# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ................................................................................... 13

PRELIMINARY REMARKS ................................................................................ 15

1 INTRODUCTION ........................................................................................ 17

PART I – SITUATING THE RESEARCH ........................................................... 23

2 THEORETICAL DEPARTURES ................................................................ 25

2.1 The spatiality of livelihoods ................................................................. 25
  2.1.1 Arriving at an understanding of (public) space .......................... 26
  2.1.2 Public space and livelihoods ....................................................... 31

2.2 Contested space and the negotiations of space ...................................... 34
  2.2.1 The spatialities of power ................................................................. 34
  2.2.2 Institutions governing access to public space ........................... 39
  2.2.3 Agency in negotiating access to public space ......................... 43
  2.2.4 Risk and uncertainty in negotiation processes ....................... 45
  2.2.5 Subsuming the characteristics of negotiations of space .......... 46

2.3 Framing the notion of urban informality in the negotiations of
  (public) space ............................................................................................... 47
  2.3.1 From a dualistic concept to a hybrid understanding .................. 48
  2.3.2 Beyond poverty: from the ‘quiet encroachment of the ordinary’
  to informalisation of the state and ‘elite informality’ .............. 49
  2.3.3 Informality as a mode of the production of space .............. 53

2.4 Spatial justice: Access to public space and the right to the city .......... 55

3 RESEARCH FRAMEWORK ...................................................................... 61

3.1 Research objectives .................................................................................. 61

3.2 Research questions ................................................................................... 62

3.3 Research methodology ............................................................................. 64

4 METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES .................................................................. 67

4.1 Narrowing down: the multi-layered research process ....................... 67
  4.1.1 Selecting the research sites .............................................................. 67
  4.1.2 Investigating the research questions ‘on the ground’ .............. 70

4.2 Fieldwork methods ................................................................................... 74
  4.2.1 Observation of public spaces ....................................................... 75
### Table of contents

4.2.2 Participant observation ................................................................. 76  
4.2.3 Solicited photography ...................................................................... 79  
4.2.4 Qualitative interviews ................................................................... 81  
4.2.5 Challenges and limitations .............................................................. 88  
4.3 Analysis of empirical data .................................................................. 90  
4.4 Reflections on research ethics and positionality ..................................... 92  
4.4.1 Research ethics .............................................................................. 92  
4.4.2 Positionality .................................................................................. 94  
4.4.3 Synopsis of reflections on research ethics and positionality .......... 101  
5 SETTING THE CONTEXT ...................................................................... 103  
5.1 Bangladesh – political and socio-cultural legacy .................................. 103  
5.1.1 Political system and effects on local governance .............................. 103  
5.1.2 Islam in politics and culture ............................................................ 106  
5.1.3 Female positions in gender relations ............................................ 108  
5.1.4 Traditional institutions and power structures .................................. 111  
5.2 Dhaka – scarcity of space and differentiated citizenship ....................... 113  
5.2.1 Urbanisation and the urban poor’s struggle for space ...................... 113  
5.2.2 ‘Informal settlements’ and notions of citizenship ........................... 116  
5.2.3 A critique of planners’ perceptions of the city ................................. 118  
5.2.4 City representations: hopeless, fragmented, smooth or ordinary?.. 119  
5.3 Manikpara – a diverse and highly dynamic urban quarter .................... 121  
5.3.1 Development and living conditions ................................................. 121  
5.3.2 Public spaces ................................................................................ 126  
5.3.3 Economic livelihood activities ....................................................... 127  
5.4 Nasimgaon – a vivid yet partly ‘invisible’ urban neighbourhood ............. 128  
5.4.1 Development and living conditions ............................................... 129  
5.4.2 Public space .................................................................................. 132  
5.4.3 Economic livelihood activities ....................................................... 133  

PART II – THE SPATIALITY OF LIVELIHOODS ........................................... 135  
6 USING PUBLIC SPACE IN EVERYDAY AND EXTRA-EVERYDAY LIFE .......................................................................................... 137  
6.1 Everyday life spatial practices .............................................................. 137  
6.1.1 Economic activities ....................................................................... 138  
6.1.2 Free and leisure time activities in public spaces .............................. 145  
6.1.3 Reproductive activities ................................................................... 151  
6.1.4 Religious and spiritual activities in everyday life ............................ 153  
6.1.5 Night time activities ...................................................................... 158  
6.2 Extra-everyday life spatial practices ................................................... 159  
6.2.1 Religious holidays and functions ................................................... 160  
6.2.2 Bengali cultural celebrations ......................................................... 163  
6.2.3 Political activities and Bangladesh national celebrations .......... 166
6.2.4 Educational activities ................................................................. 168
6.3 Impacts of the quality of public spaces .......................................... 169
6.4 A rich diversity of spatial practices in everyday and extra-everyday life .. 172

