

Time, waiting and gender: Everyday encounters with the state in contemporary India

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Introduction: Waiting for the state

Time matters. But time - the forms and meanings it takes when waiting - are not experienced identically by everyone, everywhere (Appadurai, 2004; Frederiksen, 2008). This article focuses on meanings and practices of waiting encountered by poor, low-class Dalit and Muslim Indians in interactions with the state. We explore practices of waiting - around applying for paperwork, documents, cards, and welfare schemes - as constituting the materiality and temporality of citizen-state interactions. Waiting, queuing, applying and seeking signatures and approvals are, we argue, processes that generate citizenship and citizen rights, and establish fragmented forms of state power and citizens' agency. Whilst these processes constitute the materiality of citizen-state encounters, this article explores the importance of attending to spatio-temporal dimensions embodied in waiting, as well as intersections with class, gender, caste and religion.

Waiting takes various forms. Sociological scholarship has focused on long-term waiting as 'prolonged' or 'chronic' time, that may span months, years, lifetimes or even generations. This 'chronic' waiting has been explored in relation to un/employment (Axelsson et al, 2015; Ferguson, 2006; Jeffrey, 2010; Jeffrey and Young, 2012; Ozoliņa-Fitzgerald, 2016), migration (Conlon, 2011; Harney, 2014), asylum seeking (Griffiths, 2014; Rotter, 2015; Turnbull, 2015), prison release (Foster, 2016) and marriage (Ramdas, 2012). Here, waiting is often sustained by imagined futures, hopes and aspirations, which enable tolerance of short to medium term precariousness in the hope of better futures (Cross, 2014; Jeffrey and Young, 2012). Until then, however, this waiting is often experienced as 'lost' or 'dead' time (Jeffrey, 2008: 956). More recently, others have discussed 'periodic' waiting. For example, the replacement of politicians at elections with those who can be swayed as a result of their embeddedness within neighbourhood relations (Ghertner, 2017).

We discuss two other variations of waiting. Short-term, or 'on the day' waiting, and 'to and fro' waiting. The former refers to time, often many hours, spent in queues or outside offices waiting to submit applications for documents or welfare schemes to state officials or local bureaucrats. This waiting often involves uncertainty and fear of being refused, being told paperwork is incorrect or being ordered to return another day. This 'on the day' waiting is less explored in the literature (for exceptions see Auyero, 2012 and Corbridge, 2004), yet shapes many people's everyday encounters with the state in India and elsewhere. We show how this 'on the day' waiting often encapsulates poor people's interactions with local state representatives and is widely considered 'wasted' or 'lost' time'.

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2 Linked to this is 'to and fro' time, or what Secor refers to as 'go today, come
3 tomorrow' (2007: 40), which comprises multiple visits to offices with different
4 paperwork, evidence and signatures. As with 'on-the-day' waiting, it is also seen as
5 'time that costs' in terms of lost work or earnings, and embodies frustrations of not
6 knowing what the outcome will be. Secor's study of state-citizen encounters in
7 Istanbul documents 'narratives of circulation' or stories that trace the circulation of
8 people, 'documents, money, and influence through the offices and waiting rooms of
9 government buildings, state ministries, hospitals, police stations and courts' (2007:
10 38). Repeated cycles of referral and deferral shape seemingly endless circulations
11 that constitute people's experiences of citizenship and state encounter. Circulation
12 not only captures spatial (to towns, offices, etc) and temporal (back and forth)
13 movements produced by the state but also the state's power '*to hold in suspension*
14 actors, actions, justice, and rights' (2007: 38).
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19 We show how both 'on the day' and 'to and fro' waiting shape poor people's
20 circulatory and often prolonged encounters with the state as they try to obtain
21 paperwork and access welfare schemes. We illustrate how state power and citizen
22 agency interacts, but also explore the ways in which waiting, queuing and time are
23 temporal features through which citizenship and citizens themselves are created in
24 fragmented, ambivalent and contested ways (Auyero, 2011; Oldfield and Greyling,
25 2015; Secor, 2007). In particular, our empirical data reveal a gendered story.
26 Women are very differently implicated in encounters with the state and the production
27 of citizenship. They often take a disproportionate share of waiting 'work', and are
28 subjected to additional processes of subjugation and exclusion.
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32 In addition, the article reveals how state-society encounters are experienced through
33 different temporal processes or rhythms that combine, intersect and at times flow into
34 each other (Axelsson et al., 2015). Elderly poor people waiting for a state pension,
35 for example, may queue at an office for a day, only to be told to return with additional
36 forms or signatures. What started as 'on-the-day' waiting becomes 'to and fro' or
37 circulatory and may become a prolonged wait of months or even years, often
38 wrapped in temporal uncertainty as to whether the pension will materialise and
39 resulting in a 'chronic' state of despair, fear or expectation.
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43 *Power, agency, and the production of citizens*

