Mobility and the region: A multi-scalar ethnography of the Vohra Gujarati community, in India and abroad

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This PhD thesis is about Vohras, an Indian Muslim community that identifies the ‘Charotar’ region of central Gujarat as its homeland. Their cultivation of regional identity takes place within the context of a recent history of violence against Muslims in the state, and more widely in relation to the marginalisation of Muslims in Indian politics and society. The thesis describes the various ways in which Vohras shape their community and their sense of local belonging: through narratives, marriage practices, land investments, charitable associations, and travel.

The thesis is based on multi-sited fieldwork involving ten months in Gujarat, two months in the UK, and brief fieldwork trips to other locations. The community is analysed from a ‘multi-scalar’ perspective, at three levels: as a local community in Anand town, as a regional community in ‘Charotar’, and as a transnational family network with ties to the region. By applying the notion of ‘place-making’ within a multi-scalar framework, the research contributes to theorising the region and to the ‘placial turn’ in discussions of transnationalism and migration, and, more specifically, to current debates on the position of Muslims in India.
Mobility and the region

A multi-scalar ethnography of the Vohra Gujarati community, in India and abroad

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### SUMMARY

### NEDERLANDSE SAMENVATTING

### BIBLIOGRAPHY
Foreword

This PhD thesis has come about as part of the ‘Provincial Globalisation’ (‘ProGlo’) research programme, which explores transnational connections between Overseas Indians and their home regions, especially the effects of ‘reverse flows’ of resources, including remittances, philanthropy, investments, and knowledge. The programme consists of five independent but interlinked research projects (three PhD and two postdoctoral) located in three regions of India – Anand District in Gujarat, Guntur District in Andhra Pradesh, and Dakshina Kannada District in Karnataka. The research documents a broad range of resource transfers by migrants, including economic resources (such as household remittances, investments in land), social remittances (including flows of ideas, support for NGOs), and cultural flows (such as religious donations), and their influence at the regional level. The PhD projects are intensive studies of the selected regions that focus on the effects of resource transfers by migrants in provincial towns and their rural hinterlands, while the post-doctoral projects provide macro- and meso-level mappings of transnational linkages and flows at the regional, state, and national levels. By tracing these transnational networks and the modalities and destinations of resource transfers comparatively across three regions, the research programme provides insights into the economic, social, political, and cultural consequences of Overseas Indians’ engagements with India.

‘ProGlo’ is a five-year collaborative research programme of the Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research (AISSR), University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands, and the National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS), Bangalore, India, funded by the WOTRO Science for Global Development programme of the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO), the Netherlands, initiated in 2010. The AISSR helped to make the research possible and helped finance the thesis.

The ProGlo programme directors and PhD supervisors are Professor Mario Rutten (AISSR) and Professor Carol Upadhya (NIAS). Carol Upadhya and Mario Rutten conceptualised the ProGlo research programme and helped me develop my project from beginning to end, provided extensive comments on fieldwork reports and thesis drafts, pointed out literature that I had missed, and gently guided me back on to the path when I got side-tracked. Without them, this research project would not have been possible.

It has been a privilege to work in an international research team, in which ideas, resources and drafts constantly travelled between Amsterdam and Bangalore.
Sanam Roohi has been my ProGlo soulmate throughout these five years. The ‘ProGlo team’ has further included researchers Sulagna Mustafi, Puja Guha, and Leah Koskimaki, supporting staff Anju Christine Lingham, Jananie Kalyanaraman, Sheela Venkatesh, Keya Bardalai, H. S. Sudhira, filmmakers Dakxin Bajrange and C. Vanaja, students Maudi Heerink, Wanda van Kampen, Molly Fitzpatrick, Jasne Krooneman, Pieter Lagerwaard, and Fieke Jagers. The ‘ProGlo’ programme has been facilitated at the University of Amsterdam by José Komen, Hermance Mettrop, Joan Schrijvers, Joanne Oaks, Yomi van der Veen, Karen Kraal, Nicole Schulp, Janus Oomen, Emilie van Tol, Muriel Kiesel, Cristina Garofalo, and at NIAS in Bangalore by P. Srinivasa Aithal, A. Deva Raju, Ramakrishna K. S., J. N. Sandhya, C. Shashidharan, A. S. Mary Stella, and librarians Hamsa Kalyani, R. Vijayalakshmi and Mr. Bhaskar.

During the research period in Gujarat, I was embedded within the Sardar Patel University in Anand. Professor of Sociology Amrapali Merchant of the Sardar Patel University was my local Ph.D. supervisor in Anand, my ‘philosopher, guide, and friend’. I am sad she passed away on December 23, 2014. At the Sardar Patel University, I thank Vice Chancellor Harish Padh, Tushar Majmudar, Varung Patel, and Jigar Desai for institutional support, and Nusrath Kadri and Hemant Dave for academic partnership. The project has also benefitted from a brief internship at the Gujarat Institute of Development Research in Ahmedabad (June 2012) under the guidance of Professor Amita Shah. My Gujarati language teacher in Ahmedabad was Professor Raymond Parmar (St. Xaviers College), and in the Netherlands, Amrita Vyas (Sri Uganda Hindu Union).

Research findings and preliminary chapter drafts have been discussed at research seminars at the Centre for Social Studies (CSS) in Surat (January 2012), Gujarat Institute of Development Research in Ahmedabad (June 2012), University Münster (December 2013), Gujarat Studies Association in Ahmedabad (February 2014), and on various occasions at the University of Amsterdam. Research findings have also been discussed with stakeholders during two meetings in Anand 2012, one co-organised with Asif Thakor at Alana school and one with Professor Amrapali Merchant at Sardar Patel University, and during a stakeholders meeting in Amsterdam in October 2013, co-organised with the research programme ‘Migration, development, and Citizenship: Notions of belonging and Civic Engagement among Indian (knowledge-) Migrants in The Netherlands and Return Migrants in India’ (VU University). I thank all participants in these meetings for their feedback, particularly those who acted as a discussant: Ellen Bal (VU University), Rubina Jasani (University of Manchester), Gijsbert Oonk (Erasmus University), Olga Sooudi (University of Amsterdam), Sandra Baernreuther
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Sanderien Verstappen
PART I

Introduction
India and Gujarat

Gujarat with the Charotar region highlighted

Anand town and surroundings

Robin Verstappen, 2015
Introduction

The idea that India is a land of Hindus is so prominent and internationally successful that, over the past few years, I have found myself repeatedly explaining there are also Muslims in India, and further that there are Muslims in India who feel a strong sense of local ancestry and regional belonging. I have had to explain this not only to Dutch students enrolled on bachelor’s programmes at the University of Amsterdam but also to residents of the region where I based my PhD research, central Gujarat in India. It is often forgotten that India has the second largest Muslim population in the world (after Indonesia) and that it contains 11% of the world’s Muslim population.1 Muslims are, in fact, an important part of the social fabric of cities, towns and villages in many parts of India, and so they are in central Gujarat. And, when Indian Muslims migrate abroad and become ‘overseas Indians’, their relationship to India remains of importance and some keep investing emotionally and financially in their home region. This is precisely what has happened to a group of Gujarati Muslims, Charotar Sunni Vohras, whose regional and transnational attachments are the subject of this thesis. They originate from a small region called Charotar in Gujarat, a region characterised by fast spatial transformations that are, in part, the consequence of an episode of violence against Muslims in 2002. In the aftermath of this violence, there was substantial migration of Muslims within the region, with those living in Hindu-majority villages moving to a ‘Muslim area’ in a town called Anand, seeking safety in numbers. The thesis describes how these developments are experienced and how notions of locality, regional belonging and community are reconfigured in this context.

Looking at these developments and reconfigurations from different angles is central to this study. As participants in the ‘Muslim area’ include both residents of the town and Muslims from the region living abroad, to do justice to the translocal aspects of life in the neighbourhood, the research for this thesis took a multi-sited approach. The fieldwork concentrated on two key perspectives: the perspective of residents of Anand town, who stay in touch with villages in the wider region despite shifting residence to the town, and the perspective of transnational migrants in the UK, who are in touch with the ‘homeland’ and with Anand town through holiday visits, investments, and donations. The result is a multi-sited community study of Charotar Sunni Vohras, the most prominent community among Muslims in the town.

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Muslims in India have been marginalised in various ways, and this has increased in recent decades. They are excluded from power within the state apparatus, are underrepresented in the judiciary, the administration and the police (Gayer and Jaffrelot 2012, 4-6), are marginalised within the formal sector of employment, and are only minimally present among the salary earners of the public sector (Gayer and Jaffrelot 2012, 314). Moreover, Muslims in India are experiencing increasing impoverishment and have the lowest literacy rate among all Indians (Gayer and Jaffrelot 2012, 2-4). In some parts of India, Muslims have been the victims of violent attacks on their lives and property, resulting in massive displacements as they flee their homes and move into Muslim-majority neighbourhoods, described as ‘ghettos’ or ‘enclaves’ in the literature (Gayer and Jaffrelot 2012; see also Gupta 2015; Jasani 2008; Mahadevia 2007; Rajagopal 2010; Sattar 2012). One wave of violence took place in Gujarat in 2002, India’s greatest human rights crisis in a decade, during which mobs of men travelled around the state, killing and raping, looting and burning, while police and politicians waited and watched or even encouraged people to ‘vent their anger’. Muslims were the main targets of this violence. These developments have taken place in the context of an increasing popularity and power of Hindu nationalist politics, which defines Muslims as non-Indian, not belonging in India (Guha 2008 [2007], 633–659).

Previous studies of Muslims in Gujarat and elsewhere in India have described various ways in which they manoeuvre self-identification and assert themselves as human beings on their own terms. Though they have been marginalised and confronted with an ascribed social identity as ‘the other’ (Ghassem-Fachandi 2010, Simpson 2006b), there are still ways in which Muslims can maintain a sense of self-worth and affirm social status: by defining themselves as educated people, highlighting achieved status over ascribed status (Jeffrey, Jeffery, and Jeffery 2004a); by cultivating membership of a ‘trading’ community shared with local Hindus (Heitmeyer 2009b); by claiming to be a separate community different from other Muslims (Jaffrelot and Thomas 2012, 59–66); or through status competition between different Muslim groups to (re)establish local hierarchy (Simpson 2006a, 87–109). Anthropologists have explored how ideas and practices are employed within these processes, tracing dynamism over time in specific local contexts. One important avenue of (re)formulating identities among Muslims has been the cultivation of modern religious identities through

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2 In comparison, lower Hindu castes are catching up in terms of social-economic position and education (Basant and Sharif 2010, 239; in Gayer and Jaffrelot 2012, 3).

Islamic reform (Osella and Osella 2008a; Osella and Osella 2008b; Osella and
Osella 2011; Simpson 2008).

This study acknowledges the richness of these earlier studies and contributes by
describing how regional and transnational attachments are implicated in processes
of community making. While place-based identities always deserve attention
alongside religious, caste and class identities, they are particularly important in
the specific case of the community studied in this thesis, Charotar Sunni Vohras,
whose regional orientations and narratives represent a challenge to the now
dominant idea of the Muslim as an outsider. Through ethnographic explorations
among people who consider themselves Vohras, this thesis will look at how this
self-affirmation as a regional community is sustained in central Gujarat and
among Vohras living abroad while maintaining transnational ties to Gujarat.

On the one hand, the thesis can be read as a ‘community study’ in the classic
anthropological sense, in that it looks at community as ‘an empirical phenomenon’
(Cohen 2000 [1985], 38) and seeks an understanding of this phenomenon by trying
to capture people’s experiences and the meanings they attach to community (Cohen
2000 [1985], 38). On the other hand, it is different from the classic community
studies in that it explores the complex processes of community making from
different spatial angles, thus taking a multi-sited and multi-scalar approach. Here
the ‘community’ is conceived of as geographically dispersed across different
villages and towns and across different countries. Being localised in a town, with
research visits to nearby villages and abroad (mostly in the UK with some additional
research in the USA), the thesis shows how ideas and experiences of belonging take
shape differently in each context and among different individuals.

Through a highly specific community study, this thesis contributes to three
specific discussions in the social sciences, about the region, transnationalism, and
‘ghettoisation’, and thereby to a wider debate in the social sciences about how
people (re)construct a sense of place and community in an increasingly
interconnected world. The Vohra community provides an interesting case study in
this discussion, because Vohras have travelled the world and are traveling more
today, while maintaining a sense of being a specific community derived from a
small region in India. Though questions on ‘diaspora’ and ‘transnational
community’ have been taken up prominently in studies of transnational migration
(Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004; Glick Schiller and Fouron 2001; Sökefeld 2006;
Brubaker 2005; Baumann 2000), we still understand very little about how spatial
attachments and feelings of regional belonging can take shape in contexts of
mobility and dispersal. Why and how do people cultivate ideas of and emotions
towards a region/homeland? How do experiences of travel and migration affect
this process? How can a regional community be maintained in the face of experiences of exclusion and memories of violence?

In order to answer these questions, it is useful to consider the community of Charotar Sunni Vohras, which derives its name from a region in central Gujarat known as ‘Charotar’ and which has historically been a prominent community in Charotar. Vohras have, like many other communities in India, preferred marriage within the community or within smaller sub-groups of the community (e.g. Chaud, Arsad, Dewataja or Makeriya). By doing so, they have maintained a distinct identity as a specific community among other Muslims and Hindus in Gujarat. In recent decades, their social position has been affected by the political, social and economic marginalisation of Muslims in India. In the violence in Gujarat in 2002, Vohras suffered particularly in the villages and towns where they were a minority and, partly in response to this, many have moved to Anand. Despite this, Vohras in Anand still narrate their community history as a regional one and continue to maintain social and economic ties with the wider region beyond the town. Today, they describe Anand as the ‘Vohra head quarters’, as the regional ‘centre of the Vohra community’, or even jokingly as ‘the Makka of Vohras’. This raises further questions. How, living in this urban context, do they maintain and cultivate a sense of regional belonging? How are Vohras making this safety zone into a key town within a web of rural-urban linkages?

As part of their regional history, Vohras have participated in the centuries-long history of international migration from central Gujarat, to East Africa in the colonial period, to Karachi (Pakistan) during the Partition of British India into India and Pakistan in 1947, to Gulf destinations since the oil boom in the 1970s, and later to the UK, USA, and Australia. Vohras settled in the UK and USA (re)construct a sense of community as Indians, as British/American citizens and as Muslims, but also retain a sense of being a community with a specific regional background, for example by establishing ‘Vohra’ community associations in the new context, by marrying within the community, or by maintaining social and economic ties with central Gujarat, which they visit for holidays, to meet family, to find a spouse, to invest in real estate, and/or to support charitable projects. These regional attachments at home and abroad are noteworthy because of the prevalent marginalisation of Muslims in Gujarat: living in a society dominated by public debates about Muslim terrorism and Islamophobia, these transnationals are confidently voicing the idea that their host society is more welcoming of religious minorities than Gujarat has been.

4 The joke was made by a man when explaining the history of the Vohra community to me during a community event in Anand (see Chapter 3).
For Vohras living abroad and maintaining transnational connections to Gujarat, Anand town has become an important locus of attention. Despite originating from different villages and towns in the region, their ties to the home region have increasingly come to be centred in Anand and Vohras living abroad have become an unmistakable part of the social and economic life of the Muslim middle class in the town. Even some of the elderly and settled migrants, who left at a time when Anand was still an insignificant town, now participate in the town. So, why and how do Vohra migrants cultivate ties to this town, as a new locus of attention, within a region where they are marginalised?

These empirical considerations have led to a multi-sited research project on Charotar Sunni Vohras and their sense of region and community within the context of political, social and economic developments in central Gujarat that affect them. The following research questions are central to the thesis:

*How do people who consider themselves Charotar Sunni Vohras, in central Gujarat and in the UK, maintain a sense of belonging to the Charotar region despite experiences of exclusion and memories of violence and displacement?*

*More specifically, how do they relate to Anand town as an emerging centre of the Vohra community, both in the region and in transnational social networks?*

By answering these empirical questions, this thesis contributes both to current discussions about the position of Muslims in India and to discussions in anthropology about place and region, local and transnational community making, and migration and development. The region, which has emerged from the fieldwork as important, is the central notion in the thesis. I argue that mobility is constitutive of the regional experience, and approach the interface between mobility and the region from a localised and from a transnational perspective.

In terms of theory, this study integrates three distinct discussions: first, the anthropology of place and region, which provides clues to understand the mobile and regional experiences of local residents; second, scholarship of transnational migration, in which the notion of the ‘homeland’ is understood in relation to the notion of ‘diaspora’; and a third discussion, localised in India, about marginalisation and ‘ghettoisation’ of Muslims in Indian cities. The thesis can be seen as an invitation to other scholars of Muslims in Indian cities and in urban studies in general to explore how neighbourhoods and their wider surroundings and networks are important in the lives of urban residents through a multi-sited and
multi-scalar approach. The thesis illustrates this approach by including regional and transnational networks within an ethnographic research project grounded in a neighbourhood as a micro-locality of everyday life.

Chapter Outline:
This thesis is a multi-sited community study, and the reader will visit many places as we follow the people around. Using the notion of ‘scale switching’ (Hastrup 2013) as a classifying device to put different spatial perspectives to work in a study of a community and as a rhetorical device to guide the reader through the chapters, the thesis starts with a town, zooms out to a region, then zooms further out to the transnational realm, and finally revisits the town to see it in all its regional and global connectedness. At each of these scales of analysis, a ‘Vohra community’ takes shape. First, then, the thesis contextualises the Vohra community in Anand town. Next, it describes how the urban Vohras continue to maintain ties to the wider region, and depicts their urban life in relation to the predominantly agricultural area of central Gujarat. After that, we move to the UK, to look at the community from the viewpoint of transnational migrants residing in the UK. How do they remake the ‘Vohra community’, how do they view the ‘homeland’ from a distance, and how has Anand town become an important centre of attention within it? Their experiences reflect the ‘global’ character of Anand town, a hub of regional and transnational mobility and a key node of regional and transnational community making.

Part I. Introduction
In Chapter 1 (the analytical framework), the question of how community identity is constructed among Charotar Sunni Vohras is positioned within debates on the ‘region’, the ‘homeland’ and ‘the town’ within anthropology and the social sciences. Regions can be thought of as ‘imagined’ and as ‘practiced’ and I use both perspectives in the analysis. While the ‘homeland’, a guiding notion among scholars of transnational migration, has so far been studied mainly as an imagined space (‘myths of the homeland’), there are good reasons for exploring the lived experience of the homeland too. The chapter discusses these different approaches and formulates a multi-scalar framework for the study of a regional community from a local and a transnational perspective. I argue that mobility is constitutive of the regional experience and understand the interface between mobility and the region through the notion of ‘pathways’. An empirical focus on the town as a centre of regional and transnational mobility helps bring these perspectives together.
In Chapter 2 (on multi-sited and multi-scalar research), I outline the research methods of this study. My approach has been to understand people from a geographically grounded perspective (a neighbourhood in Anand town), while also moving beyond the particular geography of the single field site to incorporate the circulation of people in different sites of activity. My research took place at multiple ‘scales’ (local, regional, transnational) and in multiple places (in central Gujarat and in the UK, with some additional research elsewhere). The questions addressed here are: what were the challenges of this multi-sited and multi-scalar approach, and how did I resolve them?

Part II. A local community

Chapter 3 (on the town) familiarises the reader with the main fieldwork setting, Anand town, and with the Vohra community as a prominent group among local Muslims. Muslims have moved to Anand for two reasons: to seek safety from Hindu-Muslim tension after the 2002 violence and to achieve upward mobility through rural-urban migration. Within Anand, a ‘Muslim area’ has emerged, where residents feel comfortable, and where middle class residents affirm social status through education and religious reform. Here Vohras maintain a distinct community identity through endogamous marriage practices. The chapter shows that the processes of migration, segregation and ‘ghettoisation’, so far observed mainly in metropolitan and large Indian cities, have also taken place in a small town in a rural area.

Chapter 4 (on the region) explores the construction of a regional identity among Vohras of Anand town. Despite their urban residency, ties to the wider rural area are still an important aspect of how Vohras affirm community identity: as a regional community. How do narratives, village-based marriage circles, and everyday experiences of travel generate experiences of regional belonging? This chapter presents a view of a ‘Muslim area’ in a regional town in which rural-urban linkages are a crucial aspect of everyday life, thus asking if scholarship of ‘ghettoisation’ has perhaps overemphasised the isolation of Muslims in Indian cities.

Part III. A transnational community

Chapter 5 (on the homeland, from an overseas perspective) focuses on Vohras who have migrated away from the region. After describing the migration trajectories, I zoom in on the UK as an important site of Vohra settlement, with some comparisons to Vohras in the USA. I describe the position of migrants in the
UK and show how they have reconfigured themselves as a ‘Vohra community’, through kinship, through a formal association, and through a notion of a shared homeland. While Vohras feel that their position in the (political) homeland of India/Gujarat is ideologically problematic in the present imagination of Hindu nationalism, they maintain affinitive ties with the home region of Charotar/central Gujarat. It is not so much an abstract ‘myth of the homeland’ but rather the more practical social ties of marriage and kinship that create a homeland, or homelands.

Chapter 6 (on transnational place-making) brings all these different threads together. It ‘emplaces’ the homeland by describing how Vohras living abroad participate in the social and economic life in the villages and towns in region, and how migrants and locals collaborate as ‘agents of development’ in central Gujarat. This process is clearly visible in Anand town. Migrant ties to the home region have increasingly come to be centred in it after the town has become an important regional centre and meeting point after 2002, even for those for whom it is not their town of origin. How is this development perceived and evaluated?

In the conclusion, I show how the thesis contributes to finding a ‘way out of the ghetto’ in studies of Muslims in Indian cities (Gupta 2015) through a multi-scalar perspective. First, it does this by drawing attention to the enduring emplacement of Muslims in a rural region despite migration and residential segregation, breaking with the view of Muslims as isolated and immobile through the regional ‘scale’ of the study. Second, through incorporating transnational migrants and local residents within the same case study, the thesis adds a transnational scale and simultaneously contributes to the ‘placial turn’ (Gielis 2009) in studies of transnational migration. This it does through localised field research that implicates the neighbourhood and the pathways that connect the neighbourhood to what lies beyond. Such a multi-sited and multi-scalar perspective is likely to be increasingly relevant in studies of social life in ‘global towns’ in migrant-sending regions in South Asia and beyond.
This chapter provides an analytical framework for the study of Charotar Sunni Vohras as a regional community. There are, broadly, two bodies of literature that have provided starting points for the analysis. First, there are studies on the ‘region’, which uncover how people engage with their direct surroundings and which provide tools to implicate spatial experiences in a community study. Second, there are studies that uncover how people look at their ‘homeland’ from afar, conducted mainly among transnational migrants in their societies of arrival. By analysing a regional community from both a local and a transnational perspective, this thesis develops a more dynamic anthropology of the region, incorporating different ‘scales’. Since notions of space are, to a large extent, shaped by experiences of travel and mobility, the thesis looks at how different forms of mobility are implicated in the process of regional community formation. As an empirical focus on the town as a centre of regional and transnational mobility has been helpful, I also introduce the reader to discussions on the ‘town’ in the context of South Asia.1

1 In this chapter, to draw an analytical framework for the thesis, I confine the literature review to the notions of the region, the homeland and the town. More localised literature on the position of Muslims in Indian cities is discussed in Chapter 3 and 4, while studies on diaspora, transnational migration and development introduced in this chapter are discussed further in Chapter 5 and 6.
While the interest in the region and regional identities is not new in the social sciences, for some time the spatial angle was lost in discussions about transnationalism and globalisation. Today's world has been described as characterised by an intensification of global interconnectedness, where people are cast into increasing and immediate contact with each other (Inda and Rosaldo 2008, 2; see also Cochrane and Pain 2004; Guillén 2001). Scholars have argued that the growing possibilities for human mobility, interaction and communication, technological developments and improving wealth have caused social relations to become disembedded from places (Lupi 2008, 30). The resulting reordering of time and space has been described as time-space compression (Harvey 1999; Inda and Rosaldo 2008, 6), a shrinking of the globe in which the organisation of human activity is less constrained by time and distance, or as time-space distantiation (Giddens 1995 [1981]; Inda and Rosaldo 2008, 8), a rearrangement of social relations through a disembedding of relations from localities.

These ideas have been criticised as it became apparent that revolutions in transport and communication did not erode regional and national identities. In fact, instead many revivals of such identities have been observed, leading to awareness that technology, as much as enabling moving away from places, enables the nurturing of regional and national attachments across distance (Anderson 1998, 58-76). It is now argued that mobilisation runs parallel to significant and complex forms of territorial anchoredness (Christensen 2012, 894; see also Bönisch-Brednich and Trundle 2012; Sheppard 2002). It is also said that the accelerated change and mobility that characterises today's world, 'epochal in scale and seriously disorienting' have made issues of place and place-making all the more urgent (Friedmann 2007, 260). Anthropologists have been particularly vocal in arguing that processes that transcend territorial boundaries still have territorial significance. From this perspective, deterritorialisation (Appadurai 1996, 27–47), the lifting of cultural and social processes from spatial locations, is always linked to processes of relocation (Inda & Rosaldo 2008, 12). Anthropologist Peter Geschiere (2009), for example, has explored how claims of autochthony, which seek to establish a primordial right to belong, have come to the fore in different parts of the world, resulting in fierce political struggles over inclusion and exclusion as a ‘flip side’ of globalisation.

The question of how processes of deterritorialisation and relocation are changing social relations has been approached from various angles. Three concepts have

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2 There have been many discussions about whether 'globalisation' is happening, and if so what it entails and how to evaluate it. My position confirms to the view described by Cochrane and Pain (2004, 23) as 'transformationalist': the consequences of contemporary global interactions are complex, diverse, and unpredictable, and this calls for serious study.
been useful in analysing the case study of Charotar Sunni Vohras: ‘transnationalism’, ‘place’, and ‘scale’. The transnational perspective was introduced by Glick Schiller, Basch and Blanc-Szanton (1992) and further developed by different anthropologists and sociologists (Kivisto 2001; Levitt 2001; Portes 2001; Vertovec 1999), who took up the intellectual challenge to look at the world through a ‘transnational optic’ (Levitt and Khagram 2007) and to move beyond ‘methodological nationalism’ (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002). This approach has been taken up in different fields of study, particularly in the study of migration to foreground the processes by which migrants ‘forge and sustain simultaneous multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement’ (Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton 1995, 48). Much of the discussion has focused on how transnational migrants establish themselves as individuals and communities in their destination countries while also maintaining relations with their nation of origin, the so-called ‘homeland’.

While the introduction of the transnationalism framework has resulted in rich scholarship on the formation of spatially stretched-out social relations and has become a dominant perspective in the social sciences today, there has been mounting awareness of its limitations. One problem is that it tends to privilege the perspectives of a particular kind of flows and networks, those crossing international borders, at the expense of more localised flows and networks, such as rural-urban migration (King and Skeldon 2010, 1620–1622; see also Gidwani and Sivaramakrishnan 2003; Kalir 2013; Olwig 2003; Skeldon 2006). Another critique is that the analysis too often only focuses on the perspectives of transnational migrants, at the expense of more sedentary actors in the region of origin, who also take part in transnational social fields (Faist 2008, 14–15). This thesis takes these criticisms into account by paying equal attention to transnational and more localised processes. At the same time, the thesis draws on insights from transnational studies and is part of the effort to move beyond the ‘nation-state container model of society’ in the social sciences (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004, 1006) and to understand how social processes are stretched across different spaces.

This brings me to the second concept that has guided efforts to understand spatial attachments in a world of accelerated change and mobility: ‘place’. This approach has been developed among anthropologists, who have traditionally based their research in micro-localities but who have increasingly come to study these places more as objects of study in and of themselves, and less as merely the backdrop for social life (Allerton 2013; Feld and Basso 1996; Hirsch and O’Hanlon 1995; Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003; Rodman 2003 [1992]; Thornton 1995). ‘Place’ can be understood as the way in which people engage with or appropriate
an otherwise abstract external ‘space’ (Gray 2003 [1999]; Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003; see also de Certeau 1984). Places are brought into existence when people build and shape their environment. Places are appropriated, experienced, and given meaning by people as they travel and perceive the landscape around them in certain ways. A criticism of the focus of anthropologists on micro-localities has been their overemphasis on agency of the local actors, a problem that may arise when localised systems of meaning are treated as autonomous, in isolation, without taking into account the wider political and economic structures and processes that influence them (Wolf 1997 [1982], 13–19). Anthropologists need to recognise that places are thoroughly penetrated by social influences quite distant from them (Rodman 2003 [1992], 211), and need to position their place-based research in wider contexts of circulation and exchange (Gupta and Ferguson 1997, 3). This has also been a concern for this research project.

Third, the notion of ‘scale’ has been widely discussed, first in geography (Allen and Cochrane 2007; Jessop, Brenner and Jones. 2008) and later also in anthropology. The anthropology of globalisation and transnationalism initially focused almost entirely on the relation between the ‘local’ and the ‘global’ (Kearney 1995), or the ‘glocal’ (Eriksen 2001 [1995], 294–311), studying local appropriations of global processes, or ‘large issues’ in ‘small places’ (Eriksen 2001 [1995]). The local-global dichotomy was, however, still a ‘rudimentary’ analytical tool to think about data in a global framework (Tsing 2005, 58) and the notion of scale has been a valuable addition to escape the oversimplified dichotomy of a homogenous global and a heterogeneous local and to arrive at more dynamic analysis. This thesis combines the anthropology of place and of transnational networks through a multi-layered spatial approach, which is why I call it a ‘multi-scalar ethnography’. I have used the idea of scale as an analytical and methodological tool in the research and as a rhetorical device for the organisation of the thesis in chapters.

Two types of scales are distinguished: (1) taxonomical scales, a hierarchy of spatial layers central to bureaucracy of the nation-state, e.g. the national versus provincial state; and (2) emergent scales, which are actor-centric or activity-specific, do not have definite shapes and are hard to map but are made into reality (Xiang 2013, 284–285). In anthropological research, both types of scales can be productive research tools. My own study was approached through three scales of attention: the local, the regional and the transnational. I have tried, as far as

3 Though I limit this overview to the discussions within anthropology, to which I aim to contribute to through this thesis, I am aware that discussions on scale and location among geographers have informed discussions among anthropologists and that, in geography, the discussion has taken different turns, including proposals for eliminating scale as a concept altogether (Marston, Jones, and Woodward 2005) and efforts to address the limitations of too sharp a scalar turn (Jessop, Brenner and Jones 2008, 389). This thesis broadly follows the latter’s suggestion to seek a multidimensional account of sociospatial relations, in which scale is important but is not the only spatial lexicon.
possible, to construct these scales as emerging through fieldwork as spatial frames through which people understood the Vohra community. Over time, I came to understand that the region is a spatial zone of importance for Charotar Sunni Vohras and that the self-narrated Vohra community history is a story of regional connectedness. This sense of being a regionally specific community was found not only among Vohras living in the region itself but also among Vohras in the UK, although in different ways. Following up on the ‘topographical awareness’ (Hastrup 2013, 156) of people I met in the field, I selected the ‘region’ as a key emergent scale, with the town of Anand figuring as a key node of social relations in the region.

In this chapter, therefore, I describe discussions on the region as they have taken place in the social sciences, in order to provide an analytical framework for the study of Charotar Sunni Vohras. First, I introduce discussions on the ‘region’, which have taken place mainly from the localised perspective of the residents of an area. Second, I delve into studies of transnational migrants, whose regional attachments have been discussed so far mainly through the notion of a ‘homeland’. How is a homeland different from a region? Do the lenses of the region and the homeland offer different perspectives on the process of community making? Is it possible to use both lenses and see more? A specific but relevant body of literature on the role of towns in regional economies in South Asia, which I explore at the end of the chapter, provides some tools to develop a dynamic anthropology of the region.

The *region* in anthropology

So what is a region? And how can we understand regional identity? Older discussions on ‘the region’ provide useful clues – earlier social scientists realised ‘the importance of the phenomena which belonged neither to the abstract “level” of the nation, nor to the slightly more concrete and visible level of village’ (van den Muijzenberg, Streefland, and Wolters 1982, 1). A region sometimes overlaps with a nation-state, but is distinct from it if there is no attempt to frame it as a sovereign domain. A region is also distinct from a place, because a region is imagined to include localities outside and inside people’s personal experience. A region is imagined to consist of various places, as if they are somehow connected to each other, thereby forming an entity.

Regions have been thought of as ‘collective mental maps’, as geographical areas with social meanings that, depending on historical circumstances, differ between social groups and from issue to issue (van Schendel 1982). There are official regions,
imagined by administrators, marked on maps, and defined by clearly demarcated geographical boundaries, but here I am talking about other regions, those imagined by common people and which may be unknown to outsiders (van Schendel 1982, 41). To understand how regions or ‘micro-regions’ are locally recognised requires a ‘bottom up’ approach that unravels how the people under study have come to think of seemingly unconnected places as an interconnected system. Research on regional identities has shown that people construct ‘region’ in various ways – spatial, linguistic, economic, cultural, and/or historical (Cohn 1987), and that regional identities can become politicised and contested (Koskimaki and Upadhya 2013).

Regions do not always have clearly demarcated outside borders, but may be imagined as existing around ‘centres’ or market places (Bertocci 1975; Heesterman 1982; Skinner 1964; van Schendel 1982), specific ecological zones (Gommans 1998), or oceans (Simpson and Kresse 2007). They may be imagined differently by different individuals, who encounter the same places but experience them in different ways depending on their form of engagement. For instance, a shepherd going around the hill with his sheep every day develops a concept of the entire hillside based on the sub-sections his sheep particularly like (Gray 2003), while a peasant walking to the market towns in the vicinity of his village develops a concept of an ‘intermarket span’ (Skinner 1964; 1965a; 1965b; in van Schendel 1982), with the home village at its centre and all market places reachable on foot within the time span of one hour at the corners. These ‘micro-regions’ should not be seen as isolated but as connected to other regions that lay beyond.

An understanding of regions as ‘mental maps’ highlights cognitive processes of regional formation that are partly accessible to the researcher through talking to people. However, as these examples show, regions come into being not only through narrative, but also by people’s personal experiences and practices (Rodman 2003; Gray 2003). Phenomenological approaches, highlighting people’s intimate knowledge of their direct surroundings and attempting to describe ‘local theories of dwelling’ (Feld and Basso 1996), have paid specific attention to experiences and embodied engagements with places, in addition to narrations of places (Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003). Tim Ingold, building on Casey (1996, 24), describes the region as a network of interplace movements, a network of ‘coming and going’ (Ingold 2005 [2000], 235) emerging alongside ‘paths of observation’ (Ingold 2005 [2000], 229). This understanding of the region draws attention to the practical engagements of people with their immediate surroundings and to the ‘social labour involved in establishing equivalences and connections across places’

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4 To describe locally defined regions and distinguish them from officially defined ones, van Schendel (1982) uses the term ‘microregions’, which he borrowed from Bertocci (1975, 357), who, in turn, took inspiration from discussions among Bengal scholars. According to Bertocci, the term was first used in an unpublished paper by Ralph W. Nicholas.
Regions are forged ‘in the passage from place to place, and in histories of movement and changing horizons along the way’ (Ingold 2005 [2000], 227).

In this thesis I describe both the ‘imagined’ and the ‘practiced’ region. One of the concepts that I find useful with regard to the practiced region is the concept of place-making, which has been employed mainly in studies of urban neighbourhoods (e.g. Friedmann 2007, 259). At the neighbourhood level, ‘place-making practices’ may include the arrangement of a social event or the cleaning of the street. By doing so, people transform a geographic ‘space’ into a practiced ‘place’ (Gray 2003, 224). Through ethnographic fieldwork among Italians in Toronto, Harney (2006) describes place-making as a form of claiming and colonising space in an urban neighbourhood. Place-making includes the most ordinary, repetitive acts and routinised activities such as the ritual of taking an evening walk, or the more collective periodic colonising of public space such as the Good Friday Procession of Italians in Toronto (Harney 2006, 38).

Walking is mentioned frequently in the literature as a way through which people make place: this is relevant for urban neighbourhoods as well as for the shepherd walking the hillside and the peasant walking from the village to the market town, as mentioned above (Gray 2003, 231–233; van Schendel 1982, see also Pink 2008). People’s engagements with places, it has been argued, can be studied by moving along with them (Gray 2003, 227; Moles 2008; Pink 2008; see also de Certeau 1984): following people around during their everyday practices enables the researcher to understand more of their lived experience. Studying such mobile practices in combination with people’s narratives of place helps to understand ‘the critical ways in which places that may be separately named and recalled are connected to one another and form a unified whole’ (Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003, 18).

A classic approach to this is the notion of ‘pilgrimage’, used by Anderson (2006 [1983]), who builds on Turner (1967; 1974), to analyse how administrators in the Spanish colonies could start imagining a geographically bounded community (the nation). Anderson argues it was through being stationed in various posts within an administrative domain that the administrators of American colonies could slowly start conceptualising a ‘nation’ and started thinking of themselves as a national community. In a somewhat different way, the ‘pilgrimages’ of education, from the village to the provincial town and then into the capital, were a way for young intellectuals in the Netherlands Indies to start imagining the (territory of) the nation.6

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5 The concept of place-making was introduced by architects and psychologists in the 1970s and found its way into the social sciences in the 1990s, giving rise to discussions about the way in which spaces acquire meaning in people’s everyday life (for an overview of these discussions, see Lupi 2008).

6 For a further discussion and critique, see van der Veer (1994, 106-137).
I incorporate the idea that travel generates spatial experiences and identities but broaden the focus on walking. Walking with research participants helped understand the experiences of South Asian peasants thirty years ago and is still useful today to understand experiences of living in the micro-locality of an urban neighbourhood. However, when living with residents of central Gujarat, it was through motorised travel that I slowly gained an understanding of informants’ sense of region. An indispensable aspect of life in central Gujarat is travel: by car, by train, on motorbike, or in shared auto-rickshaws that ‘shuttle’ between villages and towns. As I show further on, these everyday practices of mobility are producing a spatial experience of the ‘Charotar’ region among Charotar Sunni Vohras. Thus, this study looks at the region from the bottom up, using narratives, experiences and mobile practices as access points to understand how people construct themselves as a regional community.

In this thesis, I thus understand the region as imagined (Anderson 1991), and as practiced, in line with phenomenological approaches in anthropology (Desjarlais and Throop 2011, 88), which have considered lived experience and point at the body as a living entity through which people experience the world. In addition to the explicit rhetoric of the local, as found in representations and narrative, Jain (2010) speculated on ‘another sense of the local’ that informs processes of cultural identity-formation without being explicitly invoked.

this sense of locality is marked by the relative absence of articulateness or self-reflexivity: it is grounded in performative practices and interpersonal linkages that are not always relayed back via overarching symbols of community. Indeed, it is precisely the relative absence of self-recognition or self-acknowledgement that makes this interpersonal habitus hard to reify, because it is irreducibly local, nonexchangeable with other forms of identity. But also, by the same token, this enacted or performed rather than ‘imagined’ (Anderson ...) community does not map onto explicitly political formations such as nation or civil society (Jain 2010, 35-36).

Like Jain, I pay attention to the performative and practical aspects of making place and region, as well as to processes of imagining and verbalising the region. This, as I have shown, is not a new approach. Like the earlier scholars, I incorporate the practices of travel through which the region/homeland is made and experienced.8

7 The name ‘Charotar’, an informal name used to identify to the region under study, is clarified in Chapter 4 of the thesis.
8 Related to the discussions on the ‘region’ are discussions regarding the ‘area’ of area studies (van Schendel 2002) and the ‘territory’ of states (Ludden 2003, see also Jessop, Brenner and Jones 2008). Due to limitations of space, I have left these notions aside in this literature review. In the empirical chapters, I address territory when local power dynamics or state borders impose constraints on the situations described.
Before we continue, it is useful to position this study within the specific literature on the region of Gujarat, where research has been based. Though Gujarat is now perceived as if it has always been around, the current state of Gujarat only came into existence in 1960 after a political campaign to divide Bombay State in Gujarat and Maharashtra on linguistic grounds (Simpson 2010a, 1–2). The ‘idea of Gujarat’ has been particularly popular in the area under study, central Gujarat, most notably among the agricultural caste of Patidars who have been powerful in Anand town and the surrounding countryside (Tambs-Lyche 2010, 108). Their home region became the ‘centre’ of Gujarat when the Patidar power base was extended more widely after Independence in various ways, for example, through land reforms in the 1950s that benefitted Patidars in the regions of Saurashtra and Kutch (Tambs-Lyche 2010; Sud 2010; in Simpson 2010, 12–14). Having gained the upper hand both economically and politically at the time of the formation of Gujarat, the Patidars of central Gujarat show considerable pride in Gujarat and in being Gujarati.9

The ‘idea of Gujarat’ has been received with less enthusiasm in areas with less political influence and with very different administrative and cultural histories. This has been the case for some residents of the now ‘peripheral’ coastal regions of Saurashtra and Kutch, where formerly dominant groups lost influence with the advance of the ‘centre’ over local affairs. In Kutch, local historians narrate regional histories of kingdoms and goddesses linked specifically to the land and territories of Kutch (Simpson 2010b, 76–77), thus different from the rest of Gujarat, resisting the idea that their region is Gujarati or even a part of Gujarat (Simpson 2010a, 12). The existence of such regional histories raises the question what alternative regional stories can be found within central Gujarat, for example, among non-Patidar groups that constitute an internal periphery within the centre.

An old map of social groups in Gujarat mentions Sunni Bohras (Vohras) along with Patidars and Rajputs, in the area surrounding the Narmada river (1947, in Kapadia and Simpson 2010, 29).10 Since 1947, Patidars have gained in influence, Rajputs have lost power and Vohras have become almost invisible as a social group, increasingly subsumed into the larger category of ‘Muslims’. Today, Muslims are easily excluded from the idea of Gujarat: they are not seen as central to the ‘imagined community’ of Gujarat. The most frightening aspect of the violence in Gujarat during 2002, Tambs-Lyche argues, is that the ‘silent majority’ tolerated and, to some extent, even encouraged the acts of violence against Muslims (Tambs-
Lyche 2010, 116). All of this raises the question of how Vohras themselves look at the region and their role in it; how they maintain and cultivate a sense of regional belonging.

The *homeland* in diaspora studies

Vohras have moved within the Charotar region, from village to village and from village to town, and beyond the region, to Mumbai, to Karachi, to various Gulf destinations, to East Africa, the UK, USA and Australia. They have also moved in between some of these places, sometimes without touching Gujarat in between. After moving away, many have kept engaging with the region of central Gujarat in various ways. To understand the regional affiliations of such mobile persons, I use insights from studies on migrant transnationalism, specifically engaging with the concept of the ‘homeland’, which has been coined as an important element in processes of identity and community formation within studies of ‘diaspora’ (Axel 2002; Cohen 1996; Falzon 2003; Morawska 2011; Safran 1991).

There are quite different ideas about what a ‘homeland’ is. Since the perspective of the ‘ancestral homeland’ has been the dominant view, I begin by describing it in detail before introducing a contrasting view, following that up with my own take on the discussion. The term ‘ancestral homeland’ (or ‘original homeland’) was introduced in two founding articles of ‘diaspora’ studies (Cohen 1996; Safran 1991). While their definition of a ‘diaspora’ has been criticised for its essentialising portrayal of migrants (Brubaker 2005) and for its understanding of the ‘homeland’ (Clifford 1994), their ideas about ‘homeland’ remain prominent in discussions of processes of community and identity making under conditions of migration.

Safran defined the ‘original homeland’ or ‘ancestral homeland’ as a ‘true, ideal home’ of a diaspora, which was, in turn, defined as an ‘expatriate minority community’ whose members are ‘dispersed from a specific original “centre” to two or more “peripheral”, or foreign, regions’, who ‘retain a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland’. A diaspora was said to relate to this homeland in a way that defines their identity: migrants feel a collective commitment to ‘the maintenance or restoration of their original homeland’ and perceive of the homeland as ‘the place to which they or their descendants should eventually return’ if circumstances allow (Safran 1991, 83-84). In Cohen’s (1996) slightly altered version of the definition the idea of an original homeland is adapted and fits in better with a constructivist framework, putting more emphasis on the subjectivity of the homeland: rather than talking about the existence of an ‘original homeland’
as an empirical fact, he speaks of ‘an idealization of the putative ancestral home’ as a creative act.

Since those initial studies, work on the ‘homeland’ has expanded enormously, often in connection with ‘diaspora’, sometimes with otherwise defined transnational migrant communities. Considerable discussion has been focused on the emotional and political attachments of migrants to an imagined homeland. In line with Cohen, most of these scholars do not necessarily consider the homeland as an empirical location, but as something that is created, through imagination. Thus, rather than revealing something about a space, they investigate people’s ideas about space. This empirical work includes studies on migrants’ long-distance engagement with homeland politics (Anderson 1998; Feyissa 2012; Orjuela 2008; see for an overview Østergaard-Nielsen 2003) and on migrants’ engagement with media from the homeland (Gillespie 1995; Morley 2000). Research specifically on the ‘Indian diaspora’ and the ‘homeland’ has drawn attention to the social labour of (de)constructing Indianness with regard to the immense diversity in migration trajectories, religion, social-economic background, and destination contexts (Biswas 2005; Oonk 2007; see also my own work on Indian cinema and the Indian diaspora, Verstappen 2005; Verstappen and Rutten 2007).

One conclusion that can be drawn from these studies is that although the ‘homeland’ tends to be perceived and represented as primordial by the people themselves, transnational affiliations to it are not necessarily a revival or extension of already existing communities (Falzon 2003, 664). A sense of ‘Heimat’ or homeland can arise as a result of moving away (Anderson 1998, 60), or later, decades after the moment of migration, in response to specific events and new developments (Sökefeld 2006) like the activities of political parties and institutions in the home nation, who suddenly ‘discover’ the lost sons and daughters of the soil and make an effort to reconnect (some of them) to the nation (Bal and Sinha-Kerkhoff 2005; Glick Schiller and Fouron 2001; Orjuela 2008; Østergaard-Nielsen 2003; Sinha-Kerkhoff and Bal 2003). While an interest in (re)connecting to the homeland may also be triggered by experiences of discrimination and marginalisation in the host society (Kurien 2001, 278; Safran 1991, 96), signs of connectedness to another nation-state may lead to a questioning of loyalty and (further) hostility towards the migrants in the host society. Facing new constraints and opportunities in the society of arrival and departure, confronted with new political ideologies and discourses, taken-for-granted notions of ‘home’ are reconsidered, and a ‘myth of the homeland’ develops.

Another insight that I draw from these studies is that multiple spatial affiliations interact in complex ways. This brings us back to the discussion on scale, introduced
earlier in this chapter. In some cases, migrants’ regional identifications have been replaced by national ones, for example among Polish migrants in the USA, who arrived with a sense of belonging that ‘extended no further than the okolica, the local countryside’ and who gradually replaced their localised affiliations with a national self-identification as ‘Polish Americans’ because of their exposure to the ‘salad bowl model’ (Morawska 2011, 1033). In other cases, regional affiliations and village/hometown affiliations remain relevant alongside national and religious identities (Upadhya and Rutten 2012). Although the more localised affiliations usually remain invisible in the public sphere of the host society, they can nevertheless form a basis for processes of community mobilisation, for example through small-scale ‘hometown’ or ‘village’ associations (Caglar 2006; Faist 2008; Mazzucato and Kabki 2009; Orozco and Lapointe 2004), or through the emergence of a ‘transnational village’ (Levitt 2001) or a ‘translocal village’ (Velayutham and Wise 2005) as a social field through which norms and values travel back and forth and through which localised gossip is reproduced. The enduring importance of local and regional identities has been highlighted in case studies on Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi migrants in the UK (Ballard 1990; Ballard 2003b; Gardner 2008; Singh 2013; for a critique, see Gardner and Shukur 1994). While this thesis confirms the importance of localised identities, it puts the transnational region, rather than the transnational village, centre stage.

Critics have argued that there has been an overemphasis on the myth of the homeland in studies of transnational migration and diaspora. Clifford (1994, 306) argued that ‘transnational connections linking diasporas need not be articulated primarily through a real or symbolic homeland’. Some have redirected their studies by using other ways of conceptualising a diaspora (Brubaker 2005; Sökefeld 2006), or have delinked diaspora spaces from the original homeland (Falzon 2003), others have tried to reformulate the concept of the ‘homeland’ by further delinking it from place. One example of the latter approach is a case study by Axel (2002), who criticises studies of the ‘homeland’ for supporting an ‘essentialisation of origin and a fetishization of what is supposed to be found at the origin’ (Axel 2002, 411), instead repositioning the homeland as a ‘temporalizing and affective aspect of subjectification’ and drawing the homeland ‘in relation with other kinds of images and processes’ (Axel 2002, 426). More concretely, in this case, ‘Khalistan, the

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11 Prema Kurien pointed out that associations of Indians that manifest themselves in the public sphere in the USA organise around religion or around an Indian/South Asian identity, while more localised regional affiliations remain invisible in the public sphere. Lecture Civic and Political Activism of Indian American Groups, National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bangalore, January 3, 2014 (see also Kurien 2003).

12 In the realm of border studies, a ‘transnational region’ refers to a region divided by a national boundary. Here, however, I am concerned with the conceptualisation of a region in a context of transnational migration.
homeland, is not necessarily conceptualized as an empirical place of origin that Sikhs wish to return to and reterritorialize’ (Axel 2002, 412) but rather the ‘Khalistani Sikh subject’ seems to be constituted by violence of the Indian state, and by the circulation of pictures of tortured Sikh bodies on the internet and in temples in the UK and USA. This approach thus looks at the homeland as an affective and temporal process rather than a place. While I agree with Axel that the concept of a ‘homeland’ can be useful as a conceptual tool even in the absence of empirical place-based references, in this thesis I describe people that do attach value to place.

What both approaches to the homeland, the ancestral and the affective, have in common is that they tend to understand the homeland as something that ‘exist within a community wherever it lives’ (Axel 2002, 426, emphasis original). The objects of study are thus the minds and emotions of the migrants. In my opinion, both of these propose ‘placeless’ homelands because both are, to a large extent, dislocated. They tend to exclude from the analysis the actual encounter with the places and people assigned to comprise the homeland. When this happens, the experiential aspects of the actual homeland remain abstract and unexplored. Taylor (2013, 397–398) has critiqued this tendency in studies of diaspora to foreground the societies of arrival of the migrants without taking into account historical and social dynamics in the home region:

If diasporic identities are inherently transnational, we require transnational research to investigate them. However, despite an explosion in the field of transnational studies, much contemporary transnational social science research displays a northern bias (Taylor 2013, 402).

He adds that:

(...) the majority of existing studies of South Asian diasporic identities, despite some notable exceptions (...),13 focus too heavily upon dynamic processes of intra-diasporic identity formation within Western societies, neglecting equally important dynamic processes of identity formation within South Asia, the original source of migration. The influence of South Asia upon diasporic meanings of home is considered highly significant by previous studies. However, this influence is not analysed in detail and is represented as static and unchanging (Taylor 2013, 398, emphasis original).

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13 Here Taylor refers to the work of authors including Gardner (2001 [1995]), Osella and Osella (2000), and Ramji (2006), about which more below.
The ‘placelessness’ of homeland approaches within diaspora studies is surprising because there is considerable evidence that migrants visit their home region, build houses and roads there, send ‘remittances’ and fulfil social obligations. In this thesis, I therefore attempt to ‘emplace’ the homeland by including the face-to-face encounters of migrants with their home region through visiting, collaborating, investing, and donating. These face-to-face interactions have been discussed in literature on ‘migration and development’, a different field less concerned with questions of imagining or belonging and more concerned with the impact of international migration on economic development in migrant-sending regions. I next show how I use insights generated in this field to understand the ‘homeland-as-practiced’.

The homeland in studies of migration and development

Increasing awareness of the volume and significance of household remittances, diaspora philanthropy, and transnational investments in migrant-sending regions in Asia, Africa and Latin America have led to renewed political and academic debates about the impact of international migration on economic development (for overviews, see de Haas 2005; de Haas 2009; de Haas 2010; Faist 2008; Piper 2009; Raghuram 2009). A significant proportion of scholarship in this field has consisted of efforts to measure the economic impact of migration and remittances on developing countries, with some discussions about ‘social remittances’, the transfer of values and ideas across national boundaries (Levitt 1998; Levitt and Lamba-Nieves 2010). This literature on various types of remittances and their impact on economic development provides insights in the role of transnational migrants in migrant-sending countries, although many of these stay at the national level.

Anthropologists have also contributed to the discussion through on-the-ground ethnographies that explore the transfers of remittances and other migrant resources within their socio-cultural context, paying close attention to cultural meanings and to social and political processes implicated in resource transfers (Upadhya and Rutten 2012; see also Ballard 2003a; Dalakoglou 2010; Gardner 2001 [1995]; Osella and Osella 2000; Taylor, Singh, and Booth 2007). Through their ethnographic approach, these anthropologists have also been able to contribute to a better understanding of the old and newly emerging social formations through which resources are channelled across national borders. They have shown how existing forms of organising social life, such as kinship (Ballard 1990; Charsley and Shaw...
and caste/community (Upadhya and Rutten 2012, 19–20; see also Roohi forthcoming) can become important channels of resource transfer. In addition, discussions on transnational migrants as ‘agents of development’ have shown that new types of transnational networks are shaped both ‘from the bottom up’ by migrants and facilitated or constrained ‘from above’ by government policies (Caglar 2006; Faist 2008; Mazzucato and Kabki 2009; Vertovec 2007).

All these discussions are relevant in India, where, in recent decades, the nation has been reconfigured as a transnational nation (Lessinger 1992; Walton-Roberts 2004a; Xavier 2011). India has adopted a range of ‘diaspora policies’ that aspire to demarcate the Indian diaspora as a part of the Indian nation and to incorporate it in economic, cultural and political terms (Xavier 2011, 34), including financial schemes to attract foreign direct investments and remittances (since the 1990s), experiments with a new kind of diaspora ‘citizenship’ (Overseas Citizen of India scheme, since 2003), and the creation of a ‘Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs’ (2004). These policies have emerged in parallel to neoliberal economic policies, in which diasporas and their resources are recognised as a source of foreign direct investments and as an asset to economic development (Xavier 2011, 35). The increasing visibility of migrants in Indian media and society (Allessandrini 2001; Moorti 2001) has resulted in lively discussions about the potential consequences of migrants’ long-distance involvement with India’s development (Hercog and Siegel 2013; Lessinger 1992; Walton-Roberts 2004b, 61–64; Xavier 2011, 43).

Simultaneous with the invitation of overseas Indians to participate in India’s ‘development’, however, anxiety has been increasing about the ‘foreign hand’ in India’s development. NGOs such as Greenpeace, Cordaid, Amnesty International and ActionAid have been accused of “serving as tools for foreign policy interests of western governments” by sponsoring agitations against nuclear and coal-fired power plants across the country. The legal tool used to curtail them is the Foreign Contribution Regulation (FCR) Act, promulgated during the Emergency under Indira Gandhi (1975-77) to secure India’s sovereignty and revised in 2010 to prohibit utilisation of foreign contributions of organisations for ‘any activities detrimental to the national interest’.

16 Organisations ‘having a definite cultural, economic, educational, religious or social programme’ were allowed to accept foreign contributions, although they had to first register with the central government and could be asked to provide additional information if deemed necessary. The Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 1976 (49), 31 March 1976. ICNL, The International Center for Not-to-Profit Law, http://www.icnl.org/research/library/files/India/IndiaForeignContribution.pdf, accessed February 8, 2013.
been used to curb freedom of expression and association and to particularly target progressive NGOs and minority associations. In 2012, 4000 NGOs had their FCR Act registration cancelled, among them many church-backed groups and anti-nuclear protesters. In Gujarat in 2015, five Muslim associations were banned from receiving foreign funds.

All this raises questions about who is invited to participate in India’s development, and whose contributions are seen as threats to the nation. While the introduction of a special citizenship status for ‘overseas Indians’ offers an ‘opening up’ of citizenship beyond state borders, there is a simultaneous “closing of ranks”, with acquisition of citizenship through birth or by registration and with trends that reinforce cultural identity as constitutive of Indian citizenship (Roy 2006, 1421). As BJP (Hindu nationalist) governments have been prominently involved in the development of these policies, the tendency has been to understand the Indian diaspora as a ‘Hindu’ diaspora, extending the exclusion of Muslims from the definition of ‘Indian’ into the ‘Indian diaspora’.