7 WHICH PUBLIC SPACE? THE PRODUCTION AND 
REPRODUCTION OF SPATIAL PRACTICES ................................. 175

7.1 Gendered spatial practices and mobility patterns ............................. 175
  7.1.1 Female employment, spatial practices and gender norms .......... 176
  7.1.2 Female mobility patterns and determining gender norms ........... 180
  7.1.3 Male spatial practices and mobility patterns ............................ 186
7.2 Nuances of ‘publicness’ ................................................................. 187
  7.2.1 Urban fabric, recognition and nuances of ‘publicness’ ............... 187
  7.2.2 Identities, citizenship and perceptions of the city ..................... 190
  7.2.3 Men’s mobility patterns reproducing the familiar and strange .... 197
  7.2.4 Women’s mobility patterns, clothing style and hierarchies of 
                     ‘publicness’ .................................................................... 200
  7.2.5 Multiple hierarchies of publicness ........................................... 206
7.3 Shifting borders of familiar and strange ........................................ 207
7.4 A multiplicity of factors producing and re-producing spatial practices ... 213

CONCLUSION: THE SPATIALITY OF LIVELIHOODS ......................... 215

PART III – THE NEGOTIATIONS OF ACCESS TO PUBLIC SPACE ............. 219

8 NARRATIVES OF THE NEGOTIATIONS OF PUBLIC SPACE ............ 221

8.1 The embankment slopes in Manikpara ........................................... 221
  8.1.1 The statutory ghat leasehold and sequence of arrangements ...... 221
  8.1.2 The daily operation of the ghats and embankment slopes ........... 223
  8.1.3 Tariq’s garden and the temporary mosque ............................... 225
8.2 Khalabazar in Naisingaon ............................................................. 227
8.3 Naisingaon Eid Gah Math .............................................................. 232
  8.3.1 Conflicts, improvements and plans for the Eid Gah Math in 2009 232
  8.3.2 The conflict about rickshaw garages and school construction ....... 234
  8.3.3 Claiming space on the Eid Gah Math in 2010 ............................ 236

9 EXPLORING THE ELEMENTS OF THE NEGOTIATIONS OF 
ACCESS TO PUBLIC SPACE .............................................................. 239

9.1 Actors, claims and power sources in negotiation processes ............. 239
  9.1.1 Differentiating the actors in negotiation processes .................. 239
  9.1.2 Aims and motivations in making spatial claims ...................... 241
  9.1.3 The multiplicity of power sources for negotiations ................. 246
9.2 Strategies to negotiate and contest spatial claims .......................... 265
  9.2.1 Preemptive strategies to secure spatial claims ......................... 265
Table of contents

9.2.2  Reactive strategies to contestations of spatial claims .......... 286
9.2.3  Offensive strategies to contest others’ spatial claims .......... 299
9.2.4  Resistance strategies ................................................. 307
9.3  Legitimation of actors’ spatial claims .................................... 309
9.4  Results of the negotiations of access to space ...................... 316
  9.4.1  Results for the condition of public space in the urban fabric 316
  9.4.2  Results for access arrangements regarding the space-based 
        livelihoods of the ordinary .............................................. 320
  9.4.3  Results for elite groups .............................................. 323
9.5  Conceptualisations of (public) space .................................... 323

CONCLUSION: THE NEGOTIATIONS OF ACCESS TO PUBLIC SPACE .. 329

PART IV – RECONNECTING THE RESEARCH TO THE THEORY 
DEBATE AND URBAN PLANNING .................................................. 333

10  FRAMING THE CONCEPT OF URBAN INFORMALITY IN THE 
NEGOTIATIONS OF PUBLIC SPACE ............................................. 335
  10.1  Urban informality as a mode of the production of space .......... 335
  10.2  Negotiated space and urban informality .............................. 336
  10.3  The usefulness of the concept of urban informality ................ 340