44 A key debate around 'chronic' waiting concerns the ways in which power, control and
45 discipline are produced through waiting, as well as the spaces for agency that are
46 opened up in the process. Chronic waiting may not be a passive condition,
47 comprising wasted time alone, but rather 'an active and intentional practice' through
48 which people pursue particular futures (Axelsson et al., 2015: 2). Axelsson et al
49 describe Chinese migrant chefs in Sweden who comply with exploitative work
50 conditions in the short run as part of a future-oriented strategy to obtain long-term
51 settlement and citizen rights. Jeffrey similarly notes that 'waiting must be understood
52 not as the capacity to ride out the passage of time or as the absence of action, but
53 rather as an active, conscious, materialized practice in which people forge new
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2 political strategies' (2008: 957). In further work on chronic waiting among educated,
3 unemployed youth in North India, Jeffrey and Young observed young men not only
4 forming friendships and solidarity, but collaborating across class, caste and religion in
5 protest against state and university bureaucracies. This provided 'a seed-bed for
6 new cultural and political forms' (2012: 638) with the potential to challenge
7 longstanding class inequalities, even if only fleetingly (ibid: 658). 'Timepass', a
8 vernacular expression of chronic waiting, was not only about passing surplus time,
9 but provided a space for forging 'new forms of urban conviviality and ... novel forms
10 of politics' (ibid: 649). However, as young men started capitalising on their own
11 political networks to pursue self-interested strategies, cross-caste solidarities eroded,
12 raising questions about long-term potentialities of spaces and politics enabled
13 through chronic waiting (ibid: 639). Nevertheless, the 'agentic capacity' inherent in
14 waiting, which can turn feelings of time 'lost' into more productive experiences, has
15 been noted (Bissell, 2007; Foster, 2016; Gasparini, 1995; Griffiths, 2014).
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20 Whilst we recognise that waiting is never devoid of human agency, we build on
21 observations by Bourdieu (2000), Auyero (2011) and others that waiting is implicated
22 in producing power and powerlessness. Power is never 'just there', but is produced
23 through control over people's time and movements. Indeed, 'the temporality of
24 bureaucratic systems also functions as a mediator of power and a mechanism of
25 subordination' (Ghertner, 2017: 2). This is particularly transparent in circulatory
26 waiting practices that poor people globally are subjected to when engaging with local
27 states. In his account of poor people's waiting in Buenos Aires's welfare offices,
28 Auyero argues that the state's ability to make people wait, reschedule appointments
29 and force repeated returns reflected far-reaching control over people's time and
30 hence the working of state domination. Auyero concludes that this creates 'compliant
31 clients' or 'patients of the state' rather than citizens capable of making rights-based
32 claims (2011: 5). Seemingly endless processes of waiting for benefits, surrounded
33 with uncertainty, made applicants despairing and despondent. For Auyero, the
34 welfare office was not a space of bargaining or negotiation, but one 'of compliance, a
35 universe in which you "sit down and wait" instead of attempting to negotiate with (or
36 complain against) welfare authorities' (ibid: 21). In the office, subjugation was created
37 through waiting and compliance, with such practices constituting a 'governing
38 technique' through which state power was articulated and a 'docile body of welfare
39 clients' created (ibid: 25).
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45 Griffiths's study of refused asylum seekers and immigration detainees in Britain,
46 similarly shows how applying, queueing and waiting is intimately bound up in
47 relations of power, control and bureaucratic domination. Here, 'the imposition of
48 waiting, always with a glimmer of hope for eventual change, is part of the technique
49 of control that sustains the marginality and compliance of undocumented migrants'
50 (2014: 1996). The processes of applying for cards and paperwork discussed in this
51 article are similarly productive of relations of domination and subordination. Women,
52 members of lower castes and Muslims are made to apply, wait, return and beg for
53 approval in spaces often dominated by male, high-caste and Hindu officials as well
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2 as through engagements with local bureaucrats, village presidents and political
3 actors who may or may not share identities aligned with those of applicants.
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5 In this context, and following Olson, we avoid representations of power structures as
6 pre-existing or static, and instead examine how 'space and waiting come together to
7 *produce* and *maintain* potentially abusive and harmful arrangements of power and
8 inequality' (2015: 517, italics added). Indeed, waiting produces differentiated citizens
9 within 'hierarchies which segregate people and places into those which matter and
10 those which do not' (Ramdas, 2012: 834). Individuals wanting something from the
11 state know they have to wait, and wait appropriately, or face the consequences
12 (Olson, 2015), including the denial of citizenship itself. Waiting - and being made to
13 wait - is an 'everyday' governing technique through which subjects and citizens are
14 created, and subordination and compliance produced (Olson, 2015: 522; Foucault
15 1979). Here our ethnography aligns with Secor's argument that narratives of
16 circulation - 'go today, come tomorrow' - 'provide a critical insight into the everyday
17 sociospatial constitution of power – not despite but because of their very banality'
18 (2007: 42).
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23 *Patronage, money and morality*