Bal and Sinha-Kerkhoff (2005, 193) argue strongly for (political and academic) inclusion of Muslims in the Indian diaspora, to prevent denying Muslims their history and rendering them academically ‘homeless’. Their findings show that even though they are not usually included in rhetoric of the ‘Indian diaspora’ by the Indian government, Muslims of North-Indian descent in Suriname do see India as their homeland. My findings also show that Muslims of Gujarati descent in the UK and USA feel a connection to their region of origin in Gujarat and send remittances, investments and donations. They can thus be seen as ‘transnational agents of development’ (Faist 2008) even though their politicised position as Muslims constrains their participation in certain ways.

The migrants I introduce occasionally visit the region, receive visitors from the home region in their homes, and stay in contact with acquaintances in the home region over the phone. All these encounters contribute to the (re)conceptualisation

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21 Similarly, van der Veer (1994, 194) argued that anthropological studies of South Asia that neglect Muslims or treat them as an entirely separate culture unwittingly support Hindu nationalism.
of the homeland, and to an awareness of its dynamics. Paying attention to these
dynamics helps to ‘emplace’ the discussions of the ‘homeland’ in diaspora studies,
which are too often based mainly on conversations with migrants in their own
living rooms without following them during their return trips to the ‘homeland’. I
thus follow the example of Ramji, who has illustrated the contradictions between
what Clifford (1994) refers to as the ‘desired’ and ‘lived’ home through the case
study of first-generation British Hindu Gujaratis retiring to India (Ramji 2006).
Although migrants develop fantasies about a nice retired life in their home town
in Gujarat, where fields are lush and green and where the sense of community is
solid and strong (Ramji 2006, 650), when the desired return to the home town is
finally realised, they find that their idealised home town is different from what
they had hoped (Ramji 2006, 655–657). As a result, they start re-evaluating their
‘Britishness’ and ‘Indianness’. A complicated process of conversion takes place
when transnational migrants engage with or move back to their homeland
(Carruthers 2002)\(^{23}\) and Ramji’s work highlights the experiences of migrants in
Gujarat and the resulting complex processes of reaffirming identities. Identities
are negotiated and reformulated as a result of encounters with the actual space of
the homeland and with the people that live there.

I hope to contribute to these explorations into the homeland-as-practiced and,
by looking at Muslims within this framework, I also hope to contribute to the
project of reinserting them in discussions of diaspora, migration and development
in India. By looking at the migrants as ‘agents of development’, the thesis draws
the imagined homeland in relation with the pathways of travel between specific
nodes in a matrix of movement, applying Ingold’s ideas of the region (2005 [2000],
235) on a transnational ‘scale’.

### Mobility and the region/homeland

Comparing the ‘regional’ perspective to the ‘homeland’ perspective described
above, it is evident that experiences of mobility figure in both perspectives as
important aspects of regional identity formation, but in different ways. In studies
of the region, the informants tend to be local people who reside in a region, and
their range of mobility is also localised. One example I use to illustrate how
localised mobility ‘makes’ a region was that of the shepherd walking along pastures
and thus envisioning an entire hillside. In the homeland approach, the subjects of

\(^{23}\) For an overview of discussions of return migration, see Biao, Yeoh, and Toyota (2013).
study are always transnational migrants and mobility is always crossing national borders. How transnational mobility ‘makes’ a homeland has been illustrated through the example of the Polish migrants in the USA, whose sense of belonging to the okolica (local countryside) was replaced with a national self-identification as ‘Polish Americans’ after migration. Thus, scholars who have studied the ‘region’ have highlighted how mobility within the region contributes to conceptualising it, while scholars who have studied the ‘homeland’ have highlighted mobility from and back to it.

With one academic perspective that is limited to the views of locals and one perspective that is always looking at the region from a distance, we are left wondering: are local ‘regions’ different from transnational ‘homelands’? If so, how? Is it perhaps possible to track connections and see similarities between the two? How have ‘regions’ and regional identities been affected by the growing possibilities for human mobility and communication across the world? And how have ‘homelands’ been constituted by localised experiences of travel? In short, is it possible to develop a more dynamic anthropology of the region in which different forms of mobility are recognised as interlinked and potentially constitutive of the region?

By integrating the ‘region’ and the ‘homeland’ into one analytical framework, I contribute to the discussion on a problem that has been put on the research agenda again and again, with little progress so far: the question of how to integrate ‘internal and international’ migration into one conceptual framework. In the recent past, there has been a bifurcation in the literature (Skeldon 2006, 17–18; Thomas 1984; Zelinsky 1971) and, in their article ‘Mind the Gap!’, King and Skeldon (2010) argue that this existence of two almost entirely separate literatures, written from different conceptual, theoretical and methodological standpoints, is problematic and needs to be overcome. While earlier theorising on ‘migration’ was all about migration within countries (e.g. Ravenstein 1885), in the last decade or so, ‘migration’ has somehow come to be synonymous with the crossing of international borders, even if the volume of what is now called ‘internal migration’ is still much higher (King and Skeldon 2010, 1620–1622; Skeldon 2006). This shift in academic interest from internal to international migration is not the result of an empirical change, but is related to the political problem that cross-border migrants have come to present in a world with increasingly heavily guarded state borders: migrants are perceived as ‘potentially upsetting for conventional links between territoriality, sovereignty, or national belonging’ (Kalir 2013, 314).

In order to bridge the gap between internal and international migration, King and Skeldon have introduced an analytical model that traces connections between various steps in migration pathways: e.g. migration from a rural region to an urban
centre facilitates international migration, and vice versa, international migrants who return to the home country sometimes choose to settle in urban centres rather than in the rural home region. While this model can explain some of the dynamics that I explore in this case study, it is focused on individual migration pathways and does not help to understand how various forms of mobility within a community or even a family are related to each other.24

My study is quite different from most studies of migration in that it pays equal attention to rural-urban and international mobility. The people I studied are those who still reside in the region as well as those who went abroad but keep ties to the region. I consider local Vohras and Vohra migrants within the same study rather than as entirely separate groups (cf. Rutten and Patel 2003). While migration pathways of the Charotar Sunni Vohras are discussed as a contextual background, the main theme is how the intersection of various forms of mobility contributes to the making of a region and a regional community.

Overall, the key contribution of this study is thus that it looks at social processes from a truly transnational perspective, through different spatial angles. I have been inspired by anthropological studies that have taken a similar approach, studies that have taken a transnational perspective while also being deeply immersed in a specific region in South Asia. Such studies have, for example, been conducted in Sylhet in Bangladesh (Gardner 2001 [1995]) in connection with London (Gardner 2006; Gardner 2008), Doaba in Punjab in India in connection with Jat Sikhs in the north-east of England (Taylor, Singh, and Booth 2007; Taylor 2013), the town of Madhapur in Gujarat in connection with Patidars in London (Ramji 2006), in Kerala in India in relation with Muslim entrepreneurs in the Gulf (Osella and Osella 2009), in villages in central Gujarat in connection with Patidars in Britain (Rutten and Patel 2002), and on coastal Andhra Pradesh in connection with Kammas in the USA (Roohi in her forthcoming PhD thesis as part of the Provincial Globalisation programme).

A limitation of these earlier multi-sited studies is that they have often focused on relatively powerful groups within migrant-sending regions (except the Osellas): Patidars in central Gujarat, Patidars in Kutch, Jat Sikhs in the Punjab, Kammas in Andhra Pradesh. The research participants tend to be landowning families in their village or town of origin, who own ancestral land, and who have further enhanced the social position of their families and caste/community in their village or town through migration. Their remittances, their investments in magnificent houses on

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24 While King and Skeldon (2010) do refer to social links in their explanation of various migration pathways, they do not include these significant relations in the analytical model itself.
family-owned land, and their support to temples, hospitals, schools and water purification plants thus significantly contribute to enhancing their already privileged status and powerful position in the home village or town. In addition, these migrants and their local relatives are well-connected to local politicians, and the schools and temples they support tend to be closely associated with the ruling party in the home region, enabling them to benefit from government funds to finance a part of the expenditure (Dekkers and Rutten 2011, 16) or to acquire the necessary government permits (Roohi, forthcoming). Gardner (2001 [1995], 95-96) also indicates that migration in Sylhet is concentrated in families which were already well-off, thus helping to maintain the status quo or even polarising power relations between landowning and landless families.

As a whole, the body of work described above gives the impression of a power balance in which the migrants, derived from the most powerful groups within their home regions, have so much agency that they can do what they want without any major constraints or limitations imposed on them. The main resistance they appear to face is from reluctant relatives and insulted co-villagers, who complain about the arrogant and extravagant attitude of the migrants (Dekkers and Rutten 2011, 11) and about the way they flaunt their wealth (Taylor 2013, 408–409). These complaints and contestations refer to internal frictions within the community/caste and, on the whole, transnational activities are perpetuating and deepening caste divisions in these regions (Taylor, Singh, and Booth 2007, 343).

The indirect consequence of this focus on mainly relatively dominant landowning groups in migrant-sending regions is that the home village is projected as a primordial and original space, with which nostalgia and privilege are closely connected. This projection is wholly disrupted in this thesis, as it highlights the experiences of people who have more mobile attachments to the home region, without fixation on a specific ancestral homeland or village of origin. What makes this case interesting from the perspective of the discussions on ‘homeland’ and ‘diaspora’ is that it presents a counter-case to primordial constructions of the ‘home’: Vohras are fully aware of the newness of Anand as a home town of Charotar Sunni Vohras. Their home town is not simply there as an ancestral or original place of belonging, it has to be actively made. Their ability to shift attention from an ancestral or original home village to a previously insignificant town, which is actively made into a (new) home in the home region, shows their engagements with the homeland are very much interlinked with the travels and migrations of their local acquaintances. An understanding of social processes and spatial transformations in the region and a multi-sited research approach to include transnational migrants and local residents is indispensable to understand how
this comes about. A focus on the town has been helpful to develop such a multi-
scalar approach.

The *global town* as a hub of regional and transnational mobility

One way of understanding the construction of a regionally attached community while including intra- and extra-regional mobility in the analysis is through focusing on an urban centre. Some previous studies have noted how cities in migrant-sending countries have come to acquire special meaning as meeting places for dispersed communities (Christou and King 2010; Falzon 2003). Clifford (1994, 306), for instance, argued that ‘decentred, lateral connections may be as important [to diasporas] as those formed around a teleology of origin/return’. This argument has been developed further by Falzon (2003), who introduced the terms ‘centres’ or ‘cultural hearts’ to describe cities that are functioning as ‘home’ for migrants who live dispersed over various countries, creating a sense of community linked to place yet delinked from the ancestral soil. A ‘cultural heart’ or ‘centre’ is distinct from the ancestral homeland: Falzon argues that these centres, ‘constructed and represented as a result of the diasporic process are often of much greater practical importance than a notion of homeland which survives the process or is created and projected back in time to seem primordial’ (Falzon 2003, 665). As this notion of a centre is very useful in this study, I shall elaborate on it a little, using Falcon’s case study of the Hindu Sindhis in the Sindhi ‘centre’ of Bombay/Mumbai.25

The region of Sindh, the ancestral homeland of Sindhis, part of British India from 1843 to 1947, became part of the newly-formed Pakistan after Independence. Sindhis share a narrative of forceful displacement at Partition in 1947, and the notion of a ‘Sindhi’ community followed rather than preceded the time when Hindu people were living in Sindh. Hindu Sindhis are now dispersed26 over more than hundred countries, but retain a degree of cohesion through kinship practices and business networks (Falzon 2003). While the notion of a distant homeland is central to their diasporic consciousness, Sindh is now part of Pakistan and perceived as threatening by many Hindu Sindhis, and practical associations with the region have weakened considerably. However, the Sindhis are not rendered

25 I use the term ‘Mumbai’ when discussing the present-day city and ‘Bombay’ when discussing the city’s past, as the official name of the city changed in 1995. Falzon uses the name ‘Bombay’ in the article.
26 Sindhis moved out in three waves. First, a group of merchants practiced long-distance commerce within the structures of the British colonial empire. Second, Hindu Sindhis left the region in response to the political and social turmoil that came with the partition of India in 1947. For various historical reasons, Mumbai was the main centre of relocation. Third, after Independence, many Sindhis joined other migrants from the subcontinent in search of better opportunities in the United States, Canada, Britain, Australia, and in Gulf destinations such as Dubai (Falzon 2003, 665-668).
homeless, they have established a ‘Sindhi cultural heart’ in Mumbai. The city is now the largest single concentration of Sindhis anywhere in the world, as thousands of Sindhis living elsewhere have a second house in it, relatives, or both. The city has, furthermore, become a site of Sindhi investment in real estate and of Sindhi patronage of public institutions, such as schools and hospitals. During wedding season in December, Sindhis from all over the world flock there to attend marriages, engage in business networks, to enjoy themselves, and arrange marriages (Falzon 2003, 672). Falzon interprets this ‘pilgrimage’ by Sindhis to Mumbai as ‘a rite which establishes periodically the individual Sindhi as a member of a “we”'; moreover, a translocal ‘we’ (Falzon 2003, 679–680). Mumbai has become ‘a sort of community shrine for Sindhis’.

In this thesis, I show that the internationally dispersed Vohra community is also building such ‘centres’. Like the Sindhis, Vohras have traditionally had significant links with Mumbai, and there is a sizeable Vohra population and a regular coming and going of visitors in Mumbai. But, unlike the Sindhi diaspora, most Vohras stayed on in their ‘homeland’ during Partition, and practical links with central Gujarat remain important, even among those with strong connections in Mumbai. As a result, the town of Anand, one of the main urban centres of central Gujarat, has developed into an important ‘centre’ or ‘heart’ of the Vohra community. Vohras living in the UK and USA feel that it has increased in significance for the community after 2002, and these sentiments are shared by migrants who do not consider Anand their natal or ancestral home town. Studying their relationship to the town may shed new light on how towns in migrant-sending regions are being refashioned into ‘centres’, as towns often mark intersections of flows within the region and beyond. The buzz around ‘global cities’ (Sassen 2001) has obscured the fact that towns are crucially linked up to other cities, including to global cities in various parts of the world (Denis, Mukhopadhyay, and Zérah 2012, 23), and that towns can become an important anchor of identity and community making. By shifting attention from the city to the town, the thesis counters the overall ‘metrocentricity’ in urban research (Bunnell and Maringanti 2010) and in studies of migrant transnationalism and globalisation.

A mobile understanding of towns is not new. Historical studies of South Asia also point at the market town or qasba as a centre of the region, as a node for mobility within the region and for mobility between the region and the outside world (Hasan 2004 in Gayer and Jaffrelot 2012, 15). The Moghul empire in South Asia relied on networks of trading centres and on traffic routes connecting them (Heesterman 1982, 10–14). Rather than any external geographical boundary of an empire, the furthest outposts of the empire were the qasbas in the rural interior,
from which the borders of organised agriculture and tax demand were pushed outward. The qasba, integrated with surrounding villages and with larger towns, became a locus of identity and attachment for the members of the educated and landed Muslim gentry. Historical studies thus project regional towns as a centre of connectivity and as a locus of identity, which suggests that the extent to which studies of contemporary mobility have lost sight of this is unjustified.

Sociological studies on small and middle-sized towns in India in the 1970s and 1980s have emphasised the role of towns as nodal points within the regional or national economy, and suggest that towns have a pivotal role in regional development processes (Corwin 1977; Dahlberg 1974; Prasad 1985; Rana and Krishan 1981; Rondellini 1983; Spodek 1976, 113). They have described the towns as bridges linking the agrarian sector in the rural hinterland with the industrial and trading sectors, through the provision of manufacturing, markets, and services, and as serving as market places spaced over the countryside to break the isolation of the rural dweller from the national market (Spodek 1976, 107), so acting as ‘nodes’ or ‘hubs’ within systems of rural–urban connections. In central Gujarat, towns have been described as market centres for agricultural produce, as centres of manufacturing, of secondary education, of religious pilgrimage, and as administrative centres where peasants had to travel to attend to offices and court (Hardiman 1981, 264). Thus, these earlier studies have highlighted the relationship of towns with rural areas and the key role of small urban centres in rural-urban linkages and regional development (Ballard 1983; Denis, Mukhopadhyay, and Zérah 2012, 23; Tacoli 1998). However, though valuable, these studies have projected a limited view on the ‘hub’ function of towns, emphasising their role as nodal points within the regional or national context without paying attention to their role within the global context, as nodes connecting regions within India to the wider world.

Towns are connected locally, nationally, as well as globally, and the international networks that ensue from them sometimes bypass the metropolis (Denis, Mukhopadhyay, and Zérah 2012). Their global connectedness is unmistakable in regions with strong patterns of international migration, where they are ‘key nodal points in regional social formations’ as well as ‘as sites through which transnational traffic moves and often congeals’ (Koskimaki and Upadhyya 2013, 2). Such towns should be seen as ‘nodal points in networks and movements that are symbolic as much as material’, which ‘create a regional fabric as well as connect the region into trans-regional and transnational networks’ (Koskimaki and Upadhyya 2013, 14).

27 This brief overview of previous literature on the regional hub function of towns in South Asia has also been described (in a somewhat different and more extended form) in an article I co-authored with my supervisor Mario Rutten (Verstappen and Rutten 2015, 230-232).
In this thesis, I use the term ‘global town’ (introduced in Verstappen and Rutten 2015) to describe Anand town as a hub of rural–urban and transnational migration. The term ‘global town’ is a nod to Saskia Sassen’s ‘global city’ so is meant to contest the overall ‘metrocentricity’ of social research of transnationalism and globalisation, which has projected the view that while megacities are hubs of international mobility, towns are merely nodes of rural–urban mobility. As an urban conglomerate with a population of just over 200,000 residents, centrally located in an agricultural region with a long history of international migration, the town of Anand in central Gujarat clearly functions as a node of interconnection between rural–urban and local–global mobility. It is both a regional hub and a platform for departure and arrival of various transnational flows (Verstappen and Rutten 2015, 232). Due to its function as a hub of mobility, the town has acquired a central place in the imagination of the region itself, both for the local residents and for the transnational migrants returning ‘home’. In this thesis, I therefore present Anand town as a ‘centre’ (Falzon 2003) of the Vohra community, as it is through and from the town that Vohras can still cultivate their specific regional identity.

Conclusion

During a conference in Amsterdam in 2014, the founding mothers of the transnationalism paradigm and others came together to discuss if the paradigm was still useful within the current and much changed political, economic, social and cultural global context. While it may be true that transnationalism speak is over its peak after all the discussions in recent decades around globalisation, transnationalism and multi-sited ethnography, a transnational optic is still needed in the social sciences and a multi-scalar approach can be a useful tool for this.

The focus on the region and the town, seen from nearby and from afar, has been suitable to the case study of Charotar Sunni Vohras, a Muslim community in the region of Charotar in central Gujarat, India, whose affirmations of local belonging represent a challenge to the idea of the ‘Muslim as an outsider’ now dominant in India. What makes the case interesting in relation to earlier multi-sited studies on transnational migrants and their homeland is that it presents a counter-case to primordial constructions of the ‘home’, drawn from studies among landowning or otherwise relatively privileged groups. The emergence of Anand as a safe zone and as a new home town of Charotar Sunni Vohras in Gujarat and abroad indicates

that, for them, the homeland is not there as an ancestral or original place of belonging, but has to be made, actively.

An understanding of social processes in the region and a multi-sited research approach to include transnational migrants and local residents is indispensable to understanding this active process of homeland construction. As the older rudimentary framework of the ‘local and the global’ that has long prevailed in multi-sited anthropology does not provide enough tools to understand the mobile, dispersed and fluid processes described in the case study, I have developed a multi-scalar approach to study the regional identifications of the Vohra community. Through the empirical focus on the ‘global town’ as a hub of transnational and regional mobility, this thesis provides a multi-scalar perspective of community making, and a town-based perspective of a transnational region. It thus contributes to earlier academic attempts to understand the ‘stretching’ of social life across space by positioning the anthropology of place and the region within a transnational framework and, conversely, by ‘emplacing’ discussions on the homeland, doing so through developing a multi-scalar approach. I hope the thesis thus contributes to specific discussions on Muslims in India, and to wider academic discussions on how to understand regions and processes of regional community formation in a rapidly changing and increasingly interconnected world.
CHAPTER 2
Multi-sited and multi-scalar research

Multi-sited fieldwork is not a new phenomenon in anthropology (Hannerz 2003, 202–203) and, in the methodological sections of research presentations, it has become quite common to find summaries of places visited (Wilding 2007, 336). This trend stems from concerns about the inadequacy of classic single-site fieldwork methods to study a mobile, changing, globalising world (Gupta and Ferguson 1997, 3) in which groups migrate, regroup in new locations, and reconfigure their histories and identities without maintaining tight spatial boundaries (Appadurai 1991, 191, 196; in Gupta and Ferguson 1997, 3). However, critical methodological questions have been raised about what has also been labelled ‘hit-and-run ethnography’ (Geertz 1998, 72; in Wogan 2004, 130). The question is: How does one do an ethnography of mobility and connections (Tsing 2005, xi)?

It has been argued that anthropological research can still best be accomplished by staying long-term in one place (as was advocated in Evans-Pritchard 1976), as that enables a grounding of the multi-sited research in the peculiarities of a well-known place (Wogan 2004). If researchers ‘spread themselves too thin’, meeting many people in many places without staying put anywhere, this may prevent
them from getting to the core of ethnography: understanding and revealing the perspectives of actual people through ‘immersion’ in the process of social life in the field (Hastrup 2013, 147). If fieldwork is not to be contained within a single site, while at the same time grounding fieldwork in a place is still a condition for good fieldwork, this then raises the question of how to construct the ‘field’ of fieldwork.

Various approaches have been suggested to deal with this problem, some of which have helped to shape the contours of this study. Marcus’ oft-quoted article (1995) about the methodological consequences of globalisation encourages experiments with multi-sited ethnographies and highlights various ‘modes of construction’ that can function as guides for designing a research project with multiple sites of participant observation. These devices of construction include (pre-planned or opportunistic) movement by the researcher, the tracing and mapping ‘within different settings of a complex cultural phenomenon given an initial, baseline conceptual identity that turns out to be contingent and malleable as one traces it’ (Marcus 1995, 106). The techniques he discusses are: follow the people, follow the thing, follow the metaphor, follow the story, follow the biography, and follow the conflict. In this project, while I have used the technique of following the people, that broad strategy still does not answer the underlying methodological questions: which people? Why them, and not others? How does one choose whom to follow and whom not? And again, how to construct ‘the field’?

My main answer to these questions has been to spatially embed the research in a town, more specifically, a neighbourhood in a town, and to ‘follow the people’ from there. Anand town is a centre of mobility, from which people move in multiple directions and to which they and their resources return. The town can be called a ‘global town’ in the sense that encounters and interactions in the town connect it to destinations far beyond; connections that can be followed up by the researcher if she is open to surprise. In the process, collaborations with local interlocutors led the researcher to ‘see’ unforeseen connections and unforeseen forms of mobility, which then also led to new research themes and questions. The initial research plan was gradually expanded to include more and more of these unforeseen connections, travelling with informants even if the destination was sometimes unknown, rather than adhering strictly to a pre-formulated research plan. The research was thus mobile as well as located, sharing life with the people I met in Anand town and tracing their connections to other locations, and, at the same time, it gradually became more focused: from the town to a neighbourhood in the town, and then to a specific community that turned out to be prominent within that neighbourhood.

The act of ‘scaling’ or ‘scale switching’ has been crucial in the analysis of all these connections. Scaling puts different perspectives to work in the study of a subject:
depending on situation and perspective, the fieldworker’s attention stretches and bends to privilege different ‘scales of attention’ at different points in time (Hastrup 2013, 145). One advantage of scaling is that, as it involves multiple levels of analysis in the same study, it helps to overcome ‘methodological nationalism’ (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002) without falling in the trap of replacing that much-criticised framework with equally fallible methodological transnationalism or methodological regionalism. My research project positioned the town in relation to three ‘scales’ of attention: a neighbourhood in a town, the town as a node in a region, and the town as a node within a transnational social network.

How these three scales developed over time, by trailing the people and mapping their connections, is discussed next. Briefly, as far as possible I tried to follow up on the ‘topographical awareness’ (Hastrup 2013, 156) of Muslims I met in Anand and their connections elsewhere by following the leads I found during fieldwork. Doing research at these multiple levels was challenging, as I developed a wide-ranging set of contacts in different places, following a multiplicity of cases along with a multiplicity of people. This involved frequent travel and difficult choices about whom to visit when, and how to divide the time.

Below, I outline the multi-sited and multi-scalar approach of this fieldwork. First, I introduce the reader to the neighbourhood that became my home during the research period, and explain how I studied it. Next, I introduce the region, the second scale of attention on which the research took place. Since a region, more abstract in its conceptualisation than a neighbourhood, is a slippery subject to study, I explain how I went about that. Third, I take the reader abroad, elaborating on the purpose of the research trip to the UK (and USA) and how this linked up to the neighbourhood and the regional study.

The study is based on twelve months of fieldwork: ten months of fieldwork in central Gujarat, in the period of 10 September 2011 until 28 June 2012, and two months of fieldwork in the United Kingdom, from 1 July to 10 September 2012. A ten-day orienting pre-fieldwork trip took place in April 2011, during which my supervisor Mario Rutten introduced me to scholars and friends in Ahmedabad, in Anand, and in a village near Anand. Two brief follow-up trips took place, one to Anand in February 2014 and one to join a community event of Vohras in the USA in May 2015.

The qualitative research in Gujarat was based on participant observation and interviews, and the research in the UK was based mostly on interviews with some participant observation. The core of the research in Gujarat consisted of frequent participation in the everyday affairs of fourteen Muslim families and four Muslim associations, in addition to less frequent interactions with many other families.
and associations. The mode of participation was often ‘participation to write’ (rather than a fully experiential style, Emerson 2005, 17–20): my acquaintances were used to me carrying a notebook around most of the time and sometimes encouraged me to take notes or pictures of what they thought significant. I also had approximately 200 ‘interviews’ in central Gujarat - I put ‘interviews’ between quotes because many of the interactions developed more like fragmentary and frequently interrupted conversations, during which I asked directive questions only occasionally. These conversations were sometimes audio-recorded. In the UK, I had 28 interviews, which had a more conventional format: a clear beginning and end, and a concentration on the topic at hand, a highly condensed type of conversation. There I made an audio recording of 18 interviews for transcription, and participant observation consisted of sharing residency in an apartment in East London with a group of two young couples and a baby (all Vohras from central Gujarat), and participation in social events in the houses of others.

In addition to the qualitative research, quantitative data was also acquired in three surveys. Survey A is a household survey of 147 households in Anand town, Survey B collected data from 35 migrants in Australia and Survey C from 35 informants in the UK (for survey questions, see appendix A.2.1, A.2.02, A.2.3). In addition to the three surveys, quantitative data was gathered on mosques and in a shopping area in Anand. Throughout the research in central Gujarat, my neighbour and research assistant Minaz Pathan helped me approximately three days per week. She had various tasks, one of which was to translate (Gujarati and Hindi into English), particularly in the first months. I had taken Gujarati language classes (for six months with Amrita Vyas of the Sri Uganda Hindu Union in The Netherlands, and for one month fulltime with Professor Raymond Parmar in Ahmedabad) but it was a few months before I could have basic conversations in Gujarati independently. Short written sources encountered in the field were translated by Minaz, while longer and more complex written texts were translated from Gujarati to English by Mayur Macwan and Monica Macwan in Anand, and one source was partly translated by Rashid Vohra in London. Sources in the Gujarati language included information produced by associations, locally produced history books, pamphlets, (pictures of) public notice boards, invitations for social events, and some audio-recorded interviews.

While the fieldwork mainly focused on Muslims, I also talked to Hindus and Christians. I had ‘interviews’ with approximately 30 Hindus in Gujarat, most of whom I met them through Muslim acquaintances. In addition, I have been in regular touch with two Hindu (Patel) families in the region, whom I know due to a previous research project (Rutten and Verstappen 2014). I myself was positioned in
the local category of ‘Christians’, being from a Catholic family background in The Netherlands. Consequently, I also organically developed friendships with three Catholic families in Anand.

A neighbourhood study

It was my local supervisor, emeritus professor of sociology Amrapali Merchant of Sardar Patel University, who first drew my attention to the neighbourhood at the edge of Anand town where I eventually based my research. That day she had taken me to Anand in her car, driving us there from the city of Ahmedabad where we were both staying at the time. During the trip, she pointed out significant sites in the landscape, shared her life philosophy inspired by Jainism, and voiced her support for Ana Hazare’s hunger strike against corruption that then was dominating the news. After two hours, we approached Anand, and she suddenly asked: ‘What is your religion?’ I mentioned my Catholic family background. She continued: ‘All religions are pathways to God. Now look outside the car. These houses you see here weren’t there before. This was just agricultural land. In 2002, there were riots here. Then, there was a lot of killing in the villages around here, and so many Muslims were murdered. After that, they left their village and came here. Maybe 50,000 Muslims are now living in Anand. They occupy the gate of the town. Whenever you enter Anand, you pass Muslims.’

I registered as a student at Sardar Patel University and based myself at the student housing assigned to me on the campus in Vallabh Vidyanagar, the educational hub of Anand town’s urban conglomerate. From there I started my research among Muslims in Anand, initially with help of two professors of the Agricultural University and later with help of Minaz Pathan, a young Muslim woman who had just completed her bachelor’s studies at Sardar Patel University at the time. Minaz’ presence was a tremendous help in establishing rapport, as some of the families we visited knew her family personally. After two months of commuting from Vidyanagar to different research sites, I found a family willing to rent out the apartment built on top of their bungalow, in the ‘Muslim area’ that had been pointed out to me that first day from the car window. The invitation enabled me to participate more in everyday life in the neighbourhood, seven kilometres away from the campus. The family kindly took me in as their ‘paying guest’ by sharing lunch and dinner with me in their living room while giving me enough

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1 Professor Amrapali Merchant was a former vice chancellor of the Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University, honorary professor at the Gujarat National Law University GNLU and the president of the Gujarat Sociological Society. It is a great loss that she passed away on December 23, 2014.
privacy on the top floor to work on my field notes and receive guests. Through their introductions, I quickly came to know more and more families in the neighbourhood.

The residential area is locally referred to as a ‘Muslim area’, despite the presence of century-old churches and various Hindu shrines that testify to a more diverse occupancy. The specific housing society I was in was a Muslim-only housing society. Residents almost uniformly identified themselves as followers of the ‘Tablighi Jamaat’. In terms of caste identification, of the 22 residents in this housing society, the majority were Vohra (13 families) while other residents were from other backgrounds (9 families, including Diwan, Shaik, Pathan, Khan, and Momin).

It was a middle class territory. The large, freshly painted bungalows testified to the relatively wealthy character of residents. My neighbours were employed in different occupations, some in various kinds of business (including real estate brokers, a tobacco trader, a car trader, and a shopkeeper), others were white collar workers (a bank manager, a professor, an advocate, and a deputy superintendent of police). Some worked for the government or for private companies, others were self-employed. Table 2.1 gives an overview of the occupations of the heads of households of this housing society. The residents themselves consider their housing society relatively well-to-do and highly educated. Due to its relatively wealthy character, in this thesis, I use the invented name ‘Majestic Housing Society’ to refer to it.

| Table 2.1. Occupation of heads of household in ‘Majestic Housing Society’ |
|-----------------|-----|-----|------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----|
| **Households**  | 6   | 6   | 1    | 2         | 2         | 1         | 2         | 22  |


* In this thesis, in the category ‘white collar’ I include ‘government’ jobs and office jobs in private companies, e.g. tax officers, clerks, advocates, bank employees, as well as teachers and professors.

** The category ‘business’ includes both owners of large corporations and small-scale entrepreneurs.

*** One stated only ‘retired’, the other ‘working’.

‘Majestic Housing Society’ and the neighbourhood surrounding it became the main site of the research, giving the fieldwork a grounded character in spite of its multi-sitedness. The neighbourhood study started with an orienting round of interviews with local families and associations. After moving in, my role gradually changed from the interviewer asking questions to the curious neighbour who participated in social life. With some key informants a more intimate relation

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2 The table is based on a household survey (Survey A), the methodology of which I explain further on in this chapter. There were two ‘closed houses’, where the residents were absent at the time of the survey, bringing the total of houses in the society to 24.
grew, one that can perhaps be called friendship: a regular sharing of words and activities. As is to be expected in a gender-segregated society most of my friends were female, but some men were also able to spend time with me without offending social norms. Close acquaintances developed with individuals in fourteen families, eight Vohra families and six non-Vohra Muslim families (Pathan, Diwan, Malek, and Patel). In all of these families, at least one of the members spoke some English. Some of them lived in my own housing society, others a little further away, but all within walking distance. They can be classified as middle class Muslim residents of Anand town.

To get to know the neighbourhood better, where possible I joined neighbours in their everyday activities and accompanied them to the social events they attended. For example, my female neighbours regularly took evening walks, and by joining them I learnt a lot about the neighbourhood. I also visited the local associations they were connected to – schools, hospitals, charitable associations, a madrassa, and the Vohra caste association. Although mosques were inaccessible for me as a woman, other associations were open to receiving me. Schools turned out to be rewarding places to spend time with people. There was a government school nearby, but most schools in the interior of the neighbourhood are managed by Christians and Muslims while schools and colleges on the main road and in the rest of Anand are managed by Hindus. I ended up visiting privately managed schools of all denominations because they were in some way connected to my Muslim acquaintances. Two associations in particular became my home base: a primary school and a charitable hospital. Both associations were managed by a trust of Vohra men. In these associations, I was allowed to visit as often as I wanted, and I talked repeatedly to staff, volunteers, trustees, and parents and students, most of whom also lived in the neighbourhood. These associations then also invited me when they organised special events, which I attended when possible. In this way, I participated in the social life of the neighbourhood as much as I could.

Throughout the research period, Hindu acquaintances responded with caution when I mentioned where I lived. Officials and teachers reacted with surprise, awkwardness, or disapproval when I mentioned the research site, students I had befriended in the campus area surrounding the Sardar Patel University praised me for coming to India to do ‘such a hard job’. These and other ideas circulating about the neighbourhood are described further in Chapter 3.
A regional study

It was through the neighbourhood study, through living in Anand and participating in social life, that I came to see and experience the residents’ involvement in the wider region over time. I used a qualitative approach to explore the region. This meant I generally followed residents’ formulations of the region rather than officially defined ones. This ‘bottom-up’ sense of region emerged both from conversations and from travelling. In the process of getting to know my neighbours, I often received invitations to visit nearby villages or towns, to meet their relatives, to see their workplaces, or visit associations they were involved in. By following up on these, I came to see how Anand is embedded in regional networks.

I thus used the research strategy of ‘following the people’ (Marcus 1995) to explore the region from the perspective of my neighbours. The strategy of moving along with informants has been highlighted recently as a way to ‘propel anthropology towards a pragmatic definition of the field’ (Hastrup 2013, 155). According to Hastrup, ‘the field is constituted through people’s connections to each other within the region’, and mapping these connections is a ‘way of figuring out the field in the first place’ (Hastrup 2013, 157). It was through motorised travel that I came to gradually gain an understanding of the local sense of ‘region’. Travel usually took place on the back of a motorbike or in shared auto-rickshaws that ‘shuttle’ between villages and towns, occasionally by local train or (with the more privileged) in a car. Experiencing these everyday practices of mobility by moving along with urban residents has been instrumental in producing a bottom-up understanding of the region.

Excursions into the region took place partly in the sphere of family and business, and partly in the world of ‘Muslim trusts’ (associations managed by Muslims). I visited twenty such ‘trusts’ during the research, ten in Anand town itself and ten elsewhere in the region. These included eight schools and four hospitals, two madrassas and two banks, and various other types of organisations. Most associations I visited only once, but two associations outside Anand became a site of fieldwork more intensively because I visited them frequently. These two trusts were located in two smaller towns, both within an hour’s travel from Anand. I did not really select the trusts, they selected me: they were enthusiastic to receive me, sometimes even insistently so, and regularly invited me to take part in their activities. Both were mixed gender environments, one a school, the other a health clinic and youth centre. Being embedded in these associations enabled me, to some extent, to compare the situation in Anand to the situation in two smaller towns nearby. One association was a Vohra trust, the other was directed by a Saiyed.
Access to the twenty associations was facilitated by people who were themselves leaders or staff members of an association, and who invited me to accompany them on visits to other associations. For them, the trip provided a good opportunity for networking. For me, they literally opened up the field. Asif Thakor had a special role in shaping this regional field: his extended regional networks and superb skill dealing with all kinds of sensitivities that occurred in different local contexts made it possible for me to visit a wide range of associations and their leaders. Though not a Vohra himself, he was employed by a Vohra trust, and also guided me to mostly Vohra-managed associations – a consequence of the dominance of Vohras as leaders in the world of ‘Muslim trusts’ in central Gujarat. Asif is a social worker and a former Ford Foundation Fellow, a resident of Bhalej village who studied Sociology in NS Patel College in Anand and Child and Youth Development at the International Institute of Social Studies in Rotterdam.

His academic training made it possible for us to brainstorm together about fieldwork choices, about where to go, whom to talk to, what subjects to discuss. Asif’s position as a social worker also shaped his interest in working with me: he thought it necessary I would get sufficient information, because ‘your report is going to people outside, like the World Bank, and they should understand the situation of Muslims, what problems they face around here’.

It was a major challenge to do both a neighbourhood study and a regional study simultaneously, that too within the limited time frame of ten months. Over time, the questions of where the region ended, which connections to follow and which not, emerged. As I came to know more people in various villages and towns in the region, I was invited to meet them again, to talk more, and to participate as the foreign ‘special guest’ in weddings and institutional events such as Republic Day or Annual Day. It was frequently believed that I should really meet so-and-so because he/she would be a useful contact for my research. In many cases I benefited from such an arrangement and went with the flow. However, after some months of extending my networks and receiving ever-more invitations, this strategy led to exhaustion. Trying to be everywhere, travelling between different villages and towns and meeting new people in all these locations, became difficult. It took an illness where I was forced to stay in bed for a week to realise that many interesting things, which I had not noticed so far because I had so often been away, were going on within my own house. This led me to slow down a bit, and to concentrate on the neighbourhood study again. This, however, meant I had to say ‘no’ to invitations elsewhere, which was not always accepted easily by the now disappointed people that I had so willingly joined before. Switching scale between neighbourhood and
region was thus not a choice I could make on my own, but was a constant negotiation with various interlocutors who had their own ideas about what I should study.

Where did the ‘bottom-up’ region end in a spatial sense? The answer to this question was not straightforward, but over time I could see a pattern emerging. The furthest outposts of overland connectedness were, for my neighbours, the cities of Ahmedabad and Vadodara, Mumbai, and in rare cases Surat. To explore these, I went to Mumbai for a few days, and to Ahmedabad and Vadodara, to have follow-up conversations with people I had met in Anand, or with their acquaintances there. However, I found that residents of Anand were not as keen to take me to the cities as they had been to take me to small towns and villages in the direct vicinity of Anand. This was undoubtedly partly due to the greater distance and longer travel time. But I also sensed that they felt somewhat insecure vis-a-vis their city-based acquaintances and wondered how the foreign guest would be received. A man first invited to take me to a trust he had collaborated with in Vadodara, then hesitated and said that I should ‘learn more Gujarati first’. A family spoke with great enthusiasm about their relatives in Mumbai but became nervous when I suggested meeting them, because they were ‘very religious’, ‘more orthodox than us’. A man who had happily taken me around the region in his car and kept inviting me to visit his home village, never considered taking me along on his frequent trips to Ahmedabad. Overall, travel-along visits to Vadodara and Ahmedabad remained limited. The city seemed to be a universe apart, a known yet somewhat unfamiliar domain.

The consequence of entering the region from a Muslim-majority neighbourhood in a fast-growing town is that I could not spend as much time with Muslims still living in more traditional residential areas, in mixed neighbourhoods with Hindus, such as the central market areas of towns and villages of central Gujarat. Their invisibility in this study is compensated for by a recent PhD thesis about Vohras in precisely such a neighbourhood, in the smaller town of Mahemdabad, just an hour’s drive from Anand (Heitmeyer 2009a). I also spent some time in that town myself, through a case study that led me there. That has helped me to appreciate Heitmeyer’s rich work and enables me to draw, where relevant in this thesis, comparisons between the two towns.

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3 In addition to following up on connections from Anand, I also visited the cities of Ahmedabad and Vadodara to meet with scholars and NGOs, to spend some time at the Gujarat Institute of Development Research (GIDR), and to attend academic seminars.
A transnational neighbourhood and a transnational region

Approximately a third of the families in Majestic Housing Society (9 out of 22 households) have at least one relative abroad (see table 2.2). In addition, there are two ‘closed’ houses in the society, where we established that the family probably resides abroad. The apartment I lived in exemplified this transnational character of the neighbourhood. It had recently been constructed on top of the house, using remittances, as accommodation for the holiday trips of the two sons of the family, who had moved to Australia a few years earlier. The apartment became available for rent soon after the younger son’s holiday trip ended. As a result, my landlady wore new sweaters her sons had gifted her from Australia, used Australian barbecue sauce on her homemade pizzas, and experimented with Facebook and Skype on the laptop her son left for her. Apart from the Australian connection, there was also an American one: every few days, I would find ‘Uncle’ on the couch of the living room. Uncle was from America. Having lived there since 1993, he has been spending several months a year in Anand ever since his retirement, to escape harsh winters. Uncle regularly visited our house for a chat and a cup of green tea.

Throughout the research period, I was always ready to meet ‘transnational migrants’ (Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton 1995) who were in some way engaged with the local society. I ended up talking to visiting migrants, return migrants, acquaintances of migrants, and potential migrants. Many of my neighbours helped me to spend time with migrants, for example by inviting me to their houses to meet them there. Some conversations happened spontaneously, when I unexpectedly found a visiting migrant in the house of a neighbour. Other meetings were more arranged, after I asked people if they would please introduce me to their visiting migrant relative. Over time, it became well known that I was interested to meet everyone’s migrant acquaintances, and people started informing me on their own.

In many cases, my neighbours were present while I talked to the migrants. One neighbour, himself a return migrant from London, took the task so seriously that he started to tip me off well in advance every time a migrant visited his house, informing me what time the person was to come so I would be able to plan my day around it. It was not always possible to spend time with the visitors for more than

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4 I use the term ‘migrants’ and ‘transnational migrants’ throughout the thesis, although I have wondered if this label is the right term. Is a young man staying two years on a student visa in the UK a migrant, a student, or a temporary labourer? Is a retired man spending his winters in Anand and his summers in London a return migrant or a resident of Gujarat with transnational ties? The purpose of using the label ‘migrant’ in the thesis is to distinguish them from the local residents, but in some cases this distinction is not entirely clear.
an hour, because they were often restless and travelling a lot, on their way to relatives, friends, dentists, doctors, banks or shopping malls. Often I knew the local family better than their migrant relatives.

Having said that, a few migrants enjoyed spending time with me and took me along for a day or so. This happened particularly with British and American citizens who were in some way involved in the associations I frequented (in Anand and elsewhere in the region). These people had heard about me from their local acquaintances before they visited, and were therefore curious to meet the foreign woman who had investigated ‘their’ association. They expressed themselves in English with ease and usually also had a car available, which allowed them to take me along during some of their activities in the region. This allowed us to talk outside the family setting, which provided a different perspective. With three visiting migrants, one from the UK and two from the USA, I had a particularly intense period of fieldwork where I followed them around for several days at a stretch as they took me along as a participant on their busy schedule. These periods were spent travelling and in meetings with mainly male companions of the migrant, sometimes till so late in the evenings that my neighbours started worrying about my safety. My joining in as a woman was accepted because this was the migrant’s choice, although it sometimes had to be negotiated. In such cases I tried to take Minaz along, as being two women considerably eased the tension of crossing gender boundaries.

The qualitative research was complemented by a household survey designed to find out how many families in this neighbourhood are connected to transnational migrants, and to collect some other demographic details. An overview of the questions is provided in the appendix (Survey A, table A.2.1). The household survey was executed by Minaz Pathan5 in six housing societies (147 houses), all within walking distance of each other. These housing societies were chosen because we had access through personal connections, and because we knew at least one family in them had a relative abroad. The response rate was high: in all houses except three, a resident was available and willing to answer the survey questions. All of the six surveyed societies were occupied solely by Muslims6 and they were occupied mainly by relatively well-to-do (middle class) residents.

Table 2.2 provides an overview of the main survey findings regarding international migration. Additional results of the household survey are discussed later in the thesis.

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5 I thank Abedaben Vahora, Shifa Vahora and Sajid Vahora for helping Minaz Pathan to carry out the household survey in Anand.
6 To contextualise the findings, we conducted the survey in a seventh housing society occupied mainly by Christians. The findings of this additional housing society are not used in the thesis.
Table 2.2. International migration in Majestic Housing Society and other housing societies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Majestic Housing Society</th>
<th>Total six housing societies, including Majestic</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total houses in housing society</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Houses with a link to abroad</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total residing families with a member abroad</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families with one or more children abroad</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closed houses; family (probably) abroad</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Return migrant ( temporary or permanent)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Households without a link to abroad</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Abroad

The transnational links found in the neighbourhood and the regional study were followed up abroad at the end of the research period. A two-month research period abroad had been planned and budgeted for in advance, with the intention of gaining additional understanding of the families and associations studied in Anand town and central Gujarat. The idea was to locate people whom I had heard about but whom I had not been able to meet in Gujarat, to follow those I had met in Gujarat to their location of settlement, and to collect information that had not been accessible in the home region. As my acquaintances in Anand led me to addresses in the UK, Australia, and the USA, the choice of location was a difficult one. In the end, I chose the UK for the two-month research period and collected some additional data on Australia through a survey carried out among migrants by a research assistant, and on the USA through a brief fieldwork visit of five days.

I chose the UK for the planned fieldwork period abroad because it has a long migration history, resulting in a diverse group of migrants from the region so leading to a variety of links with the region: I had encountered UK-based Vohras visiting Anand in their holidays, had found UK-based Vohras who had invested in houses and land in Anand town, and had met local families maintaining dense transnational relations with families in the UK. I had also encountered a few charitable associations in central Gujarat that aim to ‘do good’ in the home region by providing health and other services to the poor in Gujarat with money collected in the UK. In short, I had encountered multiple cases in Gujarat that led to the UK, whereas I had fewer and less varied cases studies leading to the USA and Australia.
As part of the research abroad, I designed a survey with basic questions about the characteristics of the migrants and their social and financial links with people in Charotar (see appendix, A.2.2 and A.2.3). This survey was carried out among 35 informants in Australia (Survey B, appendix A.2.2) and 35 informants in the UK (Survey C, appendix A.2.3). The Australian survey was relatively brief, discussing only basic demographic details; the UK survey was more extensive, including more questions about home villages, family relations and social-economic ties in Gujarat. In Australia, the survey was made possible by Abedaben Vahora, a resident of Anand visiting Australia, who offered to collect information there as a temporary research assistant. The informants, whom she gathered through her personal networks, were all Muslims with links to the Charotar region, the majority Vohra. They were quite recent arrivals (maximum 9 years ago) and relatively young (below 35 years old). In comparison, in the UK the survey participants were more diverse, and included settled families with British citizenship and young recently arrived individuals and couples. In the UK, I gathered the information myself and the survey questions were, in most cases, asked as a small part of longer semi-structured interviews.

Table 2.3. Characteristics of survey respondents in the UK and Australia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Survey UK</th>
<th>Survey Australia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total respondents</strong></td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vohra(^7)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (non-Vohra) Muslims</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Duration of stay</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 years or less</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 to 10 years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 years or more</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Born here or arrived as a young child</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Legal status</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporary visa (student visa, dependent, ‘breezing’, etc)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship, ‘PR’ (permanent residency), or ‘indefinite leave to remain’</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclear</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Survey in Australia (Survey B) and in the UK (Survey C), 2012.

In the UK, I followed up on addresses collected during my stay in central Gujarat, but also ‘snowballed’ further to other people from these initial contacts, prioritising, when possible, the families that had social or economic links to central Gujarat. Snowballing became easier when I discovered an organised network of Charotar Sunni Vohras in the UK, the ‘UK Vohra Association’, whose members kindly helped

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\(^7\) Based on the surname noted in the questionnaire and including respondents with the surname ‘Mansuri’, who are considered Vohras (Heitmeyer 2009a, 80).
me to find more British informants. During interviews, I was sometimes accompanied by a woman I call ‘Aunty’. People in Anand had told me to meet Aunty because ‘she will help you. She helps all the new people that come to London’. As a Vohra born in Mumbai, having come to the UK with her husband six years previously, and knowing a considerable number of Vohra families in the UK, Aunty helped me just as she had helped other new arrivals from Gujarat to start their lives in the UK. Her condition was that we would practice English. With her burqa and my salwar kamis we made an interesting pair in the London bus, until she bought me two long-sleeved t-shirts and told me to start wearing Western clothes: people had apparently complained about my rural Gujarati attire. In this way, she not only provided contacts and information, she also acquainted me with the social norms I had to learn to adapt to in this new research context.

Relying on the Vohra community network meant that the data collected on Vohras in Anand became, in hindsight, more important, which led me to change the focus of the study. While I was in Anand, my focus had been on a middle class neighbourhood that included various Muslims, mainly Vohras but also including non-Vohras, and I had not prioritised one Muslim community over others. The UK-based research, however, took place almost exclusively among Vohras from Charotar, although I also spent some time with a Diwan student and a Pathan family from Anand, and a Muslim from Baruch with social links to Anand. This community bias made it necessary to start asking more questions about the Vohra community itself, what it meant to people, and how it was organised in the UK. After the fieldwork, during the analysis phase, I re-read my notes on Anand through the lens of the ‘Vohra’ community and found enough information to build the thesis on. In the research and writing process, I thus increasingly focused on the Vohra community.

The research project was thus not pre-planned as a community study but became one over time. Insofar as this has led to gaps in the data, I was able to fill in some of them by returning to Gujarat for ten days in February 2014. During this brief follow-up trip, I interviewed two new people who had been mentioned to me as important contacts for migrants in the UK, and went back to previous informants to talk to them once more about subjects I had asked about before but which had now acquired different meaning because of what I had learnt in the UK. This did not lead to very surprising data but provided the information I needed to write with confidence about the two settings.

For the interviews in the UK, I used a set of questions (appendix A.2.4) to map social and financial links with Anand and central Gujarat, particularly transnational marriages, transnational associations, and transnational investments. I also used some provocative statements made by informants in Anand, an interview strategy...
designed to evoke reflection and discussion. The interviews took place in the family sphere. More than 50 informants participated in 28 interviews. A husband and wife were often interviewed simultaneously, in other cases it was ladies only, or the head of household was interviewed while his children, friends, siblings or (grand)parents listened in to the conversation, sometimes commenting or adding information. The shortest interviews lasted half an hour, the longest more than four hours, the majority were something in between. The interviews were based on open-ended interview questions (appendix A.2.4), in addition to a short section of closed survey questions (Survey C). I made use of audio-recordings here more often than I had done in Gujarat. At the beginning of the interviews, I handed out a ‘Research Consent Form’ signed by myself (not by informants), in which I promised not to share the audio-recordings with anyone else.

Participant observation took place mainly among newly arrived migrants because I lived in a shared apartment in East London with young immigrants. They were two couples and a baby, all Vohras, three of them from central Gujarat and one from Vadodara. Sharing housing with them helped me to understand their daily routine, prayer and leisure patterns, and to meet some of their friends, although, due to time limitations, I did not follow them outside the house, to their work place. It was possible to contextualise these findings because of an earlier fieldwork experience among young Hindus from the region, who lived in the same neighbourhood and whom I also visited during the research period.8 Participant observation was possible in the households of settled migrant families when they invited me to social gatherings such as Iftar, Eid, funeral prayers, and a wedding.

Due to the limited time available, just two months, the UK segment of the fieldwork had a somewhat ‘hit-and-run’ character. Even within London itself it sometimes took two hours of travelling before I reached the home of a research participant. I also travelled to Leicester, Newcastle, Crawley and Guildford. Informants had arrived in the UK through diverse trajectories and at different moments in time, lived in different economic circumstances, had different networks and different religious convictions and practices. This diversity made it hard to contextualise information. While I did not reach a comprehensive understanding of each family, I consider the research in the UK effective because the point was not to reach complete local knowledge but to gain, though this side-route, additional understanding of what I had seen before, in Anand town and central Gujarat.

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8 From 2007 to 2011, I collaborated with Mario Rutten and Isabelle Makay on a documentary film entitled ‘Living Like a Common Man’ (2011), and thereafter with Mario Rutten on related publications (Rutten and Verstappen 2014, Rutten and Verstappen 2015). For further information on the documentary, see http://sites.google.com/site/livinglikeacommonman. The film was recorded among migrants from central Gujarat, in the same neighbourhood in East London where I lived during fieldwork for this thesis, and among their parents in India.
Some access problems occurred in the UK, though only with men I had not met in Gujarat before, and mainly with those of the ‘second generation’. Some were puzzled when they heard that a Gujarati-speaking European woman had visited their relatives and had asked many questions. They could not understand why anyone would take an interest particularly in the small Charotar Sunni Vohra community, and started to theorise. One man explained to me how his friends were worried about me being a spy, for Modi, for the ‘anti-Muslim’ Dutch or Danish government, or perhaps for the Israeli secret service. Two men confronted me, explained their worst fears, and demanded deletion of their families’ personal details from the dataset (which I did). I thought their awkwardness stemmed from a strong sense of vulnerability, probably related to increasing Islamophobia across Europe in the context of the worldwide ‘war against (Islamic) terrorism’ (Atom 2014). Their disengagement from the research may also have been related to the fact that I presented myself as a scholar interested in Gujarat and Gujarati, which did not fit their self-identification as ‘British Muslims’ (Gardner and Shukur 1994, 163).

The reluctance of a few contrasted with the enthusiasm of many to participate in the research project. Rapport was best with first generation migrants, especially with those who shared with me an intimate knowledge of Anand town. My (basic) knowledge of the Gujarati language and my personal experiences in Gujarat ensured that they felt comfortable and were sometimes very enthusiastic about talking to me. They realised I could differentiate between Mumbai and Gujarat, between Ahmedabad and Anand, and between Boriavi and Kanjari (two adjacent villages). Due to this shared knowledge, they could explain to me the exact location of their family’s house or other sites of significance. Sometimes we had common acquaintances. The specific research trajectory of starting in the home region is largely responsible for the fact that I was able to gain good contacts with first generation migrants, who felt comfortable talking to me about highly localised issues. If I had begun the project in the UK instead of Gujarat, this would have generated a somewhat different entry into the Vohra community.

The Vohras in the UK who enjoyed reflecting on themselves within a ‘Gujarati’ or ‘Vohra’ framework of identity particularly found purpose in my research project. Young people who did so were drawn into my conversations with their parents, spurring on the discussion by listening intently, sometimes adding questions or stories. The most rewarding fieldwork occurred when interviews overflowed in group conversations, a sort of informal focus-group discussion. In their own living

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9 I am aware of the difficulties of talking about people in terms of ‘first’ and ‘second’ generation (for a discussion, see Charsley 2013, 17), and limit the use of these terms as much as possible, but I occasionally use the term ‘first generation’ to indicate those who migrated to the UK as adults and the term ‘second generation’ or ‘second and later generations’ to indicate their offspring, those born in the UK and those who arrived with their parents at a young age.
rooms in the UK, at a distance from Gujarat, the reflections of the migrants about Gujarat were often more lengthy, more concentrated, and more pronounced than the statements I had recorded in Gujarat.

The USA fieldwork trip was an afterthought, and occurred on the occasion of the ‘Vahora Families Reunion’ in May 2015, organised by the ‘Vahora Association’ in the USA. During the three days of the event and the two days after, I met many people, took many notes, and captured part of the observations on video. However, since this fieldwork was so short and took place so close to the end of completing the thesis, I have not followed up on new findings (yet) and have mainly used the data to enrich the existing argument.