11  HOW TO PRODUCE ‘SPATIAL JUSTICE’? UNJUST SPATIALITIES 
AND ENTRY POINTS FOR URBAN PLANNING ............................ 341
  11.1  Spatialities of (in)justice: exclusion and inclusion ................ 341
  11.2  Entry points for urban planning ....................................... 344

12  CONCLUSION OF THE RESEARCH .......................................... 351

GLOSSARY OF BENGALI TERMS .................................................... 357

REFERENCES ................................................................. 367

APPENDIX ................................................................................. 381

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1:  Structure of the thesis ...................................................... 21
Figure 2:  The dimensions of the production of space ....................... 27
Figure 3:  The research process .................................................... 66
Figure 4:  Layers of the research process ....................................... 67
Table of contents

Figure 5: Overview of fieldwork methods in relation to the four research topics .................. 72
Figure 6: The fieldwork schedule of the researcher and field assistants................................. 75
Figure 7: Process of solicited photography........................................................................... 79
Figure 8: Party and party sub-organisations on different (spatial) levels in Dhaka................. 105
Figure 9: Dhaka megacity administrative boundaries.......................................................... 114
Figure 10: Example of transformations of a housing compound ......................................... 130
Figure 11: Organisation of a rural housing compound ......................................................... 191
Figure 12: Mobility pattern of Hortem, employee of a plastic sorting shop in Manikpara..... 198
Figure 13: Mobility pattern of Khalil, banana vendor in Narsingaon .................................. 199
Figure 14: Mobility pattern of Fahima, employee of a plastic sorting shop in Manikpara..... 202
Figure 15: Mobility pattern of Rohima, tea stall operator and fruit vendor in Nasingaon..... 204
Figure 16: Nuances of publicness in Manikpara and Nasingaon ........................................... 207
Figure 17: The developments at Dokkin Ghat ................................................................. 226
Figure 18: Changes at Khalabazar between 2009 and May 2010 ......................................... 228
Figure 19: Plans to fence Naisingaon Math and implementation ......................................... 233
Figure 20: The conflict about the rickshaw garages .............................................................. 236
Figure 21: Taslima’s pitha stall ......................................................................................... 238
Figure 22: Overview of actors’ sources of power................................................................. 246
Figure 23: Venn diagram of Rokib, 12.04.2010 .................................................................. 260
Figure 24: Venn diagram of the lease operator Foyez, 06.04.2010 ....................................... 268
Figure 25: Venn diagram of Shahin, 21.04.2010 ................................................................. 292
Figure 26: Overview of actors’ legitimation ....................................................................... 309
Figure 27: Decreasing public space at Khalabazar ............................................................... 317
Figure 28: Negotiated space and urban informality .............................................................. 337

Figure A-1: Urban development and ‘slums’ in Dhaka Metropolitan Area ............................... 381
Figure A-2: Female clothing styles ......................................................................................... 393
Figure A-3: Organisational set-up in a sub-area of Nasingaon ............................................... 396

LIST OF PHOTOS

Unless otherwise quoted, all the photographs have been taken by me or by my field assistants, whom I instructed to do so.