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25 In this article we explore how Indian Dalits and Muslims experience and negotiate the
26 temporal impositions of waiting in everyday - banal - encounters with the state.
27 Documenting this, we argue, offers insights into the workings of the state as well as
28 modalities of citizenship. It also illuminates the role of patronage in everyday state-
29 society encounters, and the ways in which these are mediated by gender and other
30 markers of identity. We build on Secor's findings from Istanbul, which suggest that
31 'only money, influence and personal networks afforded individuals with the ability to
32 break out of endless cycles of circulating and waiting' (2007: 39). In India too, it is
33 recognised that personal networks, status and money enable shortened waiting
34 periods. Across South Asia, social networks and personal influence shape a politics
35 of patronage in which patrons act as middlemen and brokers to access state
36 resources, 'not despite democratic statehood, but alongside and indeed often
37 through it' (Piliavsky, 2014: 4). Rather than being vilified these actors are valued
38 mediators and their interventions not simply associated with corruption. As Osella
39 argues, regarding migration brokers in Kerala, 'accusations of corruption ... do not
40 concern the exchange of money for favours, but the failure to fulfil promises made to
41 clients' (2014: 367). Piliavsky similarly notes that in vernacular understandings of
42 mediation, it is not 'the misuse of public office for private gain, but the collapse of
43 "good patronage"—when patron-politicians prove instrumental, selfish and tight'
44 (2014: 32) that matters.
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50 We also explore the role of patronage and money in the negotiation of waiting, along
51 with the moral terrain in which this is embedded. In a context of implicit assumptions
52 amongst officials that the poor have ample time to queue and wait, we illuminate a
53 sense of being 'time-starved' and thus a willingness to 'buy time'. We show how
54 people mobilise middlemen, activate patronage and pay money to claw back a
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1 valued 'resource'. Disappointments or accusations of corruption do not surface when
2 people approach panchayat (village level) presidents or others to get their paperwork
3 processed, but only when these individuals fail to respond or deliver on their
4 promises, thus 'wasting' people's time. Frustrations run high whenever there is
5 ambiguity as to whether payments should be made and whether payments made will
6 be effective.
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10 Corbridge argues that when officials are seen as unaccountable or biased, ordinary
11 people are likely to respond similarly by queue-jumping or activating patronage
12 connections. However, a scarcity of resources, personnel and state capacity
13 produces forms of queue-jumping behaviour that affect the poor disproportionately.
14 Queue-jumping, Corbridge emphasises, 'is overwhelmingly an affront to the poor
15 (and poorer women especially), and it is roundly condemned by the poor themselves'
16 (2004: 195). It is often those without any influence, connections or money who are
17 left to wait and queue.
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21 Importantly, what is routinely labelled as 'corruption' in the 'global south' often does
22 not differ much from more formalised practices of queue-jumping and paying for
23 faster access to services in other parts of the world. Purchasing a 'Q-bot' at
24 Legoland or paying to use 'fast-tracks' at airports, for example, enables the
25 shortcutting of queues. Frølund describes how Fast-Track routes through
26 Copenhagen Airport are obtained through payment or through displaying loyalty via
27 the airline's frequent flyer scheme. This, Frølund argues, produces differentiated
28 temporal experiences of navigating the terminal (spatially and bureaucratically) and
29 creates 'a fragmented hierarchic space clearly designed to facilitate the "kinetic elite"
30 of "affluent business and leisure travellers"' (2016: 244). In the *mohallas* of
31 Saharanpur and rural areas of Tamil Nadu both money and other forms of loyalty
32 similarly act to create temporal hierarchies that disproportionately affect the poor.
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36 Moreover, recent research has pointed out that waiting patterns are highly gendered
37 (Auyero, 2011; Conlon, 2011), with women often shouldering the 'waiting work.' In
38 India too, the time and effort spent waiting and queuing at government offices often
39 falls on women. Taking this further, we seek to demonstrate how waiting processes
40 not only reflect but are themselves productive of gendered hierarchies and feminine
41 attributes. The very act of being made to wait by men - often belonging to a higher
42 status group - produces 'women' as the passive, submissive and dependent gender.
43 As women are made to wait, beg, be submissive, patient and grateful, gendered
44 power hierarchies are being constructed via the very bureaucratic processes in which
45 people engage. Through waiting and queuing, the association between women,
46 submissiveness and patience is produced and reinforced. Crucially, in India, such
47 gendered dynamics - through which men become publicly portrayed as the dominant
48 agents and women as the submissive/powerless clients/patients of the state - are
49 further entrenched as they intersect with inequalities of caste, class and space.
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54 Whether they are Dalit women facing higher caste men in Tamil Nadu, or poorer
55 Muslim women facing Hindu men in Uttar Pradesh, bureaucratic processes are
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2 deeply embedded in the social reproduction of gendered inequality at the state-
3 society interface. Gender hierarchies are not just produced at home or in the market,
4 but also when people encounter the state. The processes through which this
5 gendering takes place vary. In rural Tamil Nadu low-caste Dalit women take on the
6 bulk of the bureaucratic responsibility. In Uttar Pradesh, women also shoulder much
7 of this work but do so in spaces that are often seen as part of a male 'public' realm.
8 In both cases, however, engagements with the state are not just gendered but
9 constitute a space in which gendered subjectivities are produced and entrenched.
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12 **Contextualising the study**

13 *Ethnographic research in Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh*

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16 Our research was undertaken in two villages in Tamil Nadu and a Muslim *mohalla*
17 (neighbourhood) of Saharanpur in Uttar Pradesh. The Tamil Nadu villages, Allapuram
18 and Mannapalayam,¹ are located in the hinterland of Tiruppur a major garment-
19 producing centre. Author1 and Author3 have undertaken research in these villages
20 since 2008, with fieldwork on this theme being carried out in 2014 and 2015. Mixed
21 methods were used, including participant observation and semi-structured interviews
22 with a range of informants. Both villages are made up of a dominant landowning
23 community, the Gounders, various intermediate caste groups, and many landless
24 Dalits, both Arunthathiyars and Adi Dravidas. Villagers from Allapuram work in either
25 the Tiruppur garment industry, or in agriculture, whilst in Mannapalayam agriculture
26 and powerloom work exist side by side.
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29 The *mohalla* in Saharanpur, Hasan Nagar, is one of several areas of the city known
30 for wood manufacturing. Author2 has worked here since 2011, with this fieldwork
31 conducted during 2015 and 2016. The *mohalla* itself is relatively poor with many
32 residents employed as woodcarvers, carpenters, polishers or general labourers.
33 However, spatial segregation of Muslims in Saharanpur, a feature across North India
34 (Jaffrelot and Gayer, 2012), means that larger properties of wealthier individuals
35 intermingle with poorer dwellings. The neighbourhood is of mixed *biraderi* (muslim
36 caste/community) and comprises densely populated residential alleyways
37 intermingled with numerous open fronted wood workshops. Whilst there are some
38 non-Muslims, fieldwork focused on Muslim residents with interviews and informal
39 discussions conducted in workshops, homes, ration shops and government offices.
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49 *Cards, paperwork and time*