Conclusion
Combining research in the country of origin and the country of arrival of transnational migrants is methodologically very complex. My work follows up on an established genre of multi-sited ethnographies based on long-term research. While other researchers have studied a particular region for many years and later incorporated transnational migration into their research (Gardner 2008; Rutten and Patel 2003), I have attempted to achieve similar ethnographic depth within the limited timeframe of one year, which poses many challenges for the project. One of these was the flexibility of the research design. The research grew more and more focused over time, shifting from a neighbourhood study to a community study. While it was not necessarily my intention to do a community study, the Vohra community became the focus of the project in the process of constructing and reconstructing the ‘field’. Although this process was only partly the result of an independent decision-making process, has been somewhat intuitive and is therefore hard to describe, I have tried to shed some light on how I have developed the ‘field’ in this chapter. I have explained how I ‘landed in’ a specific neighbourhood in Anand town, the kind of people who guided me from there, and how the field has been constructed and reconstructed because of them. The shift from a study of a neighbourhood to a study of a community connected to a neighbourhood took place at the very end of my research, in the UK, because Vohras there had organised themselves on the basis of a ‘Vohra’ identity. This has enabled me to ‘snowball’ through Vohra networks with relative ease within the UK but it also caused a challenge during the writing phase, when some of the data I gathered in Gujarat ultimately did not fit into the thesis.

Such flexibility is inevitable when combining a localised field study with a multi-sited and multi-scalar approach. I have followed the trend of doing multi-sited fieldwork in anthropology, which stems from concerns about the inadequacy
of classic single-site fieldwork methods in an increasingly interconnected and changing world and have conceptualised the research at three interconnected ‘scales’ (local, regional, transnational) as a way of putting different perspectives to work and of thinking through the complexities of a multi-sited ethnography. At the local level, research entailed ‘immersion’ in a particular neighbourhood. From there, connections that mattered to the people in the neighbourhood were mapped, and sometimes followed. This approach requires some flexibility in the research design and good rapport with local interlocutors, who open up further-away field sites as guides and gatekeepers. It also imposes constraints on the research as the researcher cannot always choose where to go even though she still has a degree of choice about which trails to follow and which to ignore.

Being open about the way in which local interlocutors guided my decisions, rather than pretending that the anthropologist had more control than she did, is in line with the increasing recognition in anthropology of how collaborations influence the production and negotiation of the ethnographic ‘field’ (Gupta 2014, 394–395; Middleton and Cons 2014, 280). While I have allowed local interlocutors to guide my research in many ways, I have also guided them to guide me, in the sense that my curiosity for their multi-sited connectedness was quite obvious to them, and they were generally happy (and able) to make me ‘see’ the links. This approach, combining openness with selective attention, has enabled me to construct the case studies that form the basis of this thesis.

The specific research trajectory of starting in a neighbourhood in a fast-growing town, zooming out to the region, from there tracking transnational connections and following up on these networks abroad, renders some things visible and others invisible in this thesis. Some readers may be baffled by the choice to leave out the ‘national’ as a key scale of research. While this methodological choice has been part of the effort to avoid ‘methodological nationalism’, it is not as bold as it might seem: nations and their symbols are important aspects of the lives of the research participants, and this is reflected in their stories in the empirical chapters. Of the three scales (local, regional, transnational), the region was the most central and this is reflected in the research questions and build-up of the thesis. However, my locatedness in a town ensured a specific view of the region, a town-centric view of the region, seen from the perspective of the residents and visitors of this town. Starting in India rather than in the UK has been an influential methodological choice too. Having lived in Anand for some time before I came to the UK to meet the migrants, my best contacts were with those among the migrants who also felt some connection to the places and people that I had come to know there. I could
understand their discussions of highly localised issues in central Gujarat, which would not have been possible if I had started out this research in the UK. Another result of this choice to start in Gujarat is that the concerns of those born and/or brought up in the UK were harder for me to address. Some British-born Vohras have nevertheless collaborated with this study and have contributed interesting additional insights, which are included where possible in the thesis.

Now that I have outlined the research questions, the theoretical framework, and the methodological approach of the research project, I continue to describe the empirical findings of the research. In Part II, I describe the Vohra community as a local community, based in Anand town and in the central Gujarat region. In Part III, I describe the Vohra community as a transnational community, based in the UK and USA with ties to Anand town and central Gujarat.

For clarity, I repeat the research questions outlined earlier. Empirically, I ask how Vohras in central Gujarat and abroad maintain a sense of belonging to the Charotar region and how they relate to Anand town as an emerging regional centre of the Vohra community in the region. An underlying question involves the three key concepts of the thesis, mobility, community and the region: how are different forms of mobility (local and transnational) constitutive in the process of regional community making?
PART II

A local community
Vallabh Vidyanagar is on the left, Anand in the middle, Gamdi on the right.
CHAPTER 3
A ‘Muslim area’ in a regional town

Today, if one approaches Anand from the main road that connects it to the cities of Ahmedabad and Vadodara (Baroda), a high bridge provides a view of a sprawling residential area with a multitude of mosques and churches.¹ This area is referred to by the residents of Anand as a ‘Muslim area’, even though Muslims share the area with Christians and some Hindus. In this ‘Muslim area’, research has been based mainly in the suburban parts, home to a Muslim middle class who highlight their privileged social status through education and religious reform. Charotar Sunni Vohras, the single largest Muslim community here, are prominent among this educated and religiously reformed Muslim middle class.

This chapter introduces this town, Anand, as a key site of immigration for Muslims in central Gujarat, and describes the Vohra community in this local context. Muslims have moved here for two reasons: to seek safety and to achieve upward mobility through rural-urban migration. While this migration to town should be understood against the historical background of the violence and aftermath of the violence in Gujarat in 2002, it should also be related to the larger

¹ Some parts of this chapter, including a part of this introduction, have been published in Verstappen and Rutten (2015, 241).
processes of urbanisation and rural-urban migration in the region, in which Anand has become an important centre of immigration for those that value education (secular and religious) and a (sub)urban lifestyle.

The situation of Muslims in Anand is comparable with previous academic descriptions of the situation of Muslims in other Indian cities and towns, specifically with that in the nearby city of Ahmedabad (Breman 2002; Breman 2004, 221-231; Breman and Shah 2004, 176; Berenschot 2001; Berenschot 2009; Gassem-Fachandi 2012; Jaffrelot and Thomas 2012; Jasani 2008; Jasani 2010; Jasani 2011; Rajagopal 2010; Spodek 2010, Turèl 2007), and in the nearby town of Mahemdabad (Heitmeyer 2009a; Heitmeyer 2009b; Heitmeyer 2011). In Ahmedabad, segregation between Hindus and Muslims has increased significantly in response to the 2002 violence, leading to the emergence of 'Muslim areas' and 'Hindu areas' within the city and to strict separation of social life along religious lines. In the market town of Mahemdabad, Muslims and Hindus continue to live in shared neighbourhoods, defying separation of social life. The situation in Anand is between these two opposites: the residential areas of the town are segregated but social life is not entirely separated.
Rural–urban migration and displacement

A: Education. That’s what Anand was selected for. Education and business purpose, no other. And, for our religion. How are you going to get religious education in the village? That way they also chose Anand.

B: The main reason why people were coming in Anand is that they suffered lots in riots. That’s why the people can’t live in villages. So they transferred here to Anand.

C: They came [here] because they can easily go to work, easily travel, and easily get religious education. Then in 2002, BJP came.2 They divided Hindus and Muslims. (...) So, they left their village and came to Anand.

This transcribed fragment from an audio-recorded group interview with three elderly men, long-term residents of Anand town, illustrates that a variety of meanings are attached to the history of Muslims in the town. The gentlemen had earlier explained to me that there has been a long history of settlement of Muslims from nearby villages. The question I then posed was: ‘Why did Muslims come to Anand?’ The discussion reveals ambiguity. Was the move to Anand motivated by education and business purposes? Or was it related to the 2002 riots? Or to both? As I show next, employment, secular and religious education, and the quest for a more (sub)urban lifestyle are important reasons for immigration of families from nearby villages and some towns into Anand, in addition to the particular history of violence and displacement after 2002. A quest for upward mobility through urbanisation and motivations of safety are intertwined and, as a result, an already existing suburban area at the north-eastern edge of Anand town has expanded and further developed over time, a process that sped up significantly after 2002, leading to the formation of a sizeable and still growing Muslim-majority neighbourhood.

Long-term residents of Anand town have witnessed their direct surroundings change considerably over the past decades. During a conversation, a resident whose family has lived in the town for three generations sighed: ‘When I grew up, this was a very small and quiet place. Shanti. Hardly any traffic. Now, it is so crowded! I hardly dare go into traffic anymore!’ According to the Census of India (table 3.1), the size of the town more than doubled between 1981 and 2011, growing from 83,936 to 198,282 residents.3 Construction of new urban areas expanded

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2 The Bharatiya Janata Party, the political party in power during the 2002 violence.
3 The population of Anand was about 40,000 people in 1961 and has increased gradually ever since. The rise in population has been accompanied by an increase in spatial spread of urban areas. Planners describe Anand as the first urban region within Charotar as a predominantly agricultural zone, where urban development takes place within a rural setting (rurbanisation). Lecture by Prof. Shashikant Kumar, ‘Nature of Urban Development in Anand UA and Challenges for Planners’, July 24, 2013, https://www.irma.ac.in/publications/publicationdetail.php?cid=6&pid=1364, accessed April 5, 2015.
The causes of urbanisation in India have been the subject of much discussion among scholars, particularly in the Indian journal *Economic and Political Weekly* (Kundu 1986; Pradhan 2013; see also Parry 2003, 219). The rapid growth in population of Indian cities and towns is assumed to have been caused at least in part by a redrawing of urban boundaries. Other reasons for urbanisation are rural-urban migration in pursuit of education and urban occupations. The widening availability of (higher) education and non-agricultural employment has, it has been argued, turned towns into focal points of the regional dominance of rural elites, who access urban jobs through education while holding onto traditional resources such as land in the villages (Jeffrey 2001). At the same time, marginalised groups have accessed education and non-agricultural occupation in the hope of acquiring economic and social upward mobility (Jeffrey 2001, 226; Jeffrey, Jeffery, and Jeffery 2004a; Gidwani 2008, xix), a process associated with urbanisation.5

The Census of India (in 2001) shows that migration within Anand district is significant. Of the respondents indicating that they previously lived somewhere other than in the place of enumeration, the majority came from within India, most from within the same district (appendix, table A.3.2). Although a closer look at the migrants within India reveals that rural-rural migration is by far the most important

The Census of India (in 2001) shows that migration within Anand district is significant. Of the respondents indicating that they previously lived somewhere other than in the place of enumeration, the majority came from within India, most from within the same district (appendix, table A.3.2). Although a closer look at the migrants within India reveals that rural-rural migration is by far the most important

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5  Christophe Jaffrelot, *The Uneven Erosion of Caste in the Politics of Gujarat (India)*; lecture given at Gujarat Research Network Seminar, Organised by the University of Amsterdam and University Münster, at the International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam, September 11, 2014.
form of migration, rural-urban and urban-urban migration is also significant, with 110,648 rural-urban migrants and 81,202 urban-urban migrants recorded (appendix, table A.3.3). As the migration records for the more recent Census of 2011 are not yet available, whether the rapid urban growth in the last decade is due to increasing immigration into urban localities cannot yet be assessed.

To complement the Census data, I included a question in the household survey in Anand (Survey A), asking how long the residents had lived here. The responses show that 58% of the households arrived less than 10 years ago (table 3.2). With regard to the ‘home town’ of the heads of households and their spouses (vatan for a man, pir for a woman in Gujarati), we found that most of the residents come from villages and towns in the direct vicinity (table 3.3).

Table 3.2 Numbers of years the head of household resided in Anand

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 years or less</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20 years</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 20 years</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Household survey Anand, 2012. This table is based only on the last housing society surveyed, as the question was added to the survey at a later stage.

Table 3.3. Hometowns of 50 households in a housing society in Anand

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vatan (home town of the head of household)</th>
<th>Pir (home town of the wife of the head of household)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bakrol</td>
<td>Borsad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anand</td>
<td>Anand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anand</td>
<td>Anand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahudha</td>
<td>Mahemdbad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pancmahal (Jahol)</td>
<td>Madhya Pradesh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhalej</td>
<td>Anand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadeli</td>
<td>Salun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>Bihar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathlaal</td>
<td>Thasra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhalej</td>
<td>Bhalej</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anand</td>
<td>Savli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahmedabad</td>
<td>Pedlad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amreli</td>
<td>Anand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narsanda</td>
<td>Navsari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melej</td>
<td>Dahlyab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhalej</td>
<td>Padhra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Azarpura</td>
<td>Khatial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Padad</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Padal</td>
<td>Baroda</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
While the household survey gives an indication of the migration patterns, my understanding of the situation is primarily informed by conversations with the residents of Anand town. For them, it is clear that there has been significant immigration into town. They have seen the people coming. They have seen the new housing societies being constructed. They assume that most of their new neighbours are local people, from nearby villages and towns, although they say that some people from places further beyond have also found their way to Anand, such as Muslim artisans from Bihar, Momin restaurant holders from north Gujarat, and government servants from all over India.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anand</th>
<th>Nadiad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gamdi</td>
<td>Dabho</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bayad</td>
<td>Bayad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamidpura</td>
<td>Palloli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kutch</td>
<td>Rasloli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Odh</td>
<td>Anand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jargal</td>
<td>Katlal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jargal</td>
<td>Katjal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tarapur</td>
<td>Godhra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhalej</td>
<td>Mithapur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navli</td>
<td>Anand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhalej</td>
<td>Bhalej</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amirpura</td>
<td>Umreth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anand</td>
<td>Ananad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Umreth</td>
<td>Sojita</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anand</td>
<td>Anand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alwar</td>
<td>Ahmedabad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aasi (Pedlad)</td>
<td>Kheda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undel</td>
<td>Vadodara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thasra</td>
<td>Ananad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thasra</td>
<td>Mahemdbad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kasol</td>
<td>Kathla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rudan</td>
<td>Vadodara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buhranpur(MP)</td>
<td>Saurashtra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarsha</td>
<td>Surat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anannd</td>
<td>Kheda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anand</td>
<td>Anand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kapadvanij</td>
<td>Kalsad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaklisi</td>
<td>Vallavh Vidyapagar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathiyavad</td>
<td>Anand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tranol</td>
<td>Tranol</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Household survey Anand, 2012. This table is based only on the last housing society surveyed, as the question was added to the survey at a later stage.
The town's growth can be understood within the larger regional context: Anand long been the centre of the economically well-developed region of central Gujarat and has recently developed into a hub of education and government in the region. The major stimuli for the urban growth of Anand and its surroundings were developments in the agro-industrial and industrial sector, including the establishment of the Amul Dairy Co-Operative in 1946, the large-scale industrial enterprise Elecon in 1960, and the Vitthal Udyognagar Industrial Estate in 1965 (Verstappen & Rutten 2015). The population of Anand town also grew after Independence as a result of Anand's position as a centre of education in the region. With the establishment of the Sardar Patel University in 1955, and the subsequent development of the university township of Vallabh Vidyanagar, the number of high schools and educational institutions increased rapidly, along with hostels, staff quarters and other facilities catering for the growing population of students and staff members. Alongside the increase in educational facilities, the public sector has expanded significantly over the past two decades. With the administrative division of the larger Kheda district into two separate districts in 1997, the town
became the capital of the newly-established Anand district, leading to an increase in government offices and administrative jobs, construction activities and businesses catering for the expanding public sector. These developments in the educational and public sectors have been an important driver for immigration of new residents, attracting rural-to-urban migrants from nearby villages and urban-to-urban migration from elsewhere in Gujarat and India. As a consequence, the real estate sector in the town has experienced a boom, especially since the mid-1990s, with rapidly-rising housing prices, large-scale conversions of agricultural land and the construction of new housing societies. It has also resulted in new settlements on the outskirts of Anand town, which have facilitated the arrival of an upwardly mobile middle class seeking a (sub)urban lifestyle.6

For Muslims and Christians, Anand has been attractive for other reasons too. Besides being a centre for education and urban jobs, it has also been a centre of religious education and a refuge for religious minorities in the region. The Catholic Church began its mission in 1893 in Gamdi, a village now part of the urban conglomerate of Anand,7 establishing churches, convents, schools and student hostels, and the Anand Press office.8 According to local Christians, the Church appealed particularly to the lower caste of Vankars attempting to escape caste oppression through baptism and education. One aspect of their process of upward mobility was moving out of the villages into the growing Christian centre of Anand-Gamdi. An Islamic centre was founded in Anand a few decades later, in the 1920s,9 by Deobandi scholars from Uttar Pradesh in collaboration with a local man, Gulamnabi Vohra. Their ‘mission’ was not to convert Hindus to Islam, but to educate the local Muslims about ‘proper Islam’. Their aim was to improve the position of Muslims, perceived as economically and religiously backward in the region, by reforming their religious practices.10 To this end, they started a madrassa in Anand and in Tarapur, followed by smaller ones in the villages. According to the teachers I spoke to in the madrassa, this development was spurred by competition with the Church, who had ‘started to convert people to Christianity’ at the time.6

6 This paragraph has been published in Verstappen and Rutten (2015, 233-234).
8 From this centre of Christianity, Jesuits travelled around the region to teach, recording local music to transcribe Biblical texts in indigenous music. ‘Gurjarvani, 50 years of Communication in Gujarat’, a film produced by Gurjarvani, Xavier Centre for Culture and Communication. Film screened on September 11, 2011, at St. Xaviers College in Ahmedabad, during a honorary celebration for Father Lawrence, Father Devasia, Father Rappaj, Father Ornellas, Father Thomas and Brother Paul, for having served in the Jesuit order for 50 years.
9 In an interview with three teachers of the institute, 1919 was mentioned as the year of foundation. A written source mentions that the institute was founded in 1924: Purushotam C. Shah and Chandrakandh F. Shah (eds.), Charotar Sarvasangra (1954). Nadiad: Parekh Kevdachand Kanjiibhai and Sons, in Volume 1, Chapter 21 ‘Muslims in Charotar’ (Part III): 926-952. Translation of this section: Mayur and Monica Macwan, 2012. Mr. Odhavji H. Vadgama kindly lent me this precious book.
10 This information on the institute is based on a group interview with three teachers.
The initial immigration of Muslims to Anand was related to wider processes of rural-urban migration, and to the increasing opportunities for secular and religious education, agro-industry related businesses and non-agricultural employment in the fast-growing town. It was, however, only after 2002, in a direct response to the riots, that the wider area surrounding the initial Muslim housing societies of Nutannagar and Ismailnagar further developed into what is now known as a ‘Muslim area’. A brief explanation of these violent events is necessary here because references are made to them throughout the thesis.

There are many competing versions of this history, some highlighting the role of politicians in inciting and organising the violence, others highlighting the ‘clean chit’ given to the then Chief Minister of Gujarat, Narendra Modi. Despite the still ongoing discussions and court cases, there is considerable evidence of the involvement of political actors in the instigation and organisation of the violence. Dhattiwala and Biggs (2012, 504) have shown that Muslims were most vulnerable

### Table 3.4. Population by religious community, Anand town and urban outgrowth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Hindus</th>
<th>Muslims</th>
<th>Jains</th>
<th>Christians</th>
<th>Sikhs</th>
<th>Buddhists</th>
<th>Other religions</th>
<th>Total persons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>104,145</td>
<td>17,047</td>
<td>935</td>
<td>8,600</td>
<td>364</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>131,104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>118,355</td>
<td>25,099</td>
<td>1,972</td>
<td>9,963</td>
<td>579</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>156,050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of India, table C-1.
in places where the Hindu nationalist political party BJP had previously won around 33-36 percent of the vote, indicating that the violence served to attract more voters at the next election. Berenschot (2009), explaining the capacity and interest by political actors to organise religious violence through ethnography, has argued that shifting patterns of state-society interactions in Gujarat and growing insecurities due to integration of Gujarat’s economy in global markets cause increasing dependence of citizens on political actors to access state services, which accounts for the ability of Hindu nationalist organisations to mobilise large groups of (poor) people for rioting as a means of strengthening patronage networks (Berenschot 2009, 272-277, and for an overview of explanations 32-61, see also Breman 2002; 2004, 290, Simpson 2006b).

On 27 February 2002, a train stopping at the train station of Godhra in Gujarat caught fire, resulting in the deaths of 59 travellers. The cause of the fire was not clear, but the effect was three months of state-wide communal violence, with well-organised large-scale attacks on Muslims. Most of the travellers had been Hindus returning from Ajodhya, where they had been to celebrate the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP)’s construction of a temple on the grounds of a 16\textsuperscript{th}-century old mosque, a contested issue that had led to earlier communal violence, in 1992 (Dhattiwala and Biggs 2012, 486). Describing the fire on the train a ‘pre-planned terrorist attack’, the BJP government of Gujarat brought the 59 corpses to Ahmedabad railway station on February 28, one day after the fire (Patel, Padgaonkar, and Verghese 2002; Dayal 2009; in Dhattiwala and Biggs 2012, 486). This was further fanned by inflammatory media reports. Dhattiwala and Biggs continue:

On February 28 alone, 248 Muslims were killed. In three days, the death toll reached pogrom-like violence, almost entirely against Muslims, spread on an unprecedented scale in villages across the state with sporadic killings continuing until December that year. Qualitative evidence in media and academic reports suggests that the violence was the product of a well-organized ‘riot system’ even though the BJP presented it as spontaneous. (…) The government referred to the massacres as ‘disturbances’. There is evidence of police complicity in the violence in many places. In the aftermath, moreover, the police failed to properly investigate and prosecute (Dhattiwala and Biggs 2012, 486-487).

Violence on this scale was unprecedented in the state of Gujarat. According to official figures, 790 Muslims and 254 Hindus\textsuperscript{15} died as a result, but human rights
groups put the number of killings higher, at approximately 2000.\textsuperscript{16} The official figures record that a total of 223 people were reported missing, 2,548 sustained injuries, 919 were rendered widows and 606 children were orphaned. Brutalities included raping and maiming. A feature of the violence was the targeted destruction of property, of Muslim shrines, shops and houses, sometimes by large mobs of 2,000 or more attackers,\textsuperscript{17} resulting in widespread financial losses. These riots were different from previous communal violence in Gujarat, which had been largely confined to Ahmedabad, because they were widespread in rural parts of the state, affecting a total of 151 towns and 993 villages in Gujarat.\textsuperscript{18} There was violence in 19 districts. Anand district was among the 8 districts where violence was most intense.\textsuperscript{19} Local records of the district show that nineteen violent events occurred here (table 3.5) in towns including Borsad, Pedlad, and Umreth. Not included in these records, however, are the burning and looting of Muslim houses and shops in smaller villages such as Bedva, Navli, and Chikodra (reported by informants).

Table 3.5 Incidents reported in Times of India of the 2002 riots, district Anand

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of incident</th>
<th>Sub-district</th>
<th>Town/village</th>
<th>Killed</th>
<th>Cause of incident, as reported in newspaper</th>
<th>Whether a clash between police and attackers</th>
<th>Whether a clash between Hindus and Muslims</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 March</td>
<td>Anand</td>
<td>Ode</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Prev violence (communal)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 March</td>
<td>Anand/Vasad</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>Prev violence (communal)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 March</td>
<td>Anand</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Prev violence (communal)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 March</td>
<td>Anand</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Prev violence (communal)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 March</td>
<td>Adas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Protest against police action</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 March</td>
<td>Ank Bav</td>
<td>Umeta</td>
<td></td>
<td>Prev violence (communal)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 March</td>
<td>Borsad</td>
<td>Borsad</td>
<td></td>
<td>Prev violence (communal)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 April</td>
<td>Borsad</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Prev violence (communal)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 April</td>
<td>Borsad</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Prev violence (communal)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 September</td>
<td>Borsad</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Other (accident)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 March</td>
<td>Kambhat</td>
<td>Kambhat</td>
<td></td>
<td>Prev violence (communal)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 March</td>
<td>Kambhat</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Prev violence (communal)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 March</td>
<td>Pedlad</td>
<td>Pedlad</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Prev violence (communal)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 March</td>
<td>Pedlad</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Prev violence (communal)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


\textsuperscript{17} Compounding Injustice: The Government’s Failure to Redress Massacres in Gujarat. Human Rights Watch July 2002 15 (4 C).


A widely reported event in the area, in a village just a half-hour drive away from Anand, was the massacre of Ode. On March 1, 2002, a large mob, of an estimated 2,000 people, attacked approximately twenty Muslim homes. When members of several of the families took refuge in a three-storeyed house, the mob locked the doors from the outside, and threw burning rags, kerosene and petrol inside. In the fire, 23 people died, including 9 women and 9 children, and 6 people escaped by jumping off the roof. Of the 46 accused, 23 were found guilty by the district court in Anand (on April 9, 2012).20

Amidst all this turmoil, Anand remained relatively quiet with one stabbing incident recorded (27 March, table 3.5). The person killed was probably Hindu.21 In some parts of the town, Muslim shops were attacked. The Muslim student hostel in the campus area of Vallabh Vidyanagar was ransacked.22 What all residents of Anand felt was the curfew, which lasted for ten days and effectively confined people in their houses in an extremely tense situation. Muslim women remember how they gathered on rooftops in groups, with buckets of \textit{marchi} water (water boiled with pepper) to ward off potential attacks while their husbands were out on

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22 The identity of the victim is not recorded in the \textit{Times of India} record (table 3.5). When I asked some informants in Anand about this event, they were not aware about it, but one man remembered it and he thought the deceased was a Hindu.
23 I came to know of these events in Anand through people whose property had been looted or burned, or who had witnessed such incidents.
the streets, standing guard. But, ‘nothing happened in Anand town’ because ‘we are safe here’. The news of attacks in nearby villages, the massive influx of refugees camping on the local community grounds, and the arrival of many relatives, some of whom stayed over for weeks in the period, contextualise their idea that ‘nothing happened in Anand’ in comparison with what was happening elsewhere.

The violence displaced more than 200,000 people. Muslims sought safety in makeshift relief camps, in mosques, and in the homes of their relatives in Muslim-majority areas of nearby villages and towns. At least 104,318 people had sought refuge in relief camps by 28 April 2002, two months after the violence began. In Anand, refugees were accommodated in three refugee camps, and in mosques and community halls. The refugees came from 46 different villages, including the aforementioned village of Ode. Local leaders say that there were hundreds, possibly thousands of refugees. Their arrival made quite an impression on the long-term residents of the town. Men remember the period as a time of friendship and small acts of heroism, when they went out in groups to collect refugees from nearby villages by truck and helped to organise shelter and provisions. Young men and boys helped with the distribution of food in the camps. Some men became brokers, guiding visitors from all over India and even abroad who had come to provide financial and legal support. Support came from individuals and from associations, from Indian human rights activists in Mumbai, from Muslim associations in South India, from two young, possibly Canadian, women, from local Church organisations, and from a corporation associated with local (mainly Hindu) farmers.

When the violence died down, some refugees returned to their villages while others decided to stay on. For those willing to return to their villages, ‘rehabilitation plans’ were started by several NGOs in collaboration with local Muslim leaders from Anand and from the villages concerned. These plans aimed to rebuild and repair damaged houses in the villages of origin and to help people to (re)start their businesses. In the village of Ode, 63 new houses were built for people who had lost their houses, 62 for Muslim families and 1 for a Hindu family affected by the violence. This politics of return, which can be interpreted as an attempt to reclaim the villages as a shared space, took place in the context of notice boards put up in some villages announcing ‘This is a Hindu village’. Local leaders helped people to return to their original homes. During meetings they

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25 This number is derived from an interview with a resident of Anand who had been actively involved in the organisation of relief after the riots.
26 Personal communication with an Anand-based member of an informal group that helped to arrange this.
organised with the panchayats and other leaders of the villages, Muslim leaders demanded guarantees for the safety of the returnees. The leaders felt return was beneficial for the refugees because ‘life is cheaper’ in the village and because ‘they have some assets there’. There was a concern that the situation in refugee camps was untenable in the long term, and that the influx of so many unknown people might result in social tensions with the resident Muslim population in the places of arrival.

Still, not everyone was ‘rehabilitated’. When the government closed the relief camps in Gujarat (between July and October 2002), many refugees stayed on in the now-closed camps. According to human rights reports, this was ‘because they did not believe that their former homes were secure’. According to a local Muslim leader, it was (also) ‘because they saw the town and they realized it would be a good place for them: they could make some business there’. To accommodate the refugees who remained, special housing societies were constructed by various groups, including NGOs, community associations, and religious organisations. These aimed at the most destitute among the new arrivals, who did not have the means to organise housing by themselves. Eight such relief societies were built in Anand town, housing 1,049 people in a total number of 205 houses.

Conversations with residents of three colonies indicate that they originate from villages and towns in the direct vicinity. Residents include the former residents of Ode and other nearby villages, and from urban areas, including some from within the urban conglomeration of Anand itself. According to a survey by the NGO Jan Vikas, the average income of the internally displaced families had still not recovered to pre-2002 levels in 2011. Moreover, many colonies still face infrastructural problems, a lack of (government) facilities, and ownership of the
houses is not always clearly organised. These poor circumstances may be one of the reasons why some of the initial residents left the relief society within a few years. The departure of the refugees is not reported in the available records, but my own visits to three housing societies indicate that not all residents are riot victims. Those I spoke to included residents who had bought or rented the houses a few years later, when the original residents moved out. What took the original residents away, back to their village or perhaps elsewhere, could not be assessed.

The rapid growth of Anand town is not only due to poor and destitute refugees. Large stretches of newly constructed housing societies, with spacious free-standing two or three storey high bungalows, suggest the arrival of an incipient middle class of Muslims. Riot victims from relatively more well-to-do families moved to Anand by living with relatives for a few years, then finding their own houses in the town. These people faced financial loss after (part of) their properties in the villages were destroyed but still had the means to invest in a house in Anand using their own financial assets. Anand also attracted Muslims not directly affected by the riots who had been interested in moving to town for other reasons. Some of these newly arriving middle class families made the move because they were tempted to invest in the newly developing housing societies, or because Hindus sold them houses at affordable prices:

We came to Anand because of education, for the future of our children. Before 2002, this housing society was a Hindu society. The residents were Patel. Now, only one Patel family remains. We don’t know exactly what happened, but we know that this housing society was attacked during the riots. To be honest, it is only because of this that we could afford to buy this house at a relatively cheap price. The residents were in a hurry to get out. They moved to another part of town.34

The woman speaking here is a mother of four children, all of whom are enrolled in private educational institutions in or around the town. For her, moving to Anand was a golden opportunity because here her children have easy access to English medium schools and higher education and she herself is more mobile and free than she has ever been in the village. After her move, she has started to take an interest in Islamic education and in studying English.

Today, the area to the northeast of Anand stretches a long way along the main road leading into the town. The influx of so many people, poor and middle class

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34 This quote has been published, somewhat shortened, in Verstappen and Rutten (2015, 243).
alike, has caused Anand’s land prices to rise extremely rapidly, attracting investors who have started to build housing societies and apartment blocks in the town, advertising them along the road on large billboards. Many people bought a plot of land or a bungalow in Anand not to live there but merely as an investment, with the intention of simply reselling it at a profit after a few years. The local government has been slow to catch up with developments and most of the new buildings are not yet accessible via cemented roads.
The process of immigration has been paired to a process of increasing residential segregation, as indicated in the quote above. The old Anand town was characterised by a pattern of social ‘clustering’ in residential neighbourhoods on the basis of caste and occupation (Harris-White 2005, 11–12). The residents included Brahmins, Patidars, Ksatryas, artesans, Rabari, and Muslims. This older residential pattern has been replaced by increasing socio-spatial segregation on the basis of religious identity. Where Muslims moved in, middle class Hindus moved out, although poor Hindu labourers remained in tent-like houses near the construction sites and along the roads and railway tracks. The visibility of their shacks in slum-like patches on both sides of the ‘overbridge’ seems to further highlight the marginalisation of the area: these urban poor and travelling labourers are just as much outsiders to middle class Hindu society as Muslims are. There are Hindu and Muslim merchants in the bustling market place called the ‘supermarket’ too, but these Hindus are not from locally powerful Hindu groups, they are Sindhis, immigrants from Sindh in what is now Pakistan, and Punjabis, immigrants from the Punjab (table 3.6).

Table 3.6. Shop owners in Anand’s central market area, ‘Supermarket’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification of shop owners</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Subtotal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vohra</td>
<td>48</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nadiad Vohra</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Muslims</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sindhi</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjabi</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total respondents</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: This record was established by research assistant Sajid Vahora, who did a survey of 100 shops on the ground floor of ‘Supermarket’, the central market place of Anand town.

The area continues to be of special significance for Christians because of Gamdi, the local centre of the Mission even if Christians also gradually moved out. Muslims offer good prices for their houses, enabling some of them to resettle elsewhere, in a newer suburb a few kilometres further off, away from the still-arriving Muslims and the sound of the *azan* that can now be heard five times a day from all directions in the old Christian neighbourhood. Today, the Christian schools and colleges provide education to many Muslim children.

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When asked why they moved to Anand, many Muslim families say that the main reason was better education for their children and to have a better, urban, lifestyle. While the violence of 2002 and the idea of safety can also be reasons for the move, it is important to understand this within the wider context of urbanisation and the growth of the town as an emerging centre of secular and religious education. In the following sections, I further explore the desire for safety and education among the residents.
Safety

This is a Muslim area. Over there, Vidyanagar, it is a Hindu area. It is hard to live in a Hindu area.

Why is it hard to live in a Hindu area?
Well, we have riots you see. For a long time everything can be fine, but when election time comes, riots can happen, and at that time we are not safe in a Hindu area (retired university professor).

What is it that makes Anand a safe place? Are relations between Hindus and Muslims somehow more peaceful here than elsewhere? Most of my neighbours do not think so. Their sense of safety is derived from their numerical majority in their neighbourhood. They find safety in numbers. That some Hindus rarely dare to visit them anymore since the riots indicates a sense of lost trust, but it is also a source of safety.

Next, I explore experiences of sociality and space in the town and its relation to the recent history from the perspective of Majestic Housing Society, where I lived during the research. In the evenings, after dark, I regularly accompanied my female neighbours on their walks in the neighbourhood. On 100 Feet Road, my neighbours pointed out that the road is the ‘division’ between Hindus and Muslims in Anand: on one side is a Hindu residential area, on the other side is the Muslim area. With a temple on one side of the road and mainly mosques and churches on the other side of the road, this distinction was observable, even if no material boundaries hint at such a rigid division between Hindu and Muslim areas. Before 2002, neighbours told me, the division had not been so clear. But during the 2002 riots, police stood guard on this very road to make sure nobody crossed the line. Afterwards, the middle class Hindus who had lived on the ‘Muslim side’ had left in a hurry and the division, which some called ‘partition’, was complete. Still, some Hindus and many Christians remain in the neighbourhood. When I spoke to them, some said they were happy to live in the area while others indicated that they wanted to move out but did not (yet) have the means to do so.

36 In this section, I approach this question from the perspective of Muslim residents of Anand. For academic discussions on why some places remained peaceful while others did not, see Berenschot (2009, 234–268; see also Dhattiwala and Biggs 2012).
The following statements were made by my neighbours in Majestic Housing Society:

Anand is safe because so many Muslims are in Anand. We are one group, a big group. The railway station and bus stop are ours. If there are any difficulties, we are safe here.

We are strong here. Hindus know that Muslims will fight back if they are attacked.

We are safe here. Because on that side [pointing left] there are the butchers. On the other side [pointing right] there is Ismailnagar. So nothing can harm us. *What do you mean, how do the butchers make this area safe?* They have knives. People don’t dare to pass.

Safety is provided for Muslims in Anand not by concrete walls or material fortification (as observed in Kutch by Simpson 2006b, 331), but by the fear of the Muslim Other itself. While the butchers have knives, the people of Ismailnagar are believed to have *talwars* (swords), and are locally (in)famous for their role in the 2002 riots. The statements of ‘we are safe here’ and ‘we are strong here’ are not empty phrases but lived experience, and this is illustrated by the fact that it is normal and respectable for women to walk about here at night without male patronage.

The story of Ismailnagar, a housing society a fifteen minute walk from ‘Majestic Housing Society’, is instructive and deserves some further explanation. Hindus and Muslims both know ‘Ismailnagar’ – Hindus use the term to indicate the entire ‘Muslim area’, Muslims consider Ismailnagar a specific housing society within it. Both affirm that Ismailnagar can be a ‘dangerous’ place. They say that ‘not even the police dares to enter’ Ismailnagar. Ismailnagar is one of the areas where refugees arrived in 2002, and it appears that the police tried to enter the area but were prevented from doing so by angry stone-throwing residents. It is said the police used tear gas, and that the police van was attacked. A young Muslim (a resident of a housing society adjacent to Ismailnagar) told the story of the violent confrontation between the police and the residents of Ismailnagar:

Ismailnagar is very dangerous. [In 2002], Hindu people were beating Muslim people at the village. Hindu people [set] fire [on] Muslim people’s homes, vehicles, shops. Fire everything. In Ismailnagar and in my society, Muslim
people made one big camp. Village people came here and we are helping. We are giving food, tea, everything.

So Ismailnagar... when police came, they are throwing to police. Police throwing to peoples. Tear gas. This is all Muslim area.

Why is Ismaelnagar dangerous?

That means all are fearing. Ismailnagar [made a] name in Delhi parliament. Because all people are very angry at that time. They are doing dangerous things. Anand police told to Gujarat government, government told to Delhi government: ‘Ismailnagar is very dangerous’. All Hindus fearing to pass this area. That time, not now.37

As a result of the ‘dangerous’ image of Ismailnagar, residents of it observe that ‘after the riots, my Patel [Hindu] friends don’t dare to enter our area anymore, even though they have known me for many years’. Throughout the research period, this was confirmed by middle class Hindus whenever I met them. Their stories of ‘Ismailnagar’ involved rape and more horrific dangers. A couple I befriended made serious efforts to change my mind about visiting ‘Ismailnagar’, telling me it would be better to do research among Muslims in a place where there would be ‘not so many of them’. When they realised this would not happen, they followed up with a series of well-meant warnings about what to do and not do in the area: ‘never go out after dark, never ask a stranger for directions, never trust anybody.’

The residents of Ismailnagar are not the only ones who receive limited visits from (middle class) Hindus. As mentioned previously, outsiders are usually unclear about where exactly ‘Ismailnagar’ begins and ends, and equate this particularly renowned housing society with the entire stretch of land near the railway tracks where Muslims live. In Majestic Housing Society too, where I lived myself, bringing over Hindu acquaintances caused some anxieties. An effort to bring a Hindu acquaintance to my house ended up in disaster as darkness fell and she panicked: ‘How can you live here?’ My remarks that the area was perfectly safe were met with disbelief or with praise over my bravery. A different kind of anxiety arose when I gave a Hindu man a lift on the back of my scooty and made the mistake to take the short-cut along the butcher street, exposing a vegetarian to the stench of meat and the sight of blood. These and more anxious reactions towards Muslims have also been observed by other scholars of Gujarat, who have analysed these more in-depth then I can do here. Ghassem-Fachandi argues that ‘fear surrounds the “Muslim” as she invokes the possibility of terrorism and calls for heightened

37 This is a shortened fragment from an audio-recorded conversation. In the conversation, it was also noted that ‘some Hindu people stay here individually, not by society’.
security measures’ (2010, 557), and discusses the exaggerated perceptions of the
supposed unruly character of Muslim areas in Ahmedabad (2008, 71) in connection
with the disgust for meat among Hindus (2010). Simpson notes in Kutch that
‘many Hindus simply do not have relations with Muslims to disabuse them of the
impression that all Muslims are bootleggers, polygamous and gorge on beef’
(2006, 335). He argues that the misrepresentations of Muslims are brought into
existence for reasons other than to represent the truth, that is, ‘re-imagining’ the
state as a “Hindu” entity personified by elite and non-elected intermediaries’
(Simpson 2006b, 333).

Muslims distance themselves from the image of the Muslim goonda (criminal)
who supposedly lives in Ismailnagar, but they also derive some benefit from Hindu
fear of entering the area, which shields them, protects them from harm. The myths
serve as a safety precaution. The other side of this is that the police and some other
state actors do indeed refrain from entering the area. The elected municipal
councillor representing this area explained that ‘there are no facilities whatsoever
in Ismailnagar. No water, no drainage, no streetlight. There is no playground for
children, no bank, and only one government school.’ An Anand municipality
bureaucrat explained that Ismailnagar is the only part of Anand where no town
planning is intended.38 The suburban territories of the Muslim middle class
generally have more facilities than Ismailnagar, such as street lights and gutter.
Metalled roads are rare across the ‘Muslim area’, although some roads were
constructed towards the end of my research period in 2012.

Hindu fear of entering the ‘Muslim area’ does not stop Muslims from entering into
‘Hindu areas’. Shared rickshaws and local buses are available within a few minutes
walk from most locations within the area, on the main road. Muslim students daily
go into ‘Hindu areas’ for their higher education. Vallabh Vidyannagar, where only
2% of residents is Muslim (table 3.7) is also a popular place for entertainment for
young men and couples, who venture out here to the fun fair, to restaurants or to
window shop. Venturing into other parts of the town occasionally causes anxiety
over safety, as explained by a grandfather, who was relieved every time his
granddaughters returned from their coaching classes in Vallabh Vidyannagar: ‘you
never know when a riot will break out.’ Still, these and other practices of travel are
commonplace.

38 This is because the implementation of a town planning scheme in Ismailnagar would ‘create problems. It is a congested
old area. You cannot plan in there’. A former member of the municipal council explained that there is also considerable
confusion about the layout of the plots.
Confidence inside, marginalisation outside

From my observations, I draw that, besides safety from violence, there is a second sense of ‘safety’ related to living in such a neighbourhood: the comfort of not having to deal with the stigma of being Muslim, the comfort of being Muslim within the space that is ‘ours’. This was evident when I talked to neighbours about their experiences in education and in the professional sphere. For example, when one of my neighbours tried wearing a *burqa* for a while, then quickly abandoned the practice, I asked her why. She explained how she had tried to be a good Muslim after her *Haj*, but also wanted to continue her studies at Sardar Patel University, for which she undertook regular trips to Vallabh Vidyanagar on her *scooty*. When visiting Sardar Patel University for her exams, she felt very uncomfortable wearing a *burqa*: ‘Everybody is looking at me!’ For students, traveling into Vallabh Vidyanagar can thus generate experiences of being ‘othered’ as Muslims, which they do not experience when they are in the neighbourhood.

I have noted earlier that the availability of educational opportunities is an important reason for rural families moving into town. Ambitions are high but are tempered among Muslims by the fact that the more prestigious institutions for elementary and higher education in the town openly pursue discriminatory policies of enrolment. The openness with which these policies are discussed by teachers and trustees of educational institutes is striking. Some popular private schools accept Muslim students, but others are selective and openly acknowledge they have a policy of discriminating at enrolment on the basis of religion. Private

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*Source: Census 2001, Table C0101, State 24 (Gujarat).*

**Table 3.7 Population by religious community**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Total population</th>
<th>Hindu</th>
<th>Muslim</th>
<th>Christian</th>
<th>Jain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anand, urban conglomerate</td>
<td>156,050</td>
<td>118,355</td>
<td>25,099</td>
<td>9,963</td>
<td>1,972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vallabh Vidyanagar</td>
<td>29,378</td>
<td>28,026</td>
<td>628</td>
<td>346</td>
<td>261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Census 2001, Table C0101, State 24 (Gujarat).*
and semi-government schools and colleges managed by Hindu trusts tend to give priority to Hindu students, schools managed by a Christian trust give priority to Christian students, and some of them have a policy of only accepting exceptionally bright Muslims from good families.

The overttness of these policies became clear during a research visit to one of the more prestigious schools in Anand, revered among Muslim families as a ‘good school’ but also known for its discriminatory policies. The school is managed by a Hindu trust and most of the teachers are also Hindu. In a vigorous group discussion with almost all the teachers and the director of the school, they gave their reasons for supporting the school’s policy of only accepting exceptionally bright Muslims from ‘good families’. They felt that most Muslim families are ‘backward’ and ‘ineducated’, and therefore hard to teach and discipline. They also found it hard to communicate with the parents. Further reasons given were the alleged violent nature of Muslims and the desire to keep the classroom a vegetarian environment. While the teachers hastened to say that they had also seen ‘exceptionally bright’ Muslim students and that it had been a pleasure to work with them, they supported the school’s policy of allowing only a limited number of Muslim students.

My neighbours in Anand know that these policies exist and often talked about them. Stories of rejection are discouraging, but schools known to discriminate are still considered desirable places to send one’s child to, partly because enrolment here indicates acceptance by the majority society. The reasoning among Muslims is that if a student was accepted to such-and-such school, he/she must be extraordinarily brilliant, or perhaps his/her family is well-connected, or has paid a large ‘donation’ to secure entrance. Once inside the school, students are confronted with mainstream ideas about Muslims among peers, which leads to feelings of being different as ‘Muslim’, sometimes for the first time in their lives. When their peers find out the student is a Muslim, they fall silent in wonder, unable to hide their amazement, or respond in well-intended phrases like: ‘You are so kind, I would never have thought you are Muslim!’ At school, Muslim children hear, for the first time, that others refer to their neighbourhood as ‘mini Pakistan’, which is quickly understood to be a ‘bad name’.

After school, the quest for employment begins. The tragedy is that the economic growth of Gujarat since the mid-1990s has not led to an increase in ‘decent employment’ (Hirway 2012b, 10). Formal employment in the most desirable public sector has declined in absolute terms, while organised or formal employment in the private sector has increased slowly but gives less job security (Hirway 2012b, 40) These experience were narrated to me by young men and women participating in higher education institutions in Anand.
13–14; Hirway 2012a). Failure to get a job results in complaints of discrimination, although these are always hard to prove. Here is a statement illustrating the feeling of despair that can result from discrimination, made by a young man just after he heard that a friend had been rejected for a job as an English teacher at a semi-government school in Anand:

Where can we go? We are not treated as Indian citizens, where can we go now? Muslims are not killed in Gujarat anymore. Riots are abolished. But now they are doing social exclusion. In the schools, students are discriminated. Hindu students get more attention, Muslims are neglected, and many of them drop out and don’t get highly educated. If they graduate, they can’t get a job. Nobody hires them. [About his friend:] They told him ‘We cannot hire a Muslim.’ Openly! They are not ashamed to say it!

Confidence is easily damaged outside. All of this shows that there is a tension between, on the one hand, experiences of strength and confidence within the neighbourhood and, on the other hand, concerns about safety and experiences of marginalisation outside. As a researcher, I myself became aware of this tension between the inside and the outside when Muslim informants tried to teach me the skills of moving in a Hindu area. Here is the advice of a professor for my excursions into the campus area of Vallabh Vidyanagar:

I want to advise you, don’t tell people that you are studying Muslims. Not in Vidyanagar. If you do, they will respond differently to you and keep distance. Just tell them ‘Charotar’.

For my neighbours, apart from social workers and some politicians, discrimination and exclusion are not subjects to be discussed at length or to try to change, but rather facts of life one has to learn to deal with. These skills are not taught in school but are very much part of the everyday life. Discussions revolve around practical solutions to known problems: getting one’s children into the right school, getting one’s son into a good job despite discrimination. Those who succeed in finding a job in Hindu-majority professional environments say that trust gained and maintained was key to their professional success.

Looking at the five major characteristics of a ‘ghetto’ outlined by Gayer and Jaffrelot (2012, 22; on the basis of Wacquant 2008), I conclude that the ‘Muslim area’ of Anand fits the first three of the five outlined criteria of a ‘ghetto’:
... an element of social and/or political constraint over the residential options of a given population; the class and caste diversity of these localities, which regroup individuals of different social backgrounds on the basis of ethnic or religious ascribed identities; the neglect of these localities by state authorities, translating in a lack of infrastructure, educational facilities, etc.; the estrangement of the locality and its residents from the rest of the city due to lack of public transportation as well as limited job opportunities and restricted access to public spaces beyond the locality; the subjective sense of closure of residents, related to patterns of estrangement from the rest of the city’ (Gayer and Jaffrelot 2012, 22).

The first two criteria apply, and most residents would agree with the third criteria by pointing at the absence of metalled roads in most parts of the area and at the limited presence or low quality of government services in education and health care. But the criteria of estrangement and sense of closure do not precisely fit the case study of Anand town, since travel into ‘Hindu areas’ on public buses and scooties is a normalised and everyday affair. It is true that there is the experience of being othered when traveling outside the neighbourhood, which could be seen as a form of estrangement. However, people still travel, send their children to school in ‘Hindu areas’, do business with Hindus, learn how to deal with obstacles and discuss how to overcome them with each other. As this deserves more discussion than above, I will return to the notions of estrangement and closure in Chapter 4, where I show in greater detail how mobility beyond the neighbourhood takes shape.

Social distinction through education and religious reform

If status loss is a risk of venturing outside, there are still small and bigger ways in which Muslims can affirm a high social status inside, as long as they stay within the own neighbourhood, safe and on top of things. While the internal distinctions of community, class and religious difference go noticed by outsiders, they make all the difference in the social life of the neighbourhood. I now turn to these internal processes of distinction.

Education

We now enter a street that leads to an extended neighbourhood of spacious free-standing two to three storey high bungalows, freshly painted and surrounded by
low walls and terraces, interspersed occasionally with empty, yet-to-be-developed plots. We take a look into the living room of a spacious bungalow in ‘Majestic Housing Society’. Morning starts here with the sound of the majids calling for prayer from every direction. This is followed by the loud thumps of housewives and their servants washing clothes by hand behind the houses. Next, men and some women leave their houses to attend business or work, youth travel to school, housewives prepare lunch and dinner, clean and care for their houses. In the evenings, men gather in small groups in front of the paan shops on the streets, women visit each other in their homes, go for walks, or enjoy the daily ritual of watching TV dramas.

The most popular TV drama series during my stay here was Diya aur Bati, in which the main character is an educated young woman married into an uneducated family. The main character has countless problems with her in-laws as a result of her education, hiding her knowledge to prevent her in-laws from finding out she is educated but failing at the most basic household chores such as producing round chapattis. Such themes are recognisable for these women, for whom the benefits and drawbacks of education are a daily subject of conversation. ‘Watch and learn’, the eldest woman in the room instructed a younger woman as we watched: ‘You may have BCom (Bachelor of Commerce) but your mother-in-law will love you for your cooking!’ Though the characters of the drama are Hindus, their actions are followed with the attentiveness of a close relative and their dilemmas are recognised.

‘Education’ was on everyone’s lips throughout my stay in Anand, and I started to think of education as a symbol of community (Cohen 2000 [1985], 19), more particularly, a symbol of an urban middle class community that derives its prosperity and social standing from social and cultural capital acquired through education (van Wessel 2001, 52–92). Among the first things exchanged when two new people meet each other here is the educational level of their children. Education is also among the first things mentioned in local gossip, in the sense that criticism directed at some common acquaintance is almost inevitably accompanied by the qualifier that he/she is ‘not educated’.

Overall, Anand has been particularly attractive to Muslim families who value education, that is, who feel that their children should attend college. As I have mentioned, Anand has been an important centre of education in the region. In 2014, Sardar Patel University alone had more than 25,000 students spread over 26 postgraduate departments and 87 affiliated colleges. Besides that, there are more than 125 secondary schools and high schools in the urban conglomerate of Anand and its surrounding villages (Verstappen and Rutten 2015, 234). According to a Muslim leader,
Many people came to Anand because it is close to Vidyanagar [the campus area]. There, they can provide their children with top class education. That is why people have migrated there, not only because of the riots.

For many families I met, the choice to move to Anand town was directly or indirectly connected to their desire to send their children to higher education. I found it interesting that education has caught the imagination here so much even though only a proportion of the parents are ‘educated’ themselves – as indicated in the household survey for the head of households. In this housing society, while 33% of the heads of household holds a bachelor’s degree, 29% is not educated above 10th standard (table 3.8). In the overall survey of six housing societies, the percentage of heads of households with education at or below 10th standard is even higher, 41%. The emphasis on education is aimed at the next generation, the children now growing up in Anand town.

Table 3.8. Educational level of heads of household in ‘Majestic Housing Society’ and in the other surveyed households

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Level</th>
<th>Majestic Housing Society</th>
<th>Total houses surveyed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Illiterate</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSC or below (10th pass)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSC or below (12th pass/old 11th pass)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical degrees (e.g. I.T.I.)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate (BA/BCom/BSc/BEd/LLB/etc)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA/MCom/MSc/MEd/etc</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closed house</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


I have spent some time asking why my neighbours want their children to be educated. Their explanations are partly economic and partly social. It is obvious that education serves various economic purposes. One strategic reason to send a child into (higher) education is the hope that he or she may be able to go abroad on student visa. The presence of transnational migrants is very important in the neighbourhood, a subject to which I turn in Chapters 5 and 6. Another reason to
send children into (higher) education is that it is seen as the main venue to achieve upward mobility within India: through education, they can access white collar jobs. This is of particular importance in Anand, where the public sector has expanded considerably when Anand became the district capital of the new Anand district in 1997, leading to an increase in jobs and businesses catering for the public sector. Government jobs are seen as the most secure and profitable source of employment in the region, and these lower government workers were quite prominent among my neighbours. They were numerically not the largest group (6 out of 22 heads of household, plus 2 engineers, table 2.1), but they were prominent in the sense that they were noticeably among the more well-to-do households, with large bungalows, sometimes air-conditioning, or maids to help do the housework.

For families with capital and a profitable business, education is not directly an economic necessity to achieve wealth, although education can be a strategy to get into ‘better business’, bigger business, or a more high-tech kind of business than they have been traditionally engaged in. Education can also be a strategy of diversification, so that some of the sons can continue the family business while others can get into paid employment or go abroad. This diversification strategy can be linked to the history of riots. A Vohra businessman explained:

Education plus business is progress. Many families nowadays believe that one son can continue the business and the other can go into professions, or maybe he can try to go abroad. This change occurred after 2002.

*How does education protect against violence?*

Business brings risk. Many shops were burnt and our business for example, we lost 10 lakh\(^{41}\) in properties. Among Muslims there was a total loss of business. And every so many years there are riots. After each riot we have to think where to start the new shop, and you have to invest and for one year you have no income. But those who are working in government, in professions, have an income. Their monthly income is safe.

Besides the economic reasons of anticipated wealth and social security, social reasons are given to explain the emphasis on education. Degrees have become an important marker of status and, among the middle class, education is now often a requirement in the marriage market. Education gives, in the words of a teacher in a local government school, ‘awareness’, ‘understanding’, ‘civilisation’. As

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\(^{41}\) A lakh is Rs. 100,000: the amount lost equals € 13,710. Conversion through http://themoneyconverter.com/EUR/INR.aspx, accessed October 7, 2015.
elsewhere in Gujarat, such as in the city of Vadodara (Baroda, van Wessel 2001, 62-92), English medium private education is emphasised and has become an important mark of social distinction. Parents are prepared to pay hefty school fees and even large ‘donations’ in order to send their children to English medium primary and secondary schools, which are thought to provide better access to higher education and which bring the children in contact with other middle class children. Education is more than a means to get a job, it is part of a practice of social distinction to attain self-worth. This distinctive function of education has been described as important for the Indian middle class, the class that is most dependent on cultural capital (Deshpande 2004; cf. Bourdieu 1984; see also Dickey 2012).

The politics of education in the neighbourhood are such that it is not enough to educate one’s own children, it is deemed necessary that the entire community takes up education. Some prominent educated families said that they feel the need to ‘set an example’ for others ‘in the community’, and to take on a leading role in this matter. A Vohra man explained:

Even those people who are building houses [manual labourers] nowadays send their children to school. And we, the Vohra community, provide help to people from other communities to become educated. We are helping their children to study.

This stress on education is confirmed by the presence of five primary schools managed by Muslims in Anand town (three of which by a Vohra trust), offering education to the local poor at very cheap rates or even for free. The emphasis on educating the poor is in line with the values of the organisers, and can also be seen as a response to nation-wide discussions about the ‘backward’ position of Muslims, which have revealed a lack of (access to) education of Muslims in India. The trustee of one school explained: ‘the riots made us realize that the government is not doing anything for us. We have to take care of ourselves: uplift our own community.’ The efforts are comparable to efforts to ‘uplift the community’ in Ahmedabad (Turèl 2007; Jaffrelot and Thomas 2012, 77).

