the bureaucrat announced that contracts were going to be given to private contractors for the maintenance and upkeep of the system. “Paani aamchya hakkacha, nahi kuna cha bapaacha.” Shouting over the voice of the Assistant Commissioner, the protestors chanted, “Water is our right, it’s not anybody’s father’s [property].” The assistant commissioner pleaded to be allowed to continue. Disregarding him, many began to walk toward the stage in protest. For the media and the police, who had long appeared bored and forlorn, things had suddenly become interesting.

Shouting at city employees is a relatively common way to articulate discontent with public services in postcolonial cities (Chakrabarty 2007). Recognizing that they were losing control of the meeting, the administrator and engineer invited the city councilors (“your representatives,” they assured the audience) to the stage. Recognizing the power and authority of the councilors, and their special (and historical) ability to manage and discipline their populations, the engineers had guessed correctly that settlers would not be quite so vocal with the councilors. Awed by the presence of their councilors and the city mayor, many in the audience quickly quieted down. The mayor, now on stage, asked the protestors to allow for the presentation’s completion. The protestors quickly agreed.

The chief hydraulic engineer resumed his presentation. Unfortunately for him, however, he was imprisoned by the sequence of his PowerPoint presentation. The very next slide led him straight to a very contentious proposal for prepaid water meters for unregularized slums. The audience roared in protest at both the engineers and the councilors, who by this time were sitting mute, quite literally on the same side as engineers and administrators proposing the reforms. This proved to be too much for the youth groups. As a mass of bodies rolled down the aisles shouting slogans, it was apparent that the rest of the “consultation” was going to be far less scripted.

With chants and demands, the protesters walked right through a frazzled yet helpless police force to take control of the stage and its microphones.
Standing now at the same level as city councilors and administrators, they challenged their authority, proceeding to rail against the initiative. They berated the Municipal Corporation for overseeing a takeover of the utility by private, foreign companies. By now, things had reached such a pitch that even the mayor and the city councilors could not keep things under control. The youth groups refused to cede the stage to the councilors and shouted them down whenever they tried to speak. Flustered, the mayor left the meeting. It was only when the Assistant Commissioner took a microphone and offered to answer questions that, somewhat miraculously, a large number of protestors quieted down and began filing behind the microphone to ask questions. The rituals of democracy were rescued and resumed from what, moments before, had seemed an impossible situation.

Realizing that they now needed to have substantive questions, many in the group near the stage began looking for Ramesh, the Vikas activist who was the spirited force behind the Water Rights Campaign. He took the stage and, with expertise and authority, began asking difficult questions of the water department. I quote his engagement at length, not only because I admire it as an articulate, rights-based critique of the reform project coming from a representative of the city’s non-governmental organizations and its settlements but also because it points to the contradictions between the apparent motivations for the reforms and their potential effects:

I would like to say that the World Bank has created this farce [of consultation, privatization] not only here today, but everywhere in the world. . . . I want to make two more points clear. I am a person living in the slums. . . . Yes, I agree that there is inequitable distribution. But you have found a medicine that is worse than the disease! The disease is that people don’t get water and the solution [you propose] is that you will fix prepaid meters! Prepaid meters have not only been experienced in Asia but are largely responsible for what is happening in Africa. In South Africa. Many have died in the cholera epidemic. Even in the most developed nations whose principles we would like to emulate, even in those countries prepaid meters were banned in the ’90s. In such a scenario, when we know that the road ahead is full of pitfalls, why are we going in that direction? We are in a quandary over this matter and we would like you to clarify.

By introducing himself not only as an NGO worker but also as someone who lived in the settlements, Ramesh foregrounded his own experience in accessing water. He raised a conventional and powerful right versus commodity
dichotomy, very prevalent in debates over water distribution and frequently articulated in community meetings in the settlements, and presented a powerful case for why water should remain a public good. Nevertheless, Ramesh acknowledged the difficulty and inequality that he faces when accessing the public system. He asked how the BMC could transition to a 24/7 system when it cannot even provide him with a few hours of water each day. The issue of prepaid water meters was even more contentious. Preferring the status quo to “a medicine that might be worse,” he asked that the current system be expanded to all settlers, not just to those who can mobilize the correct documents of belonging.