50 The bureaucracy discussed in this article involves applications for ration cards and
51 identity cards, registration for job cards and voters cards, and various certificates that
52 confirm education, residence, caste identity, as well as eligibility and entitlement to
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57 ¹ All names, including the villages, are pseudonyms.
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1 state resources and welfare. Applications often require a number of signatures,
2 recommendations and circulatory visits to government offices, placing demands on
3 time and encouraging the seeking of short-cuts, either through money or patronage.
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6 Different cards and paperwork have their own distinct temporal processes. In rural
7 Tamil Nadu every household has a ration card listing all household members. This
8 gives access to the Public Distribution System (PDS) through ration shops and other
9 periodic State government distributions. The Aadhaar card is a biometric identity card
10 held by individuals, launched in 2010. Initially voluntary, the Aadhaar card has
11 effectively become compulsory with the 2016 Aadhaar Bill giving the government
12 'sweeping power to make Aadhaar mandatory for a wide range of facilities and
13 services' (Drèze, 2016). Today the Aadhaar card is linked with gas subsidies and
14 MGNREGA wages. The MGNREGA job card is a booklet given to anyone registered
15 for work under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. This social
16 protection scheme, rolled out nationwide in 2006, gives all rural households the right
17 to 100 days of employment on public works. The voting card is universal for over 18s
18 and enables vote casting at both national and state elections (Author1 and Author3,
19 2014). In addition, there are various other cards and certificates, such as residence
20 and community certificates, which enable access to state schemes and resources,
21 and provide recognition of citizenship.
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26 Similar cards are held by households in Saharanpur, but with some distinctions.
27 MGNREGA job cards are only available in rural areas, hence not held in the *mohalla*.
28 Almost all households have a ration card and most individuals have voting cards. As
29 in Tamil Nadu, the Aadhaar Card is increasingly held by most informants. Initially
30 treated as an unnecessary piece of paperwork by many, the recent tying of gas
31 subsidies to the Aadhaar Card meant people rushed to apply, triggering the
32 burgeoning of an industry dedicated to facilitating applications. However, the overall
33 number of cards held by households and individuals proved to be lower than in Tamil
34 Nadu and complaints by Muslims regarding limited access to state support were
35 commonplace. In addition, the meaning and value associated with certain cards
36 echoed a sense of marginalisation. The voting card, for example, was seen not only
37 as a voting document but as a means through which identity and citizenship could be
38 proven - especially that an individual is not from Pakistan or Bangladesh. Carrying a
39 Muslim name meant ID cards took on a passport-like quality when passing beyond
40 the imagined border of the *mohalla* (Author2, in progress). These considerations too
41 impacted experiences of waiting and interactions with the state.
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49 **Everyday experiences of chronic, 'to and fro' and 'on the day' waiting**

50 Our field data shows how time and waiting are inherently political: who you are (in
51 terms of gender, caste, religion etc) will affect experiences of time, subjectification
52 through waiting, and available shortcuts. Social contacts and networks - 'known
53 people' - as well as money are critical for saving time, bypassing the waiting or
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1 hastening outcomes. Whether this is ‘bribery’, ‘oiling the wheels’ or paying to save
 2 time, money is central to encounters with middle(wo)men and state representatives.
 3 Moreover, considerations of money and time are deeply suffused with concerns of
 4 dignity: how one is treated by officials and middlemen is a particular concern for
 5 marginalised and stigmatised communities whose members are well aware that
 6 encounters with the state reproduce domination and subordination.
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10 A widely discussed example of ‘chronic waiting’ in rural Tamil Nadu, concerns waiting
 11 for an Old Age Pension (OAP). Despite evidence of increasing numbers of
 12 pensioners in Tamil Nadu, from the perspective of villagers the OAP is one of the
 13 hardest schemes to access. A doctor’s certificate is needed for age confirmation,
 14 then a completed application form and a ‘recommendation’ from the president and
 15 VAO (Village Administrative Officer). This then goes to the Revenue Inspector and
 16 from there to the Tahsildar in the Taluk (sub-district) office. There – if all goes well –
 17 one should be registered for an OAP and receive a registration certificate, ultimately
 18 enabling the pension.
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21 It rarely works out like this. As Sumati an elderly woman from Allapuram explained
 22 ‘you need four signatures: VAO, revenue inspector, panchayat president and a
 23 doctor.’ But, she asserted, even if eligible ‘somebody has to tell’, meaning you need
 24 a recommendation. The process, she said, ‘may take one or two years’. However,
 25 another elderly lady, Danalakshmi, interrupted, telling us that despite being eligible
 26 she never received an OAP:
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30 I have applied a hundred times. I have asked people but they said mine was
 31 not sanctioned yet. They keep giving the same answer. ... how many times
 32 can you ask? I have been asking for four years, this is the fifth year.
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35 Laughing but fed up, she joked: ‘They put it under their bum and sit on it – that’s how
 36 they treat us! You have to bribe them!’ Sumati agreed: ‘if you go with money it takes
 37 a week. Without money it will take a year.’
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39 Noor, a 40-year-old widow in Hasan Nagar, experienced a similarly chronic wait for a
 40 widow’s pension. These payments are small but Noor hoped it might help given her
 41 meagre income from home based piece rate woodwork. Her husband’s death a
 42 decade earlier led to a protracted and fruitless engagement with local officers to
 43 receive a pension.
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46 For 11 years I went to many offices and filled many forms for a widow’s
 47 pension. ...I have no ration card and I have also been to many offices to try
 48 and get one. ...Lots of money is needed as a bribe but still no result! One
 49 officer lied. He said my pension was ready at the post office, but when I went
 50 there the post officer shouted ‘every day lots of widows come here like you, we
 51 cannot do anything, it is the government problem. Do not come here’. The first
 52 officer had given a false slip for the pension and taken a bribe from me, only
 53 later when i got to the post office did I find out that it was useless.
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3 Even those with kin who know the system and the officials struggle. We spoke to
4 Meena in Mannapalayam, a bank employee who visits villages with a 'Smart card'
5 machine to distribute pensions and other payments. Her grandmother applied for an
6 OAP over a year ago and still hadn't received anything. Meena enquired at the taluk
7 office but was told that her grandmother would only receive a pension when a
8 panchayat resident died. Despondently, she told us, 'whenever someone dies, I try
9 to get my grandmother's pension, but still nothing'. Even for Meena, who is
10 knowledgeable on cards, procedures and applications, much remains opaque.
11 Higher up the system people encounter even less transparency, leaving eligibility,
12 registration and sporadic payments unexplained.
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16 In both field sites, 'on the day' and 'to and fro' waiting - usually presented as
17 'narratives of circulation' (Secor, 2007) - were common. The nature of this circulation
18 can best be illustrated with reference to the ration card, probably the most important
19 document for poor households. When a couple set up an independent home, they
20 have to apply for their own ration card, first providing evidence that their names have
21 been removed from their parents' cards. While apparently straightforward, in practice
22 the process often takes many visits to offices in different places over several months.
23 Visanti, a newly married Dalit woman in Allapuram explains:
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26 First we went to the taluk office in Tiruppur to remove my name [from parents'
27 card]. The lady said she would do this but she messed things up. After five or
28 six months she said she never had the card. Eventually my father went, took
29 that lady's phone and ...threatened her saying, 'you find that card or else
30 contact whoever you need to contact, but you find that card'. After three hours
31 she had found the card, and the card came back home. Then I went again to
32 remove my name... We had to go to Dharapuram taluk office to get my name
33 on our new card but for that it was my father-in-law who went. In total, there
34 were about 8 trips to those offices.
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38 Visanti's case shows the time-consuming nature of application processes and how
39 paperwork can get 'stuck', even in straightforward cases. Her 'to and fro' narrative
40 also reveals the importance of patronage and gender. Visanti's father is the brother
41 of a local District Councillor and himself a government employee for the Electricity
42 Board. Despite being Dalit, his extensive patronage networks, his gender and his
43 political connections gave him confidence to threaten the (female) office worker.
44 While Visanti could have mentioned the same connections, it needed a man to be
45 taken seriously. Whilst visiting such offices is a time burden often imposed on
46 women, the process remains dependent on male interventions at crucial points.
47 Widowed, divorced or separated women are particularly vulnerable as a lack of male
48 support further undermines their ability to access welfare and citizenship rights.
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52 This gendered burden of waiting was also present in Saharanpur, although with a
53 degree of ambivalence around the role of women in public life. While women's time
54 was also here ascribed less value than men's, women's engagements with the public
55 sphere were further mediated by practices of *purdah* and notions of reputation,
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demeanour, character, embodied practice, and how one is seen by society (or what is referred to in the vernacular of *chāl-chalan*).-Moreover, the gendered nature of women's involvement with cards, government schemes and ration shops also intersects with other identity markers, not least social status and class. It has long been recognised that *purdah* (in both Muslim and non-Muslim communities) is aligned with the social position of those involved. With increasing status, women are more likely to withdraw, or be withdrawn, from the public sphere to express respectability and relative wealth (Chen, 1995; Das, 2005; Sen, 1999), although this tends to relax with age (Das Gupta, 1995).