All of this is in line with the analysis that

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42 Enrolment and continuation rates at elementary level are lowest for Muslims, compared to other religious groups (Sachar et al. 2006, 244). Between the 1999-2000 NSS round and the 2004-05 one, the decline in illiteracy has been much higher in the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) (9-6%) than among Muslims (4.8%).

43 To clarify, I refer here to schools offering secular education.
... education is a particularly attractive development idea because it offers marginalized groups a model of achieved status distinct from ascribed definitions of respect. This is especially important for communities such as Muslims (...) who have been the victims of social and spatial exclusion based upon their religion (...). Nevertheless, (...) Muslim young men's definition of themselves as educated people occurs largely within the terms set by rural elites. In forwarding notions of education as development, these educated young men did not seek to undermine established principles of hierarchy, but alter the terms upon which backwardness are defined (Jeffrey, Jeffery, and Jeffery 2004a, 975).

In sum, education is the talk of the day in many households in Anand town, where distinctions are drawn between the 'educated' and the 'uneducated'. The emphasis on education entails educating one's own children in English medium schools but also starting or supporting Gujarati medium primary schools, which offer affordable education to the local poor and employment for young school teachers. The emphasis on education also explain the urgency in the discussions about discrimination in English medium private schools in Anand.

All of this is rather different from the situation described in Mahemdabad: Heitmeyer says that Vohras have traditionally downplayed the importance of formal schooling in lieu of vocational training or apprenticeship, even if she also observes a rise in educational level (Heitmeyer 2009a, 80–81). In Anand, this ‘traditional’ attitude towards education can be observed among some very wealthy business families, who have achieved their status without degrees but, as I have explained, even they are discussing the pros and cons of education for the next generation. Overall, ‘education’ seems to be an important value for the residents of Anand. Middle class families describe the move from the village to Anand as one that enabled them to attain education, urban professions, and a more modern or urban lifestyle.
Students at the Sardar Patel University (2011)

Students on the way to the campus area, on a local bus (2011)
Religious reform

Besides secular education, religious education is an important feature of the urban experience. Religion is also an important means of making internal distinctions in the everyday social life of the neighbourhood. Residents identify two main religious groups in their neighbourhood, ‘Tablighis’ and ‘Sunnis’. The term ‘Tablighi’, sometimes used interchangeably with the term ‘Jamati’, refers to the religious reform movement of Tablighi Jamaat popular in South Asia. In this section, I explore how residents talk about religious distinctions and contextualise my findings in relation to anthropological literature on Islamic reform elsewhere in India.

Most residents of Majestic Housing Society identify as ‘Tablighi’. My neighbour Shahinben is one of them. She feels the Tablighi Jamaat fits in well with her lifestyle because it encourages people to educate themselves and to read and think on their own. The advantage of the Tablighi Jamaat is that ‘you don’t need a religious teacher to tell you what to do’, how to pray, how to celebrate festivals, or how to behave. The ability to read books independently, books available in the market place in Gujarati, Hindi and English, clearly installs a sense of social worth. This religious empowerment is enhanced by the ‘de-hierarchising’ discourse of the Tablighi Jamaat, which offers common people, both men and women, the opportunity to become teachers and preachers (Jasani 2008, 449). Shahinben is not a preacher and in fact rarely prays, but, as one of the more highly educated women in the neighbourhood, with a Bachelor’s degree in English, another degree in Education and working as an English teacher in a local school, the possibility of independent religious learning professed by the Tablighi Jamaat appeals to her. Her feelings are congruent with those of middle class Muslims, Hindus and Christians elsewhere in India, for example in Kerala, who ‘associate religious reformism with a self-consciously “modern” outlook; the promotion of education; rallying of support from the middle classes’ (Osella and Osella 2008b, 317).

Shahinben often explained to me what she thinks of ‘Sunnis’ people, the other prominent group of Muslims in the town. Sunnis are locally referred to as ‘bapuwallahs’ (the followers of bapu) or as ‘Suni bapu’. This is because they are guided by a bapu, whom Shahinben describes as a phoney religious teacher, who makes a living by extracting money from his followers. Bapu can be found in

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44 Muslims outside of Anand, as well as some critics within Anand itself, tend to get confused by this local term ‘Suni’ because ‘Suni’ Islam is usually seen as an umbrella category defined against Shia Islam. In Anand, the distinction between ‘Sunnis’ and ‘Tablighis’ refers to an internal distinction within this umbrella category of ‘Suni’ Islam. There are Shia communities in Anand too (Momins from north Gujarat, Khojas and Dawoodi Bohras), but their distinct religious practices rarely cause discussions with other Muslims. Shias constitute a small minority in the town and do not intermarry with other Muslims, and non-Shia Muslims feel no need to argue with them about religious matters. The discussion that matters in Anand, because it plays out within families, is the distinction between ‘Tablighis’ and ‘Sunnis’.
dargahs (shrines of deceased bapus) and they sometimes visit the houses of the bapuwallahs ‘to get more money’. Their ‘business’, Shahinben explains, is performing ‘magic’ and other rituals that have ‘no Islamic purpose’. Their followers, she feels, are ignorant, uneducated, misguided. At the festival of Moharam, when young men passed our house in noisy processions, striking themselves on the chest on the rhythm of chants memorialising the death of Imam Hussein, Shahinben and the other women in our neighbourhood stood to watch the spectacle in silence and made disapproving comments afterwards. This practice of Taziya processions during Moharam is common among Sunnis in Anand, but my Tablighi neighbours perceived it as a practice of the poor and uneducated. The proper way of mourning Imam Hussein during Moharam, Shahinben explained to me, is not to feast but to fast.45

An overview of mosques in Anand shows that the Tablighi Jamaat is the dominant religious group among Muslims in Anand town: a research assistant counted 51 mosques, 34 of which are connected to the Tablighi Jamaat, while he labelled 16 mosques as ‘Sunni bapu’ (table 3.9). There are only two dargahs in Anand while some nearby villages and smaller towns have many more. Visiting these shrines associated with Sunnis was taboo for my neighbours. Having read about dargahs in Gujarat I was keen to visit the dargahs of Anand, and kept asking around if someone was going and could take me along, but most women I knew were uninterested. When I found a woman to take me to the main dargah, I was subsequently subjected to questions by laughing neighbours about what I had seen and how much money I had paid to the bapu. This situation is extremely different from descriptions of the smaller town of Mahemdbad, which is ‘dotted with dargahs and mazars’, and where such sites ‘remain a socially-acceptable and popular venue for worship amongst many Mahemdbadis’ (Heitmeyer 2011, 489).

Table 3.9. Mosques in Anand

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Constructed before 2002</th>
<th>Constructed after 2002</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tablighi Jamaat</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Sunni bapu’ mosques</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other mosque</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: This record was established by a research assistant, who went around Anand town on a motorcycle and asked about all the mosques he knew of. In addition to the mosques, two dargahs were counted. Shia mosques were not taken into account.

Despite all the talk about ‘Sunnis’ and ‘Tablighis’ as two clearly distinguishable categories, it soon became evident that divisions run within families. One day, while I was in the living room of Shahinben, her maternal uncle arrived, clearly upset. Talking agitatedly and rapidly, he explained about a row he had just had with his brother: he had been performing prayer for his deceased parents when his brother had suddenly left the house, saying he did not want to be part of it. Shahinben offered tea and listened, trying to provide some comfort. After her uncle had left, she turned to me and explained that the uncle was a ‘Sunni’, and that his brother was ‘Tablighi’. She felt that the Tablighi brother had been right to leave the house, as the Sunni prayer had been inappropriate. She concluded that her uncle was ‘uneducated’ and ‘ignorant’, and seemed to pity him. This scene was one of many observations that showed that the divisions between ‘Sunnis’ and ‘Tablighis’ run within the families themselves. Later on, Shahinben admitted that her husband had called a bapu to their house, when their family had been going through a crisis. She did not believe in the ‘magic’ but in that crisis situation she also did not stop her then desperate husband trying.

These descriptions of religious orientations among Muslims will not surprise the reader familiar with the rich literature on Islamic reform movements in South Asia. Reform movements are as old as Islam itself, were particularly spurred in the eighteenth and second half of the twentieth century (Robinson 2008), and have emerged in very diverse forms in different localities across South Asia (Jasani 2008; Osella and Osella 2008a; Osella and Osella 2008b; Osella and Osella 2011; Simpson 2003; Simpson 2008; see also Gardner 2001 [1995], 229–268). Anthropologists have observed that their informants tend to broadly distinguish between two versions of Islam: on the one hand a ‘traditional Islam’, a mystical form of Islam in which saints act as intermediaries between people and God, and, on the other hand, a ‘reformist Islam’, in which people develop a more direct relation with God through study of the Islamic texts, prayer and reflection, and ritual sobriety (Gellner 1969, 7–8; Gellner 1992, 9; in Simpson 2006a, 14).

The binary view on Islam, narrated by my informants and a recurrent theme in academic representations of Islam in South Asia, has been disqualified as a valid theory for understanding religious practices: what people do is more complex than what they say they do, and even what they say is often more multifaceted and dynamic than can be contained in a binary worldview (Osella and Osella 2008a, 250; Simpson 2008; Gardner 2001 [1995], 236). If the two strands of Islam exist in the minds of people as a rhetorical device, they should not be seen as mutually exclusive realities or as properties of distinct sectarian groups, but rather as
‘potential courses of action’ available to an individual (Simpson 2006a, 108–109). Individuals selectively appropriate and denounce aspects of the spiritual repertoires available to them, and their choices may vary over time and within families. In Anand too, families are literally divided by religious discussions about which potential courses of action to take.

In terms of class, Islamic reform has been described as a device for the rich to reinforce their economically dominant position through expressing religious superiority and modernity (Gardner 2001 [1995], 236–237) and as a means of upward mobility for lower- and middle-ranked caste groups (Jasani 2008, 453). Religious reform has also been associated with rural-urban distinctions, as observed by Heitmeyer when visiting Anand with her informants from the smaller town of Mahemdabad. Vohra Muslims in Mahemdabad observe purdah and Islamic tenets such as the five daily prayers less strictly than their urban relatives in cities such as Anand and Ahmedabad, and they associate manifestations of piety with a more ‘Islamised middle-class urban lifestyle’ (Heitmeyer 2009a, 174). My neighbours in Anand confirm this view. They observe that new arrivals who lived in a village before settling in town tend to fall ‘under the influence’ of the religious atmosphere in Anand town after some time, and then gradually reform their religious practices. They see this as a normal part of their process of adaption from a rural to a more urban and modern lifestyle.

There has been some discussion over whether reform should be seen as a break with tradition, or as an allegedly ‘foreign’ influence on Indian Muslims (Osella and Osella 2008a, 251). In Anand, as in Ahmedabad (Jasani 2008), one could pose the question of if and how reform is related to the process of reconstruction in the aftermath of the 2002 riots, as the aftermath of the riots has been linked to renewed proliferation of religious institutions. The survey of mosques (table 3.4) in Anand shows that the number of mosques almost doubled after the riots. However, this growth is not only due to the reform movement: the number of mosques of both groups, Sunni and Tablighi, doubled. Besides, the survey shows that 18 of the 34 Tablighi mosques in town were already established before 2002. Religious reform therefore has a longer history.

Overall, my findings suggest a long-term local embeddedness of religious reform in Anand and in the wider region of central Gujarat. Religious reform can be seen as part of a long-standing tradition of reform in the region, a tradition cherished today in a newly constructed impressive white madrassa towering over the main road, which is the new residence of the older educational institute founded around 1920 in Anand town, offering complete religious education from kindergarten to post-graduate studies, a government-supported school with a
secular curriculum, and 124 small madrassas that offer primary religious education to the rural youth in the surrounding villages. As I show below, local Vohras have been implicated in the long-term efforts towards religious reform in the region.

I have merely scratched the surface here and there are many more questions to be asked about the varied and dynamic religious practices of Anand’s residents. While the Tablighi Jamaat is important in Anand’s suburbs and provides a modern approach to religion that fits the ‘educated’ outlook and urban lifestyle of the middle class residents, it is also not hegemonic, and religious practices are as contested here as they are among Muslims elsewhere in India. What I have shown in this section is merely that religious practices are a marker of social distinction for the urban middle class in Anand. To be ‘educated’ is to have a degree, to have access to good jobs, to have knowledge and manners, and to be religiously educated.
Makka of Vohras

At a community meeting organised by the Charotar Sunni Vohra community association in Anand, guests take the occasion to share their views about the Vohra community with me. A man, a big smile on his face, declares good-humouredly that: ‘Anand is the Makka of the Vohras!’ At my puzzlement, he gets serious and explains: ‘Previously, Vohras were happy in their villages. They had some small business there. But since the riots in 2002, Vohras want to be in Anand. Some are buying houses here; others are still living in the village and just doing some business here. Nowadays, everybody wants to invest in Anand town.’

Charotar Sunni Vohras (in everyday conversation referred to as Vohras) are the single largest Muslim community in Anand. Residents I spoke to, irrespective of where in Anand they lived, estimated at least 50% of the Muslims in the town are Vohra. Other Muslim surnames frequently heard of here are Sheikh, Diwan, Pathan, Memon, Malek, and Saiyed; there are also some Momin, Khojas, Dawoodi Vohras and Baruchi Patels. My own household survey in the town shows that 66% of the households are Vohra (appendix, table A.3.4). A very significant majority of those who settled in the housing societies constructed in Anand to accommodate riot victims is from the Vohra community. These findings confirm an earlier description of the town as ‘the centre of the Charotar Sunni Vohra community’ (Heitmeyer 2009a, 81).

When discussing ‘community’, I broadly follows Cohen’s views (2000 [1985], 12–15; see also Barth 1998). Now mainstream in anthropology, the idea is that ‘community’ is a relational notion best explored by looking at the creative process of drawing boundaries between self and others (Cohen 2000 [1985], 37). The task of the academic, Cohen argued, is to capture people’s experience of community and the meanings they themselves attach to community boundaries (2000 [1985], 38). In Anand, while ‘community’ is a much-used word, it is used in a variety of ways: to delineate a Hindu from a Muslim ‘community’, and also to describe specific groups within the Muslim community, such as the Charotar Sunni Vohra Samaj (community).

In scholarship of South Asia, debates about ‘community’ have been linked to the concept of ‘caste’ and to questions of social stratification and hierarchy. A long-
term scholarly debate on the question of caste among Indian Muslims has revolved around two opposite positions, one that says Hindu and Muslim social configurations in South Asia are quite similar (Misra 1964, 132/139; in Simpson 2006a, 89) and one that ranking among Indian Muslims is more fluid (Barnett, Fruzetti, and Ostor 1976; in Simpson 2006a, 89) or occurs at the individual level rather than at the level of communities (Mines 1975; in Simpson 2006a, 89). A distinction often referred to in the literature on caste among Muslims is between Ashraf groups (or nobles) and non-Ashraf groups (or commons): Ashraf communities are, or claim to be, the descendants of immigrants, Arab traders and saints, and are considered an elite, while non-Ashraf families are seen as the common people with an acknowledged Indian origin, who have turned to Islam through conversion (Dumont 1970, 207).

In central Gujarat, hierarchical ideas about a sacred genealogy among Muslims do play a role in assessing differences between communities, but this strategy of assessing status generally remains secondary to more instrumental approaches to obtain prominence, such as ‘local politics, financial wealth and, (…) consumption and lifestyle patterns associated with the middle classes’ (Heitmeyer 2009a, 82). The majority of Muslims in central Gujarat belongs to non-Ashraf communities and there is no clear hierarchy among these groups (Heitmeyer 2009a, 83). Vohras are a non-Ashraf group. The Ashraf ‘nobles’ among the Muslims in the region are believed to be the Saiyeds, a group of saints who claim ancestry from the immigrants who brought Islam to the region in the distant past. Although Saiyeds are connected to households in Anand as religious experts, they are not prominent as a group in the town. They have their own centres elsewhere, in nearby villages such as Hardgod.

Throughout the thesis it will be evident that there are different ideas about what the Vohra community is or should be. These different ideas exist both ‘in the field’ and in academic representations of the community. There is remarkable variety in how earlier scholars have described Vohras. In terms of Vohras’ economic background, in particular, different sources contradict each other. Misra (1964, 122) says that ‘the majority of the Sunni Vohras of all regions are cultivators but an increasing proportion is taking to trade for its livelihood’; Engineer (1989, 30–31) calls Vohras ‘peasants’ and ‘tillers of the soil’; Rajyagor (1977, 185) describes them as ‘engaged in business or employed in Government or semi-Government services. Some of them are lawyers, doctors and engineer also’. Heitmeyer described Vohras as a ‘business community’ (Heitmeyer 2009a, 32).

When I describe Vohras, I describe them from the specific perspective of (mostly
middle class) residents of Anand town and from that of Vohras in the UK and USA. This generates some commonalities and some differences in my account with the earlier scholars who have described Vohras. Key to all descriptions of Vohras is their existence as an endogamous community. It is through their distinctive marriage practices that they set the boundaries vis-à-vis other Muslims and maintain their identity as a separate community. My analysis confirms the analysis of Heitmeyer that endogamous marriage practices ‘are central to encouraging unity within the wider Sunni Vohra regional network and are closely linked to the samaj’s strong sense of identity within the local landscape’, even if my analysis spatially extends from the local network to the transnational family network of Vohras. I also confirm that Vohras profile themselves as a community with a regional identity and distinguish themselves from other Muslims by speaking the Gujarati language in the home, thus aligning themselves with Gujarat, while most other local Muslims speak Hindi in the home, thus aligning themselves with the ‘national language’ and with north India (Heitmeyer 2009a, 87).

In economic terms, my findings partly confirm the earlier descriptions of the Vohra community as a ‘business community’ (put forward in Heitmeyer 2009a) but also suggest that Vohras in Anand are probably more oriented towards education and (white collar) jobs than elsewhere. In Anand, the ideal of education and ‘finding a good job’ has a firm hold on the career choices of Muslim youth, which is reflected in the marriage market where ‘being educated’ has become almost a prerequisite to finding a spouse. This inclination for ‘education’ and ‘service’ is a reflection of the development I sketched earlier, that Anand attracts Muslim families interested in education and urban professions.

There are different marriage groups within the Vohra community, the ‘Chaud’, ‘Arsad’, ‘Makariya’ and ‘Dewataja’. The Chaud (in Gujarati: ‘fourteen’) group is considered a relatively privileged high-status group of fourteen families (or groups of families), who have traditionally been powerful in business, with ‘land and property’ in their villages of origin, and traditionally less interested in education (Heitmeyer 2009a, 105-111). After migration to Anand, they maintain the family-owned land and property in the villages and simultaneously use the town to extend their power base, accessing education and urban business while still cultivating social relations in other towns and villages (comparable to the situation of local Patels, Verstappen and Rutten 2015; and comparable to the situation of rural elites in north India, described by Jeffrey 2001, 228, 231).

Other families who derive their income and status not from business but from (government) service have used education, non-agricultural employment and rural-urban migration to experience a process of economic and social upward
mobility (comparable to the strategies of local Christians, and comparable to the situation described by Jeffrey for marginalised groups in rural north India, Jeffrey 2001, 226; Jeffrey, Jeffery, and Jeffery 2004a). This strategy is associated with the Arsad and Makeriya marriage groups in the Vohra community. In Anand, these are described as families without traditional capital who have made considerable economic progress through education and (government) service. The women of the Arsad and Makeriya group are thought to be more highly educated than the women of the Chaud group. The Makeriya group in particular stresses education in their self-presentation and in the events they organise, such as an annual ‘awards’ ceremony for students who receive a degree that year. Some neighbours have said that the families of the Arsad and Makeriya group are catching up so fast that they are now surpassing the Chaud families in status and wealth and that this would be a major impetus for Chaud families to send their children into education too. Overall, my findings confirm business is important among Vohras, but suggest in Anand people are more oriented towards education and (white collar) ‘service jobs’.

To understand the prominent position of Vohras in the town, we need to look at the local interest in both secular and religious education. In the past, during the establishment of religious institutions in Anand, Vohras have been at the forefront of religious reform. The oral history of the ‘Big Madrassa’ has it that it was a Vohra, Gulammabi from the village of Tarapur, who started the development to ‘bring light’ to the Muslims in the region. This is confirmed in a local history book. In Anand today, it is common to find Vohras working as maulanas or to see groups of young Vohra men dressed in white kurta pyjamas walking around the neighbourhood to meet nominal Muslims and invite them to (more) faithful adherence to Islamic teachings (cf. Metcalf 2003, 136). Their zeal is noticeable, but not appreciated by all. One man (Malek and Sunni) found the visits of the Vohra preachers so bothersome that he forbade them to come to his house again.

The Vohra-supported tradition of reform questions the relevance of the oft-described Ashraf/non-Ashraf hierarchy in which the role of religious service provider is attributed to Ashraf communities, as here members of the non-Ashraf community of Vohras can take on the role of preachers and teachers (cf. Jasani 2008, 449). It has been noted elsewhere that reform can be used to reinterpret

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48 On the basis of a handbook of the Makeriya group in Anand (appendix, table A.3.6 and A.3.7), I calculate that 44% is said to be in business while 24% say they have a ‘job’. This shows that, along with ‘service’, business is still important in this group.


50 Jasani argues that, within the context of disruption of established social hierarchies in the aftermath of 2002, for Muslims of Gujarati descent, especially the middle class, associating oneself with the Tabligh Jamaat has been a means of upward mobility within North Indian Jamaat leadership structures (Jasani 2008, 453).
religion in such a way that traditional authority is attacked, so that an emerging economically powerful group can establish religious superiority (Simpson 2006a, 87–109). In Anand too, the religious teachers of the Vohra community are in competition with the Saiyeds, who are verbally abused time and again by being called cheating bapus who steal money from the pockets of innocents (comparable to descriptions in Simpson 2006a, 104; also Jasani 2008, 453), even if categories are not fixed and a bapu may still be called upon in times of need (Simpson 2008).

Vohras are recognised in Anand, by themselves and by other Muslims, as the single most prominent and powerful Muslim community in town. They take on a leading role in the Muslim community by organising facilities for poorer and less fortunate Muslims in the town: several primary schools, two hospitals, and a charitable association, all managed by trusts consisting of only, or mainly, Vohras, and all open to all residents of the neighbourhood, including other Muslims and the Hindu poor. The prominence of Vohras is also signified through language. Vohras speak Gujarati, most other Muslims speak Hindi but, significantly, my non-Vohra neighbours switch automatically from Hindi to Gujarati when conversing with Vohras, even when visited by Vohras in their own homes. It is here, in Anand's 'Muslim area', that Vohras have come to establish themselves as a dominant community among other Muslims and sometimes try to dictate even what and how they pray. The description of Anand as 'the centre of the Charotar Sunni Vohra community' (Heitmeyer 2009a, 81) seems an apt one to me.

Conclusion

Muslims have moved to Anand for two reasons: to seek safety and to achieve upward mobility through rural-urban migration. In this chapter, I have described the migration of Muslims to Anand against the historical background of the violence and aftermath of the violence in Gujarat in 2002 and in relation to other processes of urbanisation and rural-urban migration in the region. I have shown that Anand has become an important centre for local Muslims, particularly to those that value (secular and religious) education. Within the town, Charotar Sunni Vohras are the single largest Muslim community and have become a clearly visible group among the educated and religiously reformed Muslim middle class.

The situation of Muslims in Anand can be compared with the situation of Muslims in other Indian cities and towns, specifically with the nearby city of Ahmedabad and with the nearby town of Mahemdabad. Ahmedabad has been

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51 In addition, a trust of the Memon community manages a primary school, and there is a student hostel for Muslim students in Vallabh Vidyaganagar.
described as an emblematic case of the process of ‘ghettoisation of Muslims in Indian cities. In many parts of India, Muslims have been relegated to ‘neighbourhoods of exile’ in response to communal violence, concerns over safety, marginalisation and exclusion (Chaudhury 2007; Gayer and Jaffrelot 2012; Mahadevia 2007; Sattar 2012; Shaban 2012), sometimes as a result of voluntary self-segregation and, at other times, as a result of the ‘forcible relegation of a negatively typed population’ (Gayer and Jaffrelot 2012, 21). Surrounded by physical and metaphorical ‘borders’ (Mahadevia 2007, 379) that reduce opportunities for social interaction with members of other communities, these neighbourhoods tend to be shunned by middle- and upper-caste Hindus and are referred to by them as ‘mini-Pakistan’, reproducing the nation-state at the neighbourhood level and alienating residents from citizen rights (Shaban 2012, 219–221).

The case of Anand indicates that the trend of ‘ghettoisation’ of Indian Muslims, described so far mainly in larger Indian cities, is also taking place in a town in a rural region. The ‘Muslim area’ of Anand fits the description of an ‘enclave’ (Wacquant 2008; in Gayer and Jaffrelot 2012, 21) as it houses residents of various social-economic backgrounds, is almost homogeneously composed of Muslims as a result of self-segregation in response to communal violence, and is the result of a residential regrouping of people on the basis of ascribed religious identities that has occurred because of social and political constraints. Sometimes residents feel estranged from wider society, for example, when they experience difficulties in getting access to good schools, to decent jobs, or when they experience othering while traveling into ‘Hindu areas’.

In spite of the above, the neighbourhood is not experienced by the residents as an ‘open air prison’ (Shaban 2012, 223). This contrasts with descriptions of other ‘Muslim areas’, where a lack of mobility has been observed and residents seem almost locked into the neighbourhood. In Ahmedabad, Muslims cannot easily leave the Muslim area partly because of the absence of infrastructure or public transport and partly because residents are socially barred from venturing into other parts of the city (Gayer and Jaffrelot 2012, 324). This results in estrangement from the rest of the city and a ‘subjective sense of closure of residents’ (Gayer and Jaffrelot 2012, 21-22). In Anand, Muslims are not confined to their neighbourhood. Although there is segregation, this does not stop Muslims from having regular contact with the outside world: students go to school, women enjoy (window) shopping in Vallabh Vidyanagar, and men continue to be economically involved in ‘Hindu areas’.

Participation in wider society is, however, not always easy. Self-confidence can suffer as a consequence of experiences of discrimination or stereotyping when
people venture into other parts of the town. There is a tension between experiences of strength and confidence within the neighbourhood, and experiences of marginalisation and exclusion outside. On the one hand, the emergence of a neighbourhood in which no (middle class) Hindu wants to live, in which many middle class Hindu do not even dare to enter, sets Muslims apart as different. Outsiders know the place as a ‘Muslim area’, and this label is enough for them to believe the place is dangerous and filled with poverty and crime. Residents are aware of these outside labels. On the other hand, for them, living in a neighbourhood they can call ‘ours’ is also a source of confidence and comfort, particularly for the upwardly mobile middle class that derives confidence from the fact they are part of a wealthy and relatively educated elite within the larger ‘Muslim area’. It is within the neighbourhood that other processes of social distinction become visible and that a Muslim elite can manifest itself. Within the ‘Muslim area’, one’s social standing is dependent on economic position, educational level, and religious practice.

If the situation of Anand is rather different than the situation in Ahmedabad, it is also different from the situation in the nearby town Mahemdabad, where segregation has not taken such pronounced forms (Heitmeyer 2009a, 45-47). The old qasbah town of Mahemdabad seems to have been immune to ghettoisation. Vohra merchants live among Hindus in the central market area. Their livelihoods and everyday existence depend on harmonious relations with local Hindus. This is so even though there was more violence in Mahemdabad than in Anand during the riots. The violence in Mahemdabad included five deaths, approximately Rs. 33 million in damages by local Muslims, armed men shouting abuse and throwing rocks at the houses of prominent Muslims and of anyone else opposing the Hindutva agenda, and finally a backlash of violence against low-caste Hindus in the town (Heitmeyer 2009b, 109–110). These atrocities shocked the residents but are explained by them as intrusions by ‘outsiders’, not of the town, who came in groups numbering the thousands to wreak havoc (Heitmeyer 2009b, 110). Through the trope of the ‘outsiders’, previous modes of relations and continued co-existence of Hindus and Muslims are cultivated within the town.

Insofar as Heitmeyer (2009a, 87; 2009b, 106) does note segregation, this is instigated by the upper classes and upwardly mobile middle classes who move out from the central part of the town into suburban Muslim ‘housing societies’ at the outskirts of Mahemdabad. My data suggests that some of these upwardly mobile families have not stayed within Mahemdabad but have moved into Anand town, along with many others from smaller town and villages in the vicinity. In Anand, these new arrivals from non-segregated towns such as Mahemdabad do settle in ‘Muslim areas’.
The comparison between Anand town and Mahemdabad is all the more interesting because Charotar Sunni Vohras are a large Muslim community in both towns, and the residents of the two towns are connected through economic and kinship ties. Vohra merchants in Mahemdabad profile themselves as culturally closer to local Hindus than to other Muslims in the region (Heitmeyer 2009a, 76-77). Vohras in Anand presented themselves to me rather differently. They try to take on leading roles within the Muslim community, for example in the field of primary education (through the establishment of charitable schools to educate the poor) and religious reform (though the Tablighi Jamaat). Heitmeyer observed that Vohra Muslims in Mahemdabad associate Anand with a more ‘Islamised middle-class urban lifestyle’ than their own (Heitmeyer 2009a, 174), and my neighbours in Anand confirm these and other urban-rural divisions. I see the differences between Vohras in the two towns as an outcome of the recent process of migration to Anand and the formation of an urbanised Muslim middle class in Anand, which is linked to a reorientation in outlook and lifestyle.

I have used the term ‘middle class’ frequently in this chapter because my neighbours also talked about themselves as ‘middle class’ people. There is an extensive literature on the emergence of an Indian ‘middle class’ (Batnitzky, McDowell, and Dyer 2007; Fernandes 2006; Sridharan 2004; Upadhya 2011; Varma 1998), which is partly a response to the fact that people in India themselves find this social category relevant as a tool of distinction between themselves and others (Dickey 2012). Studies of the middle classes in other places in India describe similar strategies of upward mobility through education, (sub)urbanisation and improved morality (van Wessel 2001, 34–61; Säävälä 2001). It has also been noted that participation in higher education enables people to affirm a status as ‘educated’ and that this is a way to attain self-worth in contexts of marginalisation, particularly for Muslims and Dalits (Jeffrey, Jeffery, and Jeffery 2004a; Jeffrey, Jeffery, and Jeffery 2004b). A politics of religious reform has been noted both among aspiring middle class lower-caste Hindus (Säävälä 2001) and among urban educated middle class Muslims distinguishing themselves from the ‘rural ignorant’ through a modern religious outlook (Osella and Osella 2008b, 322–323). The families I lived with illustrate these patterns described elsewhere: they affirm they are part of an Indian middle class, live in a (sub)urban neighbourhood, and education is the talk of the day.
Map of central Gujarat
The description of Anand as the ‘Vohra head quarters’ or as a ‘centre of the Vohra community’ indicates a perspective of Anand as a key node within a wider social network and a self-image of the Vohra community as a regional community. This represents a challenge to the notion of the insulated Muslim ‘ghetto’ and deserves further exploration. In this chapter, through ethnographic explorations with Vohra residents of Anand town, I describe Vohras as a regional community with significant ties to the predominantly agricultural area of central Gujarat.

My argument here is that Vohra residents of Anand town cannot be seen in isolation from the region. This leads to a modification of the perspective of ghettoisation, which has guided recent authorship on Muslims in Indian cities, particularly in Gujarat (Chaudhury 2007; Gayer and Jaffrelot 2012; Ghassem-Fachandi 2008; Jasani 2010; Patel 2006a; Mahadevia 2007; Rajagopal 2010; Sattar 2012; Shaban 2012). As I have shown in Chapter 3, the ‘Muslim area’ of Anand fits the description of an ‘enclave’ (Wacquant 2008; in Gayer and Jaffrelot 2012, 21), and the case study confirms that the process of segregation, described so far mainly in larger Indian cities, is also taking place in towns. However, since the process of segregation in Anand is not characterised by a subjective ‘sense of closure’ of the
residents, it is an interesting counterexample to the recently studied Muslim ghetto of Juhapura in Ahmedabad, where residents cannot easily leave the area due to a lack of public transport and due to being socially barred from venturing into other parts of the city (Jaffrelot and Thomas 2012, Gayer and Jaffrelot 2012, 21-22). While Juhapura has been called ‘the only Muslim ghetto of the subcontinent’ (Thomas 2015, 4), it has also been presented as ‘the most emblematic’ case of ghettoisation in Indian cities (Gayer and Jaffrelot 2012, 324) and as characteristic of the isolation of ‘many other Muslims of Gujarat’ (2012, 324). It was tempting for me to also use the rhetoric of isolation and immobility to understand the lives of Muslims in Anand town, but the ethnography has led me to a different understanding.

What strikes me as obscuring our view is that the urban studies are themselves somewhat ‘insulated’, seeing people only within the confines of the urban area, and mapping only the connections between the neighbourhood and the rest of the city. By ‘scaling up’ from the town into the region, this study asserts that ‘the linkages between urban centres and the countryside, including movement of people, goods, capital and other social transactions, play an important role in processes of rural and urban change’ (Tacoli 1998, 147). This regional perspective leads away from guiding notions of isolation and closure, and opens up an awareness of connections between the enclave and the wider area beyond the city. Such a perspective is particularly relevant in the context of small and medium-sized towns in India, which can play a key role in creating a ‘regional fabric’ (Koskimaki and Upadhya 2013, 14).

Anand has been described as an example of a town that is intimately connected to the rural hinterland (Patel 2006b, 26) through dense economic and social networks, regionally dispersed networks that encapsulate key relationships for the town’s residents. The district capital of Anand district within central Gujarat and forming the centre of a typical ‘rurban’ or ‘peri-urban’ region in which town and wider rural environment are closely connected, Anand is a hub that provides services to the rural hinterland and a node of transport in a network of villages and other towns. It is therefore characterised by a large in- and outflow of people from the region on a daily basis: commuters and students travelling from nearby villages to work or school in Anand, villagers who come to visit relatives and friends, to do business, to buy goods or to visit the restaurants or cinema halls. The town is also well-connected by roads, highways and railway lines to the large cities of Ahmedabad, Vadodara, Surat and Mumbai, so forms a node in a wider network of villages to the larger cities.¹

¹ This description of Anand’s connectedness has been published, somewhat shortened, in a journal article (Verstappen and Rutten 2015, 233).
The Vohras who settled in Anand before and after 2002 have thus become part of a town that is well-connected to the wider region. As a result, they have been able to maintain their own ties to villages and other towns in the region with ease. Since these urban families continue to straddle the rural-urban divide by their maintenance of cherished kinship relations and economic ties across the region, looking at these urban residents only within their urban context would not do justice to reality. As I argue next, their continued embedding in the region is of practical and symbolic importance to Vohra residents of Anand town, and their regional attachments are an important aspect of their sense of ‘community’. This chapter thus argues that regional belonging persists along with memories of victimisation and displacement in the wake of 2002.

How do Vohras think about and perceive the region? How have violence, rural-urban migration and segregation affected regional identities? Has traveling changed? There is no single answer to these questions. Social dynamics of class, age and gender inform how individuals relate to the region. Using different perspectives on the region has helped me to ‘see’ this. While regions can be thought of as ‘imagined’ (Anderson 1991), they can also be thought of as a ‘matrix of movement’ (Ingold 2005 [2000], 217), as a network of ‘coming and going’ (Ingold 2005 [2000], 235). In this chapter, I use both analytical lenses, the lens of imagining and the lens of mobility, to explore how the region is seen and perceived by Vohras of Anand town. The work of imagining is shown through an exploration of community history and local marriage circles, and experiences of mobility are described through an exploration of dispersed kinship ties and business ventures. This opens multiple perspectives of the region, as understood by different kinds of people. At the end of the chapter, I compare my findings with existing descriptions of the regional affiliations of the economically, politically and socially dominant community in the region, the Patidars of Charotar.

The Charotar Sunni Vohra association

In a small office in Anand I meet two elderly men, who introduce themselves as board members of the ‘Charotar Sunni Vahora Samaj’, the community association of Vohras in the region of Charotar. They explain about the events they have organised for the community in the past years, the goals of the association, and the publications they have produced. The office is managed by a paid employee, who shows me the pictures of events stored on the computer.
The Charotar Sunni Vohra association is a good starting point to explore the regional identity of the Vohra community. Although the office described above was closed by the end of my research (after a member confiscated the computer because of a dispute over money), the community is still active and has continued to organise events after my departure. The main purpose of the association is to unite the community by encouraging the maintenance of endogamous marriage practices (within the Vohra community), an ideal ‘closely linked to the samaj’s strong sense of identity within the local landscape’ (Heitmeyer 2009a, 32). Community endogamy is encouraged through social events, publishing books, and providing support to poorer members of the community. The leadership consists of sixty board members from various villages and towns in central Gujarat. They consider Anand their ‘head office’ and joint events tend to be organised here, although members also organise activities in their own towns and villages or in specific sub-sections of the community.

How has the idea to organise as ‘Charotar Sunni Vohras’ come about? Here I provide an overview of attempts to organise the Vohra community here, showing that the word ‘Charotar’ has been contained in the names of the organisations, publications and activities for a long time, almost 100 years.

Vohras have profiled themselves as a regional community based in ‘Charotar’ since at least the 1926 publication of the ‘Charotar Sunni Vahora Anjuman’ (Charotar Sunni Vohra Assembly). Since then, the name ‘Charotar’ has been added to the name Vohra/Vahora in various attempts to organise this specific, regionally based, Muslim community. The attempts to organise the community include two mini conferences (1926 and 1928, in Uttarsanda and Anand) and two conferences (1938 and 1940, in Anand and Sarsa) ‘under the auspices of Charotar Sunni Vahoras’. Among the issues discussed were the promotion of education in the community, the propagation of simple weddings and group marriages to counter ‘wasteful expenditure in the community’s weddings’, the ‘menace of divorce in the community’ and the ‘encouragement of community spirit’. A ‘Charotar Sunni
Vahora Young Men’s Association\(^6\) was registered in 1936. Concrete results were the establishment of a higher education institute, the I.J. Kapurwala commercial school (in Anand) and the establishment of two student hostels (in Vadodara and Anand) in the early 1940s. After independence, although the educational institutions were closed,\(^7\) conferences continued to be organised to discuss community affairs. A ‘Charotar Sunni Vohra Panchayat’ (Charotar Sunni Vohra village council) was established in Pedlad in 1954 and a ‘Charotar Sunni Vohra Tarahija Mandal’ (association of the Tarahija sub-community) was established in Chaklasi in 1979. I draw these insights from a rare unpublished and undated book entitled ‘A glimpse at Vohra’ (*Vahora Darshan*), the only source that I have found that provides information about the origins of the Charotar Sunni Vohra community. I stumbled upon the book at the end of my research period, in London, and later discovered that a school teacher in Anand also owned a copy. The book is presented as a history of all Vohras in India and the Middle East,\(^8\) but the history of the Vohras of Charotar is the most extensively covered, and the informational focus in the book indicates that the author was well-connected to, and informed by, Vohra residents of central Gujarat and Bombay. The author was a Vohra and says that he lived in Mumbai, his name indicates ancestry from the town of Borsad in central Gujarat: Haji Ismailbhai Sabanbhai Vahora (Borsadwala) Karanchi.

Interestingly, the book suggests that those who started to organise the regional community did not live in the region itself. The idea of a regionally specific Vohra community appears to have first been raised not in central Gujarat but in Bombay, where migrants from the region started to organise themselves as a specific community of Muslims from ‘Charotar’. The organising association, the ‘Charotar Sunni Vahora Young Men’s Association’, was registered in Bombay in 1936. Though the events they organised took place mostly in Gujarat, these appear to have been organised and probably sponsored from Bombay. Ten years after its registration, the association moved office to Anand, and a bylaw was introduced in the governing body that ‘instead of only residents of Bombay, all Vohras from Baroda, Charotar region, Anand and Ahmedabad are permitted as office bearers of the association’.\(^9\)

This confirms the idea that a ‘heimat’ can be born by moving away from it, an idea proposed by Anderson (1998). While this idea has been considered relevant mainly

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\(^6\) The association is sometimes referred to as the ‘Sunni Vahora Young Men’s Association’, without the prefix ‘Charotar’ (*Vahora Darshan*, 78-100).

\(^7\) Various reasons are mentioned for the ‘downfall’ of the Vohra community in the late 1940s and 1950s. Among these are conflicts amongst the leaders, the death of some of the founders, and the lack of enthusiasm among the younger generation (*Vahora Darshan*, 91-100). Some of my informants in Anand explain the closures by the departure of rich Vohras from Mumbai to Karachi, which deprived the institutions of donations.

\(^8\) The author explains that the name ‘Vohra’ has been adopted in different contexts for different reasons. It is unclear whether these disparate ‘Vohra’, ‘Vahora’ or ‘Bohra’ groups are historically related to each other or merely share a name.

\(^9\) *Vahora Darshan*, 100-110.
in studies of transnational migrants (Safran 1991; Cohen 1996; Axel 2002; Morawska 2011), these findings show a comparable process in the context of ‘internal migration’.

Today the Vohra association in central Gujarat operates independently and Vohras of Charotar in Mumbai have established their own separate association. The main purpose of the association in central Gujarat is to bring the community together and to encourage endogamous marriage (Heitmeyer 2008, 131) through ‘Vohra meetings’, which are organised regularly so that families living dispersed across the region can meet each other. A regular event is the ‘group weddings’ (samuh lagn), one of which I witnessed myself in a community hall in Anand town. Other events organised by the Charotar Sunni Vohra community association in Anand town include ‘singles’ events to facilitate interaction between unmarried young men and women in the community and ‘award ceremonies’ for students.

In the office of the Charotar Sunni Vohra association in Anand, there were also printed materials of interest. I collected seven copies of the newspaper ‘Vohra Reformation’ (Vahora Sudharak), subtitled ‘Pamphlet for the reformation of the Charotar Sunni Vohra community’ (Charotar Sunni Vahora Sudharak Mandalnu Mukapatr), dated between 2005 and 2011, which had been distributed by the association. A more informal source of information was a folder that lay on the table of the office, containing pictures and handwritten information of Vohra young men and women, all of whom were of marriageable age. My hosts encouraged me to look through these files, which lay there especially for visitors to flip through when arranging a marriage within the Vohra community.

I also collected four books with detailed demographic information about Vohra families in the region. These books (produced between 1986 and 2006) list the marital status of each member of a family and contain further demographic information. Heitmeyer earlier collected three such books on town- or city-specific Vohra groups: Mahemdabad 1998, Thasra 2000, and Ahmedabad 2004 (Heitmeyer 2009a, 111-112). The four additional books I found are different: rather than being town-based, they focus on a sub-group within the Vohra community that is dispersed over different villages and towns in central Gujarat (three books of the Makeriya\textsuperscript{10} sub-group and one book of the Dewataja\textsuperscript{11} sub-group). The Makeriya group has been particularly active, producing a new update of the book every decade since 1986. The three editions of the book list all known Makeriya families in Gujarat by town, as in a telephone book. The main purpose of these books, Heitmeyer argues and my informants confirm, is to facilitate marriage within the

community. The books make it possible to assess a family’s socioeconomic position and sub-group within the Vohra community.

A key feature of the community association is thus to encourage unity within the community. This entails maintaining the boundaries of the community vis-à-vis other people, including other local Muslims. This is done first through the name of the community, Charotar Sunni Vohras. The prefix ‘Charotar’ marks the community off as a local community, distinct from Vohras of Gujarat with whom there is no intermarriage: Baruchi Vohras, Surti Vohras, Ahmdabadi Vohras and Kathiawari Vohras. These regional boundaries between different Vohra communities are not only drawn locally by Vohras of Charotar but are also recognised in literature about Muslims in Gujarat: Misra (1964, 123) for example distinguishes four ‘regional sections or independent communities’: Patani Vohras, Kadiwal Vohras, Charotar Vohras and Surati Sunni Vohras. This regional differentiation is in addition to the prefix ‘Sunni’, which distinguishes them from Muslims with a different (Shia) religious tradition, such as the Dawoodi Bohras.

The regional Vohra community, promoted by the active board members of the community association, is widely recognised by Vohras in Anand town. This is illustrated in the following quotes from different residents of Anand:

Baruchi Vohras are different from us. They have different customs, different language. I’m not exactly sure what the differences are, because we don’t socialise with them (quote from a middle-aged woman).

We wouldn’t marry our daughter to a Baruchi Vohra family. The family customs are different (quote from a middle-aged woman).

The Sunni Vohras from Charotar are different from the Sunni Vohras in Ahmedabad. I used to live in Ahmedabad, so I know about this. We speak Gujarati, they speak Urdu. We are also different from Dawoodi Bohras. They are a separate group (quote from an elderly man).

These quotes confirm that distinctions are being drawn between different Vohra communities on the basis of their different regional backgrounds.

The distinct identity of Charotar Sunni Vohras is also recognised by other Muslims in Anand, who are aware that their Vohra neighbours only marry among themselves. The specific local identity of Vohras was a reason for derogatory remarks among some of my non-Vohra neighbours, such as a Diwan neighbour,
who asserted that ‘only in Charotar, people know what is a Vohra. Only here they have power. Outside of Charotar, Vohras mean nothing.’

In summary, the self-naming of the community by the name ‘Charotar’ has a history of almost 100 years and continues to be an important marker of community boundaries among Muslims in central Gujarat. A more in-depth historical analysis would be needed to fully understand how and why Vohras started to organise themselves at that time in Bombay, and how the concept of a regional community travelled ‘back home’ to Gujarat. The historian is likely to comment that caste/community formation in the colonial period was related to transformations in the organisation of society under colonialism and would possibly draw attention to the colonial state’s representational politics (van der Veer 1994, 25-27) and to social classifications used for the distribution of entitlements among colonial subjects (Risley in 1891, Wallace 1896, in Pinney 1997, 62-63). A historical study would also be likely to further explore how statehood and unequal power relations have produced regions (as in Simpson and Kapadia 2010), and how this relates to the case of ‘Charotar’. Here, however, I base myself on fieldwork in Anand town in the period 2011-2012, and look at ‘Charotar’ from a town-centred perspective. How do residents of Anand town perceive of the region and of themselves as part of a regional community? What does ‘Charotar’ mean to them as a symbolic marker of community?

Regional community history

Throughout my research, Vohras consistently presented themselves as a regionally based community, based in Charotar. In this section, therefore, I analyse the community narratives of the Vohras of Charotar I was told in the field, and explore how they themselves present their historical role in the region. I explore how a narrative of conversion and a narrative of long-term embeddedness in the local economy contribute to their sense of being a local community. Their view of history is a story of long-term commitment to the agricultural economy of central Gujarat. This section is based mainly on the accounts of elderly men who, for different reasons, were appointed by my neighbours or by themselves as knowledgeable about the Charotar Sunni Vohra community.

In local and academic descriptions, ‘Charotar’ is roughly located in the relatively affluent agricultural area between the two cities of Ahmedabad and Vadodara (Baroda), on the two sides of the main road and railway track between the two
cities, with the towns of Anand and Nadiad as regional centres. Its external borders are unclear and probably irrelevant for most residents. ‘Charotar’ is translated as a beautiful or pleasant (charo) land (Rajyagor 1977, 1; Pocock 1972, 5) with a fertile and well-tilled soil (Rajyagor 1977, 1), particularly suitable for the cash crops of tobacco and cotton (Pocock 1972, 6), where land has been very valuable (Hardiman 1981, 263). The region is characterised by a high population density and a well-developed rural sector based on a long-term process of agricultural commercialisation, industrialisation and diversification of the rural economy. The rural economy has been commercially oriented since before the early nineteenth century, with tobacco and cotton as important crops, and, since the late nineteenth century, has exported tobacco, cotton and diary products to markets far beyond the direct vicinity (Rutten 1995, 73). After Independence, an acceleration of this early process of economic development took place when the so-called Green Revolution resulted in further increases in productivity in agriculture and agro-industry. The region then became a centre of dairy production, of engineering companies that manufacture and repair agricultural machinery, industries for irrigation works and the building industry, and mechanical and electrical engineering companies (Rutten 1995). Agriculture has thus gone through a gradual process of intensification of production, initially due to irrigation and small-scale development of agro-industry and, after Independence, through government-supported industrialisation of agriculture and mechanisation of the agricultural process (Rutten 1995, 79–86).

The regional/local character of the Vohra community is affirmed both through a narrative of conversion and through a narrative of long-term embeddedness in the local economy. Vohras consider themselves a local community who, once upon a time, converted to Islam from Hinduism. They thus claim to be descended from local Hindus. This claim is important in local ideas about distinction among Muslims because it sets them apart from the Muslim saints, the Saiyeds, believed to be descendants of the Prophet who landed in Gujarat from outside the subcontinent (Simpson 2006a, 88–92, see also Misra 1964, 118-122, and Chapter 3 of this thesis), and, at the same time, it aligns them with local Hindus. Various ideas circulate about this ancestry from local Hindus, two of which I mention here.

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12 Parts of this paragraph have been published in Verstappen and Rutten (2015, 233).
13 It is possible that converts took on the name ‘Vohra’ (trader) to signify their conversion to Islam. Conversion to Sunni Islam is said to have taken place during the rule of Sultan Muzafarshah I in the period 1377-1411 (Rajyagor 1977, 185), was concentrated in rural areas and took place among various local groups, including but not confined to those who actually traded. In contrast, Shia Islam seems to have been more concentrated in the cities of Gujarat (Engineer 1989, 30–31). Karim Mohammad Master says, in the chapter ‘Muslims of Gujarat’ of the Bombay Government Gazetteer (1938, 66–69): ‘The common word Vohra has been used for Shiya traders settled in cities and Sunni farmers in villages. It was believed that all the ‘Vohras’ were Daudi Vahoras from Shiya community but that later on in Gujarat during the reign of early sultans, the Shiya Vahoras in villages were converted to Sunni Islam. There is not enough evidence in support of this belief that Sunni Vohras from villages were reconverted’ (referring to Mirate Hmedi, 87).
Some claim that the Vohras are derived from lower Hindu castes and that their conversion was motivated by a desire to ‘escape from caste oppression’. These stories are accompanied by contrasting Hindu hierarchical ideas about caste with notions of equality within Islam, and thus highlight differences between Muslims and Hindus while simultaneously affirming a connection. Other informants draw connections between Patels (or Patidars) and Vohras, by explaining that both are vanyas (merchants), speak the same language, share many customs, and have lived together in the villages of Charotar for a long time. This story highlights similarities between Vohras and Patels, who were, in one case, lumped together as ‘the two dominant communities in the region’. The idea that Vohras were derived from the Patel/Patidar caste is also mentioned in a Gujarati book on the Charotar region, which refers to cultural similarities between the communities: ‘Their marriage customs [of Vohras] were like Patidars. Their dresses were like Patidari turban and ladies wore Patidari dresses.’ Clearly, there is no way of assessing the truth of these histories, the point instead is to assess what these circulating stories teach us about the present.

The second narrative through which a regional/local character of the community is affirmed is through a narrative of long-term embeddedness in the local economy. A common view of history among Vohras with whom I spoke in central Gujarat is that those who converted to Islam in the region used to be traders and agro-industrialists. The first version of this narrative, the narrative of trade, presents Vohras as an economic link between the agricultural economy and the outside world. Vohras sold products from the outside world to farmers, and bought produce from the farms to sell elsewhere, or were hawkers, selling products door-to-door, sometimes on foot, carrying their loads on their backs, sometimes using a push cart. Today, many Vohras are still specialised in selling clothes and textiles, either in shops or door-to-door (feri). At the higher end, there are the bigger business families, who bought the produce of the local farmers (mainly of the Patel and Kshatriya communities), to send to Mumbai or elsewhere to sell at a profit. At the auction market of Nadiad, which I visited with a former trader, it was claimed that 30% of the wholesale traders there used to be Muslims.

A second version of the narrative is a narrative of agro-industry, which highlights Vohras as having been embedded in the region in a very different way. Some of my older informants shared personal memories of how Vohras used to grind oil

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15 This traditional occupation of Vohras, selling vegetables door-to-door, was, in the past, also carried out by some members of the Patidar caste who had been driven to do so by economic pressures. The occupation was considered of inferior status in the Patidar caste (Pocock 1972, 38).
(ganchi) in the village, or processed cotton. With the increasing industrialisation of agriculture after Independence, and the emergence of an incipient middle class trying to move upward in life through education and ‘service’ jobs, most of these traditional occupations diminished in importance. Even so, small processing workshops can still be found in the local bazars across the region, and the legacy is continued by the big Vohra trading families, some of whom own factories, mills or cold storages related to the processing and trading of agricultural products. The link to agricultural trade and agro-industry is shown in the additional surnames of some of these Vohra business families, including Limbuwallah (in lemon wholesale business), Chanawallah (processing and trading chickpeas), Dudhwala (in dairy) and Fruitwala.

While Vohras have traditionally been linked to the agricultural economy in their self-narratives, one element of the story is not agreed upon by different narrators: the question of land ownership. There are clearly some major landowners among Vohras in Anand as well as families with smaller plots of agricultural land in their home villages. Although this land sometimes continues to be maintained even after migration to Anand town, as a researcher based in Anand, it was not usually possible for me to assess the significance and histories of landownership. Misra (1964, 122) claims that ‘the majority of the Sunni Vohras are cultivators’ (1964, 125), while Engineer (Engineer 1989, 30–31) calls Vohras ‘peasants’ and ‘tillers of the soil’. Some of my informants also claim that many Vohras were initially farmers, losing their land due to ‘all these riots’. However, other informants argued that Vohras were derived from modest backgrounds and that most of them had no land: only those among them who were successful merchants became (rural and urban) landowners because they were able to invest profits in land. These stories of land acquisition highlight the intermediary roles of Vohras as contractors and brokers in land deals and through small-scale investments rather than an ancestral claim on land. The different views reflect the diversity of economic backgrounds in the community.

A third way in which local ancestry is affirmed is through the ancestral villages of the Charotar Sunni Vohras, memories of which are maintained through their complex marriage system. To understand the Vohra’s relation to ancestral villages through ataks I need to explain a few aspects of the marriage system (for a full description, see Heitmeyer 2009a, 97-132). The main principle of the Vohra marriage systems is endogamy within four marriage circles (utaras). The two main marriage circles are ‘14’ (Chaud) and ‘68’ (Arsad), while two smaller groups claim a special position in the system, Dewataja and Makeriya. It remains unclear what the numbers ‘14’ and ‘68’ stand for. Some people told me that the Chaud (14) and Arsad
(68) group consist 14/68 ‘families’, others talked about of 14/68 ‘villages’, or in Gujarati about 14/68 ataks. Heitmeyer found most ataks are based on villages in the Charotar region (Heitmeyer 2009a, 105), but there are some other atak names which refer to occupations, such as Dudhwala (milkman). The graph below (reproduced from Heitmeyer 2009a, 106) shows that people did not know all the 68 ataks in the Arsad group. To show how the ataks relate to locality, I have indicated (in italics) which ataks are derived from village names.

Table 4.1. Ataks of the Charotar Sunni Vohra marriage system

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Chaud (14)</th>
<th>Arsad (68)</th>
<th>Makeriya</th>
<th>Dewataja</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Audya</td>
<td>Malavadiya</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Nepada</td>
<td>Mahemdabadi</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Pinjara</td>
<td>Amodiya</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mogriya</td>
<td>Vasoya</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Metrala</td>
<td>Anandiya</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Pijeya</td>
<td>Khadola</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Bharja</td>
<td>Munshi</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Ahmdavadi</td>
<td>Sinhulya</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Musela</td>
<td>(Kanjeriya)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Tarajiya</td>
<td>Dudhwala</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Dabhaniya*</td>
<td>Narliya</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Tarapuri*</td>
<td>Sunijya</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Vasaniya*</td>
<td>Kahra</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>(Kanjeriya*)</td>
<td>Umrethia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td>Aslaliya</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mankdiya</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Names in italics indicate ataks that refer to villages and cities in central Gujarat.