The audience roared in support of his suggestion, making it difficult for the commissioner to respond to his queries. By now, the audience was not prepared to listen to the experts anymore. Chanting against the reforms, they occupied the stage, not only protesting the World Bank and the BMC engineers but also berating the work of city councilors. As the melee continued, one young protestor got hold of a microphone and, looking directly at the city councilors, accused them of being dalals (agents) of private companies. Revealing the public secret—that councilors frequently act as agents of private companies—was a transgression that electrified everybody at the consultation (Taussig 1999). The children were shouting that the councilor rajas (kings) had no clothes.

With their authority being so explicitly questioned and mocked, the Shiv Sena councilors lost face. They were already upset by the ways in which their normally deferential subjects were disregarding and disrespecting their power and authority. Unable to sit still while they were being insulted, they got off their chairs and rushed to assault the questioner. As councilors sought to restore order by resorting to physical violence, their reaction revealed another public secret—that their authority was based as much on their threats of physical violence and intimidation in the settlements as on their position as elected representatives (Hansen 2005).

No sooner did the councilors and their supporters begin to assault the protestor that others from the audience came to his rescue. Surrounding him for protection, they turned to the councilors and shouted in English, “Shame shame shame shame!” The councilors, worried at this turn of the crowds against them, took themselves offstage to safety. They called their offices, apprising them of the situation, and asked that their party followers come to the meeting venue for support. Soon after, the councilors decided to leave the building. As they got into a car, the youth groups assembled to block its movement. They refused to let the car leave the meeting before the councilors...
apologized. They began shouting slogans that compared the councilors’ violence to Hitler’s fascism. Soon after, the councilors’ boys arrived from Jogeshwari to rescue them. Living in the same neighborhood, the protestors and councilors’ supporters recognized one another. Though many of them were friends at home, some began fighting each other until (finally) the police broke the two groups apart and ordered them to go home.23

Damaged Relations

A couple of days later, activists and protestors gathered quietly at a community center to watch a video of the meeting and to review what had happened. Some of the younger protestors were excited to have put the councilors in their place by inverting the political relations in the settlement, even if it was just for a brief moment. They liked having an opportunity to point to the vacillations and corruptions of councilors in public and spoke excitedly about how they shook the councilors’ authority and confidence. Others, however, were more circumspect. The disruptions, while quite powerful, had closed all lines of communication and negotiation with both councilors in the settlement and engineers at the city water department without achieving any
tangible results. The more senior activists and social workers would have preferred that the unequal theater of stakeholder consultations nevertheless remain open. At least that way their voices could have some traction, they reasoned. Instead, activists and CBO groups had damaged their relations—not only with the city’s water department but also with local city councilors.

The primary consequence of these damaged relations for NGO activists was that they now had to file Right to Information appeals to get any details from the water department about the reforms. The engineers no longer willingly gave this information to them. Yet for those living and working in the settlements, the consequences of breaking relations were more severe. Because they were known and familiar, Asha’s leaders, along with other CBOs in the settlement, were threatened by the councilor’s “circle” of party workers. Even though Vishnu had recognized the danger and slipped out of the meeting without engaging in a confrontation, the councilor’s deputy had taken note of his presence among the protestors and had informed the councilor of his loyalties. Expressing disappointment with Vishnu, the councilor suspended his plan to expand the community center and was not as responsive to his requests. The councilor’s workers threatened to beat Vishnu up.

The youth groups that took a more active part in the protest were in even more trouble. Dependent on the cleaning and sweeping contracts that the councilor arranged to ensure their financial viability, they were informed that their contracts were cancelled. A woman from a mahila gath, who was identified at the consultation, was told that she no longer had a job when she went to work the next day. As news of the protest reverberated through the settlement, several of its participants began to fear what the councilor’s workers might do to them if they were caught in the wrong place at the wrong time. Far from a celebration of their success at disrupting the meeting, settlers were more circumspect and quiet about the effects of their protests on their everyday lives.