However, it became clear that despite *purdah*, women are not just involved in application processes but often at the forefront of them, particularly in poor Muslim families where men can ill afford to take time from work or pay intermediaries. Indeed, while middle and upper classes seek to enforce *purdah* most rigorously, for poor Muslims a desire for respectability and the maintenance of *chāl-chalan* clashes with the pressures of everyday life. Bano, a 32 year old woman, married to a lorry driver and engaged in piece-rate work finishing wood items for factories, explained:

Men never go for making cards. They tell us we can do just one work, either earn or waste time. Our brothers and husbands never have time for making cards. It is not good for us. We have responsibility of home and children. We have lots of work, but instead we have to go for cards that we never get. Some do not want to go as it is bad for our *chāl-chalan* to go there and so they don't try for cards. [...] We get cards but it is mostly the men who use them for work or getting loans. The cards are for family but men never give time in this.

Bano's statement reveals not just gendered considerations around the practicalities of card making, in which men and women juggle different responsibilities, but also the difference in value attributed to men's and women's time. While men's time is seen as precious, that of women is seen as flexible, abundant, and suited to waiting and going 'to and fro', or - as men argue - being 'wasted,' even though this work, and the interactions with unknown men it involves, risk compromising their *chāl-chalan*. Women themselves, however, emphasise the burden that paperwork adds to the already multiple demands placed on their time.

When things go wrong: yearning for dignity and transparency

Processes become particularly challenging for women when things go wrong. In Tamil Nadu, Anita, who migrated to the area with family ten years ago, told us what happened when she lost her ration card during a recent house move:

The first time I gave my application they told me to bring my bank passbook. Next time said that was not enough and that I should bring my Aadhaar card. Then they said they needed my voter card. The fourth time they said I should bring the house tax receipt.

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3 This receipt had to be supplied by their landlord, but he was unwilling to search
4 for it and in the end Anita could not obtain a replacement ration card. Apart from
5 not having the paperwork, Anita felt intensely frustrated at being constantly sent
6 back to get different documents:
7