The list is based on Heitmeyer (2009, 106), except for the positioning of Dewataja and Makeriya, who are seen as separate groups by my informants but not by hers. Names with * are not included in Heitmeyer’s list, but were mentioned by my informants. My Kanjeriya informants disagreed with Heitmeyer on their position in the system: they placed themselves in 14.

Heitmeyer argues that the Vohra marriage system is ‘a consequence of their status as a mercantile community which entails the heavy intertwining of business and kin alliances and ensures that notions of trust are key to both professional and family networks’ (2009a, 32). My informants confirm the existence of this system, although some disagree about the details. Though some men felt uncomfortable when I asked questions about ataks and utaras and denied that it was important, referring to ideas of equality in Islam, their wives answered my questions about this with patience and in detail. They explained that they prefer their children to

16 Heitmeyer also observes that women (as well as children) go into more detail about marriage practices (2009, 117). This is probably related to the prominent role women play in marriage arrangements.
marry within the community, even if it was not particularly easy to find a suitable match within the right marriage circle.

The Vohra marriage system is a combination of *endogamy* (within the community) and *hypergamy* (in which a lower-status female is married to a higher-status male). The *Chaud* (14) group is considered a relatively privileged high-status group of mostly ‘business families’ who have traditionally been powerful, having ‘land and property’ in their villages of origin. They are known to prefer marriage only among themselves, and ‘are seen as “ekla kutumb” (“a single family”) that have established ongoing relations and mutual viswas (trust) over several generations’ (Heitmeyer 2009a, 108). The families of the *Arsad* (68) and *Makeriya* group are considered the ‘lower status’ group but may enter into marriages with families of the *Chaud* group. The Vohra marriage system thus ‘emphasises unity within the community while also allowing for hierarchical divisions between wife-givers and wife-takers to be replicated across generations’ (Heitmeyer 2009a, 110).

What interests me here in the context of the regional community narrative is how the marriage system contributes to the affirmation of local ancestry. On many evenings, I have witnessed women exchanging details about a certain boy or girl for their matchmaking. They exchanged information about the wealth, educational level, religious affiliation (Jamati/Sunni), moral character of the spouse, about the spatial location of the boy, but also about his *atak*. A boy can live in Anand but be ‘Nepada’ (from the village of Nepad, in *Chaud*) or ‘Umretha’ (from Umreth town, in *Arsad*). Even if the boy has never been in the nominated town or village in his life, this ancestry can make a difference in the assessment of his suitability. Thus, even if many Vohra families have no family properties in the specific town or village of their *atak*, nor any other clear trails that lead back to the ancestral village, the name of the village still matters.

All our forefathers were given a name at that time by the *mollah*. Our forefathers were given the names of the village where they happened to live at that time. I am *Dewataja*, so my forefather probably lived in the small village of Dewataj at the time (banker in Anand town).

For this banker, his *atak* has become an abstract code, a memory of the fact that his forefathers once lived in a certain village, ‘probably’. This is remembered because this ancestry has a certain significance in the marriage arrangements of his family. Marriage arrangements are thus a different way through which regional identity of the Charotar Sunni Vohras is affirmed.
Having unpacked these self-narratives of the Vohra community, I have hopefully convinced the reader that these are regional narratives. The histories construct region through the recurrent theme of the agricultural economy of Charotar in which Vohras have been embedded through trade and small-scale agro-industrial endeavours, a narrative of conversion, and affirmations of ancestry in local villages and towns. On the one hand, the stories present a different view of belonging than is suggested by Hindu nationalist politics, which defines Muslims as not belonging in India; on the other hand, rather than opposing, they apply the logics of local ancestry as a way of identification in a context where claims of local belonging have become highly contested, entwined with existence itself.

**Pathways**

Regions can be analysed as ‘imagined’ but can also be thought of as a ‘matrix of movement’ (Ingold 2005 [2000], 217), as a network of ‘coming and going’ (Ingold 2005 [2000], 235) that emerges along pathways travelled. So far, I have only used the first analytical lens to uncover what the region means to Vohra residents of Anand town. This has led me to elderly men with some authority, who felt confident about talking about these matters in an interview-setting with the foreign researcher. Mainly through their accounts, I have described the self-image and community narrative of ‘the Vohra community’. However, ‘there are also other spaces of community or locality that unfold in a minor key: relatively undeclared, uncelebrated and un-symbolised in textual self-representations’ (Jain 2010, 49). Like Jain, I combine an interest in ‘imagined community’ with an interest in the ‘performance’ of locality. I treat the local ‘as an ethnographic as much as a textual object’ (Jain 2010, 53).

Although performances of locality can entail many different kinds of practices, in this research I have used Ingold’s idea of the region as a ‘matrix of movement’ to understand locality. Traveling along with informants has been a productive way of exploring the regional perspectives of men and women, old and young, those more and less skilled in verbalising community narrative. A photo collage of a trip I made gives an impression of the kind of trips I have undertaken with research participants to explore their perception of the surroundings of the town. This young woman lived in Anand and during the trip we visited the town where she grew up. We visited her parental home, a much-loved bakery, and the locally famous dargah. During the trip, I followed her pathways and by doing so learnt many things: the places she finds important in her home town, how (not) to behave there, what (not)
to wear, with whom (not) to talk and how to do so. During trips such as this, I learnt how different places were connected from the perspective of research participants. I learnt the local histories and hidden meanings of places: of buildings constructed, of walks made, of land sold, and of shops looted in 2002 and now rebuilt.

Every ‘region’ that emerges from these pathways comes about through individuals, each trip I made was in a way unique to the personal knowledge of the person I followed, and to his/her social position in the places we visited. Every ‘region’ also has a temporality: experiences and stories shared were unique to that moment, a direct response to what was encountered along the road. In what follows, I take the reader on two trips: first, a trip with a young mother I call Sajiya shows how a region comes about through kinship ties, and, second, a trip with a young man I call Javed reveals how zones of safety and risk emerge in the regional landscape, and how this relates to the recent history of Muslims and Hindus in Gujarat.

Left above, in the rikshaw. Right above, in the shared rickshaw waiting for departure at the rickshaw stand, covering mouth and nose to protect against the dust on the road. Left below, at a favoured bakery. Right below, praying in the dargah.
Sajiya: exploring region through kinship

We depart from Anand in a car. I am in the back with two women and four children. In front of us, three men, one of them sitting suspended in the air between the two front seats. We are on our way to a wedding in Tarapur. We arrive at a mud road in an agricultural field, at the outskirts of the village of Tarapur, where we find a large tent (mandap) on an open ground. Here, approximately two hundred women are having lunch. Among the guests, we find out soon, there are many from Anand. Looking at the surroundings, Sajiya comments that she finds the place rather ‘deserted’ and ‘undeveloped’ in comparison to Anand: ‘I am from the city, my family is in Ahmedabad. After my marriage, I came to live with my husband’s family in Anand. I can manage in Anand, because it is a city. My sister is married in Thasra, it’s a small place. I wouldn’t like to live there!’

Sajiya gets bored soon after lunch. While the other guests hang around chatting to each other, men withdrawing to the madrassa and women in the homes of local acquaintances, Sajiya tells her husband to drive her to Khambhat, 23 kilometres further, where her mother’s sister (masi) lives since her marriage. They decide to take me along.

In Khambhat, we drink tea at the compound with masi. Then we take masi and her son out, who show us Khambhat in the car. The son guides us to Jamma Majid, a local dargah, St Xavier’s church and school, and the place that once was a port. We buy the sweets Khambhat is famous for.

On the way back to Tarapur, when we drive through a coconut (tadi) plantation, the children get excited about the trees: ‘How high they are!’ In response, Sajiya explains this particular area has a different soil than other parts of Charotar, suitable for different kinds of crops. ‘Do you know what is Charotar?’, she continues. ‘Fertile land. It is a good place for farming.’ We have dinner in Tarapur, then collect as many people as can possibly be squeezed in the car before driving back to Anand. ‘What fun did we have today!’, Sajiya’s eldest daughter exclaims before falling asleep.

Women in central Gujarat are marriage migrants: due to the patrilocal marriage system, they move to their husband’s family after marriage. Their move from the pir (native village) into the sasru (husband’s village) ensures that spatial linkages emerge between women and their relatives, with whom they maintain contact after marriage. The women I met would, like Sajiya, at regular intervals quite forcefully insist that their husband to take them to their relatives, in a car or, more
often, on the pillion of a motorcycle. The move from pir to sasru also ensures that women and their families build new relations with the relatives of the husband spread out across the region. Sajiya's observations about the 'undeveloped' scenery are a comment on Tarapur village as much as on the position of her husband's relatives, with whom she is still in the process of familiarising herself.

What I draw from this trip with Sajiya is that a network of kinship ties guided our travel. Sajiya's network can be drawn (see below) with lines connecting relatives in different towns and villages. On the right are the places where her own relatives live, on the left is the villages of Tarapur where her husband has relatives. I have indicated the pathway between Tarapur and Khambhat differently, because this pathway was travelled for the first time that day. The decision to travel to Khambhat from Tarapur was thus a creative act, an act of improvisation, a new pathway that strengthened the family's interconnectedness, now that her husband and children have drunk tea in masi's house for the first time. Apart from familiarising herself with her relatives and their homes, Sajiya also familiarised herself, and her children, with the wider landscape. When Sajiya reflects on the 'city' and the 'village', and when she explains what is 'Charotar', she draws abstractions from the encountered specificities of the landscape and offers this as an educational opportunity to her children and the researcher.
A sense of regional belonging is created here through kinship ties. The scene clearly shows how the maintenance of dispersed kin networks is an important aspect of urban family life, even for those living in a Muslim neighbourhood born of displacement and segregation. At the same time, the scene also shows how choices made while travelling reflect wider processes of in- and exclusion. All the places visited during the day were Muslim or Christian spaces. These choices were made of free will but were not discussed or consciously decided, they were merely the result of the fact that kinship provided the logic of travel. Access to unknown territory and a sense of familiarity was achieved through relatives, who guided the travellers to the places they knew, or thought were of interest.

Interestingly, the sites selected included the dargah of Sarkar Shah-e-Mira Miran Saiyed Ali, which was a remarkable choice considering this family’s firm rejection of dargah prayer, in line with a reformist approach to Islam. The dargah was clearly an unfamiliar space to them, although it was still recognisable in its otherness due to the regular occurrence of discussions about the disputed subject of dargahs in Anand town. The exotic character of the experience was shown in the ‘touristic’ attitude of the family. They took an attentive stroll around the dargah premises, lingered at the mela to buy roasted corn, put the children in the merry-go-round, and had a commercial photographer take a picture of all of us at the main gate. The tourist appeal of the place was magnified by the bustling spiritual and commercial activity in the dargah, as an unknown colourful festival happened to be on at the time.

If the territory of another Muslim community turned out to be quite exotic, the Catholic church and school of Khambhat presented a more familiar realm to them. The children happily pointed out the statues of Jesus and Mary to their mothers: the son of masi goes to school here, and Sajiya’s children similarly go to school in St. Xaviers in Anand, creating common ground. Both the Christian school ground and the dargah were recognisable in their otherness, reinforcing a sense of region in the sense that ‘differences are recognised and individuals are, to a greater or lesser extent, equipped with the skill to navigate through such differences’ (Simpson and Kresse 2007, 15).
In short, it is through kin, business partners and other social relations that urban residents gain access to territory beyond the town. While traveling beyond the town, people select specific sites and ignore others, and they adjust their conduct and state of mind according to the zone they find themselves in. Their choices of travel, freely chosen, reflect wider structures of social in-and exclusion. I observe linkages between the neighbourhood and various ‘Muslim’ zones (as was suggested for Ahmedabad by Mahadevia 2007, 372–374), although not all ‘Muslim’ zones are equally experienced as spaces of familiarity. In the diversity among local Muslims, the dispersed spaces of Christianity are, in some cases, even more familiar than the spaces of another Muslim community.

This case study also shows that, because men and women’s regional mobility is so different, gender is important in the perception of the region. Most of the women I knew in Anand do not own cars or motorcycles of their own. Some working women and well-to-do female students have their own scooty, but housewives are not expected to leave the house at all, as even for most of their shopping they can rely on door-to-door traders. Consequently, they rely on their husbands for transport. Demanding trips be undertaken, as shown in the case of Sajiya, was thus a regularly observed feature of social life in Anand’s households. Other examples of women’s regional outlook are the occasional absence of daughters-in-law, taking leave from their duties in their husband’s family to have a ‘holiday’ in the pir (town of origin), the happy memories shared by women of such visits and those of their children trailing along with them in summer, thereby acquainting themselves with the ‘village’. This continued mobility is important for women, whose region is produced by their duty to move house after marriage, from their native town to the town of their husband. Due to the patrilocal marriage system, most women travel after marriage so become ‘multi-sited’ in their spatial orientation. By maintaining dispersed kinship networks and by passing on the knowledge of their pir (home village) to the children, women play a key role in the (re)production of the regional community.

Javed: exploring region through business

Javed’s family is one of the more wealthy business families in the neighbourhood. Their current business is the construction of a shopping complex in a nearby town that I refer to (for reasons of privacy of the family) as ‘Nagar’. Javed is the oldest son and his father has instructed him to manage the business in Nagar. Javed spends five days a week there, waiting for potential investors who sporadically come to enquire about buying a shop, while his
father visits occasionally, to oversee the construction work. Having invited me to see the site, Javed finds me on the dusty street of our neighbourhood in Anand town. He wipes the dust from the seat of his white scooty with an old cloth, puts a scarf over his nose and mouth to protect against the dust, and instructs me to cover my nose and mouth as well. We hit the road. The heat is soaring. Javed remarks that: ‘Normally I go on scooty, but from tomorrow onwards I’ll take the bus. Now that summer is coming, the heat is getting too much. My father has a car but I still haven’t learnt how to drive it’.

We cross the ‘overbridge’, Ismaelnagar, Ekta restaurant and Tip Top restaurant. Javed points to the latter and says: ‘This is a new restaurant. I am planning to open a restaurant myself around here, maybe next year’. The road then leads away from Anand and into agricultural fields. Javed points: ‘This is tobacco. This is banana’. He explains that his father used to be in agricultural business before: ‘In 1994, our family lost crores\(^{17}\) of rupees. It was a hard time for us financially. That time my father had gone into potato business. He took a risk because this was something new for him and he didn’t know all the tricks. He lost a lot of money and he had to sell some land. The plots he sold at the time are now worth twenty times more than what he sold it for! But that way he could start his business again’.

We arrive at the edge of Nagar, and stop in a largely uninhabited area with a noisy road, fences, and a few half-constructed buildings. Other than the construction workers and the traffic on the road, there are few people around. Javed remarks: ‘Now, this area is nothing. But in ten years it will be fully developed. Value will rise. We are building a shopping centre with two floors. If all goes well, we want to build a multiplex cinema on the third floor. At this point we are building and selling at the same time’.

Javed shows me the ongoing construction work of the shopping mall. He says that Nagar is ‘a good place for investment. Before, my father constructed several buildings in Anand. He planned to buy a new plot in Anand as well, but the price was so high he decided not to do it. Anand is already totally developed. The prices are so high that they can hardly rise further. We prefer investing in small places, villages that are growing, where you can still buy land at a reasonable price and then make profit at a lower risk. Nagar is cheaper than Anand, because it is still small. But it is growing. Many people from the surrounding villages come here to shop’.

\(^{17}\) A crore is ten million rupees, so the amount lost would be above 137,000 euros (conversion through http://themoneyconverter.com/EUR/INR.aspx, accessed October 7, 2015).
During my fieldwork, I travelled with businessmen on five occasions, with men who showed me their dispersed economic practices in various types of ventures. Other than real estate business, these included a weigh bridge (for trucks to weigh their loads), a saw mill, a rice mill, various small shops. One form of land-related business entailed the conversion of uncultivated (kacca) land to land suitable for agriculture by clearing and ploughing it and building an irrigation system - when I returned in 2014, the land had already been sold. Another form is the conversion of agricultural land to non-agricultural land. Along with their commercial ventures, many businessmen were engaged in some form of social work, in schools, charitable hospitals or other social welfare institutions.

The experience of travelling together with businessmen has helped me to understand what ‘regions’ they see and perceive. The pathways of business are different from the pathways of kinship, and can perhaps be best characterised as zones of opportunities, profit and loss. During the road trip from Anand to Nagar, a sense of space emerged in relation to business ventures in the past, present and future. Javed sees different business opportunities in different places. The urban landscape of Anand town evokes dreams about potential ventures in the restaurant business. The landscape of agriculture is also not unfamiliar and is shaped by memories of family activities in potato trade, unfortunately unsuccessful. It is the space in between, the peri-urban landscape at the edge of a growing town, in which Javed is groomed in the family business. Here, on the edge of ‘development’, his family expects to make a profit. The rurban landscape is patchy, dry and seemingly empty, lined by low concrete walls marking private properties off from each other, and dotted with widely dispersed and mostly unfinished buildings. It is what much of central Gujarat today looks like.

As many Vohra business families are currently investing in land, many of them show an interest in particular in investing in semi-urban areas at the edges of growing towns, which are typically administratively defined as ‘agricultural’. Converting the land to the status of non-agricultural is a difficult, expensive and lengthy bureaucratic procedure, usually involving the bribing of local officials, but can generate great profits because the land can then be resold at a much higher price. Both local businessmen and those from elsewhere (Vadodara, Ahmedabad, Mumbai, and abroad) are participating in this business (see Chapter 6). Moreover, besides the families that have traditionally been in business, even families in ‘service’ are now participating in land acquirement in urban areas, albeit on a smaller scale.

The spatial distribution of these land investments is of interest here. Today most Muslims only invest in land in Muslim-majority areas, and this is particularly true
for those who have no previous experience in real estate business and cannot afford to take risks. During trips, the landscape evoked memories of violence and assessments of risk, colouring experiences of travel. As one informant, himself resident of a village, said: ‘Since the riots, nobody wants to buy land in the village anymore. Everybody wants to invest in town only. Especially in Anand’.

For a fuller understanding of how a sense of belonging and exclusion coalesce in this regional geography, I now continue with another scene from the day with Javed. The shopping mall under construction is located next to a temple - Javed describes the space as a ‘Hindu area’. How does he move around in this ‘Hindu area’?

In the absence of customers in the office, we relax and talk. Javed asks questions about Amsterdam. Then we talk about the 2002 riots. He is very interested in talking about it: ‘Nowadays people forget, but the people who have lost their children, their houses, their business, how can they forget?’ In the middle of the conversation, he suddenly warns me: ‘Now stop talking about this, a Hindu is coming’. A man walks in, sits down and start chatting to us comfortably. When Javed goes to the other room to pray, the man turns to me personally. From his fast Gujarati I understand that ‘there is no Hindu-Muslim tension here’. He aims to convey that Hindus and Muslims are maintaining good relations with each other.

Javed later explains that this man is the person who arranges government certificates for the construction business: ‘He knows very well how to get things done around here. He used to be a bureaucrat with the municipality, until he got fired because of corruption. We pay him a lot for his service of dealing with government officials, but he does his work well’. As explained above, building in semi-urban areas such as this requires an administrative conversion from agricultural to non-agricultural land in the government records, a time-consuming procedure usually involving the bribing of officials.

Javed further explains that good collaboration with Hindus is a key to success in the real estate business, because of the strict residential segregation in the region. Javed: ‘This area we are building in is a Hindu area. On that side there is a mandir (Hindu temple), on the other side Hindus are building an apartment complex. The customers who come to inquire about buying a shop with us are also mainly Hindus. We are the only Muslims here. I can tell you, if we had been Hindus, all the shops would have been sold by now, not just 70 out of 110. People are a bit hesitant about buying from a Muslim. They don’t say so, but I can feel that I have to deal with a trust issue. That is why we collaborate
with Hindu partners. We put the names of two Hindu partners on the sign board that advertises our shopping mall. They are not financially involved, but they are giving their name. In the same way, we help them if they want to do business in a Muslim area. My father has a lot of experience in this business, he knows how to do all these things. The name of the shopping centre is also chosen in this way. It is a combination of two words: the first is a Hindu word, the second is a word from Islam’.

On the way from Nagar back to Anand, we pass a village that has been in the news a lot lately because severe atrocities happened here in 2002, and a recent court case has led to life imprisonments. While passing, Javed asks: ‘Have you been here? It is a major victim place. It happened everywhere here, in every village. But they didn’t come to Anand. I was very young at the time, only 14 years old. Me and my friends, we went to the refugee camp near our house every day for four months. We went to help, distributing food’.

Javed is clearly at home in the region and is moving around with confidence. As his family is one of the bigger business families in real estate in Anand town, they are confident enough to invest in ‘Hindu’ spaces and collaborate with Hindu partners to make this possible. As an apprentice in the family business, Javed is keen on developing a business mind of his own, planning to build a future here, looking for business opportunities all around him. At the same time, Javed shows a keen sensitivity to how community distinctions shape the landscape, which disrupts a sense of belonging. This is visible in his knowledge of the recent history of violence in his direct surroundings, in a more general sense of spatial segregation along community lines, and an even more subtle awareness of how to conduct himself in interactions with others. Not speaking with Hindus about the sensitive subject of the 2002 riots helps to build a harmonious spirit that is a necessary precondition to successful collaboration.

Another way in which Javed maintains a low profile is through clothing. When he is at home and in the neighbourhood, Javed likes to wear the white cotton attire that is popular among men following the Tablighi Jamaat. Javed is active in the Tablighi Jamaat and would prefer to wear his religious dress every day, but he feels that ‘if I wear my white clothes (…), people look at me as if I am an animal. They fear. They look at me… don or mafia, they think’. Unsure what to do, he is experimenting with different clothes, sometimes coming in trousers, sometimes in religious dress.

Javed’s attentiveness to the specific hurdles he faces in the region as a Muslim exemplifies both a narrative of exclusion, and an eagerness to learn from his
business-wise father how to strategically manage some of the hurdles attached to their minority status. This is related to a dilemma also faced by many other businessmen: doing business in ‘Muslim areas’ may be safe but limits one’s profit margins, while doing business in other areas is considered more risky but, for those who can handle it, is also potentially more profitable. It struck me that young men dreaming of starting a business often dreamt of starting it not in the Muslim-majority areas, but in Vallabh Vidyanagar, the most expensive part of Anand’s urban conglomerate and a Hindu-majority neighbourhood. It is here that additional hurdles and risks may apply, but it is also where higher prices can be asked for almost anything one sells.

The shopping mall under construction (2012).
Multiple regions

This final section contextualises the findings and draws comparisons. In order to assess the case studies presented above, it is important to contextualise the social position of the informants. In the two cases, there are several indications that Javed and Sajiya are both from relatively privileged families within the Vohra community: for example, both travel by privately owned cars or motorcycles, which is not an option for all residents of Anand town. Both Javed and Sajiya belong to the Chaud (14) utara, which has been described as the ‘higher caste’ within the Vohra community. In Anand, the Chaud utara maintains a mercantile identity and is said to have been derived from a selective group of relatively wealthy landowners and business families within the Vohra community.

Due to their history of relative privilege, traditional forms of capital and land ownership, many families of the Chaud group in Anand still cherish concrete ties to other villages or towns. As this is not directly evident in the narratives of Javed and Sajiya, it is useful to clarify it here. Sajiya’s father-in-law and Javed’s father are both landowners, each in a different village near Anand. Sajiya’s in-laws, for example, are a Nepada family (from Nepad village). Sajiya’s husband lives in Anand and is a contractor, his brother lives in Nepad and farms a small tobacco plantain on family-owned land. He and his father remember the village of Nepad affectionately and frequently offered to take me there, although this eventually never happened. ‘It is because of that land that we can pay for the family’s living expenses’, Sajiya’s father-in-law explained. I have observed such ties mainly with families of the Chaud (14) group. This affirms the suggestion that this group originally came from families of a higher socio-economic background and traditionally consisted of relatively wealthy business families and landowners (Heitmeyer 2009a, 107). It suggests that the regional ties are particularly strong among this specific network of families, which is selective because, in many cases, marriages are performed within this sub-group of 14 ataks. In some of these families, such as Sajiya’s, attachment to the ancestral village remains of practical importance in their everyday life. In others, such as Javed’s, the attachment to the region is more mobile, not necessarily concerned with a place of origin but rather locating memories of land acquirement and loss on the regional landscape.

The other Vohra sub-groups, the Arsad (68) and Makeriya families, have a different background. For them, the mercantile background of Vohras is not that important. Those among them who belong to the wealthy middle class in Anand have, more often than not, acquired their wealth and social status in society through education, which has given them access to urban professionals and
government service. For the Arsad families I knew, who had been based in Anand for a long time, there was a different kind of metonymic relation between their atak and a particular village. If they were wealthy, they were likely to have land, but this was then urban or peri-urban, acquired recently as a source of investment rather than being inherited through family ancestry in a particular village. If they identify with a place, it was the village or town in which they grew up and where their relatives currently live – which was Anand town in these cases, which did not necessarily match their atak.

This unlinking of name from village is related to the gradual relocation into urban centres I have described earlier: rural-urban migration, the search for education and white-collar urban jobs. Having been a numerical minority in the village when they left - in some cases not even one relative remained in the ancestral village, it would have been unlikely that they claimed the village as their own. Still, even for Arsad (68) and Makeriya families who have worked their way up the economic ladder through education and white-collar jobs, their atak remains a way of being assessed by others in the marriage market, and the villages are still remembered in this way. Moreover, even these families maintain practical ties to villages. This was shown at weddings and dinner parties in Anand, when I would invariably be introduced to relatives visiting Anand from nearby towns and villages, and was also shown in the practice in some of these urban households to have a (poorer) cousin from a nearby village staying for several years during their education, relieving the rural family from the care of the child, giving the urban family companionship and help with household chores, and allowing the child to study in an urban school or college.

This contextualisation should help understand some of the class specificities of the case studies. To contextualise the findings further, I draw on earlier studies of another specific community of the Charotar region, the Patels or Patidars. Their marriage system, described by Pocock (1976) and Hardiman (1981, 41), bears strong resemblance to the Vohra marriage system. It has developed since the mid-nineteenth century and, according to Hardiman (1981, 43), affirms a strong ideological link between the village, land ownership, and the Patidar community: ‘the Patidars of a village were the village, other castes were merely there to serve’. The aim was to make groups of villages (gols) endogamous units, with fines or boycotts imposed on those who married outside the gol. Remarkably, both Vohras and Patidars (Patels) have highlighted their attachment to specific villages in their kinship system, but this attachment has evolved differently over time. For Patidars, the village seems only to have increased in importance. Recent studies
of Patidars report that even after migrating abroad, they maintain village associations and financially support the ‘development’ of their home village (Rutten and Patel 2004; see also Dekkers and Rutten 2011). The position of Patels as the dominant caste in most of their villages (in many cases, though not always, Pocock 1972, 26; Gidwani 2008) gives their relation to the village a collective meaning, resulting, for example, in village events such as an annual Village Day, during which donations are gathered for development of the village. These activities revolve around the concept of a village, while the participants tend to be, in overwhelming majority, from the Patel community (Dekkers and Rutten 2011, 13), making Village Day a community event as much as a village event. This reinforces a strong link between a specific sub-section of the Patel community and its home village.18

For Vohras, I have established that their endogamous kinship system is linked partly to villages and that the link to specific villages has remained a source of identification during marriage arrangements. For some families, particularly within the Chaud group, the atak is still important in a practical way as it relates to landownership and a sense of affection or belonging towards a certain village. For others, their atak has become an abstract code, though not as abstract as any surname. The fact that the entire Vohra community still carries these ataks and attaches value to them in marriage arrangements highlights a particular sense of being a local community. As a whole, the marriage system still establishes that Vohras as a community were derived from local villages and towns – from Charotar.

However, even for Vohras who own family land in an ancestral home village, we may wonder if the village has been a source of community identity in the same way as it has been for Patels. In my research among urban families, I found that they experience their (past) relation with particular villages more as a personal affair than as a collective trait of an entire village-based community. Most of the Vohra’s ancestral villages are Patel-majority villages. This was already so in the past, and the recent history of violence and displacement in 2002 has reinforced this situation further. I have already mentioned that at the time sign boards had been erected claiming some villages were ‘Hindu villages’, discouraging Muslim villagers from staying. Various reports indicate Muslims have been forcibly evicted from the villages.19 I have not crosschecked such stories with Hindus in the specified villages, except in one case, through interviews of Dakxin Bajrange in a nearby village (February 2015). There, a group of Hindu (non-Patel) residents living

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18 Pocock remarked that the Muslim-majority village Napa was considered ‘not a good village’ among the Patidars and tended towards ‘an exclusively wife-giving position’. This was because ‘the Patidar there were in a minority to inferior, mostly Muslim castes’ (Pocock 1972, 136) and so I infer that they were unable to claim the village space as theirs.


on land previously owned by Muslims remembered that Muslims were forced to leave the village in 2002, and were then compelled to sell their land at cheap rates (according to them by Patels). Developments like these reinforce Hindu claims over the village space and devalue the relation of Muslims to their ancestral villages. The regional outlook and the rural-urban linkages maintained by the Vohras in Anand thus points to an active process of regeneration of the regional community, in which rather fluid and mobile attachments to places determine the regional experience.

Maps of Charotar, found online. The first map is taken from a website of the Patidar community. In this map, many village names are specified and a selected sub-group of six villages (Nadiad, Vaso, Dharmaj, Karamsad, Bhadran and Sojitra) is printed in larger letters. The second map is taken from a Facebook page of the Charotar Vora Samaj. It is a district map of Gujarat, without markers of specific villages.

Conclusion

Charotar Sunni Vohras are at home in a region where they are a minority, where they are regarded as not belonging, and where many have recently moved to a Muslim-majority urban neighbourhood in search of safety after communal violence. Even so, as a community they retain a sense of regional belonging, expressed through narrative and in everyday practices of mobility and exchange.

A region can be constructed in various ways: spatially, linguistically, economically, culturally, and/or historically (Cohn 1987). They can exist around market towns (Heesterman 1982), ecological zones (Gommans 1998), oceans (Simpson and Kresse 2007), and also around dispersed kinship networks or business ties. On the one hand, regions can be thought of through the processes of ‘imagining’ spatial identities (Anderson 1991) and through the self-images and community narratives told by people themselves. On the other hand, the region can be thought of as a ‘matrix of movement’ (Ingold 2005 [2000], 217), as a network of ‘coming and going’ (Ingold 2005 [2000], 235). Such an understanding of the region requires the researcher to explore the ‘social labour involved in establishing equivalences and connections across places (Turnbull 1996, 2, in Ingold 2005 [2000], 229).

Exploring the region through a narrative-based approach has uncovered the ideas about the region that circulate among the town’s residents. The idea of a regionally specific community of Charotar Sunni Vohras was probably first conceptualised and/or first became important in Mumbai, where Vohras started to organise as such and, from there, over time, imported the now institutionalised idea of a regionally specific Vohra community into the region. Key to the idea of the regional community is the local ancestry of the Vohras as a community, which is today remembered through a narrative of conversion, long-term embeddedness in the local agricultural economy, and through a system of village-based marriage circles. Overall, Vohra affirmation of regional attachments calls into question the dominant view of Muslims as ‘outsiders’ and instead (re)generates a strong sense of local ancestry and belonging. In a way, the affirmations reiterate rather than contest the logics of local ancestry and belonging utilised by exclusivist Hindu political discourses: in a context where claims of local belonging have become highly contested, to claim that we also belong seems to be a powerful way of maintaining self-worth. It is important, however, to highlight that these regional narratives are generally unknown by those outside the community. They are mainly recounted by the older generation, mostly by elderly men considered (by themselves or by others) to be ‘experts’ on these matters. In everyday interactions with my neighbours, these historical accounts did not usually emerge, except where people were directly probed.
For the younger generation, who have brought up in Anand, it is their ‘natural’ home town, from which they explore the region. As Javed explained, they ‘saw the refugees coming’ in 2002 and they have internalised the idea that Anand is a safe place for Muslims. From this safe place, they explore the region, in as far as places are open to them through their parents and/or dispersed kinship ties. Through traveling with them, their embodied knowledge and familiarity with the area beyond the town became accessible to the researcher. Their experiences affirm regional connectedness and also show a different side of the story: insecurity, risk, and communal tensions in the aftermath of 2002. These experiences sit somewhat uncomfortably with the regional histories told with so much enthusiasm by the elderly men.

Learning how to deal successfully with the stigma of being Muslim is an important aspect of traveling beyond the comfort zone of the neighbourhood. Learning these skills is important for Javed, for youth studying in Hindu-majority schools in Vallabh Vidyanagar, for middle-aged men working for the government or in banks, and also for the elderly men when they visit their cherished ancestral villages. During a village visit with one such elderly man, he sat down comfortably with an old (Hindu) neighbour to chat, but signalled to me to stay detached and not to ask any questions at that moment. He later explained in detail about the atrocities that had happened in the village and about his migration to Anand town. There is a tension here between the region of the past, which is remembered and, to some extent, relived while visiting the village, and the region of the present, in which Muslim claims on the village space are devaluated and sometimes lost.

It seems to me that this regional perspective offers a new view that is not in recent studies on Indian Muslims guided by the sociological notion of the insulated Muslim ‘ghetto’. Describing how regional affirmations take shape in the lives of urban residents can be a valuable addition to current studies of Muslims in India, which are mainly based in cities and ignore the rural-urban connections of urban Muslims (Chaudhury 2007; Gayer and Jaffrelot 2012; Patel 2006a; Jasani 2010; Mahadevia 2007; Sattar 2012; Shaban 2012). I suggest social scientists sometimes need to ‘scale up’, from the neighbourhood-in-the-city to the neighbourhood-in-the-region. This is useful because the rural connectedness of Anand town is not unique. In many towns and cities in India, as elsewhere in the world, ‘the linkages between urban centres and the countryside, including movement of people, goods, capital and other social transactions, play an important role in processes of rural and urban change’ (Tacoli 1998, 147). A neighbourhood-in-the-region perspective leads us away from guiding notions of isolation and closure, and opens up an
awareness of connections between the residential area and the wider area beyond the city or town.

Let me clarify: I do not wish to draw attention away from the realities of violence, segregation, marginalisation and exclusion that characterise the situation of Muslims in India today. However, if we want to understand how Muslims in Indian cities and towns have come to reshape their sense of space in response to these processes, it is relevant to show how experiences of residing in a ‘Muslim area’ are produced in juxtaposition to what is ‘out there’. This juxtaposition comes about through experiences of travel. I have shown how the own (Muslim) neighbourhood is defined against spaces defined as ‘Hindu’, but also that the ‘Hindu areas’ are diverse. They contain zones of omission, which are ignored, and zones of potential danger, where precaution is taken to avoid trouble, for example by refraining from land investments. While traveling, these potential dangers are drawn to the surface and become an object of conversation, more than when staying in the neighbourhood with the residents. When villages notorious for violence against Muslims are sighted, this immediately evokes stories of what happened in 2002. These Hindu spaces are not ‘no go areas’, but entering them requires a certain state of mind and skill. Marginalisation is anticipated, and learning how to successfully deal with the stigma of being Muslim is an important aspect of the spatial experience. Consequently, Hindu areas are also (in some cases) zones of desire: successful participation in social and economic life here signals acceptance and status in wider society.

If I were to draw maps of Charotar from the travels of the town’s residents, I would probably draw many different ones, each marking different sites as central and with different types of connections between them, depending on each person’s specific experiences. Individual journeys are related to specific embeddings in social and economic life in various places. Class is an important explanatory factor in the observed mobility, and the view of the region presented here is a view from an advantaged class of relatively wealthy families, owning houses and sometimes land, motorcycles and sometimes a car. Had I focused on the poorer families living in the relief societies of Anand, some located not within fifteen minutes walk from the nearest shared auto-rickshaw stand, this study would have produced a different view on Anand’s regional connectedness. Since age and gender are also important in the perception of the region, it is important to note that the regional narratives recounted here were mainly told by the older generation, mostly by men who had lived elsewhere in the region before moving to Anand and who remained somehow tied up with village life even now. For the younger generation, who have grown up
in Anand, the town is their ‘natural’ home town, from which they explore the region. During ‘interviews’ they had little to share about the region, but through traveling with them, their skills and familiarity with the area beyond the town became accessible to the researcher.
PART III
A transnational community
Main places of settlement of Charotar Sunni Vohars
By describing Vohras as a town-based and regional community in Part II of the thesis, I have described the ‘Vohra community’ from a local perspective. Now, in Part III, I will describe the wider migration trajectories of Vohras and analyse the community from a transnational perspective. Where have Vohras migrated and how have they regrouped as a community in their new settings? Is ‘that Vohra thing’, as one young man in the UK called it, still relevant for those who settled abroad?

This chapter explores how community is reformulated and negotiated during the active and dynamic process of ‘group-making’ (Brubaker 2002) under conditions of migration. How do collective identities emerge, what cultural work is involved, and how is this process affected by the experience of migration? In the previous scholarship on these processes, I can broadly discern three approaches. First, scholars have drawn on the classic anthropological notions of kinship and caste to understand how social relations are reconfigured in response to migration and how ‘transnational social fields’ emerge in the process (Ballard 1990; Charsley and Shaw 2006; Charsley 2013; Gardner 2006; Upadhya and Rutten 2012). Second, scholars have looked into the institutionalisation and politicisation of identities,
for example through the formation of migrant associations (Caglar 2006; Mazzucato and Kabki 2009; Østergaard-Nielsen 2003; Sökefeld 2006; van Der Veer 2002). Third, scholars have looked into the formation of ‘diasporas’, based on an ethno-national consciousness of being dispersed from an ancestral ‘homeland’ (Clifford 1994; Cohen 1996; Safran 1991; for a discussion, see Faist 2008, 34–36).

These three analytical lenses are used in this chapter to explore how Vohras have reconfigured themselves as a transnational community: first, the intimate sphere of the family; second, the formal organisation of the community; and third, the shared homeland. In line with earlier studies on South Asians in Britain (e.g. Ballard 1990, Gardner 2006), my findings show that notions of family and relatedness are crucial to the process of (chain) migration and to the reconfiguration of the community. While there have also been attempts to organise the Vohra community more formally, this has featured bursts of enthusiasm and of disinterest. Approaching the situation through the notion of the homeland helps to understand how the migrants think of themselves as Indians, as Gujaratis, as Indian/Gujarati Muslims, and as Vohras from the ‘very small region’ of Charotar. However, rather than collectively idealising the ‘putative ancestral homeland’ or nurturing a dream of future return (Safran 1991, 83–84; Cohen 1996, 515), what is shared is critique on the marginalisation of Muslims in Gujarat/India.

Vohras have participated in the long-standing history of international migration from central Gujarat: to the former British colonies in East Africa, to Karachi in Pakistan, to Dubai in the Middle East, to Australia, the UK and USA. This chapter is primarily based on conversations with Vohras based in the UK, with some references to conversations with Vohras based in the USA.

Migration trajectories

Gujarat has a long history of international migration and has long been an important migrant-sending region of India (Kapur 2010, 52, 55, 79, 90). Studies of migration in and from central Gujarat suggest that migration has been distributed unevenly between groups. Until recently, it was mainly the rural elite, particularly the landowning agricultural community of ‘Patels’ or ‘Patidars’, who migrated abroad (Guha and Rutten 2013; Michaelson 1979; Morris 1968; Rutten and Patel 2002; Tambs-Lyche 1980; for background, see Pocock 1972). In the Chronicles of Charotar (1954),¹ a book with history of Charotar containing almost 200 pages

about international migration from the region, almost all migrants had the same surname: Patel. For example, in Kampala (Uganda), of 347 migrants mentioned, 287 are Patel and 14 are Amin (also considered to be Patel). Only a few other names are mentioned in this list: Dev (4), Mistri (2) and Vohra (2). This shows caste networks were crucial to accessing opportunities created due to British colonial rule in the East African colonial territories of Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda.

Vohras have migrated in smaller numbers and have followed diverse migration trajectories. As a result, their transnational networks are not as visible in the region. Conversations with Vohras in the UK who had lived in East Africa confirm that Vohras only occasionally participated in colonial migration: in their memory, ‘from our side in Charotar, there were only eight or ten people.’ Over time, these eight or ten people moved on from Africa to the UK, and contributed to starting the process of Vohra chain migration there. More recent developments have opened up the UK, USA, Australia and Canada, as well as the Middle East, to new generations of migrants increasingly independent from caste networks and derived from wider segments of the population. Visa agents I interviewed in Anand estimated that while 80% of their customers are still Patel, their customers now also include members of other Hindu castes, Christians, and Muslims.2

The household survey I organised in Anand shows that 36 of the 147 households have one or more family members abroad (table 2.2, in Chapter 2), mostly offspring; a total of 35 children (27 sons and 8 daughters) were found abroad in 26 households.3 Table 5.1 shows the destinations, visa status and numbers of years abroad of the sons and daughters who went abroad. Most are in the Australia (10 of 35), USA (10 of 35), and UK (8 of 35), a few are in the Middle East or South Africa, and one is in mainland Europe (table 5.1). Almost 50% of the children are said to hold permanent residency (17 out of 35). These numbers are in line with other findings of migration from central Gujarat, which show that the UK, USA and Australia are important destinations for migration from this region.4

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3 Of these 26 families with children abroad, 19 were recorded as Vohra (the surname was not recorded in all households).

The survey findings confirm that migration is an important aspect in the lives of middle class Muslims in Anand town, and is no longer confined to a specific caste network. Below I outline the diverse migration trajectories of Vohras from central Gujarat, and their destinations.

First, an important migration destination for Vohras from central Gujarat has been Mumbai. Central Gujarat was a part of the Bombay Presidency in the colonial period, has been connected with Bombay/Mumbai through the railways and has been an important centre of education and business for a long time, which has attracted many migrants from Gujarat. As a result, Gujaratis are the second largest linguistic group of this metropolis.5 As early as the 1930s, Vohras of Charotar were organising themselves as a community in Bombay.6 In the community directory of the ‘Mumbai Charotar Sunni Vohra Samaj’, 7 264 Vohra households are listed as residents of Mumbai. Besides those who settled in Mumbai, there are those who used the city as a stepping stone to further off destinations, such as the UK or USA.8

A second migration destination for the Vohra community has been Karachi. After Partition — the break-up of British India into India and Pakistan in 1947 — millions of people moved across the new borders, Hindus and Sikhs to India, Muslims to Pakistan.9 In this period, Sunni Vohras migrated from central Gujarat

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6 Vohra Darshan, page 78-90.
8 Information based on interviews with migrants in the UK.
9 While the demographics of these migrations have been recorded relatively well in the Punjab region (Schechtman 1949), less is known about migration patterns to and from Gujarat after Partition. The 1961 Census recorded that the number of persons who had migrated from Pakistan into Kheda district was 4,634.
and Bombay to Pakistan. The ‘Sunni Vohras or Sunni Bohras’ Wikipedia page, says that ‘after independence in 1947, many members of the community moved to Pakistan, and there is a 15,500 strong community in Karachi’, who have organised themselves into the Charotar Muslim Anjuman (association of Charotar Muslims), established in 1952. The community directory of Karachi produced by this association mentions approximately 500 families from 47 villages in central Gujarat.

Among the Vohras from central Gujarat who migrated to the British colonies in East Africa (the area now known as Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania) were labourers working in the businesses of other Gujaratis and teachers. After Independence, in the 1960s and 70s, a few stayed on in Africa but the majority migrated onwards to the UK. In as far I was able to talk to these pioneer migrants, now old and retired in the UK, they said their migration to East Africa had been made possible because of the help of a friendly neighbour or a well-connected college friend - a co-villager of the Patel community or a Muslim acquaintance from the coastal parts of Gujarat.

In their community in Gujarat, migration was rare at the time and, in some cases, was strongly discouraged by relatives. When a Vohra man from the village of Kanjari in central Gujarat had the opportunity to become a school teacher in a Khoja (Muslim) school in Tanganyika (now Tanzania), arranged through the help of a friend from Surat, his family strongly disapproved and tried to prevent him from taking up the position.

A few individuals migrated to the UK and USA in the 1960s, 70s and 80s, via Mumbai, Pakistan, or East Africa and, in some cases, directly from Gujarat. Once settled, these individuals have helped relatives and acquaintances to make the move. In the UK (about which more below), there are approximately 110 to 120 households of Vohras settled with British passports, and a varying number of migrants on temporary visas, estimated at sixty by members of the UK Vohra Association in 2012. In the USA, there are at least 350 individuals, approximately

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12 Charotar Muslim Anjuman (Pak) Regd. Members Directory, Karachi, Pakistan. The directory was given to me by a family in Anand, who had brought it with them after a recent visit to relatives in Karachi. The book is undated but mentions the date of the foundation of the association, 1952. From the name of the organisation, it is unclear whether the organisation is for Charotar Sunni Vohras only, or for all Muslims from Charotar, but the ‘community hall’ where marriages of the community takes place was described by the family in Anand as a ‘Vohra community hall’.
13 This is based on interviews with Vohras who came to the UK via East Africa. A man who had lived in Tanganyika said that there were three Charotar Sunni Vohra families in Tanganyika, three or four families in Uganda, and, similarly, a few in Kenya. The Charotar Sarvasangra mentions two Vohras in Kampala, out of 347 migrants from Charotar in Kampala (Uganda), Purushotam C. Shah and Chandrakandh F. Shah (eds.), Charotar Sarvasangra (1954): 926-952. Nadiad: Parekh Kevdachand Kanjiibhai and Sons.
14 Support by acquaintances of other (non-Vohra) communities was a theme in the narratives of the first generation migrations I encountered in the UK. Heitmeyer (Heitmeyer 2009a) presents a similar argument, through a case where a man with good cross-community connections succeeded in getting his visa, while an unconnected man with similar credentials could not.
65 Vohra families\(^{15}\), most of whom live in two main areas (on the east coast and in Illinois). Thirteen migrants arrived in the USA as early as the 1960s and 1970s, mostly as students, and this group of migrants brought over their relatives and acquaintances, who then raised their families in the USA. This chain migration has been facilitated in the US by family-sponsored immigration, whereby ‘aliens who are the spouses and unmarried minor children of U.S. citizens and the parents of adult U.S. citizens’ can apply for legal immigration.\(^ {16}\) Immigration into the USA was still relatively easy in the 1970s and 80s but has now become a slower and more difficult process due to tightening migration regulations. A Vohra community association was established in the UK in 1992 and in the USA in 2001.

**Australia** is currently a preferred destination for education-based migration from India (Baas 2010). In central Gujarat, education-based migration has become more accessible since the 1990s, leading educated youth to the UK (Rutten and Verstappen 2014) and to Australia. In interviews with visa agents in Anand who arrange student visa, they stress that the majority of their customers are actually not that interested in pursuing education, but want to work and earn money abroad and to acquire residential status.\(^ {17}\) Through a survey in Australia (Survey B, see table 2.3 in Chapter 2), I acquired details of 35 Gujarati Muslims in Australia, 22 of them specifically from Anand or nearby villages and towns.\(^ {18}\) Of the 35 respondents, 21 were Charotar Sunni Vohras. Most of them reside in Sydney and are aged 25 to 35. The majority initially entered on student or a spousal visa. Among those who have studied, twelve respondents studied ‘cookery’ in Australia, while others had studied ‘accounting’, ‘nursing’, and ‘social welfare’. At the moment, six of them still have a student visa, seven are on other temporary visas, and fourteen have acquired either ‘PR’ (permanent residency) or citizenship. Most work at the lower end of the labour market, in processing, cookery, cleaning, or security. A few described themselves as doctor (1), nurse (3), housewife (5), or in business (2).

Finally, migration to the **Middle East** is a significant feature of everyday life in central Gujarat. Indian migration to Gulf countries grew exponentially after the oil boom in the 1972-73 and 1979, and is rather diverse, including skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers, professionals and entrepreneurs (P. C. Jain 2007).\(^ {19}\) The Provincial Globalisation survey in central Gujarat shows that migration to Gulf

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\(^{15}\) During the 2015 Vahora reunion, 350 attendees were registered, from Maryland, Connecticut, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Illinois, various other states in the USA, and four from abroad (including myself).


\(^{17}\) For an in-depth study of Indian students in Australia, see Baas (2010).

\(^{18}\) Others were from Ahmedabad, Gandhinagar, Mumbai, Baruch, and Khambhat.

\(^{19}\) An interview with a return migrant, who said he was the first in his village to go to the Gulf in the late seventies, shows that while this type of migration was still rare back then, it is now popular among young men in his village.
destinations is mostly to Saudi Arabia, though there is also migration to other countries. Through interviews with Gulf returnees (from Oman, Qatar, UAE and Saoudi Arabia) in Anand and in the nearby village of Bhalej, I established that they had found the job offers in local newspapers or through agents. These men were attracted by the promise of a better salary in the Middle East for work similar to what they were already doing in Gujarat.

In the household survey in Anand (table 5.1), only a few of the households mention Gulf countries as a migration destination (4 out of 35 children abroad). These relatively low numbers compared to the other destinations is probably related to the specific urban middle class composition of the neighbourhood studied in Anand. In some nearby villages, Gulf migration is more noticeable, and in one village there was a discernible excitement about going there, particularly among young men with a background in vocational training. However, among the urban middle class families I met in Anand, the dream is rather to send one’s children to the UK, USA or Australia on a student visa with the purpose of work and settlement abroad, even if large loans have to be taken to get them there. Migration to Gulf countries is seen as less lucrative because the relatively low currency differentials (in comparison to Western countries) and the extremely stringent naturalisation and citizenship laws that make it almost impossible to acquire a permanent resident status (Jain 2007, 176). In spite of these drawbacks, migration to Gulf destinations is still seen as a viable option among young men of the urban middle class, a back-up alternative if the bigger dreams for UK, USA or Australia do not work out.

In summary, a wide variety of paths have been travelled from central Gujarat. Overall, there is no one ‘Vohra migration pattern’ that stands out. Due to the wide dispersal of localities of settlement and due to the different temporalities of each migration trajectory, Vohras abroad cannot really be described as part of a ‘transnational village’, with one town of origin intensely connected to another node of high-density settlement, as outlined by Peggy Levitt for Miraflores (Dominican Republic) with Boston (USA) (Levitt 2001). Instead, as I argue in this chapter, they are better understood as a transnational community linked to a region of origin.

The idea of a regionally specific ‘Vohra’ community has been institutionalised in the various places of settlement. There is a Mumbai Charotar Sunni Vohra Samaj (association of Charotar Sunni Vohras) in Mumbai and a Charotar Muslim Anjuman (association of Charotar Muslims) with a ‘Vohra community hall’ in Karachi. There

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is also a UK Vohra Association and a Vahora Association of the USA, which both maintain Facebook based online networks of more than 100 and 200 members respectively. All these associations are specifically aimed at Vohra families ‘who are originally from Kheda/Anand Dist[ict] of Gujarat/India’. The character and level of activity of the community associations varies, but each organises social meetings and maintains an address list with details of known Vohra families in the respective city/country. The associations are not united in a transnational umbrella association, although there are some social contacts between specific individuals in the different countries. These attempts to institutionalise show that the idea of a specific ‘Vohra’ community identity has persisted abroad and, despite diverse migration trajectories and backgrounds, is actively being remade.

How and why do people take efforts to (re)construct the Vohra community abroad? Why and how is ‘being Vohra’ of importance after going abroad, if at all? What does the Charotar region mean in the new context; is it perceived as the community’s ‘homeland’? To answer these questions, I now shift the locus of the thesis to one of the destinations of arrival, the UK. I first describe the people themselves, their social position in the UK, and their transnational ties with India, then how they have engaged in community making.

Along the main roads in Anand, many travel agents and billboards promote the attractiveness of studying in the UK, USA or Australia.

22 Website Vahora Association of USA, accessed July 14, 2015.
Social position in the UK and ties with India

Abdullahmia Hassan Vora from Mumbai is remembered as being the first Vohra in the UK (in 1959). More Vohras arrived in the UK in the 1960s, 70s and 80s from Mumbai, East Africa and Karachi. These pioneer migrants facilitated chain migration by helping relatives to come on work and business visas and through marriages. More recently, primary migration from central Gujarat to the UK has been taking place on student and temporary work visas.

Who are the Vohras that arrived in the UK? What is their position in the UK and to what extent have they maintained relations with India? Vohras here have followed diverse migration trajectories, have a variety of occupations, divergent religious beliefs and practices, are embedded in a variety of social circles, and live dispersed across the country (although mostly in East and West London). To describe such a diverse category of people, I have to make simplifications. I categorise Vohras in the UK in three groups: the recently arrived migrants, the settled (first generation) migrants, and those born and/or brought up in the UK (the ‘second’ and later generations). I realise that many other categories could be chosen to describe Vohras in the UK, but this one is useful to describe their situation in the UK and their engagements with India.

The first category, recent arrivals from central Gujarat, have made their way into the UK mainly on student visa and other temporary visas. The aim of many ‘students’ from central Gujarat is to earn and save money to improve their position in the home region and to experience life abroad for a few years, often with the hope of potential settlement (Rutten and Verstappen 2014). Most of these young migrants work at the lower end of the labour market, as carriers, cashiers, shelf-stackers, or service providers in shops and supermarkets. One of the hubs for migrants from South Asia is the area around Green Street in East London, where they can find relatively affordable housing with other newly arrived migrants. Indian imported items, cheap groceries and migration-related services can be accessed easily in this neighbourhood.

Young, newly arrived men and women on student and other temporary visas maintain close connections with relatives in India. Some are in a relation of financial or moral indebtedness to their parents or other relatives, for example, relatives who have taken out loans in India to pay for the visa fees. Though financially supporting the family is not always possible in the difficult first period after arrival, some still hope or make plans for that. Apart from financial obligations, social relations with relatives in India are very important for this
group. Still in the process of building local support networks in the UK, phone calls with relatives in India are often an important source of social support. On the whole, these young migrants can be considered as part of the joint family they have left behind in India. Though socially and financially involved with relatives in India, their financial constraints make it difficult for them to visit India regularly. For those involved in complicated and lengthy procedures to extend their visas, and for those who ‘overstay’ the visa and continue to live in the UK (illegally), visiting India is nearly impossible.

The second category among my informants are those who migrated to the UK in the 1960s, 70s and 80s through the various routes described above. Of the 35 survey respondents, 21 came to the UK more than 11 years ago and 24 have a legal right to stay permanently in the UK (table 2.3, in Chapter 2). Their occupations are diverse: some having started their own shops or agencies, others work in transport or security, yet others are employed in administrative jobs. West London and Leicester are among the places where the earlier arrivals of Vohras have settled in family homes in a more upscale (sub)urban setting, as house owners or through social housing schemes. Their local networks in the UK have become the main sources of everyday support.

This does not mean that contact with India is lost, far from it. One striking indicator of their enduring relations with India is the common presence of a visiting parent, brother, aunt or niece staying as a long-term guest in the household. A family visitor visa for a maximum duration of six months is not difficult to obtain for families who can afford to support their relatives for the duration of their stay.23 Other ways of maintaining contact with Indian relatives are frequent phone calls - among my informants on average every other week and, in some cases, every day. Holiday visits to India are common among elderly men, some of whom now visit their Indian relatives ‘at least every year’ now that they are retired and with air tickets more affordable than in the past. In addition, some families have bought land or a house in central Gujarat for investment and/or holiday purposes. Financial resources also continue to be exchanged with relatives in India, for example through remittances, loans, or donations.

The offspring of the migrants, those born and/or brought up in the UK, are an even more diverse category. They belong to different age groups, some are young, others middle-aged. Their occupations, orientations, and participation in education are also varied. The diversity among them was often emphasised in my conversations

with them: one middle-aged woman even presented herself as a good informant by saying that: ‘It is good for your research that you met me. So you understand that we are not all like... (person X).’ This diversity is also shown in their attitudes towards India. Some of those born and brought up in the UK felt awkward discussing their lives with me in terms of a ‘Vohra’, ‘Gujarati’ or ‘Indian’ family background, they presented themselves rather as ‘British’ or ‘British Muslims’. One man even declared bluntly that ‘nothing but trouble comes from Gujarat.’ Others were quite interested in talking about Gujarat and highlighted the experience of having opportunities both in the UK and in India. This attitude occurred among some of those married to a spouse from India, whose social ties had been re-energised through the spouse and his/her relatives. Inheritances of family property are another reason to intensify the relations with India and to visit it more frequently, at least temporarily, to arrange the paperwork.