The events that transpired at and after the consultation were a very visible manifestation of the intimate nature of the public sphere in Mumbai. Even though it is one of the largest cities in the world, its people are not invisible in public. To access the many resources they need to live in the settlements, settlers were often known and identifiable to both social workers and party workers. Their visibility compromised both social workers and residents in different ways as they returned to the settlement and sought to live and work in a vitiated political environment. Knowing how to talk, therefore, was not just about knowing and mobilizing the languages of rights and relations. It was also about learning and knowing the appropriate fora and manner in
which these claims could be engaged so as to expand access to urban resources. Transgressing these repertoires produced a moment of danger—a situation that not only revealed the councilors’ vulnerability but also provided the grounds for the reinscription of their power.

Conclusion

Asha’s workers work in Jogeshwari with diverse political languages and subjectivities. On the one hand, Asha’s workers join settlers desiring the care of the state to the diverse bureaucracies of government through highly visible and known relations. Yet social workers in organizations like Asha do not only engage in acts of “brokerage.” They also work with NGOs to produce liberal political subjectivities. Settlers learn (or are reminded of the importance) of their formal rights and entitlements through the different programs that it hosts. As savings groups, NGOs, and community organizations try out different and new languages of rights, they provide settlers with new ground for interventions in the politics of the city—politics that, marked by relations of inequality, are nevertheless also saturated with ideas of justice, entitlement, and political membership.

Settlers in Mumbai are connected to those in power not just through situated, everyday acts of patronage but also through training programs that cultivate languages and entitlements of democracy and representation. They often demand and expect that their political representatives act as good patrons. As rights and duties entail each other, these produce a powerful set of expectations around the responsibilities of state politicians and city engineers (Banerjee 2008). Thus, it is not only subjects who are responsibilized through the language of rights and justice (Foucault 1991; Rose 1999). Rights talk also responsibilizes the leaders, dadas, and engineers of the city’s public system. Willing to overlook the corruptions of councilors and engineers, settlers evaluate the morality of city government by the ways in which they help “ordinary people” accomplish ordinary things. Despite being in very unequal relationships with councilors, they expect them to provide basic services (including water) to all, especially those who cannot afford it.

Attending to these quotidian practices in the settlements complicates contemporary theorizations of urban politics, which for some time now have centered on rather static and dualistic distinctions between civil society and political society and between patronage and citizenship. Indeed, the cyclical and constant concern that Sunita and Rajni’s group faces around matters of
water supply is an unstable arrangement that constantly calls upon them to negotiate their water connection with their patrons through intermediaries such those working at Asha. At the same time, the analytic of political society seems a little too fixed, in this instance, to describe their changing relationship to the city’s politicians, and the confidence and fluency with which they are now able to obtain water connections. Their fluency is effected in part by their learning of the languages of urban belonging—the practiced and familiar ways in which they make claims to matters of life in the city (see McFarlane 2011).

For instance, when Rajni questions the legitimacy of the city engineer or recognizes that the councilor is not just a raja of the settlement but one who also depends on them for his election to the position, her practices elucidate a far more dynamic and multiply constituted form of personhood that cannot be explained by relegating her politics to that of political society or civil society. Yet, precisely because the subjects here are a known gathering of social relations, there are consequences for settlers who do not “talk properly” or who do not mobilize the correct repertoires of claiming access to the city’s resources. The public consultation spiraled out of control when settlers sought to hold their city councilors to account. The bitter standoff that ensued between residents and councilors revealed how settlers and social workers are not always seen and treated as liberal, rights-bearing citizens. As settlers mobilized powerful rights claims and protested the councilors’ willingness to “sell” their water supply, they were not allowed to forget that they continue to be subject to the discretionary and profane force of the city’s municipal system—a system that continues to be based on violence and inequality.
This page intentionally left blank