8 I didn't meet the Tahsildar, only the assistant ... you talk to them but they
9 just ask you to come back. Maybe I went 4 or 5 times. Each time I waited
10 one or two hours. ... you must sit outside and fill the form. Then you go
11 inside and stand in the queue. Then they take it and check the documents.
12 [The last time] they said that without the house tax document, they cannot
13 consider my application. ...When we ask why it is taking so long, they say
14 'why are you in such a hurry?' That's an assault!
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17 In Tamil Nadu, the English term 'assault' is used not for a physical attack but to
18 describe feeling insulted or disrespected. Anita uses it to convey her anger at
19 being treated disrespectfully by officials who consider neither her person nor
20 time as important. Crucially, Anita's vulnerability is further enhanced by her
21 migrant status and lack of local networks.
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24 Similar concerns were expressed by Salma, a Muslim woman in Saharanpur.
25 Salma had difficulties obtaining a ration card following estrangement from her
26 family. Her cross-*biraderi* marriage was not approved of and neither family was
27 willing to remove the newlyweds' names from their ration cards. Hence, Salma
28 and her husband could not obtain a card of their own. While a local *neta*
29 running for office promised to help them in exchange for their votes, Salma
30 explained how this promise was not honoured:
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33 The ration card is hard [to get] and usually only possible at election time or
34 with some big money. A *neta* here promised to help if he won the election,
35 but once he won his assistant shouted at me 'why are you here?' I
36 explained and when the minister came I told him also. He shouted 'how
37 dare you come here, I do not know who you are'. They sent me out
38 shouting 'You have no manners'. They did not care for my respect. Their
39 promises before the election are never fulfilled. I will never show faith in a
40 *neta* again.
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44 What upset Salma was both the *neta* not keeping the bargain and that she was
45 insulted. Cards and their application processes are carriers of sentiment, or as
46 Navaro-Yashin calls them, 'affectively loaded phenomena' (2007: 81). They
47 draw on affective devices such as humiliation and shaming to construct the
48 poor as compliant welfare clients rather than rights-bearing citizens. They are
49 made to wait, come back and present more paperwork, while being kept in the
50 dark about possible outcomes and regularly humiliated. Applicants are left with
51 uncertainty, a lack of transparency about process, and a sense of indignity.
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55 Moreover, it was not only indignity that marked the 'affective loading' of cards
56 and documents, but also a sense of mystery embodied in opaque application
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3 procedures. Gulfam, a 28-year-old carpenter, and Faisal, a 32-year-old brass
4 worker, explained:

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6 We have been waiting for a long time for the ration card but they just tell
7 us that 'now the government is not sending the cards' and many other
8 reasons. We keep going back. ...I had to go 10 or 20 times. Always they
9 said 'come again after one month' or 'come after 3 months'. Always we
10 get some new date or new time to come again for the cards.
11

12 Even the introduction of new technologies aimed at disembedding application
13 processes from particular socio-political contexts often ends up further
14 intensifying the lack of transparency and greater obscurity. As Mehboob, a day
15 labourer from a village around 10 km outside Saharanpur, describes:
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18 They put all the details in the internet but now it is stuck there and the
19 ration card is not coming [...] When they made the Aadhaar card they took
20 all our scans like eye and fingerprint, but I do not know where this goes, it
21 is all in the internet but we cannot understand this.
22
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24 Paperwork gets stuck, and people do not know where, why or for how long.
25 Through processes of making people wait and come back, giving no or partial
26 information, and remaining vague about paper trails, state officials produce
27 citizens as less-than-adult and less-than-capable applicants, rather than claim-
28 making citizens. In the process, cards act as 'affectively loaded' devices that
29 channel humiliation, disrespect and non-recognition as modes of subordination.
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32 33 **On time and money...** 34

35 Part of the lack of clarity concerns bribing itself. Anita, above, never paid any money,
36 and said she did not know if it would even help: 'If they tell me to give money, I will
37 give it. But they are not asking for that.' Yet many were clear that connections and
38 money can lighten the burden of waiting and help to speed up application processes.
39 As another informant explained 'if you need to get something, you have to pay
40 something'. Caste, class and religious identity turn waiting into a highly differentiated
41 experience, yet even for those of higher social status money still plays a role. Abdul,
42 a Congress neta in his 40s who often mediated applications on behalf of others,
43 detailed how even he experienced problems and often resorted to cash payments:
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46 I also give money for cards. Recently I gave Rs 1,000 and the next day
47 they brought a BPL card to my home for a constituent. We have an agent
48 here; we call him 'Doctor'. He took the money and came back quickly with
49 the card; I was surprised! Once we needed an urgent birth certificate but it
50 was a Sunday. However, the Doctor went and came back in just one hour
51 with all things completed, it is only he who can manage all these things
52 like this. When I give money then my headache for getting the card
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3 transfers to him. The public also know him and give money to save their
4 time.

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6 Money greases application processes that otherwise might take weeks or months to
7 conclude. Or, as Abdul sums up, 'People are giving money to buy time, they are
8 giving so that their time is not wasted'.
9

10
11 But not everyone can pay to save time. A common complaint amongst poorer people
12 was that obtaining cards was easier for the wealthier and better-connected because
13 of their levels of literacy, social capital and ability to pay bribes. Indeed, for the poor
14 payments are rarely a strategy. Joy, a recently divorced young mother in
15 Mannapalayam, is in dispute with her husband who refused to return documents
16 including her daughter's birth certificate and a bank book in her name. Joy told us
17 about the long and complex process of applying for a duplicate birth certificate. In
18 theory this should not be difficult but for Joy getting the certificate involved endless
19 trips to town. She didn't pay any money, although she was told: 'if you give money it
20 will go quicker'. However, she explained,
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24 I'm not in a position to give money, so I am going back and forth. ... I applied
25 ... about six months ago. For four months I went whenever they told me... they
26 said 'come back on Monday', or 'come back next week'. Only for the last two
27 months did I stop going. When I went they said I only applied in July, and that
28 people who applied earlier are still waiting, so it will be another three months.
29 ... For about a month I took leave and was working just on that. I used to work
30 in a powerloom, but I took so much leave that I lost my job ... now it is very
31 difficult for me.
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36 Initially her father accompanied her to the offices, as he knew people there. However,
37 'he too was losing wages by coming with me... so [after] the first two times ...I went
38 alone.' Being introduced to people proved helpful as 'without "known people"
39 (*therinthavanga*) it would be difficult. If you have money, you can do things much
40 faster, but because I have no money, I have to wait.'
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43 Lacking the financial capacity, Joy had to go back many times, utilising the contacts,
44 or 'known person' her father had introduced her to. Divorce made Joy particularly
45 vulnerable and her patronage networks were limited. In relation to an entirely
46 different official document, Joy needed the signature of her panchayat President. The
47 President, however, came from a neighbouring hamlet and had little interest in the
48 people of Mannapalayam, and refused to give his signature. She first tried to mobilise
49 her existing patronage networks, asking the local District Councillor to ring the
50 President on her behalf, to ask him to help her. All this failed, and it was only after
51 subjugating herself by begging and crying in his office that he agreed to sign. Only
52 this affective performance yielded the signature that she was entitled to. People are
53 often left exasperated and humiliated by the acts of subordination that they have to
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1 undergo as part of applications. Narratives of bureaucratic encounters presented
 2 here underscore how waiting and going 'to and fro' undermine already insecure
 3 livelihoods, unleash affective reactions, and reproduce positions of powerlessness.
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6 **Considering class, religion and gender**