In summary, Vohras in the UK are a diverse category of people. I met recently arrived young migrants from Gujarat struggling their way into the UK labour market, men and women settled with their families in large houses in suburban neighbourhoods, and their children and grandchildren. There is diversity in the social position of informants in the UK and also in the way they maintain ties with India.

Is it justified to speak about all these different people as a ‘community’? I approach this question from three analytical angles: first, in the intimate sphere of the family; second, through tracing the establishment of the ‘UK Vohra Association’; and third, through the notion of a shared homeland.
The main thing you have to know about Vohras, is that all Vohras are related. Not in one way but in two, three, four, five different ways.

The statement is from a conversation with an elderly migrant in West London, born in Mumbai and married to a woman from a village in central Gujarat, father of five UK-born children. The conversation had been filled with statements about kinship. Whenever he mentioned the name of a person, he immediately specified: ‘She is my brother’s son’s wife’s mother, and she is also my wife’s father’s sister’s daughter.’ He would add that her husband is also a relative of his, or that her daughter had married one of his cousins. Such illustrations of the many ways in which Vohras are related to each other, through marriages between closely linked families, were a regular occurrence during conversations with Vohras in the UK (more so than they had been in Gujarat).

Studies of the South Asian presence in Britain have paid considerable attention to the subject of kinship and marriage, interest that stems from the recognition that kinship structures and marriage patterns are reworked under conditions of migration and contribute to shaping novel transnational networks. Marriage has been described as a factor in the facilitation of (chain) migration (Ballard 1990; Gardner and Shukur 1994, 156–158) and as a factor in the exchange of remittances and other resources (Upadhya and Rutten 2012, 54; Singh 2006). A classic field of study in anthropology has therefore been reborn: the attempt is to explain why and how kinship structures and marriage patterns are reproduced in the diaspora, how patterns transform in response to conditions of migration, and how they have affected the formation of transnational networks.

Marriage is an important aspect of the way Vohras in the UK are (re)configuring a sense of community. After the pioneer migrants settled, their marriages were arranged within the Vohra community, mostly in India and, over time and with the expansion of the community, also within the UK. More specifically, most of the migrants were derived from the Chaud utara in the Vohra community and also arranged their marriages within the Chaud utara. Through these marriages, families in the UK started to grow and links between families were confirmed both within the UK and across national borders. The resulting couples, now middle-aged or nearing the age of retirement, are in the process of marrying off their offspring and reformulating their marriage strategies: this is probably why the issue was of the utmost importance to them and they were enthusiastic about discussing it. For these parents, who still remember the process of arrival and
settlement in the early years, chain migration through marriages appears to be key to their sense of being part of a community in the UK. This was evident during every meeting I attended, as people often started the conversation by pointing out how they all were related, summaries sometimes dazzling to hear and impossible to remember. I ended up drawing the kinship charts I had seen in classic anthropological handbooks, which pleased informants and solicited additional information.

Of the eleven parents who answered the interview question of what kind of marriage partner they preferred for their children, seven answered that they preferred marriage within the Charotar Sunni Vohra community. A father explained:

I always encouraged my son to marry within the Vohra community. I told him to take a look around during Vohra meetings. But I didn’t think it would happen. In the end, I thought, as long as she is Muslim it will be fine. One day he came up to me and said he had met a Vohra girl, and would like to marry her. I couldn’t have been happier.

In the previous chapter, I have described the marriage practices of Vohras in Gujarat, based on ataks that are often linked to specific village names in the region. In Gujarat, community endogamy is fundamental to the construction of a shared and localised Vohra identity (Heitmeyer 2009a, 131-132). In the UK, the preference for marriage within the Vohra community is maintained. The main reason given by parents for the preference for marriage ‘within the family’ is that it is hoped that it will ensure a continuation of the joint family. A mother from Mumbai explained:

Parents want their son to stay with them after marriage. They want to live in a joint family. They want to keep good relations.

A father from Anand further clarified that this necessitates a good match not just between the spouses but also between the family and the daughter-in-law:

I am afraid if any girl comes as my daughter-in-law and she cannot mix with mother-in-law or father-in-law, or maybe with sister of the boy, then maybe there will be disaster. This is not a small thing, this is a lifetime relation. So maybe the son and daughter-in-law will live separate. So we thought let us think and decide.
Those born and/or brought up in the UK are aware of their parents’ wishes. A young woman explained:

In our generation we all confirmed to our parents’ wishes. For us... it was always in the back of our minds that we have to marry according to our parents’ wishes.

It is likely that the maintenance of the traditional marriage pattern has reinforced the elite status of the Chaud (14) community, the ‘higher caste’ or privileged class of business families among Vohras in central Gujarat, because the majority of the initial migrants belonged to the Chaud community and also married their children within the Chaud community. This has allowed more Chaud youth from Gujarat to settle in the UK, although some Arsad (68) girls also made it into the UK through marriage (in line with the system of hypergamy or marrying girls up), and an Arsad boy married into a Chaud family opposed to the utara system. Some families were interested in discussing these concepts of Chaud (14) and Arsad (68) with me, and specific individuals (especially women) maintain detailed knowledge of the utara system.24 This knowledge was celebrated during some of the interviews where tales of the family's history as ‘Vohras’ were central to the conversation: here, grandmothers were called from the kitchen to clarify the ataks of all the relatives, encouraging conversation and satisfying as much the curiosity of the family as that of the researcher.

Still, informants clearly stated the utara system has no practical value for marriage arrangements in the UK. The system is seen as a relic of the past and not as playing a role in current marriage arrangements. In these conversations, the utara system was often labelled a ‘caste system’, and considered a remnant of a Hindu past, thus a sign of the community’s ancestral heritage in India. The hierarchy embedded in caste clearly contradicts notions of equality within Islam, and was criticised during some of the interviews from the perspective of Islamic reform, as a ‘cultural’ survival from India that should be abandoned. My questions about the marriage practices of Vohras in the UK therefore generated awkwardness, particularly among men. This surfaced, for example, when a man went through the UK Vohra list with me to point out the utara of each household.25 Standing in a busy corridor near other men at a Vohra family gathering, the man spoke in a low voice and acted nervously, instructing me not to mark any household with the...
numbers ‘14’ or ‘68’ on the list, and pressing me not to tell anybody that he was the
one who had given the information, since, he added, it is better not to talk about
these things: ‘People don’t like it’.

Despite the tabooisation of ‘caste’, the utara system seems to regenerate itself
under a new logic. While hierarchy is tabooed, the close relations in a small circle
of interlinked families can be maintained in other ways. Among other South Asian
Muslims in the UK, cousin marriages are common (Charsley 2007; Shaw 2006)
and in this context the assertion that all Vohras are interrelated in multiple ways
becomes a sign of being Muslim (not only Vohra). Rather than stressing utara
identity, these families explained to me that it would be beneficial if their child
were to marry a ‘relative’, or ‘people we know’. This would give some security that
the spouse is trustworthy and that the child would not encounter marital problems.

Processes of changing values in marital arrangements under conditions of
migration have been described elsewhere in the world (Oonk 2013, 132; Kalpagam
2005). The argument I am making here is that through endogamous marriage
practices a trusted family network has been (re)produced within and across
national boundaries. While the preference for community endogamy is
maintained, there are important changes in the form and legitimation of the
system, which includes a shift from an utara system to marriage with ‘people we
know’. I have so far focused mainly on the role of parents in perpetuating these
marriage practices: what this section has shown is that marriage practices are
changing in response to the process of migration and adaption to the new context.
The next step is to explore how the notion of relatedness has been appropriated by
those born and/or brought up in the UK. Have they internalised the idea of a ‘Vohra
thing’? To answer this, I describe their participation in the spatially dispersed
family network and how they discuss and evaluate this. How do marriage
regulations produce a transnational family?

Appropriating relatedness

We value family, we value family values.

Everyone keeps telling me how they are related. I know we are all related but
I keep forgetting how everyone is related to everyone.

These statements were recorded in conversations with men born and brought up
in the UK, the ‘second generation’. It struck me as significant that this group talked
about the Vohra ‘we’ mostly in terms of ‘family’ and in terms of ‘being related’. How
do those born and/brought up in the UK appropriate the notion of being Vohra? How does the notion of relatedness figure in this?

Talking to the younger generation about the Vohra family or community, I found it interesting to see how they appropriated the notion of relatedness in their own ways. There are clearly differences in the experience between the parents and their children but there are also differences between the youth themselves. Here I give three examples of how young people appropriate that ‘Vohra thing’ in their own way. First, there was a young man who had built a digitised Vohra family tree on his laptop. I had first come to the house to interview the father. The second time I came to the house I met the son, and he immediately volunteered to show me the family tree. Clicking through the file, this young man explained:

See, it has all the names of relatives I know of. It was difficult to find a system that shows all the different relations: people are related to each other in different ways. But this system uses hyperlinks and it works well [demonstrating the hyperlinks]. I still keep expanding the tree. When we have a family gathering, I talk to my aunts, the elder people. When someone is visiting from India I always talk to them, often they know new names that are not included yet.

As I had never heard about anyone in Gujarat recording a family tree, I was fascinated. His parents, listening in to the conversation, understood my amazement. They clarified they were initially pleased with his enthusiasm about this project but over time had grown slightly uncomfortable with this novel approach to the family relations: ‘We’ve asked him, where will this end? You can’t go on and on with this. We don’t even know many of the people he has in that file...’

When talking to young men and women in the USA, another novel appropriation was found. In the American setting, the term ‘tribe’ was used frequently to talk about the Vohra community. In response to my question about what it means to be at a ‘Vohra meeting’, a woman replied:

Here at this meeting, you don’t know many of the people but still you know you are related in some way or another. I explain to my American friends it’s like a tribe. It’s more than a family because in a family it’s only your mom’s side and your father’s side. Here it’s much bigger but you are still related.

In a comparable conversation, a young man discussed the Vohra community as a tribe and the Chaud, Arsad, Makeriya and Dewataja groups as clans. I thought it was
interesting they used the term ‘tribe’, as this term would in India refer to the so-called ‘Scheduled Tribes’ of historically disadvantaged people, which the Vohras are not associated with. When I mentioned this, a man argued: ‘We have always been a tribe. People in India just don’t call it that way, but we were.’ The term ‘tribe’ may reverberate specifically with the American experience, where the term ‘tribe’ clearly has a different connotation, although it would require more research to fully understand this interpretation.

The notion of (extended) ‘relatedness’ seems to be key to the way those socialised in the UK or USA perceive of their ‘Vohra’ identity. However, not everyone is equally pleased with this notion of extended relatedness. This is shown in the third and last example, of a young man who feels overwhelmed by the multiplicity of affinitive relations and with all the social obligations these bring. In fact, he is so fed up with all his cousins from India asking for support that he rejects the very notion of a ‘Vohra thing’:

My father has helped so many people to come here from India. And not only family. These people over there, they ask around. When a fourth person knows a third person, and the third person knows a second person, then they approach the first person who might be your relative.... so all these people come to us. My father used to let them stay in his own house for months and months. If they didn’t have a job he would maintain them, feed them, help them to get a job... (...) My father used to help anybody only because they are Vohra. For me, Vohra is just a surname. OK, when my father tells me to go and help somebody because he is a Vohra, I will do it, because he is my father. But if he hadn’t asked me I would not go. For me, that Vohra thing doesn’t matter. We are interested in issues that are of importance to us, the second generation. We are living in the real world. My father is still living in his world, in India...

This statement shows that the notion of relatedness does not necessarily generate a harmonious or cohesive community. Tensions emerge within the extended family. Despite all the cheerfulness and wonderful food, the meetings in the migrant households also expose the inequalities between participants.

The statement above also draws attention to the transnational character of the Vohra family. It is in the migrant household, through affective ties, that relations are made and sustained both within and across national borders, so that a ‘transnational social field’ (Levitt and Schiller 2004, 1009) can become lived experience. This field constitutes ‘a domain of interaction where individuals who do not move themselves maintain social relations across borders through various
forms of communication’ (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004, 1009) and thus includes those who perceive themselves as fully local, and who may never even have travelled to India. As I have shown, chain migration was very important in the early years of arrival and settlement. Today, exchanges with Indian relatives continue as temporary migration has become more accessible to young people in India and as the settled families bring over relatives temporarily on a visitor visa. Overall, while traveling may have increased in volume, it also has a more temporary and circular character so a flow of people coming and going is a regular occurrence.

The frustration this young man feels towards his Indian cousins draws attention to a geography of power in which new arrivals from India are dependent on the hospitality, resources, and networks of the settled families in the UK (Gardner 2008, 492). This inequality can be a drain on the settled families when newly arriving migrants ask for support in the migration process, such as the sharing of living arrangements, knowledge and resources, which creates alliances as well as some tensions. While the settled say they are doing the new migrants a favour by helping them, some of the new migrants indicate that they feel awkward or even exploited in these dependent relationships. The migration process of the newly arrived thus seems to be linked to forms of dependency and patronage in the first years after arrival. This geography of power causes tensions between the settled and the newly arrived and, in this case, also between a father and a son.

In this section and the previous one, I have shown how a Vohra community has been established in the UK through endogamous marriage practices and how family ties are made into lived reality through social ties within and across national borders. In the analysis so far, spatial aspects have seemed almost irrelevant: the Vohra family can be maintained and experienced at any family gathering, regardless of where it is organised, for example, at a wedding in Gujarat or at a wedding in London. I will return to the spatial dimensions of the transnational Vohra family later in this chapter.

The UK Vohra Association

In this section, I analyse the process of community making through the lens of institutionalisation through a case study of the ‘UK Vohra Association’. This association has had a dynamic history and the disputes around it show that the idea of organising the community has not always fallen on fertile ground among the intended ‘members’. The organisation, founded in 1992, initially attracted
much enthusiasm, fell apart after a fractious meeting in 1993, but was revived in 2002, after the news of the riots in Gujarat, when everyone felt the urgency to take collective action.

The UK Vohra Association was established in 1992. The five self-appointed board members belong to the first generation or what one called the ‘transitional’ generation, having come to the UK as young people, with their parents as children, as students, or after marriage. They are now middle-aged or elderly men, well-settled with families in the UK. They are derived from places as diverse as Sunav and Vasana (villages near Anand), Vadodara and Mumbai, and had arrived in the UK through various routes. Most of them lived in London, one lived in the Midlands. One of the committee members remembers their first discussion on starting a Vohra association as follows:

In 1992, we were discussing this: ‘In India, they used to have these Vohra meetings and you know there will be like a hundred marriages performed, there would be food, all the people would meet, all the people you haven’t seen for so long... Why don’t we have that here? It would be so easy to organise!’ In that time there was no email, so you needed to write letters, get telephone numbers... So we started making a list. The first list had 65, 70 households.

The idea of organising social meetings was based on the existing Charotar Sunni Vohra community association in Gujarat - the idea of ‘hundred marriages performed’ is a reference to the group marriages of the Charotar Sunni Vohra Samaj.26 The main goal of the UK Vohra Association was a ‘social purpose’: to meet each other, to facilitate social interaction and thereby, perhaps, to encourage marriages within the community. Introducing the children to each other during Vohra meetings was an important part of this endeavour - I already noted that the organisers had families. As one elderly lady, wife of one of the five committee members and an active organiser herself, explained:

The whole point [of the meetings] is like, you get together. The kids get to know the other kids... and then maybe, the kids who are at a marriageable age, you know, who’s available, who’s not available...

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26 During the group marriage of the Arsad Vohra community, which I witnessed in Anand on January 22, 2012, twelve weddings were performed.
The committee member quoted above continued:

Initially the reason for the Vohra meeting was that as well [indicating marriage]. In 1993, we had a meeting and we thought: ‘This time, let’s make a list, not just of husband and wife, but let’s make list of how many kids, what are the ages of the kids. If we look for potential partners, maybe not now but in five years, you can see: “so-and-so has three daughters, they have three sons, we can meet.”’ This was our intention. So we put this in our letter. (...) What I wanted to do was have a list of how many boys, how many girls, what ages... This sort of list exists in India. And I’ve seen this. (...) Very meticulous. Who is married to whom, where, how... it was very good, you can just take this book and say ‘Oh, we’re looking for a bride within the Vohra community.’ And you’d find it straightaway.

The idea of making a Vohra ‘list’ was, like the idea of the Vohra meetings, modelled on a practice of the Vohra community in India. These Vohra lists or books that exist in India, Heitmeyer (2009a, 111–112) suggests, are part of an overarching project conceived by the community’s organisation in central Gujarat as a means by which Charotar Sunni Vohra families can find potential spouses for their children.27 In addition to the localised books produced in Gujarat, I also found such a book in Mumbai,²⁸ produced by the Mumbai Charotar Sunni Vohra association, and one from Karachi,²⁹ produced by the Charotar Muslim association. The friends that started the UK Vohra Association were aware that these books existed, and their idea was to make a similar list of all the Vohra families in the UK. The version of the UK list that I saw (2012) contains information about the lead name of each household, the address, phone, email, and in some cases the ‘Indian city/village’ for 114 households.

The idea of meeting each other during a Vohra event received a positive response, and the first event in 1992 in London was attended by an estimated 200 to 250 people. The second event, in 1993, was also well-attended. The event had three main purposes: meeting each other, bringing the children together with the intention of encouraging marriage within the community, and organising

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27 This practice of producing books with demographic details has also been observed among other Gujarati endogamous communities, for example, among migrants of the Patel/Patidar community.
28 This book was given to me by the director of the Mumbai Charotar Sunni Vohra Society in Mumbai. The Mumbai Charotar Sunni Vohra Society, Mumbai, 1999.
29 I found this book in Anand, in the house of a family who had taken it with them after a family visit to Karachi. The Karachi book lists the ‘native place’ of each head of household (towns and villages in central Gujarat), residential address and phone number. Charotar Muslim Anjuman (Pak) Regd. Members Directory, Karachi, Pakistan, undated. Like the UK Vohra list, it only mentions the head of household, not each individual family member, and does not list educational level or occupation.
collective charity. One such charitable project was a *qurbani*\(^{30}\) for poor Muslims in Anand, a second project entailed the completion of a Vohra community hall\(^{31}\) in Nadiad, a town near Anand in central Gujarat. Donations for the two projects were collected by cheques in the post, and in cash during the gathering. For the two projects together, £1,715 was collected (reported in the UK Vohra Association's Newsletter, April 1994). A third charitable project was a collection of clothes, which were sent to an association in Anand using the free flight cargo allowance of 100 kilograms of a member who worked for an airline company.

During the meeting in 1993, there was a row over the desirability of gender segregation and music. The organisers had refused the request of some participants to have separate spaces for men and women, since ‘the idea is to meet each other’. Next, there was a game of ‘musical chairs’. After a while, a *maulana* took the microphone and announced that this was ‘not proper according to Islam’. One of the organisers described how this made him feel:

> It’s like: ‘Oh my God.’ This is a social function, nothing to do with religion! You meet up. You have a meal. We’ve got them do games with the kids. And now you’ve got *mauli sahib* saying that it’s *haram*, and we made them do this! So I got upset with this. I said: ‘OK, you do what you wanna do, I’m not going to do [organise] any other meeting again.’ Then there wasn’t another meeting again.

After this incident, there were no more Vohra meetings for nine years. However, in 2002, after the riots in Gujarat, the UK Vohra Association and its bank account found a new purpose: to collect donations for the victims in Gujarat. There was a sense of urgency, and Vohra men from different parts of the UK decided to meet to discuss the situation. The meeting took place in the middle of the country, in Leicester, so that ‘nobody should travel so far’. A new committee was formed, to organise the collection of funds. This committee included the original committee members who had started the UK Vohra Association earlier, and also various others. In a group discussion with three friends who attended the meeting in Leicester at the time, they remembered the following:

\(^{30}\) A *qurbani* is a sacrifice of an animal and distribution of the meat. In a separate information brochure (in Gujarati, with English translation provided), the organising trust in Gujarat introduced itself as a trustworthy organisation led by religious experts, organising poverty reduction through the medium of *zakat*. They asked for a donation of £35 per donor.

\(^{31}\) A fundraising (English) letter from the Charotar Sunni Vohra Samaj in Gujarat, responsible for the construction of the community hall, explained that the construction of a marriage hall would facilitate marriages and meetings of the community without needing of hiring an expensive hall. It said that the hall was already 75% constructed, and that they needed money for the completion.
A: All 85 families were present. The heads of each family, all of us were there. And what was decided at the time?
A: It was decided that we collect some funds, whatever they needed at the time, like utensils and... everybody just left their houses. They were looted.
B: We gave them lorries as well.
C: Roofs.
B: Some people lost their roof, we gave them a roof as well.
C: Food.
B: Money to start a business. Small business.
Did you divide tasks at the time?
B: Yes. (...) What happened was... I took the responsibility of ten [families in the UK], he took responsibility of another ten families, we would collect [money from these families]. That’s how we operated.

A newsletter was sent around, sharing information about the riots and the relief societies in central Gujarat. Funds were raised in different parts of the UK, not only among Vohras but also among Muslims in general and, to some extent, among the wider public. Collections were organised in mosques in Southall, Leicester, Birmingham, and Coventry. A mela (fair) was organised in Leicester to raise money for the riots victims, with a ‘jumble sale’, home-made samosas and cakes, speeches and information stalls. Men and women raised money among their acquaintances. More than £28,000 were collected. The money was used, amongst other things, to buy land for construction of a housing society for refugees in Anand, consisting of thirteen small houses (one room and a kitchen) and a communal water pump. The treasurer of the UK Vohra Association explains:

In 2002 it was different. It was a bit bigger then. Because it was visual. People could see it on the TV (...) and we had disks and there was internet I think. You see [showing files on the laptop], charity bazaar, letters, the houses that we built, mosque appeal, 2002, Leicester, things that we did like flyers... this was an info pack that was created. See, these are the people who are responsible, number of people that stayed, how many people they were looking after in certain areas.... in Borsad, Tarapur, Pedlad, Anklav... I just put this together for the Muslims, for the Vohras in this country. So they got to know what’s happening.

In this period, ties were re-established between Vohras in the UK and as a group

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I was originally told that £28,000 was collected but, according to another committee member, this was only the first instalment.
with Vohras in Gujarat. To organise the transfer of donations to Gujarat, the association relied on members who ‘were very involved on the Gujarat side. They had contacts there. They knew what was going on.’

Some people happened to be in Gujarat at the time. The wife of one of the committee members was in Ahmedabad for a family visit when the riots broke out. Worried, he travelled to meet her. This is his account:

At the time of those riots, my wife was in India. (...) My relatives rang me ‘please don’t come.’ (...) They said: ‘How are you going to come to Anand from [the airport in] Baroda? Vehicles are burning on the roadway, houses are burning on the roadway. How are you going to go? Cancel your ticket!’ I said: ‘No my wife is there, I have to come there, I am not going to cancel.’ (...) Then my wife called me, she said: ‘you can come now, it’s a little quieter.’ Then I saw with my own eyes... I heard with my own ears what was happening there. How people suffered. How my wife’s family suffered. Because we had been going regularly. I had seen the town, how happy they were living, they had spent a lot of money, they had made a nice bungalow. All ruined. All looted. (...) What happened? A lot of Vohras came together in Anand at the time and made camps. Because all the people were fleeing from the smaller villages. Relief camp. There were so many relief camps over there. And I went to visit them. Personally. In each camp. Had a word with them. Find out what their grievances were. What they suffered. How they suffered.

That was daring of you, as a tourist, a visitor!
Cause it is my community. I am a Vohra. This is my community.

The account highlights how the man visited the relief camps, how he heard the stories of refugees and established contacts with the organisers. He elaborated on the tragic tale of the town where his wife’s family had lived previously, a Hindu-majority village with only ten Muslim families. The Muslim’s houses and their vehicles and properties were ‘ransacked’ by a mob, the residents fled to relief camps and never returned to the village afterwards.

The account shows how the shocking events mobilised feelings of being ‘Vohra’: this is ‘my community’. After coming back to the UK, experiences were shared with other ‘people of my community’ too:

Then I came to the airport [in the UK], I talked to my brother-in-law, and to other people of my community, I gave them all the reports. What I’ve seen with my own eyes. Business is burning. I can still see the flames coming out.
Some scholars have noted that traumatic events in the homeland can be a powerful trigger for mobilising against repression (Koinova 2011, 348), this has certainly been the case here. The sense of urgency at the time made it all ‘different’, ‘more visual’ and ‘a bit bigger’. Even the second generation took active part in the collections, the committee members remember, although ‘the second generation didn’t feel that much. Not as much as I would’.

When the dust had settled, the association returned to the ‘social side of it’ and started to organise social gatherings again, in 2009 and 2010. The event in 2009 was well attended. During it, the community’s member base was extended by inviting approximately 30 ‘students’, new arrivals on temporary visas. However, some committee members had resigned because they were ‘only interested in the charity side of it’. A larger event planned 2010 was eventually cancelled due to lack of funds and interest – residents of East London found the venue in West London too far away and did not subscribe – so a smaller meeting with cricket match was organised. Since then, the association has reverted to being dormant, with some attempts to encourage interaction through Facebook. (At their request, I have also made a small contribution to this by sharing some findings of my research there.)

UK Vohra meeting (2010): cricket match. Picture taken by a participant and printed with permission.
In conversation with the committee members, they complained about the lack of interest. Some compared the UK with the USA in this regard:

You know in ’92, ’93, we did these two meetings, after that the Americans started their meetings in ’95 (…). What they did: it was even better than us. (…) They had funding and they had barbecues. Ours was one day. The first meeting they had was for three days, you know Saturday Sunday Monday. They had a bank holiday, they hired out a scout camp, hired out log cabins, they had a barbecue going, they had a badminton tournament going, they had swimming. Can you imagine? We can’t even sit in one room [referring to the discussion on gender segregation] and they are having swimming races... boys and girls you know, enjoying themselves. Music is going on there, dancing (…). They looked at our model and they improved on it. (…) I’m like: ‘Well, ours is finished here!’

The Vohras in the USA I talked to do not agree that they ‘got the idea’ from the UK: their own history starts in 1976, when a small group of young Vohra students from central Gujarat met up for the first time in a small town near Philadelphia to celebrate the first birthday of the first American-born child. However, the other descriptions given in the quote above are largely accurate.

The community event of Vohras in the USA I attended in 2015 was attended by 350 people. They came from Maryland (106), Connecticut (99), Illinois (45), New Jersey (41), Pennsylvania (19), and also from other states in the USA, including Virginia, North Carolina, New York, Ohio, California, and Texas. Some had travelled for hours in a car or in a bus to get to the event, a few had spent thousands of dollars to pay for air tickets for the entire family. The event was a long weekend of camping in a scouting area in the woods. Among the activities organised were American games, Indian cooking, Gujarati folk dance, and Islamic prayer. Although there was no swimming, there was barbecue, volleyball, tug-of-war, scavenger hunts, nature walks, ice-cream and popcorn, in addition to Indian bhajias (snacks), cricket, and a spiritual programme for the children. Music was not a problem, there was musical chairs in the afternoon and Gujarati garbah dance in the evening. There was no gender segregation either, men prayed collectively while women continued chatting on the other side of same hall, boys and girls met at the campfire. A remarkable moment from the perspective of community making was the ‘Family Feud’, a competitive quiz where teams were asked questions such

33 Information provided by the organisers, who derived these numbers from the registration process. There were four guests from abroad, including myself.
as ‘where do Vohras go in their holidays?’, ‘what is Vohras’ favourite food?’ and ‘what is the Vohras’ favourite car?’

Overall, what these meetings, lists, Facebook pages and collections show is that there are individuals who try to maintain and organise the Vohra community, and that others have responded to this with varying degrees of enthusiasm in different spatial and temporal contexts. In the UK, not everyone was as interested in the association: some of the intended members did not pay the membership fee for unknown reasons, others accused the leadership of being in it for themselves. The suggested idea, of registering details of the children in the Vohra family list, was contested, so the list does not include details of children, unlike as had been hoped for by the initiators. What surprised the organisers most was that some young men claimed they did not ‘believe’ in the existence of a Vohra community: for them, Vohra was ‘just a surname’.

What these contestations show is that ‘community is not a social reality but a discursive construction, which, however, is meant to further the establishment of social unity’ (Sökefeld 2006, 279). If it appears that the efforts to unite the Vohras as a community have been more successful in the USA than in the UK,34 I should note both associations have had their ups and downs. The event I witnessed in the USA was being organised after a time lapse of nine years.35 It was organised by dedicated volunteers, but here too some participants found issues to disagree about. Overall, the formalised associations can probably best be understood in relation to the family networks described earlier. This was shown in the USA event where references to the history of chain migration and relatedness were made as participants publicly thanked their initial sponsors over the microphone: ‘I want to thank [my brother/grandmother so-and-so], we are here because of him/her.’36

34 To explain the observed differences between the USA and UK, more research would be needed, particularly in the USA, to contextualise the findings. Possible explanations can be sought in the characteristics and migration histories of the migrants, in the residential dispersal and social position in the settings of arrival, and in the models of migrant integration/assimilation available in both settings.


36 It is beyond the scope of this thesis to engage with the ‘integration’ debate, but note that transnationalism and integration/assimilation, often juxtaposed as contradictory in political discourse, can actually reinforce each other (Kivisto 2001). Studies of comparable organisations that emerge ‘from below’ show that the organisers are often elderly and educated people, who have lived abroad for a long time (Portes, Escobar, and Radford 2007, 276). Their efforts to establish a community association do not have to reflect a desire to separate oneself from the dominant society. On the contrary, it could be argued, the efforts of migrants to organise themselves as a community in the UK can be understood as an essential aspect of the process of settlement in British society, where processes of ‘integration’ of migrants in the dominant civil culture are often linked to attempts to organise people as ethnic or religious groups (Baumann 1999, 46–47). Baumann, comparing different nation-states in their way of dealing with ‘the multicultural riddle’, argued that in the UK, the fight for emancipation is not an individualist battle, that ‘it is community based’. In this context, he compared British civil culture with ‘a soccer tournament. Everyone should fight for a team and fight for it squarely but fairly. Teams, be they ethnic minorities or religious ones, should stick together at all cost’ (1999, 46–47).
The homeland (1): ‘India’ and ‘Gujarat’

So far, the process of community making has been explored in the sphere of the family and association. The third and last tool of group-making I discuss in this chapter is the notion of a shared homeland. In scholarship of ‘diaspora’, the ‘homeland’ is described (Cohen 1996; Faist 2008, 34-36; Safran 1991) as a nostalgic fantasy of an idealised putative ancestral homeland towards which the diaspora feels a shared responsibility (for critiques, see Clifford 1994; Axel 2002). In the case of the Vohra community, while there is also a sense of shared responsibility towards the homeland (as shown by the 2002 episode described above), there is little or no nostalgia in the accounts, or at least not as long as the conversation remains at the national level. If the homeland has a binding function, it does so as an object of shared critique with regard to the vulnerable position of Muslims there. In the rest of this chapter, I explore how the homeland works as a tool of community making, first through the lens of the national imagination (India/Gujarat versus the UK), then by looking at the more localised engagements with ‘Charotar’.

When asked to talk about ‘India’ and ‘Gujarat’, Vohras in the UK present a rather dark ‘myth of the homeland’: discrimination is a key feature of their stories. Personal memories of exclusion, even of humiliation and embarrassment are recurrent themes and are linked to more general narratives of political developments and historical events in India and Gujarat. Here is a clear statement that summarises some of the feelings I have encountered:

UK is far better than India. I wouldn’t say India, whole India, I would say especially Gujarat. (...) Gujarat is very bad. (...) If you know about the communal riots, [they] only took place in a few states: Gujarat, Maharashtra, Bombay, and a few other (middle-aged man from Anand in London).

Conversations that revolved around ‘India’ and ‘Gujarat’ showed firm criticism of India. Some described communal violence as a national ‘Indian’ problem, others highlighted the peculiarity of ‘Gujarat’ as a particularly riot-prone state, or described Gujarat and a few other Indian states as particularly hateful of Muslims. The nuances between the two layers of state were important in some conversations, which highlighted that the Hindu nationalist BJP political party was in power in Gujarat whereas the secular Congress political party was in power at the centre. The fact that the Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi (BJP) was the favoured

37 This multi-scalar perception of the state was also observed among Gujarati Muslims in Ahmedabad by Jasani (2011).
candidate in the run-up to the national elections at the time was, for example, described as ‘very scary for Muslims’ in an interview.

When informants voiced criticism of Gujarat or India, they sometimes substantiated their views with some evidence, articles read or films seen. The film *Final Solution* (Rakesh Sharma, 2004), which documents the carnage and its immediate aftermath in relation with the poll campaign during the elections in Gujarat in 2002, is an example of an information source that had been seen by some. A young migrant spoke at length about his displeasure with Narendra Modi’s leadership in 2002, on the basis of this film. In other interviews, the evidence used to substantiate their critiques were personal experiences of discrimination. A recurrent theme was experience of discrimination in educational institutes. Below is the example of a first generation migrant, a middle-aged man who came to the UK after his marriage.

Muslims are a minority in Gujarat. It happens a lot in schools that they gang up on you. When I was in primary school, one of my teachers was always making bad statements about Islam. I don’t think it was needed. I can’t remember exactly what he was saying, but nasty things about Islam. I don’t know but come on, what do you want to teach children at the primary level, are you with me? (…)

I had a very bad experience [in a college in Anand]. I had an exam, on that day it was *Jumma* [Friday], so I wanted to do my prayer and then I went to my exam. I was fifteen minutes late. I didn’t expect my lecturer would have an issue with that. But when I arrived, he asked me: ‘Why are you late?’ I told him I was doing prayer, and he sent me off. I was not very religious, only in college I became a little more religious and I started praying. Then I realised: this is not easy. If you want to practice anything that goes against…. [long silence]… ehhhhhh… which probably doesn’t synchronise with their way of doing things, you know. I experienced communalism a lot.

The quote represents Gujarat as a place where Muslims are a vulnerable minority, where children get bullied in school by their peers and by teachers and where practising one’s religion is not easy.

In the interviews, a binary opposition was drawn between the host and home society, the UK versus Gujarat/India. Migrants describe major differences in how religious minorities are treated in the host and home society. A discriminatory homeland was juxtaposed against a more benevolent host society, where there is
freedom for Muslims to practice their religion and rituals without hindrances by the dominant society and where people are allowed to do what they want as long as it does not interfere with anyone else’s life. Here is a comment about these differences between India and the UK, as explained by a young man in Anand after having lived in the UK for two years:

In London, I can go around dressed in my white clothes even in the centre of the city, and nobody turns to look. In East London, the Muslim drivers, six out of seven wear a beard, and they feel safe! In Gujarat, it’s different.

Some of interviews even indicate that the marginalisation of religious minorities in Gujarat/India was the main reason to migrate abroad. A young woman, recently arrived in London with her husband, explained,

I came here because my husband wanted to work here, and I wanted to be with him.

SV: Was it not possible to work in Gujarat?
For Muslims, it is not possible to get a job in Gujarat.

A middle-aged man, settled in the UK with his family for approximately ten years:

[In the period before I went abroad], I often talked to an old man. The old man told: ‘In 1972, my sister told me to send my children to America, but I didn’t believe it. (...) [Now], my son is a qualified engineer, but we have suffered a lot because he could not get a job in India’. So this old man told that if I had believed my sister’s advice to take immigration, my son would not be in this position now. He is regretting now. (...) That story touched me. They were Banya, Jain people, they are always well-to-do people, you know, they are not Muslims. I am not Jain. I am Muslim. People can attack me, people can do anything with me, I am a minority, it is not that easy. Then, I decided to take immigration.

Even some of the ‘twice migrant’ elderly men, who migrated to East Africa before India’s Independence and Partition, said that discrimination against Muslims motivated them to go abroad. An old man, who moved from Gujarat to East Africa in 1955 said that:

When you became a graduate, you didn’t get the service at that time. Even today the same question....
Another man explained the time when he visited India as a young man on a holiday trip, from his home in the British colonial territory of Tanganyika. He felt that, at the time, there were no opportunities for Muslims in India:

In 1962, when we went to India, I saw there were a lot of our Muslim brothers who were educated, and they couldn’t get decent jobs. There was discrimination against Muslims. Even though they were educated, they were not given good jobs. I thought: ‘I don’t want to go! I can’t survive there!’

For this man, there were additional reasons to choose the UK over India at the time, which were explained on another occasion. While discrimination should not be seen as the sole reason for migration, it is remarkable that this memory of discrimination is highlighted in this migration narrative from so early on.

While these informants present discrimination of Muslims as an inherent characteristic of India, others pointed rather at a sense of loss, and drew on nostalgia for a more harmonious past, before 2002.

My family was the only Muslim family [in a housing society in Anand] in 1989. Like eighty percent were Hindu in that society. But now not a single person Hindu in that society, because of these riots. Hindus moved from that place and Muslims don’t like to live in villages, they like to live in community so they get protection. (...) Still my father has lots of Hindu friends. And I have. That’s why I say people please come here [to the UK]! Learn from these people. Not fight about religion.

In summary of the above, when asking Vohras in the UK about ‘India’ or ‘Gujarat’, they responded by drawing a picture of a discriminatory homeland. Exclusion, humiliation and an overall sense of vulnerability were recurrent themes in their stories. Personal memories of discrimination in school in Gujarat are evoked to substantiate the critiques. Some migrants even feel that the vulnerable position of Muslims in Gujarat was an important ‘push factor’ for them going abroad.

To understand the outspokenness of the criticisms, the context of the conversations must be understood. At the beginning of the conversation, some informants established what I thought about politics in Gujarat, as if they were testing my views before sharing theirs. One man explained that ‘because of these riots people have become more cautious and they don’t like to share their personal things’. They said that the 2002 episode or the position of minorities in Gujarat was mostly
discussed among themselves, and talk about ‘politics’ was usually avoided in conversation with Hindu friends. The sharing of critiques and negative memories with each other (and with me) thus also seemed to be an act of group-making, involving decisions of in- and exclusion.

At home in the UK

The descriptions of the discriminatory homeland are juxtaposed with a story of a more benevolent host society, where there is freedom for Muslims to practice their religion and where the Muslim minority can feel more at ease. Their positive and perhaps romanticised ‘myth of the host society’ was surprising to me in the European context of increasing Islamophobia in Europe since the international ‘war on terror’ after September 11, 2001 (Atom 2014; Poynting and Mason 2007). Confronted with questions about this, first generation migrants affirmed they do not experience Islamophobia in the UK. Two quotes to illustrate:

SV: I thought, well, probably Muslims in the UK after 9/11... there is so much anti-Islam attitude... I am very surprised to find people find it a liberation to go to the UK.

This started after 9/11. But when it comes to religion, UK is far better than India. (...) It is true that in the media there is a negative stereotype about Jamati, it is associated with terrorism [in the UK], because Osama Bin Laden was also wearing a beard. But there is a lot of interest in Islam among the English people. I met four white people converted to Islam! (...) My uncle had told me that the position of Muslims in the UK was very bad in London after 9/11. He had not been to London himself, he had heard about it. But when I landed at the airport, immediately I saw three or four men with beards in a high position: they were stamping passports and working as security guards. So immediately I realized: what my uncle said is not true (quote from a young man, interviewed in Anand after returning from London).

People are given more freedom in those countries [in the UK], as compared to India. When I went to uni [university in the UK], the first thing I noted was that every religion was allocated a separate space for prayer. I was really surprised! This is really good, there is a mosque in the university! And not
only in the uni. Even if you go to the workplace, and if you tell them you want to pray, they say fine, they will even think of a way to make it easy for you (quote from a middle-aged man, interviewed during a holiday visit to Anand town).

The visible presence of Muslims in positions of authority, the wide availability of Islamic institutes and the presence of white people in those institutions were frequently mentioned as evidence of the better position of Muslims in the UK. Other examples often given were the presence of prayer rooms in hospitals and universities, and the relative tolerance of the British public when they see Muslims wearing Islamic clothing in public.

What can explain this very striking juxtaposition of a discriminatory homeland and an open host society? These ideas contrast remarkably with the classic hypothesis of diaspora studies, that ‘myths of homeland’ are nostalgic and romanticised, a result of experiences of discrimination and exclusion in the country of arrival (e.g. Safran 1991). Here, the reverse is the case: the homeland is criticised in response to being excluded in the country of origin, and included in the country of arrival. This idealised ‘myth of the host society’ begs an explanation. How is it possible that migrants’ lived experience of Britain does not reflect the popularity of anti-immigration right-wing political views and the trend of Islamophobia?

To explain this, we need to contextualise the migrants by looking at developments and situations that affect them, both in the home and the host societies. The context in the home society is important and has been discussed: the memory of the 2002 riots, youthful memories of exclusion in school, and sometimes more general discussions about the political ideology of Hindu nationalism. With regard to the position of the migrants in the society where they actually live, it is important to recognise the life situation of the (first generation) migrants, which may prevent them from personally experiencing Islamophobia. This was illustrated in an interview with a middle-aged man, who happened to be one of the founders of a hospital in central Gujarat. As he had been involved in collecting funds for charitable purposes for Muslims in Gujarat, I had asked him how his collections were affected by the changing political climate in the UK. I suggested that the economic recession was likely to backfire on his charitable work and might result in complaints that migrants send all their money back home rather than investing in the UK economy. The response of the father was confusion. He had never heard any such complaint, he said. At that point his son, who was listening to the interview, interrupted. His response indicates that the second generation, who
participates in British schools and is groomed in British institutions, is much more aware of racist and anti-migration discourses than their parents.

I feel that more [than my father]. I have been to college here, now I am trying to find a job. I am moving in the outer circle. So I can agree that something is definitely changing: they want a UK for white people only. But my father is not moving in the outer circle, he is moving in the inner circle. So he is not aware of that.

This father had come to the UK in the eighties and was now settled with his family in a predominantly white non-migrant suburban neighbourhood. He agreed with his son that he was only moving in the ‘inner circle’: he had no contact with his white neighbours, he said, and his collections for Gujarat only took place among Muslims in the UK. At the time of the interview I found the statement enlightening, but in hindsight I wondered what was meant by an ‘inner circle’. This man certainly does not live in a closed world. In fact, during the process of migration and settlement this man has greatly expanded his social networks. His social circle today consists of people from different parts of the world, from Asia, Africa and the Middle East. Moreover, to manage a social welfare association in Gujarat, that too consistently for more than ten years, shows his skilful usage of contacts both with donors in the UK and with local caretakers in India. Such a very diverse network makes one wonder about what is ‘inner’ about this ‘inner circle’. Despite this nuance, what the conversation revealed was a kind of ‘blissful unawareness’ that can occur among some of the (first generation) migrants. If the parents have felt excluded in Gujarati schools, their children become aware of exclusionary discourses and practices when they go to college in the UK. How school-going can become such a powerful generator of an awareness of being different, is a question I leave to others to deal with (Connolly 2014).

There is a second aspect of the local context that might help to understand the strong juxtaposition of home and host society: the presence of a wide range of Islamic institutions in the UK and the role of the UK as an international centre of Islamic education. The UK is seen as a good place to learn about Islam both in Gujarat and among Gujarati Muslims in the UK, and it is also an interesting place to practice religion because of the presence of many other Muslims from different parts of the world, whom one can meet through religious institutions. A young man indicated he had ‘learnt a lot’ about Islam in the UK, and spoke enthusiastically about the Islamic group travels he participated in, organised by the Tablighi Jamaat in the UK. A young female migrant regularly attended a reading group with other
young women in her neighbourhood in East London. In the settled families, parents indicate that it is their children, brought up in the UK, who are more elaborately educated in religion. They talk about their children as ‘more orthodox’ or ‘more religiously learned’ than themselves. Some families have made considerable changes in their religious practices and rituals at home over time, and these changes have at least partly been inspired by the religious learning of the children.

In summary, the narrative of the discriminatory homeland is juxtaposed with a positive and somewhat romanticised narrative of the host society, particularly among first generation migrants, who talk about the UK as a more Muslim-friendly space and as an international centre of Islamic knowledge. This juxtaposition can be explained by looking at their migration experiences and their specific situations and living conditions in the UK.

The homeland (2): ‘Charotar’ and ‘Anand’

The Vohras have gone everywhere! UK, USA, Africa, the Middle East. Whenever I meet a Vohra in Leicester or Blackburn or Bombay, somewhere somehow we know we are related, maybe distantly but we are related. Because all of us come from a very small area in Gujarat: Charotar (father).

The quote above sums up just about everything I have discussed in the chapter so far, the idea of a Vohra community, the notion of relatedness and dispersal, and the homeland, in this quote described as an ancestral home region from which all offspring have come. In this final section, I explore the ‘homeland’ through a more localised lens to see if and how place comes into play in the process of community making.

In the descriptions above, there are several indications that place matters. In the Vohra family, the homeland emerges first of all because of the exchanges with people and places in India that these transnational marriages generate. In the early part of the 1980s and 1990s, it seemed natural to the parents to seek a spouse for their children in India. Through transnational marriages, social ties have been strengthened between families here and there, between London and Gujarat or between Leicester and Mumbai. The marriage arrangements have resulted in, for example, regular telephone calls between families, visits to and fro, and exchanges of resources. A recent development is the gradual shift from acquiring spouses
mainly from India to actively seeking spouses within the UK, partly because of the increasingly exclusive rules for marriage migration into the UK (Wray 2011), which make it harder and more expensive to continue this practice. According to an elderly lady, it is ‘only recently, in the last ten years say, that some weddings have started to happen in this country.’ She went on to say that 50% of marriages still takes place in India – even if this is an overestimation, it still points to a continuing relevance of these exchanges.

In the community associations, the homeland has also been important. In the USA, the website of the association indicates where this group is from: ‘Anand/Kheda district’. In the UK, the region has served as a model of community (re)building, a source of inspiration. This was shown in the deliberate reinstating of characteristic practices known among Charotar Sunni Vohras in Gujarat, such as the Vohra family list, the institution of the Vohra meeting and the ideal of community endogamy itself. Besides being a model, the homeland has been a site of shared responsibility, particularly during that key moment in 2002 when everyone saw the need and urgency to organise. I have shown that at that time personal links were crucial to the distribution of the funds, and that all of the funds were channelled through a ‘relief committee’ of personal acquaintances based in Anand town.

On the other hand, the word ‘Charotar’ has, as such, disappeared. In the interviews the references are either to more generalised spatial referents, such as ‘back home’, ‘India’, or ‘Gujarat’, or to more specific referents such as ‘Anand’, ‘in and around Anand’, or to other specific towns, cities and villages. It is telling that both associations, the UK Vohra Association and the Vahora Association of USA, have left the word ‘Charotar’ out of the name of the association. In contrast, in Karachi (Pakistan), the Charotar Muslim Association has maintained the word ‘Charotar’ but dropped the word ‘Vohra’. In the UK and in the USA, ‘Charotar’ appears to have become a word of the past, remembered only by the older generation. This older generation was happy to discuss it with me, but some of the children listening to the interviews said that they were hearing the word ‘Charotar’ for the first time in their life! When I described myself as doing research among ‘Charotar Sunni Vohras’ during the community event in the USA, probably to the bafflement of the younger ones, I received applause and cheers from the older generation.

It is not hard to see the reason for this ‘forgetting’ of Charotar: the region is completely unknown in the UK. Only in Gujarat is the word ‘Charotar’ well-known. In the Gujarati imagination, ‘Charotar’ conjures images of a fertile agricultural region of tobacco exports and long-standing transnational networks. The region has been described as ‘the centre of one of the most powerful rural nationalist
movements in India’ during the Independence struggle (Hardiman 1981, 1) and as a central place of power in Gujarat after Independence (Tambs-Lyche 2010; Sud 2010; in Simpson 2010, 12–14). In the Gujarati context, claiming to be ‘Charotri’ holds symbolic significance. In the UK and the USA, saying one is from ‘Charotar’ does not get a person anywhere. This does not mean that the home region has become irrelevant. In the interviews, people did refer to places in central Gujarat all the time. In each interview, people located their Indian ‘vatan’ or ‘pir’ (hometown, see glossary) in addition to the specific villages and towns where their relatives now live - these included Anand, Kanjari, Boriavi, Sunav, Bakrol, Narsanda, Umreth, Pedlad, Tarapur, Vera, Vododla, Baroda, Ahmedabad, and various other places in or around central Gujarat. Within the Vohra list, there is also an attempt to link each family to an ‘Indian city/village’ (table 5.2), although the list does not mention the ataks or utaras (indicating that the places of origin can be freely interpreted). The 25 places mentioned in central Gujarat include Borsad, Sunav, Kanjari, Malataj, Mogri, Vaso, Kathalal, and in three cases Anand. Mumbai and Karachi are also mentioned frequently as ‘Indian city/village’ in the list.

Table 5.2. Column ‘Indian city/village’ in the UK Vohra family list

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Households listed (total)</strong></td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Column left blank</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Places in central Gujarat</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahmedabad</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mumbai</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karachi</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan (city other than Karachi or unknown)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


At the community event in the USA, the idea of a ‘place of origin’ was even more important. During all activities throughout the weekend, the question ‘where are you from’ was a prominent feature of the conversations, and participants kept exchanging the names of villages, towns and cities in Gujarat. Moreover, almost all activities included public introductions in which people were given a microphone to answer three questions: ‘What is your name?’, ‘Where are you from in the USA?’, and ‘Where are you from in India?’ When a boy could only produce the answer ‘India’ to the last question, the parents were publicly mocked: ‘Hey, someone needs to teach this kid where he is from!’ Among the hometowns most frequently mentioned during this community event was Anand.
To summarise, the transnational Vohra family is a group of spatially dispersed interconnected families derived from a small area in Gujarat: for the old generation ‘Charotar’, for the young generation either the more generic ‘back home’ or the more specific ‘Anand [or another village/town] and around there’. If the Vohra community can be described as a ‘diaspora’, it is a regionally specific diaspora built on the emotional and social work of reproducing a kinship-based social network. However, the places and people with whom migrants interact in the home region are diverse, and we should therefore perhaps not speak of ‘a homeland’ but of a multitude of personalised ‘homelands’. These more specific homelands are not so much ‘imagined’ but are ‘practiced’ and, like the region, can be thought of as a network in which specific households forge specific relations with each other, thereby opening up pathways of travel.

Conclusion

The Vohras who have migrated away from central Gujarat have regrouped in different places as a ‘Vohra community’. In this chapter, to seek an understanding of the process of ‘group-making’ (Brubaker 2002; Brubaker 2005) through the lens of relatedness, association, and homeland, I have described the Vohra community from the perspective of the UK, with brief excursions to the USA.

First, I used the lens of family relations to analyse the process of group-making. Notions of family and through experiences of relatedness have been critical to the (re)generation of ‘a Vohra thing’ abroad. The Vohra family involves the intertwining of chain migration and kin alliances in which mutual support and (inter)dependency in the migration process contribute to the reproduction of community in the new context. Through this process, a transnational social field takes shape and can be experienced in migrant households in the UK with reference to relatives in India and visitors who may temporarily or permanently take part in the household. While Vohra marriage practices are changing under conditions of migration, they are key to producing and maintaining a transnational social field (Charsley and Shaw 2006).

The attempts to organise Vohras as a community have resulted in the establishment of a formal association with a board, a bank account and a list of members. These efforts to ‘get the community together’ have met with spurts of enthusiasm, disinterest and even discontent among the target members. The significance of these associations is their attempt to keep the Vohra community alive, which shows that the idea of the Vohra community persists, even if the association is dormant most of the time. The association suddenly became relevant at the time of crisis, in the period after 2002, then generating a flurry of collective activity.
With regard to the notion of a ‘diaspora’ and its homeland, I argue that Vohras in the UK and USA fit academic descriptions of a ‘diaspora’ (Axel 2002; Brubaker 2005; Clifford 1994; Cohen 1996; Morawska 2011; Safran 1991) in the sense that they share a sense of responsibility towards an ancestral ‘homeland’. In earlier studies, myths of the homeland are described as fantasies based on nostalgia and primordialism, on a dream of future return (Safran 1991, 83–84) or on idealisation of the putative ancestral home and a ‘collective commitment to its maintenance, restoration, safety and prosperity, even to its creation’ (Cohen 1996, 515). While these myths of the homeland would allow a mental escape from the lived experiences of marginalisation and discrimination of migrants in the host society, Vohras in the UK instead voiced strong criticism of the situation in India and in Gujarat, and described the UK in much more idealised terms as a space where there is more freedom for them as a religious minority. Despite their criticism of Gujarat/India, people do maintain transnational relations and forge transnational marriages, and some travel to the region frequently, sometimes spending months on end there. This indicates that stories or ‘myths’ of the homeland, especially when captured at the national/state level, cannot fully capture their relation to it.

For a more complete understanding of the emerging transnational social field, it is imperative to reconnect the narratives, discussions and family events among migrants in their place of settlement with their practices of exchange with the actual space of the ‘homeland’. In the next chapter, therefore, we will travel back to the geographically and socially dynamic region of central Gujarat to explore how socially durable ties between specific people here and there get entangled with specific villages and towns. We leave the living rooms of the migrant households in the UK behind and follow the trails of the migrants when they visit Gujarat, to explore their locally embedded social networks and the practical exchanges they engage in during their visits.
CHAPTER 6

Transnational place-making

This thesis began with a description of Vohras in Anand town and in central Gujarat, then moved abroad, to Vohra households and community events localised in the UK and USA. How are these disparate sites connected? In this final empirical chapter, I follow the migrants back to central Gujarat and offer a truly transnational perspective.

There has been increasing interest in the study of place-making in the context of migration and migrant transnationalism and I aim to contribute to this discussion here: the ‘placial turn’ in studies of transnational migration (Gielis 2009). Drawing on Appadurai’s idea of the ‘translocality of place’ (Appadurai 1996; Appadurai 2002, 35; in Gielis 2009, 280) and on Massey’s notion of ‘a global sense of place’ (Massey 1994, 156; in Gielis 2009, 278), Gielis argues that scholars of transnationalism need to break open migrant places. By ‘breaking open’, he means scholarship should not be restricted to what is visible in a place, but rather it should be focused on how various social networks and systems are present and interrelate: ‘only with an open, global and progressive idea of these migrant places are we able to observe the various crosscutting social networks in which transmigrants are involved in these places’ (Gielis 2009, 278). Here I take this idea out of the context where it has been used so
far, the migrant neighbourhood in the society of settlement, and apply it in the context of a migrant-sending region. The question I ask is: How do Vohras living in the UK and USA, in collaboration with their local acquaintances, ‘make place’ in central Gujarat?

The notion of place-making has been described as the way in which people turn a universal or abstract ‘space’ into lived experience through their frameworks and practices (Rodman 2003 [1992], 207; Thornton 1995, 11). Place-making can entail forms of claiming and colonising space, which may occur through activities and events, through building monuments, or through asserting oneself in an existing building or square (Harney 2006, 34–35). Through place-making, people locate identities on ‘the actual and imaginative multicultural map’. In this chapter, I show how transnational place-making practices relate to localised power dynamics, community politics and spatial changes in the migrant-sending region. The recent emergence of Anand town as a centre for Muslims in the region is a spatial consequence of the history of violence against and marginalisation of Muslims in Gujarat, and migrants are confronted with this as they visit the home region and get implicated in place-making practices in Anand town.

Migrants respond to the spatial changes in the region in different ways. Some make a point of holding on to ancestral family land in the original home town or village, and find that their position and influence as Muslims is not seen as ‘natural’ by other villagers and has to be defended, for instance through an active politics of secularism and communal harmony. Others have no specific nostalgia for their home town, but still remain involved in villages to sustain the survival of Muslims there. Most have shifted their attention partly or entirely to Anand town, which has become an important focal point in the Vohra transnational family network as previously dispersed relatives have shifted there. Some migrants have helped relatives relocate to Anand by sending remittances, some invest in real estate in Anand themselves, others are involved in charitable initiatives. Migrants indicate they feel at home in Anand town even if they have been ‘uprooted’ from their villages. It is through intimate relations that they find pathways to this town, and eventually a sense of home.