Photo A-1: Panorama of Manikpara .................................................................................. 382
Photo A-2: The embankment slopes in Manikpara ............................................................. 382
Photo A-3: Khalabazar in February 2008 .......................................................................... 383
Photo A-4: Khalabazar in March 2010 ............................................................................. 383
| Photo A-5: | Typical courtyard and corridor in Nasimgaon | 383 |
| Photo A-6: | Typical courtyard and corridor in Nasimgaon | 383 |
| Photo A-7: | Beggars selling rice at Khalabazar | 384 |
| Photo A-8: | Canvasser in Nasimgaon | 384 |
| Photo A-9: | Semi-permanent vending unit | 384 |
| Photo A-10: | Permanent vending unit | 384 |
| Photo A-11: | Stable vending unit, Manikpara | 384 |
| Photo A-12: | Stable vending unit, Nasimgaon | 384 |
| Photo A-13: | Plastic storage and sorting in public space, Manikpara | 385 |
| Photo A-14: | Plastic sorting on Fridays, Manikpara | 385 |
| Photo A-15: | Embankment slopes beginning of August 2009 | 385 |
| Photo A-16: | Embankment slopes end of August 2009 | 385 |
| Photo A-17: | Production and storage of firewood on Nasimgaon Math | 386 |
| Photo A-18: | Parking and repairing of rickshaws on Nasimgaon Math | 386 |
| Photo A-19: | The Buriganga River | 386 |
| Photo A-20: | Lake east of Nasimgaon | 386 |
| Photo A-21: | Bird cages, Bagan | 387 |
| Photo A-22: | Open space in Nasimgaon | 387 |
| Photo A-23: | Women’s cinema at a private room | 387 |
| Photo A-24: | Men’s cinema at a tea stall | 387 |
| Photo A-25: | Cricket game in Manikpara | 388 |
| Photo A-26: | Children playing kites in Nasimgaon | 388 |
| Photo A-27: | Nagordola on the Math | 388 |
| Photo A-28: | Men gathering around a karom board | 388 |
| Photo A-29: | Selling of mangos along the road | 389 |
| Photo A-30: | Open Market Sale of rice | 389 |
| Photo A-31: | Bazar area in Nasimgaon during Ramadan 2009 | 389 |
| Photo A-32: | Tea stalls along Embankment Road during Ramadan 2009 | 389 |
| Photo A-33: | Temporary shop selling Eid greeting cards in Nasimgaon | 390 |
| Photo A-34: | Shop extensions selling iftar items | 390 |
| Photo A-35: | Eid prayers on the Math during Eid-ul-Adha | 390 |
| Photo A-36: | Orosch at Jahangir’s place on the embankment slopes | 391 |
| Photo A-37: | Mussolmani on open space | 391 |
| Photo A-38: | Pohela Boishakh celebration in Manikpara Bagan | 391 |
| Photo A-39: | Crowd at mobile vendors’ stalls on Pohela Boishakh on Nasimgaon Math | 391 |
| Photo A-40: | Tent put up on the Math for the winter mela | 391 |
| Photo A-41: | Playing equipment on Nasimgaon Math for the winter mela | 391 |
| Photo A-42: | Michil on Victory Day | 392 |
| Photo A-43: | Victory day decoration at a ghat | 392 |
| Photo A-44: | Embankment Road before re-construction, February 2009 | 392 |
Table of contents

Photo A-45: Embankment Road during re-construction, April 2009 .................................................. 392
Photo A-46: Barrier to slow down traffic on Embankment Road, erected in April 2010 ................. 392
Photo A-47: Kabin Mia’s rickshaw garage before improvement of Embankment Road ................. 392
Photo A-48: A village home in Komilla .................................................................................................. 393
Photo A-49: Agricultural field in Sherpur ............................................................................................ 393
Photo A-50: Bagan on Pohela Boishakh ............................................................................................... 394
Photo A-51: Bagan on an afternoon in May 2009 .............................................................................. 394
Photo A-52: Taking possession of Nasmigaon Math after the water tank conflict ......................... 394
Photo A-53: Concrete pillars for fencing of Nasmigaon Math (September 2009) ......................... 394
Photo A-54: Fenced area designated for community purposes ......................................................... 395
Photo A-55: Blocked access to the garages under reconstruction ..................................................... 395
Photo A-56: New access road to the rickshaw garages ................................................................. 395
Photo A-57: Tea stall and new rickshaw garages in November 2010 ............................................... 395

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Contrasts for study settlement selection .............................................................................. 69
Table 2: Selection criteria for participants of solicited photography .................................................. 73
Table 3: Overview of interviews conducted ....................................................................................... 82
Table 4: Key figures for Dhaka megacity ............................................................................................ 115
Table 5: Fees to be charged officially ............................................................................................... 222
Table 6: Overview of sources of power in Manikpara and Nasmigaon ........................................... 264
Table 7: Overview of preemptive strategies to secure spatial claims ................................................. 285
Table 8: Overview of reactive strategies for securing spatial claims ............................................... 299
Table 9: Overview of offensive strategies for securing spatial claims ............................................. 306
Table 10: Overview of resistance strategies for securing spatial claims ........................................ 309

LIST OF TEXTBOXES

Textbox 1: The dimensions of the production of space ........................................................................... 28
Textbox 2: Defining ‘slum’ and ‘informal settlements’ in the context of this research .................. 52
Textbox 3: The recycling industry in Dhaka ....................................................................................... 122
Textbox 4: Categories of vending and production activities ............................................................ 138
Textbox 5: Improvements of pavement and disruption of livelihoods ........................................... 170
Textbox 6: A shalish on a conflict between house owners in Nasmigaon ....................................... 254
Textbox 7: Characters of ‘bad reputation’ ......................................................................................... 262