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 8 Whilst in Tamil Nadu low-caste migrants and Dalits bear the brunt of state officials'
 9 discriminatory practices, in urban Saharanpur Muslims of various classes find
 10 themselves subjected to the waiting, queuing and unpredictability of state
 11 representatives. Changes to who holds political power at different levels matters a
 12 great deal. In a village on the outskirts of Saharanpur, 28 year old Dilshad and his
 13 parents explained how under the previous Muslim *pradhan* cards could be more
 14 easily obtained than under the incumbent Hindu *pradhan*. Beyond the local level,
 15 shifts in regional governments had impacts too. During earlier fieldwork in 2012,
 16 Islam, a 32 year old brass overlayer, had been trying unsuccessfully to obtain a ration
 17 card. When the Samajwadi party won the state elections with the support of Muslim
 18 votes and netas from the mohallas, Islam activated these newly available networks
 19 by making a call to a new neta. The man arrived quickly and openly berated the
 20 officials over Islam's card. Although the card remains unissued to this day, the
 21 intervention of the local neta had a considerable performative significance, making
 22 Islam feel that there were now people around him who he could approach to stand up
 23 for him.
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29 Hence, whilst Dilshad above argued that local political change can facilitate card-
 30 making, Islam's case also illustrates the limits of this. While following regime change,
 31 local netas may be able to engage in public acts that express their authority, such
 32 performative interventions may have little impact on the bureaucratic process.
 33 Finally, at the national level, Indian Muslims remain marginalised (Sachar et al.,
 34 2006; Jaffrelot and Gayer, 2012) and the 2014 victory of the BJP in the national
 35 elections further intensified this sense of marginalisation. As Sajid in Hasan Nagar,
 36 reflects 'The Samajwadi Party helps us most and the BJP makes most problems.
 37 Now it is the BJP and and they know the Muslims do not vote for them, so do not
 38 help us. They only help Hindus.'
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42 However, the city's Muslim population also recognised that these problems were not
 43 exclusive to them, but affected poorer people across communities. As Faisal stated:
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46 It is no different for Muslims. The lady at our ration centre does not even
 47 make the cards for her own Hindu relatives unless they pay money. It is only
 48 money not religion that makes the cards. Only for the rich is it different. It is
 49 only the rich who do not wait.
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 52 Indeed, class position and political connections are key in shaping ordinary people's
 53 waiting for the state. Hamza, a well-off daughter of a local politician, was frank in
 54 confirming that for wealthier well-connected Muslims temporal experiences do differ:
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3 The system is very beneficial for me. I am very rich. My father is a politician. I
4 will get the ration whether it is under a lady's or gent's name. The ration dealer
5 is afraid of me. He gives me rations even without the card.
6

7 Whilst in Saharanpur both religion and class intersect in creating 'a fragmented
8 hierarchic space' (Frølund, 2016), gendered aspects make the experiences of
9 working class Muslim women similar to those of Dalit women in Tamil Nadu. Despite
10 social pressures to maintain *purdah*, poorer Muslim women are extensively involved
11 in visiting offices, waiting in line and engaging with state officials. In addition, *purdah*,
12 although not to be reified (Author2, in progress), produces particular embodied
13 experiences that further entrench gendered vulnerabilities in women's encounters
14 with state officials. Take the words of Salma who lives in a small rented house in
15 Hasan Nagar. Having been widowed, Salma had recently remarried but remained
16 responsible for all paperwork despite being given little recognition by officials:
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20 The government makes many problems. Our husbands do not have time
21 for formalities due to work, so it is us who wait in the line, but the officials
22 do not listen to *ladies*, they only listen to *gents*. [...] When the official sees
23 the burka or veil they start to misbehave. They think we are uneducated
24 and don't know anything. They only listen to Hindu ladies' complaints.
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27 Salma's comments regarding the materiality of the burka when engaging with
28 Hindu officials point to embodied and affective experiences that set Muslim
29 women apart from others. Their experiences of time and space are located
30 within the broader spatial contexts of the city that produce particular
31 experiences of belonging. Marked physical divides, as well as imagined
32 borders within the city and in the subjectivities of the *mohalla's* residents
33 (Author2, in progress), act to emphasise a sense of being 'out of place' in other
34 parts of the city. Whilst some men wear their beard long and kurta short,
35 marking them out as Muslim, many (particularly young men) do not, enabling
36 easy blending with those of other faiths. However, the relatively conservative
37 approach to *purdah* in the *mohalla* means that women in government offices in
38 predominantly Hindu neighbourhoods are marked out. As such they are often
39 the subject of suspicion and many female informants complained about being
40 seen as potential thieves or suspicious characters.
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45 At the same time, however, women are not merely victims. Here Auyero's
46 depiction of the poor as passive 'patients of the state' (Auyero, 2011) needs
47 qualification in the Indian context. Indeed, informants' stories and observations
48 of everyday interactions illustrate the ways in which women, in both Saharanpur
49 and Tamil Nadu, strategically utilised gender to raise their voices and challenge
50 a patriarchal bureaucracy. It is to this that we now turn.
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55 **On agency and resistance**