‘Not enough migrants’

We now return to the residents of central Gujarat. I have so far described them mainly within the local setting of a neighbourhood in Anand town and while traveling into the wider region from there. Here, I ‘open up’ the town and the region
to describe these as a ‘transnational space’. The household survey showed that approximately a third of the families have a link abroad (42 out of 147 houses, table 2.2). In my research among twenty associations in the central Gujarat region, I found seven local trusts that had received some form of funding from transnational migrants, five that had now, or in the past, been affiliated to an international or migrant association, and five that had been (co)founded by a Vohra residing in the UK or USA. My findings indicate that while migration is relatively recent and not as large-scale among Vohras and other Muslims compared to other local groups with a longer history of transnational migration, such as Patels/Patidars, it is significant enough to ask how Muslim residents seek alliances with transnational migrants and how these collaborations affect their neighbourhoods, towns, and villages.

On the whole, residents’ thoughts about the role of migrants in the neighbourhood are quite positive. This is worthy of note because previous studies of migrant-sending regions in India point at recurrent conflicts between locals and migrants, especially when migrants ‘flaunt their wealth’ or display arrogant manners vis-à-vis the local residents (Dekkers and Rutten 2011; Rutten and Patel 2002; Taylor 2013). One reason for the overall positivity in the way locals talk about migrants might be the relatively limited number of well-settled migrants as migration has only recently taken off on a larger scale. Feelings of social distance are perhaps more likely to arise with older and well-settled migrants, who, over time, start distancing themselves financially, culturally and emotionally from their India-resident relatives (Ramji 2006). These types of migrants are relatively few among Vohras and other Muslims in Anand. Moreover, when these migrants do visit Anand they do not seem to congregate in special housing societies at some distance from their relatives, as do Patel visitors in the Vaishnav Township in Anand, in which 56 out of 60 properties are owned by migrants (Verstappen and Rutten 2015, 240).

Within the Muslim community, the majority of the visiting migrants are still young and ‘just starting’. When they visit, they live with their parents. They are also financially more or less embedded in the joint family. When I discussed the investments made by migrants (in a new parental house, an extra floor on top of an existing home, or the instalment of air-conditioning), it was sometimes unclear whether these were intended for the parents’ comfort or to accommodate the migrants in their holidays: local interests and migrant interests were hard to distinguish. This might also explain the relative absence of local complaints about migrants and migration (in comparison with Taylor, Singh, and Booth 2007, 338–340; and with Rutten and Patel 2002, 326–327).

One complaint was however voiced recurrently by some of the residents: that
there are not many or not enough migrants in the Vohra/Muslim community. This complaint was voiced by families working to start the process of migration themselves and by those in leadership positions, managing schools and social welfare associations. Teachers and trustees announced that ‘we have more and more students in our community starting their lives abroad’ but said that only ‘few migrants are already in a position to financially support the community’. These remarks of ‘starting migration’ and ‘not enough migrants in the community’ should be understood in the wider local context, of community politics and regional development. The remarkable transformations in some nearby villages associated with the transnational migration history of the region are well-known among the residents. These developments include the foundation of hospitals, schools, and temples, and also the construction of roads, water purification plants, even amusement parks (Dekkers and Rutten 2011), all financially supported by transnational migrants who have remained connected to their home village. My informants are aware of these developments because this ‘NRI’ [non-resident Indian] involvement in local villages is so widely propagated: stories of NRI-sponsored development projects in the villages are reported in local newspapers and the stories also find their way into everyday conversation, not least because some of the local Muslims have found employment in these projects. Overseas Gujaratis are prominent in the official and popular consciousness of Gujarat (Mehta 2015, 329), and newspapers regularly feature news items about how they contribute to ‘development’, or fail to do so. An announcement in a news item by TV9 Gujarati (2014):

NRGs [... non-resident Gujarati] have rolled up their sleeves in the development of rural areas of the state. NRG’s joint initiative to give new rays to the villages of the state has taken the place of government. NRG fund is used in the development of villages which is their own initiative and fulfil[s] hopes and expectations to ease struggling life of villagers.2

An example of a news item in Times of India (2014):

When it comes to paying back to their motherland, NRGs from north Gujarat have reached out to a wider area as compared to their illustrious central Gujarat peers, according to the first-ever survey of NRG contribution to the

1 In a forthcoming documentary film, we show some of these developments in one of the villages of central Gujarat. Though only some of the development projects are in this short film, the footage shows a wide variety of projects, all supported by transnational migrants of the Patel community. Transnational Village Day, Mario Rutten, Sanderien Verstappen, Dakxin Bajrange, expected in 2016.
state’s development. (…) The survey shows almost all districts have seen significant contribution for education in the form of donations for building schools and colleges.3

These are merely two examples of how the news media link ‘migration’ to ‘development’ in Gujarat. This kind of migrant sponsoring of educational institutes, hospitals and other social initiatives has become an available model of development in the region. The Gujarati state government also highlights this, and encourages ‘non-resident Gujaratis’ (NRGs) to participate in ‘development’ through, for example, an official bureaucratic cell started specifically to encourage this (Mehta 2015, 329).

In the popular imagination, ‘NRGs’ are often synonymous with Patels, especially in central Gujarat where they are a very prominent community despite being a numerical minority. This was evident when Muslim leaders discussed migration and development in terms of community, comparing Patels with Muslims:

You see, all the development that you see here in Charotar is because of the Patels. They are getting lots of donations. They have many NRIs [non-resident Indians]. If it was not for Patels, Charotar would still be like Saurashtra… where dust goes on in the sky… [He continued the conversation by explaining how Muslims are ‘lagging behind’].

Vohras are going abroad more than other Muslims. Before it was not like that, that time only Patels went out, but now others are also going out, if they are educated. Vohras have good chances to go abroad, because they are educated.

The comparison of communities in terms of their volume of migration and donations brings out the Patels as a (role) model of development, Muslims as ‘lagging behind’, and Vohras with a good chance of catching up. It is said that Vohras and other Muslims are ‘just starting’ their migration process, unlike the local Patel (Hindu) caste, who are famous for their long-standing tradition of migration and transnational involvement in local ‘development’. These ideas were so prevalent that I was sometimes told during my research that I was studying ‘the wrong community’. During a research visit to a hospital known to have received significant donations from the UK, and managed by a Muslim trust, a doctor told me:

This type of development is not there among Muslims. This is the Patel trademark! You have to go to that community. Why do you focus on Muslims? It is very insignificant (the doctor is a Hindu, not Patel).

The doctor acknowledged that his own employers received funds from migrants in the UK too, but felt this was an extra-ordinary situation.

Though Vohra and other Muslim migrants do contribute to processes of development in central Gujarat, their role is relatively invisible. One reason for this is the limited volume of migration and remittances – yet I still found enough empirical data to write about the Vohras as ‘transnational agents of development’. A second reason is that these migrants tend to work individually or with small groups of trusted local acquaintances, operating without drawing much attention to themselves - without the donation plates, congratulatory displays and public events that are common in some of the Patel trusts (for a description, see Dekkers and Rutten 2011, 6). The absence of donation plates in Muslim trusts was explained by trustees as a strategy of keeping unwanted intrusions at bay (about which more below), of protecting the donor against additional requests by others, or of avoiding status being given to the donor, so that rewards would be granted in the ‘afterlife, not in this life’.

Notice board in Anand (2014), advertising an event of the ‘NRG Centre’, the non-resident Gujaratis Centre, started in December 2009, a collaboration between Gujarat Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Government of Gujarat to provide information and assistance to NRGs.⁴

How do Vohras of central Gujarat collaborate with transnational migrants to improve their own lives and those of others - in other words, to ‘develop’ the society? Answering this question would contribute to existing scholarship on migration and development, not just to fill in the specific empirical gap of how Vohras operate as ‘agents of development’ but also to reflect critically on the implications of politics of community and place in the migration-development nexus.

Vohras as ‘transnational agents of development’

Political and academic discussions about the relationship between migration and economic development have flourished since the 1990s (Davies 2007; de Haas 2005; de Haas 2007; de Haas 2009; de Haas 2010; Faist 2008; Kurien 2009; Kapur 2010), and are related to the realisation that, in developing countries, the volume of remittances now far surpasses the level of official development assistance. Empirical studies show a heterogeneity of migration impacts (de Haas 2010). What distinguishes the present discussions from the earlier scholarship on remittances and the ‘brain drain’/‘brain gain’ is the raised awareness of the circularity of flows and the shift in perspective from the individual migrant to transnational networks and communities through which resources flow (Faist 2008, 26). Anthropologists have contributed to this through exploring the social and political processes in which transnational migrants and their resources are embedded (for an overview, see Upadhya and Rutten 2012), understanding migrants and remittances within the context of ethnic and community politics (Kurien 2002), social inequalities (Ballard 2003; Taylor, Singh, and Booth 2007) and the transforming of social institutions, gender and class relations (Gardner and Osella 2003, xiv; see also Gardner 2001 [1995]). My research builds on this anthropological work, which has paid particular attention to the localised power dynamics involved in such processes.

In central Gujarat, an already dominant group has been in a better position than others to capture the benefits of migration and remittances. In the initial phase of migration, when families started sending their children abroad for the first time and international migration networks and institutions are being established, the Patel/Patidar caste has had almost unique access to the most profitable forms of migration. Once abroad, Patel families have been well-positioned to make their mark on political and social-economic developments in the home region and have, through remittances, further strengthened their already relatively powerful

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position. This conclusion can, to some extent, be drawn from earlier studies on Patels in central Gujarat (Rutten and Patel 2002; Dekkers and Rutten 2011; Guha and Rutten 2013). Within this context, the relation between ‘migration and development’ cannot be considered without taking the localised politics of community and caste into account.

Here I take cues from a transnational and longitudinal ethnographic research project in the Doab region in Punjab and in the UK (Taylor, Singh, and Booth 2007; Taylor 2013; Taylor and Singh 2013). Taylor and Singh argue that:

... Doaban transnationalism is shaped by, and shapes, the social structure of the region. [The article] focuses upon the relationship between contemporary Doaban transnationalism and caste and argues that multifaceted Doaban transnationalism is not only shifting the dynamic caste relations of Doaba but is also deepening the established patterns of caste domination and inequality (Taylor and Singh 2013, 50).

This deepening of established patterns of domination occurs because:

The very kinship and caste-based networks which have historically enabled Doaban migration to the UK have simultaneously restricted many of the benefits of transnationalism – social mobility but also remittances, investments and philanthropy – to these same social groups (in the case of our study, the Jat Sikh caste) (Taylor and Singh 2013, 53).

Taylor and Singh (2013, 50) present their case study of the Punjab as a contribution to the Provincial Globalisation project proposed by Upadhya and Rutten (2012) to counter the simplistic, economistic and methodologically nationalistic representation of transnational flows within much literature, research and policymaking on ‘migration and development’ with a series of ethnographic studies at the regional level. Here I make a further contribution to this ‘series of regional-level studies... (allowing) for comparison’ (Upadhya and Rutten 2012, 59, in Taylor and Singh 2013, 58).

If the Jat Sikhs of Doab and the Patidars of central Gujarat have, to a large extent, reaped the benefits of transnational migration, reinforcing their position as the...
dominant castes in their region, what are the experiences of other groups in such regions with long-term histories of migration and transnational exchange? Overall, my findings suggest that Vohras of central Gujarat are embedded in resourceful transnational networks, even if the volume of migration and hence resource transfers are much more limited than among the local Patels. How are transnational networks of Vohras implicated in (re)making the region? My findings indicate two processes are reinforced by the transnational resource transfers: the maintenance of a Muslim presence in the villages where Muslims are a minority and the creation of a new hometown for Muslims in Gujarat.

These findings are relevant because of the increasing recognition within India of the role of migrants as ‘agents of development’ at the level of policy making (Walton-Roberts 2004, Xavier 2011) and the simultaneous exclusion of Muslims from the national imagination. This was already noted during the first Pravasi Bharatiya Divas in New Delhi (in 2003), when a critical voice asked why ‘Indian Muslims should be expected to have Ram and Sita in their hearts’, thus questioning the definition of diaspora maintained by the Indian government, and which groups are included in the ‘global family’ and invited to ‘reconnect with their motherland’ (Bal and Sinha-Kerkhoff 2005, 200-201). Similar questions have been asked by diplomats in the run-up to Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s recent visit to Australia, where it was observed that those putting together diaspora meetings in Australia were closely associated with the Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh, a foreign overseas wing of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (a militant Hindu nationalist organisation). This association of Indian diaspora events with Hindu nationalist leaders and rhetoric could alienate Muslims from feeling part of the ‘Indian diaspora’.8

There is thus a paradoxical situation in which ‘overseas Indians’ are wooed and welcomed to share their resources and ideas with the nation (Xavier 2011), while Indian Muslims at home and abroad are defined as ‘others’ and ‘foreigners’ (Bal and Sinha-Kerkhoff 2005; van der Veer 2002). In Gujarat, five Muslim associations were banned from receiving foreign funds in 2015.9 In my own research, I came across two Muslim associations that had been severely affected by increasingly strict regulations under the Foreign Contributions Regulations (FCR) Act. These two associations were educational institutes that had received financial support from a transnational Memon association, and which had subsequently been labelled as suspicious, receiving regular police inspections on their premises and being subject to lengthy bureaucratic procedures. This was experienced as

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intimidating by the employees and trustees involved. A likely explanation for why these two trusts were marked as suspect is that they were linked financially to a Memon association – this may have drawn the attention of the police because of the 1993 Mumbai bombings, in which the so-called ‘Tiger Memon’ has been a prime suspect and his brother, Yakub Memon, was hanged in 2015 for playing a supporting role.10

The Vohras I met in my research have not been directly affected by such police interventions; their organisations have not been marked as (potentially) suspect. However, some were aware of the interventions in other Muslim associations. Besides, as shown previously, many spoke of an atmosphere of (potential) distrust vis-à-vis Muslims in India. This chapter therefore pays specific attention to how visiting migrants feel their role in ‘development’ is constrained by their specific positions as Muslims.

With regard to discussions about the much-contested notion of ‘development’,11 I take the position that ‘development’ implicates a desire to improve society, to do good. In the field, I have looked for emic interpretations of what that desired improvement could be. As each ‘agent of development’ has their own different ideas and strategies, I do not generalise but describe the personal aims, concerns and practices of three migrants, in three case studies. While the migrants I spoke to did not use the word ‘development’ by themselves, although they were more than confident about using it when I introduced it into the conversation, their aims were broadly formulated as helping people, helping people to help themselves, encouraging people. The aim of doing good sometimes went hand in hand with pleasing God, or with helping oneself, now or in the afterlife.

In the three case studies, I introduce three Vohra men visiting central Gujarat from the UK or USA, each of whom feels he is making a positive contribution to improving the welfare of people in central Gujarat. Philanthropist Ayub (based in the USA) started a health clinic and youth centre in his hometown; maulana Rashad (based in the UK) supports 290 widows in villages across central Gujarat;12 and


11 Different positions have been taken towards the notion of ‘development’ in history (Leys 2005; Rist 2008): a cycle of growth and decline in Antiquity, infinite progress in the Enlightenment, social evolutionism in the 19th century, discussions between the Modernisation and the Dependencia view of development with the establishment of the field of ‘Development Studies’ (Rist 2008, 28-43), and then a plethora of discussions in which ‘every imaginable paradigmatic position with respect to the question of development and underdevelopment was reviewed and awarded its own label’ (Schuurman 2000, 7).

12 To contextualise, the trusts I have encountered in central Gujarat are concerned with ‘self-sustenance’, e.g. by building hospitals and schools in Muslim-majority localities and organising services to ‘the disadvantaged’: health services, education, or the direct distribution of funds and food items. In an earlier study of Muslim associations in Ahmedabad in Gujarat, two types of associations are distinguished (Türel 2007): self-organising associations and political associations that concentrate on lobbying with political parties and state institutions to demand the endorsement of constitutional rights. In the villages and towns of central Gujarat, I found only associations of the first kind. Activists I spoke to in the cities of Ahmedabad and Vadodara confirmed that the lobbying activities of the second kind of association focus more on the cities where the media and more powerful politicians are.
businessman Idris (based in the UK) feels his real estate ventures in Gujarat have contributed significantly to providing Muslims with housing in Anand after 2002. All three can be called ‘transnational agents of development’ (Faist 2008). I conclude each case study with reflection about how it relates to community and place, asking how these ‘transnational agents of development’ collaborate with local actors in the context of localised ‘community’ politics and how their activities are emplaced in the villages and towns of central Gujarat.

Case study 1: upholding secularism in the hometown

Ayub is a US citizen with OCI status (Overseas Citizen of India), who has lived in the USA for more than forty years.13 He was one of the first in his home town in Gujarat to go to the USA in the late 1960s as a student, received a medical degree, started up various businesses and eventually settled his family in a suburban town on the east coast of the USA. In India, he has maintained close relations with relatives and other acquaintances. Throughout his life, Ayub has contributed to associations active in the field of health care and education, particularly in his home region, central Gujarat.

In November 2011, Ayub visited Gujarat for three weeks to arrange the foundation of a new trust in his own name. On this occasion, I accompanied him for some days while he organised the registration papers of the trust with a legal advisor, checked on the construction process of two buildings on family-owned land in his home town, hired employees, met old friends, and travelled around the region to meet like-minded people. The trust then entailed a health clinic with free doctor’s consultations and free medicines and a youth centre offering free courses in computer skills, English conversation training, and sports. By 2015, the youth centre had grown into an educational centre offering free coaching classes in Mathematics and English. Ayub’s overall aim is to ‘give confidence’ to people and to ‘create opportunities’ which the government is not providing for the underprivileged. He feels this is necessary in Gujarat today more than ever, because of the 2002 violence that made people ‘lose confidence’. His home town was seriously hit by the 2002 attacks, with some deaths and substantial destruction of Muslim property.

When Ayub sat down with me to be interviewed in 2011, we talked about what drove him: what motivated him to come back to Gujarat regularly, to contribute financially to social welfare associations, and then to start his own association? He

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13 The information on Ayub and his association is based on findings from the research period in Gujarat, 2011-2012, a brief return visit to his association in Gujarat 2014, and conversations with him and his family in the USA in 2015. In 2015, I read out some parts of (an earlier draft of) this chapter to him. He felt I had quoted him in an appropriate way, gave some corrections and much additional information, some of which is included here. I have changed his name and omitted some details to prevent recognition, and thank Ayub, his family, friends and employees, for collaborating with the research.
expressed his gratitude for the people of his hometown who had helped him to make it abroad, and his wish to contribute something to the society now that he had the resources:

Everybody in this town, everybody contributed to my life. Everyone. Small to big, from backward to the highest society, Banya, Brahmin, Harijan, Christian, everybody. They love me and I love everybody. I have great respect and love for them and they for me too.

His desire to do good stems from a religious conviction, in the sense that he follows the Islamic principle of zakat: those who are wealthy should help out those in need. 'I just want my God to be happy', Ayub explains. He and his wife have been lucky, he feels. They have everything they need and he sees no purpose in ‘taking our money into the grave’. Now that his children have completed higher education and are financially independent in the USA, the family’s financial capacity to contribute to charity has further increased.

His principles, Ayub stresses, are ‘very secular’. Ayub likes to talks about the national spirit, which in his opinion got lost in the new Gujarat, the new India:

When I grew up in Gujarat, in India, I never imagined India to be like this. Two different societies it has become. I come from a family of nationalists, who care for the nation. My father had the choice to go to Pakistan. He didn’t go to Pakistan. My father said, if every Muslim, if all the good leaders go to Pakistan, then who will take care of the poor and uneducated? Who will take care of those Muslims who have no direction? And who will bring them together with the right wing of Hindus?

When I was growing up, we didn’t have this kind of divide, of Hindu and this thing. The majority of my friends were Hindu. Unfortunately after a certain time because of politics (...) they came to... ‘they are Hindu, they are Muslim, they are Christian, they are Dalit, they are backward’, this thing. It (...) created a cellular India. Divided the hearts. I tell you one thing, today’s kids are very unfortunate kids. (...) Teachers even differentiate. And particularly in Gujarat, unfortunately. (...). Hindu party and RSS14 has built this [Gujarat] as a lab, a laboratory, experimental laboratory, to make this thing nationwide. Grab the power here, use the same theory and grab the power everywhere else. (...) They are trying to still do it in UP [Uttar Pradesh] and Bihar, but they fail,

14 Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, a militant Hindu nationalist organization.
because many many many Hindus are not that kind of fundamentalist. Majority of Hindus are not like that.

The statement strongly resembles the ‘homeland’ narratives discussed earlier in the thesis. It is therefore interesting to see how Ayub maintains and actively recreates his lost homeland when he visits central Gujarat. In his home town, Ayub is still living his secular India, meeting up with old school friends, Muslims and Hindus, who share his spirit of secularism. Some Hindu friends are informally involved in Ayub’s trust and I saw that they frequented the meetings organised by the association even after Ayub had returned to the USA. Ayub made a strong point of including Hindus and Christians as partners, employees, and beneficiaries.

Statements of ‘secularism’ and ‘cosmopolitanism’ were not only volunteered during conversations, but were also made publicly. During an event organised in Ayub’s trust a few months after he left, videotaped for him so that he could see it afterwards, the hall was decorated with Indian flags and the students of the youth centre performed dances to Hindi songs that conveyed a message of inclusive nationalism. Ayub feels this inclusionary ideology is a direct inversion of the current norm in the region. In the USA, he reflected that ‘it is people like us who still try to bring back some of that old spirit’.

From a local perspective, inclusiveness is both an ideological goal and a strategy. Ayub and some of his local employees and friends explained how they feel the need legitimise the trust’s activities in the face of outside suspicion. Ayub feels it is not always easy to convince people in Gujarat of his good intentions:

People [like us] do good work and still... they don’t get it. Because you are Muslim, they think: ‘Oh... you’re gonna help the Muslim!’ Come on! I want to do it for the entire community! Not doing for Muslim, not for Hindu, not for Christian. For whole humanity. Everybody. All Gujaratis. But some people don’t see it this way.

The buildings of Ayub’s trust are located in an area where the majority of neighbours are non-Muslims, mainly Hindus of lower caste. The trust’s employees are therefore making a point of including all neighbours, by visiting their houses and inviting children for free courses and sports activities. According to the social worker managing the youth centre, ‘it is important that our neighbours feel that “this is for us as well” and that they support us. Otherwise, if they feel that “this is only for Muslims”, it will create problems’. This is because ‘some people in this town don’t
like our coaching classes. They think we are making Muslims stronger.’ In 2015, Ayub even estimated that 80% of the employees and students are now Hindus.

Would his contributions fit the model of ‘overseas Gujarati contributing to development’ as advocated by the Gujarati and Indian government? Or would it be labelled as unwanted interference of the ‘foreign hand’? Ayub aims to contribute to the greater good through secularism, but feels his activities are still seen as potentially dangerous simply because he is a Muslim. He counters the fear of the Muslim other by an inclusive definition of ‘community’, simultaneously challenging the status quo and creating legitimacy for his association. Through his active inclusion of non-Muslims in the projects, he maintains his local networks in the town of his youth and purposefully contributes to the maintenance or recreation of a sphere of communal harmony in the town. Here a primordial love for the hometown is not a ‘natural’ position but has to be defended, legitimised vis-à-vis fellow villagers. Holding on to the family land in this way, by turning it into a charitable project targeting disadvantaged Muslims and Hindus, becomes a mission to maintain the legitimacy of the Muslim presence in the home town. This mission is an ambitious one but is acted out on a small scale. Ayub purposefully operates ‘under the radar’ and likes to keep things small to ‘avoid interference’. He hopes to be ‘just a spoke in the wheel’.

Case study 2: supporting poor Muslims in the villages

Maulana Rashad is a British citizen and an Overseas Citizen of India, who has lived in the UK for 26 years. He grew up in Mumbai, studied the Quran to become a religious scholar, then travelled to the UK in 1986, where he was able to secure a long-term visa due to his work as a religious teacher and later married and settled down with his family. In 2011, I met him for the first time when he visited Gujarat to oversee the affairs of his trust. In 2012, I met him again in the UK.

Rashad’s trust specialises in the distribution of zakat collected in mosques in the UK to poor and destitute Muslims in central Gujarat. The main purpose is to provide financial support and hope to ‘the most vulnerable in society: orphans, young girls, widows and the elderly’. At the time of my research in 2011, the trust was working in nine villages and towns in central Gujarat. It organised different projects, one of which was the distribution of an allowance of 400 rupees per month to 290 widows. Among the other projects were the annual distribution of

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15 The information in this section is based on interviews and other conversations with three volunteers of the association and with Rashad himself. I have been in touch with the volunteers regularly throughout my fieldwork in Gujarat, met Rashad first in 2011 when he visited Gujarat, and interviewed him again in 2012 in his home in the UK, then in the presence of his family. I have changed his name and omitted some details to prevent identification, and thank Rashad, his family and all the volunteers and employees for their collaboration in the research.
food items during Ramzan and structural financial support to orphans so that they could study in an English medium school.

When I ask Rashad why he started this trust, he had two explanations, the first based on religious doctrine, the second on a personal history. The first was explained in London, in presence of his wife:

\textit{Rashad}: In Islam if you start your own charity, rewards will keep coming to you even after your death. Because it is done in your name.

\textit{His wife}: So as long as the charity keeps going, it will be beneficial for him in the afterlife.

\textit{Rashad}: That’s the basic idea behind doing all this, why I started it. After my death it will still generate rewards.

If the underlying purpose of the endeavour is the rewards granted by God in the afterlife, it does not explain why he is doing his charitable work in Gujarat rather than anywhere else. That he explained as follows:

I saw real poverty for the first time in my life when I visited Gujarat [as a young man, from Mumbai]. In my family there was some poverty as well, but this was different. Real poverty. At that time I already thought that one day I would do something to help these people. When I came to the UK, this was still in my mind, but in the beginning I was struggling myself. But every time I went to India, I thought about it. (...)

Every time I visited India, many people used to approach me and ask for money. I used to give them also, but it was hard for me to understand who is really needy and who is not. People can easily hide things for me. Maybe they tell only half of their story. I cannot check on them. So I realized, I want to do something for these people, but you really need locals to understand who is needy and who is not.

Then one day I calculated, I had 500 pounds for \textit{zakat}! I thought that was an enormous amount of money! How will I spend that wisely? That time I went to India and I met my cousin. I discussed it with him. He said: ‘I will help you’.

Today, Rashad no longer relies on his own \textit{zakat} alone. Donations for the trust are collected more widely now among Muslims in the UK, in mosques in different cities, which Rashad tours every year during the Ramzan period to collect \textit{zakat}. The trust’s spendings are impressive: £20,000 pounds in 2008, £28,000 in 2010,
£35,000 pounds in 2011. People give him the money, Rashad feels, because they trust him and his local contacts in Gujarat. Trust is key to the functioning of the association, as Rashad explained when seated in the office with his volunteers. Looking around him, he said:

These people here [in this room] are very good. You really need local people that you can trust. When I was doing it on my own, I was getting lots of misinformation.

A volunteer: ‘He spent so much money and he was cheated too much!’

In the end, that’s what it is all about. Trust. All the people in this room are my friends and relatives. I know them for a long time. And they know the local situation. They have clear-cut criteria and they know the people. I don’t know much about how to handle everything here, that’s up to them. My job is only the financial part. I attract the money and I do the checking up while I am here. I go through the accounts, I want to see bills of everything, make sure everything is done properly. I need to know that the money is wisely spent.

Rashad visits central Gujarat every other year or so, not every year. Most of the time, he relies on his Anand-based cousin to manage his affairs in Gujarat. This local cousin is, like Rashad, also a ‘Hafiz’, a scholar of Islam, who can recite the Quran by heart. During my stay in Gujarat, I accompanied this learned cousin and the small group of trusted (Vohra) friends who surrounded him on three occasions on their monthly tour to distribute the monthly allowances to the widows in the villages. Pictures were taken of the exchanges in every village - men in white clothes handing over envelopes to colourfully dressed women - so that the donors in the UK would see. Once a videowallah followed me around - I was instructed to ask questions in English so that the donors in the UK would be able to understand, which I did awkwardly.

How is Rashid’s transnational charity embedded in local networks and forms of sociality? To get things done for the Muslims here, and to do it fast and efficiently, Rashad’s cousin skilfully uses a network of acquaintances, partly through his own family ties and partly through the religious networks of the Tablighi Jamaat. During our visits, we were always received by a local maulana or by a relative in the village. These local acquaintances knew that we were coming and had already informed the beneficiaries in advance. In some cases, maulanas had organised religious classes for the beneficiaries, which were to be followed before the money was

\[16\] Based on records of the UK Charity Commission.
distributed. As the volunteers explained, these local acquaintances are important to the functioning of the association. It is they who ‘know the people’ and who select the worthy recipients in the villages. Without them, the work would be impossible. Here family and religious networks are activated to support the continuing Muslim presence in the villages of central Gujarat.

How are the activities located? Unlike in other case studies of ‘transnational agents of development’, this trust is not active in the ancestral home town of Rashad itself (a town at an approximate 40 minute drive from Anand). Rashad is not driven by a primordial love for his ‘roots’, his choice of working in Gujarat is pragmatic:

People give money to me because they trust me. They are less concerned about the exact location of the work. In fact it may be more necessary to give money elsewhere, in Bihar or Uttar Pradesh, there is much more poverty there. I considered becoming active there, but I have no network there, not anybody I trust like my cousin. So I would not be able to start it up there. People would spend the money for their own purposes, they would cheat, and when you are abroad there is nothing you can do...

Nevertheless, the Gujarati cousin and his friends are clearly not completely at home in some of the villages they distributed money to. Some of the villages we visited were Hindu-majority. Within this context, I found it remarkable to see how the team entered the villages only briefly to distribute the money and then left for the next village in a hired rickshaw or on motorbike, literally village-hopping. In the evening, they returned to their own homes - in Anand town. From their home base in Anand, these friends thus make use of their wider regional networks based on family and religious ties. During our travels, I found that one of the villages had been the native village of one of the volunteers, a retired school teacher now living in Anand. He indicated that there had been violence in his village in 1947 and in 2002, and that most Muslims had left to Anand afterwards. The remaining Muslims, he thought, were just a handful, as only the poorest of the poor stayed behind. Through the project of distributing zakat, thus, the Muslim presence in rural spaces is maintained - by sustaining their survival.

Case study 3: developing real estate in Anand town
Idris is a British citizen with OCI status (Overseas Citizen of India) who grew up in Anand. After his arranged marriage to a young Vohra woman in the UK in 1999, he

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17 This case study is based on conversations with Idris in Anand in 2011 and 2012, and in his home in the UK in 2012. I have also spoken to some of his relatives and acquaintances both in India and the UK. I have changed his name and omitted some details to prevent identification, and thank Idris and his family for their participation in this research project.
moved to the UK. In the first years of his residence in the UK, he has been busy working and settling his family. Since his father passed away, he has returned to Anand more frequently to collaborate with his mother and other relatives in the business affairs of the family.

When I first met Idris in 2011, he had taken a ‘sabbatical’ and was staying with his wife and two children for six months in a spacious bungalow in Anand town, in the suburban area that is now ‘the Muslim area’. At that time he already explained about the numerous charitable and business activities his family engaged in in Gujarat. Idris said that:

We took a sabbatical from work and are now here to help our uncles manage the family land and real estate business, to get more involved in the family business, and to oversee the projects we are dedicated to.

At the time, Idris said that his friends in the UK measure each other’s status by the amount of land and investments owned in Gujarat. Later I learnt that these friends were all Patels from central Gujarat, with whom he meets as a men’s club every weekend - he is the only Muslim in the club. In a time when segregation was not as pronounced, Idris had lived in a Patel-majority neighbourhood in his youth and went to schools with mostly Patel students. His father also had many Patel friends. After migration, Idris maintained those contacts, both because they are enjoyable at a personal level and because he feels this contributes to the success of the family business in Gujarat: ‘Whoever is in the system is our friend. Some of our lifelong family acquaintances are now high up in the BJP [the ruling political party in Gujarat]. In this way they have come to know that not all Muslims are bad. This is why they support us when we want to get our work done.’

In April 2012, when Idris visited Anand again, he took me around in a car for a day to show me what he is doing during his extended stays in central Gujarat. During the day, he showed me a series of plots of land, some of which he inherited from his deceased father and some he acquired more recently. In the previous years, he has tried converting several plots from agricultural land into non-agricultural land in order to resell it at a higher price, sometimes successfully, sometimes not. As he drove me around, I understood that the investments are dispersed throughout the region but have, in the period after 2002, focused particularly on the peri-urban stretch now known as the ‘Muslim area’ of Anand town. Here, Idris’ father acquired agricultural plots with the purpose of converting it to non-agricultural use in order to divide them into smaller plots and sell to individual house builders. According to some of the local people who knew Idris,
he had been ‘making business’ out of Anand’s rapid growth at the time. Idris agrees but feels that this business has also contributed significantly to a larger purpose, that of resettling Vohras in Anand town after the 2002 displacements. He explains this as follows:

Nowadays, Anand has become the centre of Vohras in India. When I was three years old, there were about seventy Vohras in Anand! All our neighbours were Patels. During the riots in 2002, soooo many people came to Anand. Especially Vohras. At the time, my father and me thought we had to do something for these people. So we started a housing society. It was his vision and I agreed with it. He wanted to do something for all the displaced people who came here. This whole area was a jungle ten years ago. We bought this land at that time. We could acquire it from a farmer, because we have good relations with Hindus: a friend of my father owned this land. We bought it and sold it in smaller plots. After we sold the plots, people have been buying and selling with their plots and they have made some money out of that. We also encouraged them to do so: we told them: ‘buy two plots, sell one plot after a few years and with the profit build your house on the second plot!’ In the past five years, some plots have been sold five times. Now slowly slowly people are starting to build houses...

We bought this land on loan. Over the years we have paid 700,000 rupees\(^{18}\) on interest for that loan. In fact we have not made a profit, in the end we have made a loss on this property! But what is better, give 700,000 rupees to people for their consumption, or invest 700,000 rupees and now they live in 142 houses?

If Idris feels that he has not made profit on this particular land, or perhaps not enough, he presents the efforts as having a larger goal: they contributed to housing the newly arrived Muslims, who, in the process, made some extra money out of the buying and selling of the land.

An interview with a (Vohra) friend of Idris in London helped me to understand how this real estate business was related to the politics of place and community. He drew a map of the area where Idris’ property was located, and explained:

This area is located in Anand now, although part of it is still registered as agricultural land. Before, in this area, Patels were the landowners. Now, Vohras are becoming the landowners. Patels have gone abroad and they have

lost their interest in agriculture; they close the house, and nobody is there to take care of the farm. So, Vohras have bought some of their land and they try to convert it to non-agricultural purposes.

We can see now how Idris’ social networks enable his participation in real estate development in central Gujarat. In a sense, his actions are presented as a form of philanthropic brokerage between a Hindu farmer and the Vohra immigrants. Being embedded both in Patel and Vohra networks and thus able to get things done, Idris explains how the family investments in Anand rely on a well-maintained local network of acquaintances: relatives and friends, businessmen and politicians, Vohras and Patels. Throughout the day, Idris repeats: ‘I am good at networking. I can feel comfortable with anybody.’

With regard to the emplacement of his investments, Idris is again an interesting counter-case to discuss the assumption of primordial love for the ‘hometown’ or ‘home village’. Although he grew up in an older part of town with mainly Patel neighbours and talks affectionately about how the town used to be, he is not committed to the restoration of a lost past. During his extended stays in the town, Idris lives comfortably in the developing ‘Muslim area’, using it as a base from which to be active widely beyond it. Rather than holding on to family land, Idris is buying and selling properties where profits can be made, flexibly playing into socio-spatial transformations in the region. Rather than lamenting Anand’s ghettoisation, he goes with the flow and tries to make the most of the recent urban developments. For Idris, who had been repeatedly staying in Anand for long periods before I met him, there seems to be no distinction between the ‘desired home’ and the ‘lived home’ (Clifford 1994; Ramji 2006). He is still at home in Anand, his life develops along with the changing town.

Making a home in Anand town

Each of the ‘transnational agents of development’ I have described has their own goals and interests. There is no overlapping agenda, no commonly shared value, nor a common spatial approach towards the ‘home region’. Philanthropist Ayub aims uphold the ‘spirit of nationalism’ in the town where he grew up, maulana Rashad does not attach as much importance to his hometown but contributes to the survival of poor Muslims in different villages and small towns of central Gujarat through the mechanism of zakat, and businessman Idris has gone along with the changes in the region, contributing to urban developments in Anand town.
Overall, these results point in different directions, showing migrants are implicated both in continuing the presence of Muslims in the villages and towns where they are in a minority and in the residential concentration (or ‘gethoisation’) of Muslims in Anand town. While these case studies are not, as such, ‘representative’ in that each is unique and was not repeated elsewhere, the last strategy (of Idris) was quite common among the other migrants in the UK I talked to. Even if most other migrants do not see Anand as their place of origin, the town has become an important node in their transnational social life.

Previously I have explained how Anand town has become a ‘centre’ for the local Vohra community in response to developments of migration, displacement and residential segregation in the region. These developments affect the migrants when they visit central Gujarat, and they respond to them by turning their attention to Anand town. Next, I show how migrants feel about Anand town as an emerging regional centre and as an important node in the transnational Vohra family. How are transnational migrants making a home in Anand town?

Visiting migrants: making a (new) home

In the neighbourhood surrounding Majestic Housing Society, I regularly encountered men - migrants - staying in Anand for weeks or months on end. Most were retired men with a UK or US passport, who left a wife and children behind in the country of settlement in the winter period, others were middle-aged men who had settled abroad but used their frequent visits to India as a holiday, to escape from the constraints of hard work and family life. Some of them owned a house in Anand. Most of them were not originally from Anand but from other nearby towns and villages, or even from Mumbai. Why these men choose to stay in Anand when they ‘return home’ requires some explanation so in this section I focus on the perceptions of this group. At the end of the section, I contrast their views with those of the second generation and of the younger migrants more recently departed from Gujarat.

The redirection of attention from the ancestral village to Anand town is a response to the massive resettlement of Muslims: migrants have followed their relatives to the town and are making it their second home. One elderly migrant, who was born in Gujarat, grew up in East Africa and moved to the UK during his teenage years, explained how he feels about Anand in comparison to his natal village.

I am from the village of Sundargam.\textsuperscript{19} Now, nobody of my family lives in Sundargam. So obviously, I don’t have any feelings about Sundargam. Even

\textsuperscript{19} The name of the village has been changed to maintain anonymity.
though it is my birthplace. Because there is nobody there now! They all have shifted to Anand! (...)

So how do you feel when you visit Anand?
I feel at home when I go to Anand... I feel at home (interview in London).  

On their holidays and during their post-retirement trips, migrants are turning to a town they never thought about much when they were young. While they may have visited Anand in the past, their sense of it as a key site of attachment and even belonging arose only after 2002, when their relatives moved, causing a previously insignificant town to suddenly emerge as a nodal point of their transnational lives.

This development, although it had already started before 2002, took off when Vohras abroad organised themselves to collect funds to assist the relief efforts Gujarat in 2002. All money collected in the UK was sent to Anand town, and a ‘relief committee’ consisting of personal acquaintances of some of the migrants. Initiatives started in the town that were partly funded or fully funded by migrants in the UK and/or USA include three housing societies built for riot victims, contributions to existing schools, hospitals and social welfare associations, and the establishment of new associations. While some of the charitable activities during that period have also been linked to villages, it is remarkable that so many migrants were prepared to invest in the town. Anand was where it all happened.

One of the reasons for this sudden interest in Anand was the arrival of many Vohra victims of the riots. These refugees included relatives of the migrants themselves, and this prompted the migrants to turn their attention to the town too. How this worked is shown in the following case:

Abdullahbhai and his sister Taslimben went to the UK in the 1960s as teenagers, when they moved there with their family from East Africa. Now they are retired. Having kept in touch with relatives in Gujarat throughout their lives, 2002 was a turning point in their interactions with the region. Some relatives relocated to Anand by their own means, others did so with some support from Abdullahbhai and Taslimben. Eventually most of their relatives, who had previously lived dispersed across various villages and towns, relocated to a single neighbourhood in Anand, where their new houses were within walking distance of each other.

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20 This quote and my analysis of it has been published in Verstappen and Rutten (2015, 243-244).
21 In a village nearby Anand, a Muslim school was going to be opened and a fundraising was organised by relatives of the villagers in the UK. Despite the initial enthusiasm, the school never materialised as the expenses required were much greater than the capital injection.
Abdullahbhai and Taslimben responded by buying residences in Anand too. Abdullahbhai bought a flat in an apartment building within walking distance of their relatives, while Taslimben bought a bungalow which doubles as a holiday home and a family house for one of their relocated relatives. Taslim’s husband visits Anand regularly and then stays in the bungalow with his relatives, becoming part of their joint household during those periods.22

Abdullahbhai and Taslimben are two informants out of a group of sixteen settled Vohra households interviewed in the UK, whom I asked questions specifically about their investments in Anand town. In this group, ten of the sixteen households had invested in land or houses in the town. Most investments were made after 2002, and most of the investors trace their origins not to Anand, but to villages in the region. The reason for buying a house in Anand, migrants explain, is that in their holidays they like to be close to their relatives, who, in many cases, have also moved to Anand town. Anand is also a convenient base from which they can be in touch with relatives in it and in other towns and villages in central Gujarat, as well as in Vadodara and Ahmedabad, and from where they can make trips to Mumbai. Another reason for these investments is the lucrative real estate market that emerged in Anand around the turn of the century.

The three case studies described above are instructive. For businessman Idris, the involvement in Anand town was already illustrated. But it is significant that maulana Rashid has also chosen Anand town as the home base for his charitable association even though he is working in the wider region. He had tried to start up a health clinic in a nearby village, but this was difficult and failed because all his resources, knowledge and networks were concentrated in Anand town and then had to be transported to the selected village, causing much inconvenience for his volunteers and employees. It should be remembered that Rashad grew up in Mumbai, and has no ancestral roots in Anand town. Nowadays, however, when he travels to Gujarat, he stays in Anand.

As the case of philanthropist Ayub shows, not everyone feels at home in Anand town. As I have noted, Ayub is not only active in his home town. During the riots in 2002, he collected funds in his local mosque in his residential town near Philadelphia and sent the money to Anand to build a relief society there. In the same period, he was involved in several other charitable associations, including two new primary schools in Anand. However, in hindsight, he is extremely disappointed with how this developed. The first disappointment was that some of the projects were not carried out as he wanted. He had no power over the execution

22 This case study and my analysis of it has been published in Verstappen and Rutten (2015, 244).
and felt part of the money had been misused. One reason for this is that, compared to what he had in his original home town, he had no trusted networks in Anand town. The second disappointment was the stringent segregation of Hindus and Muslims in Anand, which, in hindsight, he feels sorry to have contributed to. When I talked to him in the USA, he spoke with disdain of the ‘ghetto’ of Anand, comparing it to the segregation in some American cities. During his return visits, he stays in his original hometown, where he feels he has more influence and can trust the people, and where Hindus and Muslims still live in mixed neighbourhoods.

Still, even critics like Ayub do not entirely avoid Anand. He is still involved in the town through a collaboration with cousin, who started up a transport business. This cousin wanted to start his business in Anand because ‘Anand has become the centre of business in Charotar’. With capital from his uncle, he built an office and keeps a separate room ‘for my mama [uncle], when he comes he can sit here’. Interestingly, through the choice of location in an area known as a ‘Hindu area’ and, by aiming mainly at Hindu customers, this initiative resisted the trend of segregation.

Anand’s growth and its special role in the 2002 episode as a site of safety and settlement has made it a place of return and investment for transnational migrants. Though the names of the villages and towns of origin are remembered abroad, it is in Anand that many locate their ‘return’ and are building a sense of home. For some migrants, the transformations in the region result in feelings of loss and disenchantment. They may distance themselves from Anand, but are still sometimes drawn to it through their social networks. For others, the sense of home in Anand is rather fulfilling. A lot can happen in ten years, so much that a sense of ‘home’ can be experienced in a place without personal history. This sense of homeness is, to a large extent, dependent on the personal contacts the migrants cultivate, which have come to be more and more centred on Anand town.

I can walk down the street there [in Anand], I can bet you, there will always be someone who will be related to me... We have good contacts there and [whenever we need anything] someone would mention a name: ‘Oh so-and-so is doing good work, I know him, he is so-and-so’s son, and was on the phone with him yesterday.’ That’s how it goes. It’s who you know. And everyone [in the UK] is in touch with everyone back home [middle-aged man, British citizen, brought up in Mumbai, born in a village in central Gujarat, has stayed in Anand during several holidays].

To contextualise, I now briefly compare the experiences of the first generation with the experiences of the second generation, and to the younger migrants who have
recently left central Gujarat. While their experiences are different, they confirm that Anand has also emerged for them as an important node in the transnational network.

The second generation: ‘not a holiday resort’
How do the children of the pioneering migrants, the second and later generations, look at Anand town? As my findings are based on very limited research among this group (see Chapter 2), I summarise them only briefly. Like Bolognani (2013) and Louie (2001, 369), I conclude that there are differences between the first and the later generation in terms of what they seek in the country of origin. While the first generation attaches much value to the maintenance and building of a relationship with relatives, the second generation visits the country of origin also to ‘relax’, ‘enjoy’, taking a holiday in a relatively cheap country. For those born or brought up in the UK or USA, the choice is between Anand and other places of interest in India, like Mumbai or the Taj Mahal, and/or between visiting India again and sightseeing in Europe, Turkey or Morocco, perhaps Dubai. Their feelings towards Anand reflect the position of it as a small town in an agricultural region, where there is ‘not much to do’. Meeting the relatives is enjoyable, they feel, but otherwise they easily get bored of the town. Some also feel that there is ‘a language barrier’ as well as a ‘culture barrier’ between themselves and their cousins in Anand.

Though very brief, these findings show that the emergence of Anand as a node of regional and transnational networks of Vohras also affects the holiday visits of the second generation. While Anand is not necessarily a preferred holiday resort for them, it is still a point of anchorage in their transnational family network.

Youth from Anand in the UK: ‘it’s where I grew up, innit?’
Finally, how do the new migrants, the ‘students’ as they are called in the UK, look at Anand town? I discuss this category last because their feelings conform to the ideas already widely projected in the literature about ‘homelands’, ‘home villages’ and ‘home towns’, that is, the primordial notion of belonging. For young migrants, the prominence of Anand town as a site for Charotar Sunni Vohras is more self-evident than for the older migrants. If Anand has become a home town for elderly migrants, for the new generation of migrants who is now venturing abroad, it was already their home town before they left.

23 For those born and/or brought up abroad, finding a spouse is an additional reason for visiting. I have collected data on this theme but do not deal with it here.
A young man from this generation, met in the UK, explained his feelings towards Anand as follows:

I love [Anand], it’s my place. I am born there, so much memories innit? (...) This is better life here [in the UK] than in India. But, at the same time I cannot miss my Anand, that is part of my life. (...) I want to die in Anand. I told all my friends; if I get in an accident, please send me to Anand. (...) I really want to die in Anand. Definitely. I don’t want to die anywhere else in the world.

For young people brought up in Anand, Anand has emerged as a true hometown, even if their parental villages and/or their ataks pointed at other places of significance in the region.

Anand has also become a point of significance even for those derived from other nearby towns. In London, I found young migrants from villages like villages Bedva, Narsanda and Bakrol, who could talk to each other for hours about the best ice-cream stall, the best pani puri stand and the best samosas in Anand. Their knowledge of Anand was shared, creating common ground, whereas their home villages were not known to all. Their shared knowledge stemmed from the fact that most of them had studied in the town. One of them had left her home village and relocated to Anand in 2002 after the destruction of her father’s business in the home village. As a result, she had lived in Anand for several years before marriage and moving to London. Among this group of friends, information on land prices and land deals was an important part of the conversation, especially as the youngest had recently bought a plot of his own in Anand ‘with money earned in London’ and was applauded for this success. There was also talk of perhaps opening a shop in the campus area of Vallabhb Vidyanagar some day. This shows that, after going abroad, those who reside nearby, even those who have moved there in response to violence, recognise Anand as a place of special significance. While Anand may not be their home town, it functions as a key location in the memory of which they find a sense of togetherness.

Multiple centres of the transnational Vohra community

It is important to note here that Anand is not the only hub in the transnational family networks of Vohras. Although the town-centric approach of my research project may give the impression that Anand is the centre of the universe for Vohras,
and that all Vohras share a sense of belonging to it, this is definitely not the case. I think of Anand as one of several nodes in a spatially dispersed family network. To explain this, I need to explore the relationship between this town from the perspective of the migrants in relation to Mumbai and Karachi, to show how multiple nodes play a role in this spatially dispersed family life.

In the next part, I first discuss the view of the Mumbaiwallahs, for whom Anand has gained in significance too, and then the view of the Karachiwallahs, for whom Anand and central Gujarat has recently become almost inaccessible due to national border policies. This final part serves as a reminder that transnational place-making is constrained by governments, in particular by national borders. With all this transnational networking, donating, and investing, the impression may be that the ‘transnational agent of development’ is entirely free to travel. This would feed the idea that the power of nation-states is declining, a continuing debate in scholarship on globalisation (Guillén 2001; Cochrane and Pain 2004). This view of the mobile subject needs, however, to be contextualised. National boundaries do have a very significant effect on the transnational place-making practices in Anand town. I show this by drawing attention to the differences between the Mumbaiwallahs and the Karachiwallahs: one group, from Mumbai, participates with ease in the social life of Anand town, the other, from Karachi, is completely invisible in the town.

The Mumbaiwallahs’ perspective
Mumbai has already been mentioned repeatedly in this thesis. I have explained that it hosts a large Vohra community of at least 264 households, who have their own caste organisation, the ‘Mumbai Charotar Sunni Vohra Society’. Vohras from Mumbai routinely participate in the social life in Anand, and I regularly met retired men from Mumbai, some of whom owned a house in Anand and spent several weeks a year in Gujarat. An interview with the director of the Mumbai Charotar Sunni Vohra Society confirmed that exchanges between Mumbai and Anand are common, as are marriage exchanges and travel to and fro. All of this can be easily arranged as the train between the cities takes only five hours.

During the research visits to the UK and USA, Mumbai was also unavoidable in the conversations with migrants. Some explained how they divided their time between Mumbai and Anand during their holiday trips to India, others had most of their close relatives in Mumbai and were less acquainted with Anand. A man in this latter category was very disappointed by the fact that I had spent only a few days in Mumbai for my research project, since ‘Mumbai is a major city for the

Vohra community!' On many occasions, Mumbai figured as part of the conversation.

The importance of Mumbai is illustrated next through an encounter with a migrant family in the UK. Ahmad was born in central Gujarat, in the maternal village of his mother. He lived in Mumbai till the age of seven, when his parents took him with them to the UK (in 1973). A snippet of the conversation shows how his family is linked to multiple places. During the initial part of the interview, the conversation focused on the ties of the family to Gujarat.

I am the only one who was born in India. My brothers and a sister were all born in the UK. But we have strong ties with Gujarat and back home. Although I didn’t go back since I came in ’73, I went back in 1987, and since then I have been going near enough every year. Often there is a marriage in the family and we have to attend, because we are like, related somehow, they’ll call us and we have to attend. Sometimes it’s just a holiday. Meet the family basically. All my mother’s side is in Anand, in and around Anand. So we go back and meet them. That’s it.

During this conversation, Ahmad’s wife Samin sat with us. At some point, they exchanged a few words with each other in a language I did not understand, and Ahmad apologised:

I am sorry... my wife and me lived in Bombay basically, so we don’t speak Gujarati to each other. [They both burst into laughter.]
Samin: It’s very strange. We always speak Urdu. I am born in Bombay. I am from Gujarat, my parents speak Gujarati as well, but I am living in Bombay, my friends, all, everybody was speaking Urdu, all the mix...
Ahmad: For seven years I lived in Bombay and I learned this language. So when I speak to Samin it’s like she’s from Bombay, I’m not going to speak with her in Gujarati! But with our mothers we both speak Gujarati.

The conversation shows that Mumbai and Anand/Gujarat are both important places in their transnational family network. While Ahmad’s marriage was arranged in Mumbai, the marriages of his younger brothers were arranged in Gujarat. Living close by each other and meeting each other at least every Friday, the families are closely intertwined and so are their transnational networks with Mumbai and Gujarat. Ties between London, Mumbai and Gujarat are strengthened through the marriages of the next generation, which brings in new migrants from Mumbai and Gujarat.
The case also shows that ‘Mumbaiwallahs’ are among the investors in Anand’s lively real estate market.

We’ve invested some money. Basically we bought land: ‘we will build a house’ or whatever. In Anand. (...) We bought quite a big plot, we wanted to build a house like this one over here [in the UK]. Huge plot.

Why Anand?
Because that’s where the family is. If we go there on holiday we go to Anand.

This is not the only case of a Mumbaiwallah buying a house in Anand town. Among the elderly and middle-aged transnational migrants ‘returning’ to Anand regularly, there are several who have been raised in Mumbai but who have nevertheless decided to buy a house or land in Anand, as a holiday home or as an investment. For ‘Mumbaiwallahs’ directly from Mumbai or living abroad, investing in Anand is also attractive because of the price differential between Anand and Mumbai. Land prices in Mumbai are unaffordable, only for the hyper-rich, while land in Anand is still affordable, particularly when currency differentials between the UK and India (pounds/rupees) are taken into account. Moreover, people living in Mumbai are believed to be ‘very busy’ with their own lives, living in an expensive and congested city and working hard to make ends meet, and consequently not to have as much time and commitment as the relatives in Anand to help the migrants arrange all kinds of practical affairs. ‘Corruption’ was mentioned as another reason to prefer Anand to Mumbai for investment, not because there is less corruption in Anand but because trusted acquaintances in Anand had offered help in dealing with it.

When I discussed these developments more generally with a migrant in London, and asked why it was that Vohras from Mumbai would invest in Anand, I received the following answer:

That’s because all the Vohras are there! Especially since 2002. And this is because Anand is just so prosperous and fast-developing. Actually Anand is great for business. That is why... you know after 2002 when everybody came, it was in a way quite lucky for them. Just a few months and they could quickly pick up some business. Had they landed somewhere else, it might have been harder to restart their lives. Now everybody knows this. Anand is a blossoming economy. So everybody comes there to invest.

In summary, Anand is one of several hubs in the transnational family networks of Vohras. Mumbai is also an important hub. Another one might be Vadodara.
(Baroda) – I have found but not fully explored links between Vohras and that city in this research. The recurrent presence of ‘Mumbaiwallahs’ in Anand again highlights how the town has become an attractive site for social networking and investment. The tendency of metropolitans to invest in a rural town rather than in the metropolis seems to confirm to a pattern of investment described elsewhere as a ‘small pond’ strategy (Lin 2014) in which mobility is used to maximise social and economic capital so that migrants become ‘big fish in a small pond’.

The Karachiwallahs’ perspective
After the Partition of British India into the two separate nations, India and Pakistan, many Muslims from India migrated to Pakistan. Insofar as Vohras joined this migration, they arrived in Karachi, a port city in Sindh. Karachi now hosts a Vohra community of approximately 500 households, who have their own community hall and an active community organisation, the Charotar Muslim Anjuman. There is a website of the Charotar Muslim Anjuman and the history of Vohra migration to Karachi is even explained on a ‘Sunni Bohra’ Wikipedia site. If Mumbai is one node of importance in the spatially dispersed Vohra family network, Karachi is another.

In the UK and in the USA, the link between relatives in Pakistan and India is clearly visible. In the UK, it was repeatedly pointed out to me that the Vohra community also included Vohras who had come to the UK via Karachi: I was told so-and-so was from Pakistan, or so-and-so was married to a Vohra from Pakistan. In the Vohra family list by the UK Vohra Association, of the 51 families that indicated their ‘Indian city/village’, 11 indicated that they are derived from Pakistan (6 listed ‘Karachi’, 1 listed ‘Lahore’, and 4 listed ‘Pakistan’, see table 5.2). Also in the USA, a significant group among the Vohras is derived from Karachi. Both in the UK and USA, marriages have occurred between Vohra youth from India and from Karachi, and through these (endogamous) marriages, family ties separated due to Partition have been re-established. The exchange of spouses between Pakistani and Indian families is not a new phenomenon, but seems to have received significant stimulus as a result of the proximity of relatives from both sites in the UK and the USA. The importance of Karachi as a nodal point for the Vohra community was made even more strongly to me when a migrant in the USA (from Gujarat) reading the abstract of my research project noted that I had mentioned all the migration destinations of the Vohra community except Karachi, and made me promise to correct this mistake in the thesis.

25 According to a book with details of members of the Charotar Muslim Anjuman in Karachi, date unknown.
In Anand, Vohras from Karachi are completely invisible. They do not participate in the thriving real estate market, nor do they participate, as far as I’ve seen or heard, in marriage ceremonies and other family events in Anand town. Vohras of Pakistan are only publicly remembered in Anand in some history books, and through a story that circulates about ‘the first Vohra school’ in Anand, the I. J. Kapurwala Commercial Highschool – it is said that the school was funded by rich Vohras from Bombay and had to close when these philanthropists chose to move to Pakistan, cutting off the funds. In the end, I found two families in Anand who had married a daughter to a family in Karachi, but they were initially hesitant to talk to me about their visits to Pakistan. Once they opened up, their accounts showed they had enjoyed their brief visit to their relatives in Karachi, even if ‘there is no better place, no more pleasing place other than India in the world’. Both families told me it was best not to mention their visit to Pakistan to anyone.

Geographically, Karachi is not far from Anand town, less than 1,000 kilometres. However, it is not accessible from Gujarat directly because of a heavily guarded India-Pakistan border. The border crossings that had been used by the two families I met in Anand were Munabao in Rajasthan and Wagah in the Punjab. What the travellers found is that there are social and political barriers related to exchanges with Pakistan due to public and political anxiety. Marriage exchanges and family visits between the two countries are allowed, but visits to Pakistan are distrusted by the Indian state and police. For example, phone calls to Pakistan are not allowed on a mobile phone, and calling from public phone booths can lead to police inquiries about the purpose of the call. This why the two families mentioned above rarely phoned their relatives in Karachi: the police might have suspicions about their intentions. The difficult relations between India and Pakistan have a profound effect on social relations between Vohras in Karachi and Gujarat: ‘The older generation has no problem traveling between Pakistan and India, but the younger generation is scared to be in touch.’

The stringent border controls also have an effect on those living outside South Asia, as was explained to me in the USA. A middle-aged woman from Karachi explained that the Indian government will not grant her family a visa because of her Pakistani nationality (US nationals of Pakistani origin can hold dual nationality). She felt the situation had become increasingly tense and that this was related to the terrorist attacks in Mumbai in 2008, when the attackers came from Pakistan by sea.28

I came to the USA when I was 18 years old. As a child in Karachi, my father used to receive guests from India frequently and he used to throw them big parties. We kept close contact with our relatives in India. This was because my father was the only one in his family who went to Pakistan in 1947, the others stayed in India. My father did well in Karachi, he had a thriving business in the port. He used his wealth to support a lot of people in India, like he helped one of our cousins to start up a business, things like that. When we were children, we used to travel to India frequently. We used to stay in Ahmedabad, Surat, or in Chaklas [a village near Anand]. After moving to the USA, we still travelled to India every now and then. But three years ago when we applied for a visa, we didn't get it anymore. We paid 1200 dollars for our visa application, but we didn't get it and there was no refund. They told us to denounce our nationality but we're not going to do that for a holiday! So we went to Turkey that year and we had a wonderful holiday. There are so many nice countries besides India! But still our relatives call us regularly: ‘When are you coming? When are you coming?’ They keep inviting us. But what can we do?

In summary, Vohra migrants in the UK and the USA produce a view of a transnational Vohra network, scattered across multiple places yet tied together through marriages, in which selected cities function as anchor points: these nodes of significance include Karachi, Mumbai, and Anand, and, perhaps to some extent, Vadodara and Ahmedabad too. There are thus multiple nodal points in the transnational Vohra family network, of which Anand town is an important one. However, the border between India and Pakistan creates a break in this transnational network. As a result, Mumbaiwallas do, but Karachiwallahs do not, participate in transnational place-making in Anand town.
Conclusion

Through an ethnography of networks and places, I have contributed to the ‘placial turn’ in studies of transnational migration (Gielis 2009). The region I have studied can be seen as a ‘zone of awkward engagement’ (Tsing 2005, x–xi). It is a zone of ‘engagement’ because it draws different actors together, connecting villagers and townspeople residing in central Gujarat with people residing elsewhere, and the engagement is ‘awkward’ because each of the actors has their own goals and interests, and there is no overlapping political agenda or commonly shared value as such. Still, through their combined efforts, their collaborations contribute significantly to the making of place. Through real estate investments and through charitable initiatives, a form of claiming and colonising space takes place (Harney 2006, 34–35), which contributes, overall, to the visibility of ‘Muslims’ in the central Gujarat region, maintaining a niche for Muslims in the villages and small towns of central Gujarat and building a new home in Anand town.

Both the continuing presence of Muslims in the villages and towns and the processes of urbanisation and ‘gethoisation’ have been important themes in the discussions with the transnational migrants. How these developments are experienced when migrants travel to central Gujarat has been illustrated through the case studies of the philanthropist Ayub, the maulana Rashad, and the businessman Idris. Ayub’s love for his hometown, which has to be defended and
legitimised vis-à-vis fellow villagers, has turned into a mission to maintain the legitimacy of the Muslim presence and influence in the town and in the nation. In the case of businessman Idris, I have shown how the opposite development is being sponsored by migrants through investment in real estate and by transferring the land from agricultural to non-agricultural, from Patel to Vohra, from Hindu to Muslim. This development is then supported in smaller ways by other migrants who invest in a house or plot or who have helped relatives to make the move through remittances, and has economic and symbolic value for the residents, whose sense of safety and comfort in the ‘Muslim area’ of Anand town. Hafiz Rashad’s distribution of zakat in the villages reveals that the town remains connected to the rural hinterland. For him, Anand has become a safe and comfortable home base where he stays during his visits and from where trusted relatives and friends shape his engagement with the wider region. For these trusted associates, working with Rashad is a way of ‘doing good’ in their natal village/town and in other nearby villages where they support the most destitute among Muslims, sustaining their survival in the region despite having moved to Anand themselves.

The empirical data presented in this chapter indicates that Anand has become an important hub for both the local Vohra community and for the transnational Vohra family. I have come to think of Anand as one of several nodes in a spatially dispersed family network, in addition to Mumbai and Karachi - and perhaps Vadodara and Ahmedabad could be added too. There are thus multiple nodal points in the transnational Vohra family network, although the border between India and Pakistan created a break in this network, keeping Karachi- but not Mumbiawallahs from participating in transnational place-making in Anand town.

In this chapter, I have drawn connections between the experiences of migrants acting as ‘transnational agents of development’ and spatial transformations in the region of origin in relation to localised power dynamics and community politics. The findings disrupt the binary framework between a (primordial or nostalgic) home town and a city abroad projected by migrants derived from dominant castes/groups in their home regions. To understand the case study of Charotar Sunni Vohras, it has been necessary to pay close attention to localised forms of mobility and more fluid attachments to land. My findings show that hometowns can be actively and reflexively ‘made’, even if notions of (lost) ‘roots’ remain relevant. Both processes occur simultaneously: an awareness of (lost or maintained) original home villages and the creation of a new hometown. The newness of Anand as a recently emerged ‘home’ of Charotar Sunni Vohras thus challenges primordialist
assumptions in studies of migration and development and highlights the changing and morphing character of ‘homeland’ affiliations (Falzon 2003; Morawska 2011) by showing how hometowns can be actively ‘made’.
Several conclusions can be drawn from the empirical chapters, and in this final chapter I reflect on these in relation to the theoretical framework introduced in Chapter 1 of the thesis. To understand the case study of Charotar Sunni Vohras in Anand town, I have built on three distinct discussions: one localised in India, about marginalisation and ‘ghettoisation’ of Muslims in Indian cities; one in the anthropology of place, on the region and more broadly on locality; and one taking place in journals about diaspora, migration and development, about the ties transnational migrants maintain with their ‘homeland’. Though different, each of these discussions has generated insights relevant to understanding the case study. I have integrated these insights by building an analytical framework around the notions of mobility and the region, using the notion of ‘pathways’ to explore how local, regional and transnational experiences relate. By following people along their pathways of travel, I have shown that rather than being isolated, the ‘Muslim area’ of Anand town is embedded in wider regional and transnational networks. Multi-sited fieldwork at different ‘scales’ is needed to uncover the social patterns, skills and exchanges that enable these pathways to exist.
In this chapter, I first summarise my methodological approach, then my application of the notion of pathways, and finally the empirical findings in relation to the discussions on Muslims in contemporary India. As the ‘ghettoisation’ of Muslims in Indian cities has been contextualised within the spatial framework of cities and national political developments, I alter the perspective of this scholarship by including the ‘scale’ of the region and of the transnational social field.

Multi-sited and multi-scalar anthropology
In this thesis, I have followed the trend of multi-sited fieldwork in anthropology and conceptualised the research at three interconnected ‘scales’ (local, regional, transnational) as a way of putting different perspectives to work and of thinking through the complexities of a multi-sited ethnography. At the local level, research entailed ‘immersion’ in a neighbourhood in Anand town. From there, connections that mattered to the people in the neighbourhood to locations elsewhere were mapped, and eventually followed up through research in the region of central Gujarat, and abroad, in the UK and, briefly, in the USA.

Many scholars advocate a broadening of the theoretical framework, from the national scale of analysis to a transnational perspective (Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton 1992) or a ‘transnational optic’ (Levitt and Khagram 2007). I have been particularly inspired by anthropological studies in South Asia that have taken a multi-sited ethnographic perspective (Gardner 2001 [1995]; Gardner 2006; Gardner 2008; Ramji 2006; Rutten and Patel 2002; Taylor, Singh, and Booth 2007; Taylor 2013), including the perspectives of the migrants and of local actors, paying attention to the political, social and economic developments in the context of arrival and departure, seeking to know how transnational social networks are being constructed and how these are implicated in transformations in migrant-sending regions in South Asia. What I have been able to contribute, through focusing on a community whose belonging in the region is highly contested and through the multi-scalar approach of the study, is how fluid and mobile such homeland attachments can be.

Previous inspiring examples of multi-sited ethnography have mainly focused on relatively powerful groups within migrant-sending regions. Their informants have tended to be landowning families with some capital, of the dominant caste/community in the home town or village, people who have further enhanced their social position in the home region through migration and remittances. As a result, the studies have given the impression of a power balance in which the migrants have so much agency that they can do what they want in their home region, almost without major structural constraints or limitations. Their focus on relatively dominant groups in migrant-sending regions raises questions. If the dominant
castes have been usually the first in their regions to reap the benefits of transnational migration, what are the experiences of other more marginalised groups in such regions with long-term histories of migration and transnational exchange? Singh (2013, 191–195) suggests that subaltern communities may use transnational resources in their own ways, through collective attempts to 'break hegemonic power structures and inequalities', and to demonstrate a sense of collective achievement. Osella and Osella’s work suggests transnational Muslims from Kerala may direct their energies at charitable and activist activities for the ‘upliftment’ of Muslims in the home region, e.g. through education and attempts to improve morality (Osella and Osella 2009, 214).

All this suggests that while migration and migrant transnationalism has the potential to reinforce hegemonic power relations, it can also play a role in attacking or altering them. However, this raises a number of other questions. Why would anyone facing oppression, marginalisation and even violence in a certain place maintain an interest there after escaping from it to another country? Why would migrants from relatively marginalised groups maintain contact with their home region and invest in it emotionally and financially, despite the ‘homeliness’ of the homeland being very questionable for them? And, if they do so, what hurdles do these relatively marginalised groups face when they attempt to use transnational resources to enhance the position of their families and wider communities in the home region? How is their agency limited by the power dynamics in the home region? In this thesis, I have filled in some of the answers.

In terms of class, I have also described a relatively privileged section of society in a migrant-sending region, an urban middle class and those who succeeded in acquiring foreign visa. Although the families described in this thesis live in the most wealthy housing societies of their neighbourhood, own cars, motorcycles, sometimes land, as Muslims they are marginalised at a political and social level, confronted with (memories of) discrimination, violence, and displacement. Because of the resulting spatial transformations in the region, the case study disrupts the binary framework between a (original) home town and a city abroad projected in multi-sited ethnographies studies which focused on families based in dominant castes/groups in their home town. To understand the case study of Charotar Sunni Vohras, this thesis has paid close attention to localised forms of mobility and more fluid attachments to land in addition to transnational migration. While a local/global perspective would not have been able to grasp this complexity, this multi-scalar ethnography has been able to, because it looks at the actors at the intermediate level of the region/homeland in connection to specific localities both at in India and abroad.
Pathways
In the anthropology of place and region, there has been a shift from a focus on processes of ‘imagining’ (in the anthropology of representations) to attempts to more fully understand the experiential aspects, the practical and performative aspects of locality (within phenomenological approaches). For the case study in this thesis, I have used both approaches, studying the self-articulated community narratives and the practices of travel through which the region is experienced. This reflects a broader trend in anthropology of increasing interest in lived experience, perception, and practice (Desjarlais and Throop 2011, 88). My understanding of the region has drawn particularly on Ingold’s suggestion of understanding the region as it emerges from experience, along pathways of travel, through the practical engagements of people with their surroundings (Ingold 2005 [2000], 229).

Travel is a crucial feature of the more practical aspects of the regional experience. Consequently, drawing on Ingold, I have used the notion of pathways to make sense of the regional identities and experiences of Vohras at home and abroad. The work of integrating places into a region is the work of the mind and the body, which are inseparable when a person moves around attentively from place to place and accesses context-specific knowledge: memories of earlier journeys along the same path, stories, skills learnt and relevant in that specific place. Knowing, Ingold affirms, proceeds along paths of observation: it is cultivated by moving along paths (Ingold 2005 [2000], 229). We know as we go, from place to place. Every place is a position on a path of movement, and the paths together constitute the region as a whole.

Perhaps because Ingold and others influenced by him have been interested in ‘indigenous’ people with strongly developed forms of local knowledge, this discussion in anthropology has so far not made a significant mark on diaspora studies or on studies of migration and development. This thesis has proposed that the notion of pathways is helpful not only in understanding the regional experience of local residents but also in studying the ‘homeland’ from the perspective of transnational migrants. In this thesis I attempted to do this, describing the homeland from the viewpoint of imagining (based on interviews and discussions) and from the viewpoint of practicing, the ‘place-making practices’ through which migrants and local acquaintances engage with a transforming landscape.

Both processes, ‘imagining’ and ‘practicing’ the region, are relevant to the case study. The Vohra residents of Anand town name their community after the region, memorialise ancestry in local villages through the Vohra marriage system, and narrate their community history as deeply embedded in the agricultural region of
Charotar. When asked to explain the regional community history of the Charotar Sunni Vohras, residents referred me to those they considered ‘experts’ on the topic, often elderly men. While these experts told the stories with enthusiasm, I have shown that women and young men (e.g. Sajiya and Javed in Chapter 4) are equally invested in the region, socially and economically. The experiences and knowledge of the region of the younger generation and of women were more easily accessible to the researcher while traveling along with them. Through their everyday practices of rural-urban mobility, through their itineraries, they bind the ‘Muslim area’ of Anand together with other places in the ‘matrix of movement’ Ingold calls a ‘region’ (2005, 219).

Similarly, among Vohras in the UK, both ‘imagining’ and ‘practicing’ are notions relevant to understanding their relation to the ‘homeland’. Vohras in the UK described their ‘homeland’ in the interviews as a site where Muslims are attacked and discriminated against. This gloomy view of Gujarat was contrasted with that of the UK, described as an open society, tolerant of religious minorities. Despite their criticisms of Gujarat, these migrants do travel to the region, investing emotionally and financially in it, for example by spending months on end there in their old age, by sending remittances and donations, or by finding spouses for their children there. This shows that stories and ‘myths’ of the homeland cannot fully capture one’s relation to it. It would be even harder to understand if this relation to the homeland were only studied at the scale of the nation, as is common in studies that describe migrants as having a ‘double’ or ‘binary’ national identity (Biswas 2005; Vertovec 2007). In this thesis, I have shown that the notion of pathways is helpful to understanding how these migrants engage with the region. These engagements are based not (only) on abstract notions or ideologies of a homeland, but on specific kinship networks that connect specific households here and there, specific nodes in a matrix of movement spanning India and in the UK. It is interpersonal intimacy that paves the pathways. Engagements with the homeland are very much linked with the travels and migrations of local acquaintances, on whose pathfinding capacities migrants depend. This explains their ability to shift attention from an ancestral or original home village to a previously insignificant town, Anand, which is actively made into a (new) home in the home region.

1 I have explained, in Chapter 5, that this is the story of the first generation, who have little experience with Islamophobia in British schools and institutions. A different type of research would be needed to explore the views of the later generations in greater depth.
Ghettoisation

Studies of Muslims in Indian cities have highlighted their increasing marginalisation and exclusion, their concerns over safety in response to lethal waves of communal violence, and their increasing residential segregation within those cities. These developments have led scholars to the guiding notion of 'ghettoisation', highlighting processes of segregation within Indian cities (Chaudhury 2007; Gayer and Jaffrelot 2012; Patel 2006a; Jasani 2010; Mahadevia 2007; Sattar 2012; Shaban 2012). The city that has become an almost emblematic case for discussions of ghettoisation in India is Ahmedabad in Gujarat, ‘the most blatant illustration of the relegation of Muslims in Indian cities’ (Gayer and Jaffrelot 2012, 325), and it has been suggested that the isolation of Muslims in Ahmedabad is characteristic of the situation of ‘many other Muslims of Gujarat’ (2012, 324).

While the perspective of ‘ghettoisation’ has been helpful to draw attention to the processes related to the marginalisation of Muslims in Indian cities, questions have been raised about the ‘ghetto mentality’ in the study of Muslims in India, which may homogenise and reify Muslims (Gupta 2015). My own concern is with the methodological urbanism2 and the methodological nationalism embedded in the ghettoisation perspective. This thesis contributes to furthering understanding of Muslims in Indian cities in three ways: first by shifting attention from the larger cities to a town in a rural area, second by showing how regional involvements and rural-urban exchanges can enrich the experience of living in an urban enclave, and third by showing how transnational migrants develop ties with and contribute to shaping such a neighbourhood.

With regard to the first contribution, the shift from the larger cities to a town: the perspective of ‘ghettoisation’ as a tool to study and discuss experiences of exclusion and marginalisation of Muslims in Indian cities has so far been tested mainly in larger and metropolitan cities such as Delhi, Mumbai and Ahmedabad. This city-centred approach has been justified by the sense that the city occupies a central place in the history of Indian Muslims - census records indicate that the majority of Indian Muslims are urban-based3 and historical sources show that Muslims have contributed significantly to the development of Indian cities (Gayer and Jaffrelot 2012, 13-18). However, the towns where many urban residents of India live their lives are lost in these discussions. Scholars have, for a long time, argued that small and medium-sized towns have been central to development processes in

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2 I use the term ‘methodological urbanism’ in analogy with the discussion of ‘methodological nationalism’ (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002; Kalir 2013).

3 In Gujarat, Muslims constitute a minority of 9% of the total population, but the proportion of Muslims in the urban population is significantly higher (14%) while the proportion of Muslims in the rural population is significantly smaller (6%). Census 2001, C-1 Population by religious community, Gujarat (24).
India (Corwin 1977; Dahlberg 1974; Rana and Krishan 1981), and more recently attention has been paid to the significance of towns as nodal points or ‘hubs’ within regional economies and transnational networks (Verstappen and Rutten 2015; Koskimaki and Upadhya 2013). To understand social transformations in urban India, however, urban studies should look ‘beyond the metropolis’ (Scrase et al. 2015, 216). This thesis contributes to addressing this overall ‘metrocentricity’ of urban studies by focusing on a town, Anand, that holds special significance for Muslims in central Gujarat, who consider it a ‘safe place’ in an otherwise riot-prone region.

The ‘Muslim area’ of Anand fits the description of an ‘enclave’ (Wacquant 2008; in Gayer and Jaffrelot 2012, 21) as it houses residents of various social-economic backgrounds, is almost homogeneously composed of Muslims as a result of self-segregation in response to communal violence, and is the result of a residential regrouping of people on the basis of ascribed religious identities as a result of social and political constraints. Residents experience difficulties in gaining access to good schools and colleges and to decent jobs, and social workers and local politicians complain that the state is not providing proper infrastructure. The case of Anand thus suggests that the trend of ‘ghettoisation’ of Indian Muslims, described so far mainly in larger Indian cities is indeed also taking place in a town in a rural region.

If the thesis would have been limited to an urban case study, that would have been the conclusion. However, I have gone two steps further, connecting the ‘Muslim area’ of Anand both to the regional and to the transnational social networks in which it is embedded. The neighbourhood is characterised by strong affective and economic ties with the surrounding region beyond the town, through a wide variety of rural-urban linkages, and this connection is also highlighted in the self-narrated community histories of Vohra residents. Moreover, I have shown that the neighbourhood can be understood as a transnational space in the sense that a section of the residents maintains affective and practical ties with migrants and that migrants take active part in the social life of the neighbourhood. These two further contributions are discussed next.

A ‘Muslim area’ in a regional town
In Anand, many urban residents remain embedded in the rural and peri-urban economy along with their urban-based residency and occupations. It has been described as an example of a town that is intimately connected to the rural hinterland through dense economic and social networks (Patel 2006b, 26), and the data presented in this thesis confirms that regionally dispersed networks encapsulate key relationships for urban residents. At the same time, the content of
these relationships and the meanings attached to them have changed in response to the recent history of violence and segregation. Muslims in Anand town have thus reconfigured a sense of belonging as residents of a fast-growing ‘Muslim area’ in a town with strong rural-urban linkages.

The emergence of a ‘Muslim area’ in Anand town is a response to the riots of 2002 and is better understood with reference to the wider regional context of the emergence of the town as an increasingly important regional centre of education, business and residence. Muslims have moved into Anand to seek safety after the 2002 riots in Gujarat and to achieve social-economic upward mobility by accessing secular and religious education, urban professions and an urban middle class lifestyle. Immigration has been paired with a process of residential segregation in the town in the aftermath of the 2002 riots, which resulted in a ‘partition’ whereby Muslims from different towns and villages and from different caste/community and class backgrounds settled in the north-eastern part of Anand, sharing the space with Christians and poor Hindus, while middle class Hindus settled in the western parts of the urban conglomerate.

In the ‘Muslim area’ of Anand town, Charotar Sunni Vohras have gained prominence as the largest and most visible community among the urban middle class. The town has thus developed both into an important residential centre for Muslims in the region and into a centre of the Vohra community. Rather than experiencing their residential area as an ‘open air prison’ (Shaban 2012, 223), Anand is described as a ‘centre’ of Muslims in central Gujarat and as the ‘headquarters’ of the regionally based Vohra community. A regional community identity is maintained through community narrative, village-based marriage circles, and practical ties to people and places beyond the town. This regional belonging is most strongly articulated by the older generation, who still remember the recent history of Anand town, but is also lived experience for the younger generation for whom the present situation is already normalised.

During travel, stories of exclusion and belonging are expressed, local knowledge and memories are accessed, triggered by the encounter with the landscape. Among the stories told during these trips in the wider region are those connected to the villages, some of which are marked by the recent history of violence against Muslims. In the landscape, specific zones are demarcated as safe and familiar while other zones are omitted, ignored, or treated with caution. Some zones have become defined as ‘Muslim’ or ‘Hindu’ areas, the latter being perceived as potentially unsafe, presenting ‘no investment areas’ but not necessarily ‘no go areas’. Pathways into such places are maintained through dispersed social ties and a skilful mediation of otherness.
Experiences of travel are affected by dynamics of gender and class. For men, economically dispersed activities and property are reasons for everyday travel, for women travel is not as frequent but is still of vital importance due to the patrilocal marriage system, which ensures the dispersal of female kin across different villages and towns. Experiences of travel are also affected by dynamics of class and social status as there is a difference between those with and those without (traditional) capital beyond the town. As I have shown, affirmations of social status are crucial in the life of the residents of the ‘Muslim area’: their sense of self-worth is related to a whole range of lifestyle strategies based on residential choices, educational strategies, and religious outlook. In the context of these status negotiations in the town, the village is both devalued as a remnant of a rural past and reinvigorated with meaning as a source of wealth and power for a privileged group of landowners within the town.

The divisions of status are quite complicated and I have described them through the local idea that there is a class division within the Vohra community, between a group of traditionally wealthy business families (associated with the Chaud marriage circle of the Vohra community), and a traditionally less privileged group, who have achieved wealth and status in town through education and (government) service in white collar jobs (associated with the Arsad marriage circle of the Vohra community). Some among the first group of traditionally wealthy and propertied families maintain ties to villages where they hold on to family-owned property. For them, the cultivation of relations and economic activities in places besides Anand is important as an economic strategy and in maintaining their social status in town. Land can be retained so that relatives in the village can farm and develop it and generate profits, and can be rented out to acquaintances or dependents. It is important to bear in mind that these connections to land are not necessarily to ancestral land in an original home village: land can be bought and sold, as I have shown for Javed’s family (in chapter 4), generating a fluid relation to it through real estate business. For these business families, skilful management of social relations across spatial and community boundaries is indispensable to getting business done. Nevertheless, their attention has shifted to the ‘Muslim area’ in town as a place for safe and comfortable residence, a place for secular and religious education of their children, and a place to expand their economic endeavours and develop additional urban-based occupations. In short, they extend or maintain their power base by accessing education and urban business while still cultivating social relations in other towns and villages. Families who do not have access to such traditional capital in nearby villages have followed a different trajectory, using education, non-agricultural employment and rural-urban migration to experience
a process of economic and social upward mobility. Rural-urban connections are also important to this group, although in different ways.

Overall, when comparing themselves to their relatives in the village, the Vohra families that have established themselves in Anand find themselves privileged: modern, educated, religiously reformed, and internationally connected. They comment on the village as less developed, less forward, less educated, and as unsafe for living. The village is where they locate the past, the town is where they locate the present, while the future of their children in many cases is imagined to be abroad. Here, the village is imagined as a place to be shaken off and left behind. Thus, the village holds ambiguous meanings for the townspeople: on the one hand, it is a source of wealth and power for a privileged group of families within the town, on the other hand, it is devalued as a remnant of a rural past.

This raises questions about how our understanding of Muslims in Indian cities might change if we revisit the earlier case studies of Muslims in the larger cities through the lens of ‘pathways’ based on Ingold’s understanding of the region as a network of ‘coming and going’ (Ingold 2005 [2000], 235) emerging alongside ‘paths of observation’ (Ingold 2005 [2000], 229). Studying the position of these Muslims through a regional lens may allow us to better see the continuing engagements of urban residents with different places beyond their direct neighbourhood, for example, through geographically dispersed kinship ties and business engagements. The purpose of this is not draw attention away from the realities of violence, segregation, marginalisation and exclusion that crucially shape the position of Muslims in India today, but to better understand how Muslims in Indian cities and towns have come to reshape their sense of space and belonging in response to these processes.

A ‘Muslim area’ in a global town
Most discussions about marginalisation and ‘ghettoisation’ of Muslims in Indian cities have taken place at the scale of the city and the nation: they have been localised within the geography of the city and contextualised analytically within political, social and economic developments in India. The lack of systematic attention to the implication of transnational processes and networks in such neighbourhoods is remarkable, and needs correction.

A transnational perspective is needed in the study of Muslims in Indian cities for two reasons. First, India has been embedded in transregional and transnational migration for a long time (Jain 1993; Jain 2007; Kapur 2010; Oonk 2007; Oonk

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4 For descriptions of the educational experiences of Muslims and Dalits, see the work of Jeffrey, Jeffery and Jeffery (e.g. Jeffrey, Jeffery, and Jeffery 2004a; 2004b).
2013; Parekh, Singh and Vertovec 2003) and the profound impact of migration and migrant transnationalism on India’s economic development is unmistakable, evoking discussions and political dilemmas (Lessinger 1992; Walton-Roberts 2004a; Walton-Roberts 2004b; Xavier 2011). Recognising this, Spodek (2013, 12) argued that urban history must attend fully to the global frameworks in which cities function. Second, the literature on ‘Muslim areas’ in Indian cities already suggests that residents are very interested in transnational migration (Thomas 2015, 7) and that transnational migrants sometimes visit or contribute financially to the development of such neighbourhoods (Jasani 2008, 445, 449–450). To my knowledge, these observations have so far not led to studies that systematically analyse transnational migrants’ ideas and practices in connection with these neighbourhoods. In contrast, ethnographies of Indian Muslims living along the coasts of Kerala and Kutch have specifically highlighted the significance of cosmopolitanism, travel, and systems of social exchange in maritime trade and migration across the Indian Ocean (Osella and Osella 2007; Simpson and Kresse 2007, 1–27; Simpson 2006a).

The absence of systematic research on the transnational character of Muslim enclaves and ghettos in Indian cities is also problematic because of the hostile imaginaries about this subject that circulate in popular discourse. Simpson wrote: ‘In India, Muslims are widely thought of as being disloyal to the country and as fostering political allegiances through religious networks with Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. They are said to be isolationist and conspiratorial while seeking political dominance through strategic terrorism and the creation of an electoral majority through high birth rates’ (Simpson 2006b, 335). During my research, I have often been confronted with people for whom this kind of othering of Muslims was taken for granted, people who have described the supposedly dangerous character of Muslims as fact, to such an extent that townspeople of Anand called me brave for simply entering the ‘Muslim area’ of their town. In government rhetoric of the ‘Indian diaspora’ (Bal and Sinha-Kerkhoff 2005), Indian Muslims living abroad are more likely to be portrayed as foreign forces than as overseas Indians.

The least social scientists can do is to cast light on the fact that these assumptions are based on political ideologies rather than empirical data, and to nuance the discussion through research. When a professor at Sardar Patel University said my research among Muslims in Anand was a good idea because it would uncover that that ‘they get loads of money from Pakistan’ and that ‘they are preparing for Pakistan’, I could not argue with that, not at the beginning of my fieldwork period, but I can now, on the basis of my research findings. My research shows that links to Pakistan are almost impossible to maintain in the neighbourhood under study,
precisely because the relation with Pakistan is so politically contentious. Moreover, it is not in Pakistan but in Anand in central Gujarat, India, that local Muslims and their relatives abroad find a sense of home and belonging.

What is absent in the literature on Muslim areas in Indian cities is a methodological effort to follow the migrants to their countries of residence and then back to their home regions to see how they see themselves and their transnational engagements. To do so requires engagement with the large body of scholarship on migration and development, which provides several insights on which I have drawn. This work has pointed to the increasing importance of household remittances, diaspora philanthropy, and transnational investments in migrant-sending regions, in India as elsewhere in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Anthropologists have contributed to the discussion by analysing flows and resource transfers in relation to social and political processes (Taylor, Singh, and Booth 2007; Upadhya and Rutten 2012).

In this thesis, I have explored how identity is negotiated and reformulated by migrants in the UK, during the active and dynamic process of ‘group-making’ (Brubaker 2002). Vohras in the UK have (re)invented themselves as a group in two ways: as a ‘community’ and as a family. The attempts to unite themselves as a community association have resulted in the establishment of a formal association with a board, a bank account and a list of members, but these efforts to ‘get the community together’ have only been successful at specific moments, particularly during the period of 2002, when the community in Gujarat was under attack and there was a sense of urgency. The attempts to maintain or reinvent Vohras as a ‘family’ have been more effective, and this has occurred through the active maintenance of close family ties across national borders, through community endogamy and ensuing family obligations. The Vohra parents I spoke to prefer to marry their children within a specific group of Vohra families and, through these marriage practices, produce a kind of ‘diaspora’ - not a national diaspora but a regionally specific diaspora built on the emotional and social work of reproducing a kinship-based social network.

Through the preference for endogamous marriage practices, a transnational Vohra family network is produced as a group of spatially dispersed interconnected families, all derived from one small area in Gujarat: Charotar. Marriage within the community entails the intertwining of (chain) migration and kin alliances in which care, support in the migration process and (inter)dependency are key to the reproduction of the family. Through this process, migrants reproduce a transnational social field that takes shape within their households in the UK, with reference to relatives in India and with a flow of incoming visitors who temporarily
or permanently take part in the migrant household. These findings are important
to understanding how migrants reformulate identity and reshape social networks,
and partly explain why they maintain a sense of belonging to the home region.
While marriage practices are changing under conditions of migration, they also
produce a transnational social field (Charsley and Shaw 2006).

Next, I have followed the migrants back to the home region to see how they
engage with local residents and with socio-spatial and political developments in
central Gujarat, showing that local actors actively participate in transnational
networks and often are indispensable brokers to make the homeland relations of
migrants possible. I have highlighted in particular that transnational social
processes are not only affecting but are also strongly affected by socio-spatial
transformations, community dynamics and politics in migrant-sending regions.

What emerges in this case study is a transnational Vohra family network that
spans households, connecting specific households in central Gujarat to specific
households in London or Leicester. The pathways between these specific places
along which people travel are produced by durable social ties and by a skilful
management of social relations. It is through close affinitive ties that practical
engagements with the ‘homeland’ take shape: a British maulana distributing zakat
in central Gujarat relies on the regional networks of a cousin in Anand, an
American philanthropist starting a health clinic in his hometown relies on the
friends he went to school with, and an elderly couple investing in real estate in the
home region buy their house in the town where their family is now, not in the
ancestral home village.

If these developments are shaped ‘from the bottom up’ by migrants, they are
also constrained ‘from above’ by government policies and localised power
dynamics. When migrants act as ‘agents of development’ and use their wealth to
engage with social-economic transformations in Gujarat, they feel their
contributions are perceived ‘differently’, as potentially dangerous, because they
are Muslim. They counter the fear of the Muslim other and prevent ‘intrusions’
with an inclusive definition of community, by actively maintaining contacts with
Hindu friends and acquaintances, and/or by operating somewhat ‘under the radar’,
not flaunting their contributions as much as migrants of more socially and
politically dominant groups have done in their home region (Dekkers and Rutten
2011; Taylor, Singh, and Booth 2007; Taylor 2013).

In response to the political and spatial transformations in Gujarat, migrants are
making their home in a previously insignificant town, as a base from which to
undertake activities in other places in the region and elsewhere in India. This town
is not historically fixed in time, not is it an ancestral home town. Anand has only
recently become a centre of the Vohra community, in response to a violent event that led to large-scale displacement. For Vohras in the UK, their sense of belonging is, in a sense, being carved onto the town, and this is an active and reflective process. Their place-making practices are not limited to the town per se, but the town has become an important node in their transnational family network and a place where they feel comfortable among a dense network of acquaintances living within a short (walking) distance of each other. This development is a response to the fact that Anand has become a central town for their relatives and acquaintances in Gujarat: as a result, the town has become a crucial node in the Vohras’ transnational family networks.

Through their investments, business endeavours and charitable projects in the town, migrants have also contributed to the spatial transformations of the town itself. While these spatial interventions constitute neither a ‘political movement’ nor a collective strategy to ‘break hegemonic power structures and inequalities’ (as described by Singh 2013), the material and emotional investments in Anand town do have a very subtle political meaning: they provide local Muslims with resources and moral support to assert their presence in the area, claiming space in the town, thereby contributing to a sense of self-worth.

Transnational place-making
There has been increasing interest in the study of place and place-making in the context of migration and migrant transnationalism, and it is to this discussion on the ‘placial turn’ in studies of transnational migration that I have contributed in this thesis. Gielis (2009, 278-280, building on Appadurai 2002, 35, and Massey 1994, 156) has argued that scholars of transnationalism need to ‘break open’ the places in which migrants are involved: ‘only with an open, global and progressive idea of these migrant places are we able to observe the various crosscutting social networks in which transmigrants are involved’ (Gielis 2009, 278). This is precisely what I have attempted to do in this thesis, to have ‘opened’ the enclave, studying it both in its regional and transnational contexts, thus contributing to a cross-fertilisation of the localised literature on Muslims in Indian cities and the transnational literature on transnational migration and development.

The question all of this raises is whether the rural and transnational connectedness of Anand town is unique, and, if it is not, what that means for studies of other Indian cities. The ‘Muslim areas’ within other cities may also not be as isolated as they are thought to be: they may also be centres of regional communities and/or anchors of transnational networking, and their interconnectedness may contribute to shaping spatial transformations and the
social life and economic strategies of the residents. I therefore end with an invitation to other scholars in this field to explore how neighbourhoods and their wider surroundings and networks are important in the lives of urban residents. This needs a methodological shift in the scale of attention of the research, from the neighbourhood-in-a-city to the neighbourhood-in-a-region and the neighbourhood-in-a-transnational-network while still holding on to a research methodology grounded in a micro-locality of everyday life. Although ethnographic research with multiple scales is methodologically challenging, and might not always be feasible for short-term research projects, this thesis has illustrated how it can be done, through localised field research that implicates the neighbourhood and the pathways that connect the neighbourhood to what lies beyond.
Appendix to Chapter 2

A.2.1. Questions of the household survey in Anand town (Survey A)

- Characteristics of the head of household (name, gender, religious affiliation, educational level and occupation).
- Number of relatives abroad, relation of relatives abroad to head of household, and characteristics of each relative abroad (age, number of years abroad, city of residence, type of visa, finished education and ongoing education, occupation abroad).

In the second round of the survey, the following questions were added. These questions were put to approximately 50% of the households surveyed:

- Number of years residing in Anand.
- Home village of the head of household (vatan), and the home village of the wife of the head of household (pir).
- Is the house your own property, or are you living on rent? In which other places except Anand do you own property?
A.2.2. Questions of the survey in Australia, among Gujarati Muslims with links to Anand/Charotar (Survey B)

- Characteristics of the informant (name, age, educational, home town, religious affiliation, gender).
- Position in Australia (visa/passport status, duration of stay, occupation, and ongoing education).
- Links with people in Anand/Charotar
  - Social: frequency of communication with people in the region and with other migrants from the region.
  - Financial: frequency, purpose and volume of financial transactions, zakat, investments, financial support given and taken.

A.2.3. Questions of the survey in the UK, among Gujarati Muslims with links to Anand/Charotar (Survey C)

These questions were posed in advance of the semi-structured interviews (see below).

- Characteristics of the informants and his/her family (name, gender, atak, utara, religious affiliation, education, occupation, locational family background)
- Position of the informants in the UK (migration history of the family, visa/passport status, duration of stay)
- Links with people in Anand/Charotar:
  - Social: frequency of communication with people in the region and with other migrants from the region, transnational family arrangements, marriages.
  - Financial: frequency, purpose and volume of financial transactions, zakat, investments, financial support given and taken.
A.2.4. Questions posed as part of the semi-structured open-ended interviews in the UK

After a brief round of survey questions (see above), one or several of the following themes were selected for further conversation: transnational marriages, transnational business, transnational charity, and/or transnational involvement in associations.

- **Transnational marriages:** How do you/will you strategise the marriage of your children? How was your own marriage made? E.g. love or arranged, in- or outside UK, in- or outside Gujarat, in- or outside Vohra community, in- or outside *utara* (marriage circle)? How does location/gender play a role in these choices, e.g. what about *patrilocality*?

- **Transnational business:** What do these activities entail, how did you get into it, what does it mean to you and others around you?

- **Transnational charity:** What have you done with *zakat* this year and what have you done previously? How do you decide this in the family? How does location (India/UK) play a role in your choices? If other forms of charity and/or remittances: same questions.

- **Transnational associations:** If involved in associations in central Gujarat, what do these activities entail, how did you get into it, what does it mean to you and to others around you, what hurdles have you experienced and what motivates you to keep going?

If there was time, the interview was concluded with a discussion through the introduction of provocative statements. Statements were based on information or opinions gathered in Gujarat, and I read them out with the explanation that I wanted to hear the views of the people in the UK about these statements: yes/no/doubt, please explain.

- On the ‘Vohra’ community identity, for example: ‘there is unity in the Vohra community’, ‘in my family we marry only into Charotar Sunni Vohra Samaj’ or ‘the Chaud (14) *utara* is higher than the Arsad (68) *utara*’.

- On being ‘Muslim’ in the UK and in Gujarat, for example: ‘the position of Muslims is better in London as compared to Gujarat’ or ‘I came to the UK because of Modi’.
Appendix to Chapter 3

### Table A.3.1. Immigration, Anand district

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Last residence elsewhere in India</th>
<th>Persons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Within Anand district</td>
<td>747,928</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From other districts of Gujarat state</td>
<td>532,735</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From other states in India (beyond Gujarat state)</td>
<td>190,395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From other states in India (beyond Gujarat state)</td>
<td>24,798</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last residence outside India</td>
<td>1,328</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of India 2001, Table D.302, State 24 (Gujarat), District 15 (Anand)

### Table A.3.2. Immigration, Anand district (last residence elsewhere in India): migrants classified by place of last residence (rural/urban), sex and duration of residence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Last residence</th>
<th>Place of enumeration</th>
<th>Total migrants</th>
<th>Duration of residence in place of enumeration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Persons</td>
<td>Males</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>747,928</td>
<td>220,869</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>540,622</td>
<td>116,878</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>429,974</td>
<td>74,314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>110,648</td>
<td>42,564</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>120,066</td>
<td>49,777</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>38,864</td>
<td>13,711</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>81,202</td>
<td>36,066</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census 2001, D2, State 24 (Gujarat), District 15 (Anand)
### Table A.3.3 Population by religious community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Total population</th>
<th>Hindu</th>
<th>Muslim</th>
<th>Christian</th>
<th>Sikh</th>
<th>Buddhist</th>
<th>Jain</th>
<th>Other religions and persuasions</th>
<th>Religion not stated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gujarat</td>
<td>50,671,017</td>
<td>45,143,074</td>
<td>4,592,854</td>
<td>284,092</td>
<td>65,587</td>
<td>17,829</td>
<td>525,305</td>
<td>28,698</td>
<td>33,578</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anand (district, total)</td>
<td>1,856,872</td>
<td>1,616,127</td>
<td>199,263</td>
<td>29,461</td>
<td>1,004</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>10,151</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>725</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anand (district, rural)</td>
<td>1,348,901</td>
<td>1,228,924</td>
<td>102,688</td>
<td>14,311</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2,208</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>574</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anand (district, urban)</td>
<td>507,971</td>
<td>387,203</td>
<td>96,575</td>
<td>15,150</td>
<td>829</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>7,943</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anand - urban conglomerate</td>
<td>156,050</td>
<td>118,355</td>
<td>25,099</td>
<td>9,963</td>
<td>579</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1,972</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vallabh Vidyanagar</td>
<td>29,378</td>
<td>28,026</td>
<td>628</td>
<td>346</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census 2001, Table C0101, State 24 (Gujarat)

### Table A.3.1. Immigration, Anand district

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vohra/Vahora</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Muslims (Sheikh, Khan, Diwan, Pathan, Memon, Momin, Malek, Saiyed)</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Household survey Anand, 2011-12. This table is based on the entire dataset but only the households where the surname was recorded are included.
Table A.3.5. Occupations of heads of household where the surname ‘Vahora/Vohra’ was recorded

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupations</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White collar/government service</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricians</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driver</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclear/other</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Vohra households</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Household survey, 2011-12. This table is based on the entire dataset but only the Vohra households are included.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupations</th>
<th>House dealer</th>
<th>Summary of occupations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>Job/service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cycle store</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Foreman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grocery shop</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Painter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std-pco (phone booth)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Auto garage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vehicle trader</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Labour work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothes vendor</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Driver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetables vendor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Tailor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruit vendor</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Watch repairing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Doctor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salesman</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Men between 25–50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Charotar Sunni Vahora Makeriya Samaj 2006, page 1-26. Makeriya is a sub-community of the Vohra community.

Table A.3.7. Occupation of Makeriya women in Anand town (2006) in the age group 25–50

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupations</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gharkam (house-work)</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women between 25–50</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

azan - call for prayer
bapu - saint
bapuwallah - follower of a bapu
bajias - snacks
chapattis - unleavened bread
Charotar - region in Gujarat
crore - ten million, 10,000,000
Dalit - the ‘oppressed’, the lowest groups in India’s caste hierarchy, accorded such
   a low status that they fall outside the caste system
dargah - shrine
Eid - Islamic event
endogamy - marriage within a group
hafiz - a term used for people who have completely memorised the Quran
haj - pilgrimage to Mecca (pronounced Makka)
Hindutva - term used to denote the ideology of Hindu nationalism
hypergamy - marriage system in which a lower-status female is married to a higher-status male
**hyperlinks** - a file on a computer that gives access to another file when clicked on

**lakh** - hundred thousand, 100,000

**madrassa** - religious school/institute

**majid** - mosque

**maulana** – religious teacher

**maulvi** - title given to religious scholars

**Memon** - surname, name of a Muslim community in Gujarat

**Moharam** - Islamic event

**pan** - a preparation of betel leaf, areca nut and sometimes tobacco, chewed for its stimulant effects

**pir** - paternal home (of a married woman)

**Pravasi Bharatiya Divas** - a celebratory event held on 7–9 January each year in an Indian city to mark the contribution of the overseas Indian community to the development of India, sponsored by (amongst others) the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs.

**samaj** - community

**scooty** - light motorised two-wheeler

**Sunni** - an umbrella category in Islam, usually the opposite of ‘Shiah’ Islam but in Anand more likely to be presented as part of a different opposition, between ‘Sunnis’ (or bapuwallahs) and ‘Tablighi’ (the Tablighi Jamaat).

**Tablighi Jamaat** - Islamic reform movement

**Vohra/Vogra/Bohra** – surname, name of a Muslim community in Gujarat

**vatan** - home, place of origin, motherland (of a man)

**zakat** - a form of obligatory alms-giving in Islam, based on income and the value of one’s possessions
Mobility and the region: a multi-scalar ethnography of the Vohra Gujarati community, in India and abroad

This thesis is a case study of the Charotar Sunni Vohra community, a regional community based in the Charotar region in central Gujarat, India. Based on ten months of research in Gujarat and two months amongst migrants from the region in the UK, with additional research in the USA, it argues that trajectories of mobility are key to the regional experience, and contributes to three discussions in the social sciences: on ‘ghettoisation’, the region, and migrant transnationalism.

The first discussion, about ‘ghettoisation’, arises from Muslims in India having been politically, socially, economically, and spatially marginalised. This has led to academic research on the ‘ghettoisation’ of Indian cities, a process by which cities become divided into ‘Hindu’ and ‘Muslim’ areas so that Muslims experience increasing isolation and estrangement from the rest of the city. This thesis contributes to this discussion by shifting attention from the larger cities to a town...
in a rural area, where spatial shifts are also emerging in response to large-scale violence against Muslims in 2002 in Gujarat and the subsequent displacements and residential segregation. To address the methodological limitations of much scholarship on ghettoisation, which generates a rather isolated view of Muslims in Indian cities, this thesis has taken, instead, a regional approach, positioning the urban neighbourhood within wider networks of mobility and exchange in the Charotar region. This approach is particularly suited to this case study of Charotar Sunni Vohras, many of whom shifted residence to a ‘Muslim area’ of Anand town after 2002, but who also strongly identify as a regional community through narratives of regional ancestry and continued rural-urban exchanges. I argue that rural-urban connections and regional networks provide pathways out of the enclave and shape the urban experience.

The ‘ghettoisation’ perspective is also limited in that it has paid little attention to the involvement of transnational actors with the spatial shifts associated with ‘ghettoisation’, thus unwittingly supporting a view in which Muslims are treated as a separate subject and excluded from wider discussions of the ‘Indian diaspora’. Through its case study of Vohras in the UK and USA, this thesis shows that overseas Indian Muslims also nurture intimate connections with people and places in India, and that some act as ‘agents of development’ in their region of origin. This process is clearly visible in the ‘Muslim area’ of Anand town.

Second, in terms of the region: this thesis draws significantly on anthropological discussions on place and the region to study a regional community in relation to the region/homeland. The field research was based in the pathways of travel that connect the neighbourhood to what lies beyond, drawing on a notion of the region as narrated and as emerging along pathways of travel, and on an understanding of movement and exchange as ‘place-making practices’. Equal attention was paid to the regional orientation of urban residents and of transnational migrants visiting the town. The resulting contribution of this thesis is that it positions the anthropology of the region within a transnational framework. Studying regions/homelands as emerging along local and transnational pathways is shown to be useful in the study of migrant-sending regions in South Asia, and also of towns, which have been described as key nodal points within regional networks but should be understood as hubs in regional and transnational networks – as ‘global towns’.

The third contribution is to the ‘placial turn’ in studies of transnational migration and to the broader project of furthering academic understanding of the ‘stretching’ of social life across space. While Vohras find a sense of home and belonging in Charotar, their putative region of origin, their orientation cannot be
explained by looking only at how they ‘imagine’ the region from afar. Being fully aware of the discrimination and marginalisation of Muslims in India, their ideas of the ‘homeland’ do not conform to the ideas of nostalgia, idealisation and the dreams of return that have been described in earlier studies of diaspora homelands. Instead, the country of arrival is idealised in their narratives, as much more hospitable to religious minorities than India has been. To understand why and how Vohras then continue engage with the ‘homeland’, this thesis looks at their place-making practices, because it is through intimate kinship ties, visits, remittances, and investments that their engagements with the region take shape. These engagements are increasingly located in Anand as an emerging regional centre of the Vohra community, even when it is not the migrants’ town of origin, showing that Vohra homeland engagements are adapting to the spatial shifts in the region and rely on the localised pathways of travel of their personal relations in Gujarat.

In summary, by following people along their pathways of travel, in this thesis, I show that rather than being isolated, the ‘Muslim area’ of Anand town is embedded in wider regional and transnational networks. Further multi-sited fieldwork at different ‘scales’ can help uncover the orientations, practices, and social networks that enable these pathways to exist.
Mobiliteit en de regio: een ruimtelijk gelaagde etnografie van de Vohra Gujarati gemeenschap, in India en in het buitenland

Dit proefschrift gaat over de Vohra gemeenschap, een moslimgemeenschap in Gujarat, India, die zichzelf beschouwt als een regionale gemeenschap met de regio ‘Charotar’ in centraal Gujarat als thuisregio. Deze cultivering van regionale identiteit vindt plaats in de context van een recente geschiedenis van geweld tegen moslims in deze regio en een bredere context van marginalisatie van de positie van moslims in de Indiase samenleving, bijvoorbeeld op de arbeidsmarkt, in het onderwijs en in de politiek. Dit proefschrift beschrijft hoe de regionale identiteit van de Vohra gemeenschap zich vormt op verschillende niveaus: lokaal, vanuit de bewoners van de stad Anand die verbonden zijn met de omliggende regio en transnationale, vanuit migranten uit deze regio in het buitenland die in contact staan met de regio. Het proefschrift is gebaseerd op mobiel antropologisch veldwerk uitgevoerd op verschillende locaties: tien maanden in Gujarat, twee maanden in Engeland, en korte veldtrips naar andere locaties.

De onderzoeksvraag van dit proefschrift luidt:
*Hoe cultiveren mensen die zichzelf als ‘Vohras’ beschouwen, in Gujarat en in Engeland, een gevoel van thuishoren in de Charotar regio ondanks herinneringen aan geweld en ervaringen van marginalisatie en uitsluiting?*

**Hoofdstuk 1** (het analytisch kader) positioneert de onderzoeksvraag in sociaal-wetenschappelijke debatten over de regio en het thuisland. Het schetst de contouren van een antropologisch perspectief op de regio; de regio gezien vanuit de onderzoeksparticipanten. Door het optekenen van verhalen en alledaagse praktijken kan de regio, zoals ervaren door de inwoners, in beeld worden gebracht. Dit antropologisch perspectief op de regio wordt geplaatst binnen een transnationale denkkader, waardoor zowel de lokale regio als het thuisland van transnationale migranten kunnen worden betrokken in de analyse. Door het onderzoek te focussen op een provinciale stad, een centrum van regionale en transnationale mobiliteit, wordt de samenhang tussen deze twee verschillende perspectieven inzichtelijk.

**Hoofdstuk 2** (methodologie) laat zien hoe deze studie een ‘multi-scalar’ perspectief toepast. Dit is een ruimtelijk gelaagd perspectief, waarin de Vohra gemeenschap op drie niveaus wordt geanalyseerd: Vohras als een lokale gemeenschap in de ‘moslimwijk’ in Anand, Vohras als een regionale gemeenschap in ‘Charotar’, en Vohras als een transnationaal familie netwerk. Het hoofdstuk gaat ook in op de uitdagingen van het doen van mobiel en ‘multi-scalar’ onderzoek, en op de wijze waarop andere mensen, waaronder onderzoeksassistenten en informanten, mede vormgaven aan het veld.
Hoofdstuk 3 (over Vohras in Anand) beschrijft hoe de provinciestad Anand een regionaal centrum is geworden, en hoe Vohras Anand zijn gaan beschouwen als een centrum van hun regionale gemeenschap. De groei van de ‘moslimwijk’ in Anand is gedeeltelijk veroorzaakt door de verhuizingen van moslims na het anti-moslim geweld van 2002, maar moet ook worden begrepen in het kader van bredere ontwikkelingen in de regio, zoals de opkomst van Anand als een centrum van onderwijs en overheid en als een aantrekkelijke woonplaats voor de rurale middenklasse. Dit hoofdstuk laat zien dat processen van migratie, segregatie en gettovorming, waarover recentelijk veel is geschreven binnen de context van grotere Indiase steden, ook hebben plaatsgevonden in Anand, een provinciestad in een ruraal gebied. Toch zijn de sociale levens van mensen in Anand niet helemaal gescheiden geraakt.

Hoofdstuk 4 (over Vohras als een regionale gemeenschap) laat zien hoe Vohras in Anand hun regionale identiteit vormgeven door middel van verhalen, huwelijkspraktijken en sociale en economische uitwisseling met de omliggende dorpen. Het hoofdstuk beschrijft hoe ruraal-urbane netwerken een cruciaal onderdeel uitmaken van het leven in de ‘moslimwijk’ en toont de meerwaarde van een regionaal perspectief in studies naar gettovorming.

Hoofdstuk 5 (over het thuisland, gezien vanuit het buitenland) beschrijft de migratietrajecten van Vohras naar verschillende delen van de wereld en zoemt dan in op de Vohras in Engeland. Hoewel de ‘Vohra’ identiteit slechts een van de vele manieren is waarop deze groep zich identificeert, speelt het ‘Vohra’ zijn wel degelijk een rol in de manier waarop de gemeenschap zich formeel en informeel organiseert. Het hoofdstuk laat ook zien welke rol het thuisland vervult voor Vohras in Engeland: opvallend is dat de migranten zeer kritisch zijn over de positie van moslims in India maar toch een verbondenheid voelen met de thuisregio. De bevindingen worden vergeleken met de situatie van Vohras in de Verenigde Staten.

Hoofdstuk 6 (over transnationale praktijken) laat zien hoe transnationale migranten participeren in de ‘ontwikkeling’ van de thuisregio. Het hoofdstuk laat enerzijds zien hoe migranten pogen hun verbondenheid met de dorpen van herkomst in stand te houden, en anderzijds hoe de aandacht van migranten verschuift naar Anand als opkomend centrum van de Vohra gemeenschap. Op deze manier illustreert het hoofdstuk hoe migranten hun thuisland heruitvinden onder invloed van ontwikkelingen in de regio.
Het onderzoek draagt bij aan theorievorming over de regio door de notie van ‘place-making’ binnen een ruimtelijk gelaagd (multi-scalar) denkkader toe te passen. Het draagt ook bij aan de ‘placial turn’ in discussies over transnationalisme, door de relatie met het ‘thuisland’ niet alleen te bestuderen via interviews met migranten in hun woonkamers maar juist ook door met hen mee te reizen in de regio zelf en hun praktijken ter plekke in kaart te brengen. Meer specifiek draagt het onderzoek bij aan recente discussies in India over de positie van moslims, en over de zogenaamde ‘gettovorming’ in Indiase steden. Het proefschrift toont aan dat ook in een ruraal gebied processen van segregatie plaatsvinden, maar vestigt tegelijkertijd de aandacht op de beperkingen van het ‘gettovorming’ perspectief, dat veel nadruk legt op de isolatie van moslims maar daarbij alleen kijkt naar de contacten tussen de buurtbewoners en de rest van de stad, veelal zonder hun regionale en transnationale netwerken in de analyse te betrekken.


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