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3 Many women, like Joy and Salma, appear resigned to waiting, uncertainty and
4 insecurity as they are sent back and forth between offices. In some ways, it is
5 people's awareness of the importance of paperwork and cards that creates
6 perseverance and makes them tolerate processes that strip them of dignity and
7 construct compliant 'patients' (Auyero, 2011). However, others become angry and
8 determined to claim their entitlements. Occasionally, indignation becomes open
9 confrontation.
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11
12 Rukmani is a Christian dalit woman in Allapuram whose husband had been a local
13 organiser for the DMK party. This gave her a degree of confidence and assertiveness
14 which she was willing to use, and she recounted how she obtained the free
15 household items that the Tamil Nadu government distributed after its 2011 election
16 victory:
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18
19 A while ago, they distributed free grinders, mixers and fans from Amma [the late
20 Chief Minister J. Jayalalithaa] to everyone in the panchayat. People from
21 different hamlets came to our village to collect the goods, but I ended up getting
22 nothing. They refused to give me anything so I went to the Collectorate in
23 Tiruppur, where I was told to wait and queue alongside others... but even there I
24 wasn't given anything, so I held up my green card [below poverty line ration card]
25 and shouted: 'Should I be getting these things or not? Everyone got them, so
26 why don't I get them? I have a green card!' I threatened to come back on
27 grievance day (*mannunidhi naal*)² and complain formally to the Collector. Then
28 they finally gave it to me!
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33 In Saharanpur, poorer women also acknowledged their ability to confront government
34 officials. As 35 year old Sameera points out:
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37 Actually the ladies can talk much more than men and shout if it is getting
38 late. They can shout and quarrel with officers, ladies have no fear. Ladies
39 can talk in an abusive language and make a great deal of noise, but the
40 men cannot do this as the police are always [around] but ladies have no
41 fear of the police.
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44
45 Sameera's story reveals how a gendered normativity that acts to restrict women in
46 some contexts may be subverted and turned into a strategic tool in other contexts.
47 While not transforming gender norms per se, women can momentarily draw on
48 existing notions of femininity to raise their voice. Both Rukmani and Sameera's
49 experiences illustrate that engaging in *affective* public performances can have an
50 impact. However, Rukmani's experience also shows that possession of a card does
51 not automatically lead to the benefits they are meant to deliver. Cards may have to
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55 ² Grievance day refers to specific days during which citizens can come to the Collectorate and submit
56 formal complaints about any government processes and officials. These are then directly heard and
57 addressed by the District Collectors themselves.
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3 be 'activated' through social connections, face-to-face interactions or even 'affectively
4 loaded' confrontations to make them work. Such public confrontations and other
5 affective performances not only reveal the poor's determination to materialise their
6 rights but also their yearning for recognition as right-bearing citizens making
7 legitimate claims. It is precisely because people's banal encounters with the state are
8 ultimately about a wish to be seen, heard and recognised as rights-bearing citizens
9 that they engender affectively loaded interactions and confrontations.

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12 Whilst confrontations may play on gendered positionalities, there are also occasions
13 when such interactions challenge gender normativity. In Saharanpur, Rehana
14 introduced herself saying 'you know I am a *khatara* (danger lady)' when explaining
15 her role as an agent who obtains cards and paperwork for other women in the
16 *mohalla*. Following her divorce, some years before, she had started this work to
17 make ends meet. Gradually, however, she had learnt to navigate the bureaucracy
18 and raise her voice:
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21 My help is important because ladies remain in the veil or hijab but I cannot do
22 purdah as I work outside. I have to go here and there... as I am divorced.
23 Now after many years doing this I have the knowledge, experience and
24 boldness for work in official places... First I was afraid but not now. I am like a
25 danger lady, all the officers know me as a danger lady. ... Muslim ladies are
26 very timid and shy, there is no boldness, but I am not like this. Now I am well
27 respected among ladies but not gents. Men gossip about me, they say that I
28 go in the offices and that this is disrespectful in Muslim society. All the
29 departments dislike me because of my boldness. I never give bribes when I
30 can just raise my voice. Every officer has fear of me now and thinks I can
31 expose their corruption. When I come... they say to each other that they
32 should do my work fast so there is no argument and I will go away. They say
33 they should do whatever I want silently as otherwise I will give them abuse.
34 These are the main reasons why ladies come to me for help as I can [go]
35 boldly and without money.
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41 Rukmani, Sameera and Rehana might not be typical women in their communities.
42 However, they illustrate potential agentic capacity in people's interactions with the
43 state. While state encounters activate patterns of waiting and queuing that entrench
44 women's vulnerabilities - intersected by class, caste and religion -, women
45 simultaneously challenge state processes through embodied performances, affective
46 confrontations and the subversion of gendered hierarchies.
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49 Conclusion

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52 In this article, we have focused on time and temporality to gain insights into poor
53 Indians' encounters with the state and the modalities through which citizens and
54 citizenship are produced. Across India, many experience everyday interactions with
55 the state through a temporal lens. Spatio-temporal processes such as waiting,
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2 queueing, and being sent back and forth lie at the heart of routine interactions with
3 state officials, offices, middlemen and brokers. Some waiting is chronic in nature,
4 such as when widows wait for years to draw a pension. Yet much evolves over
5 shorter periods here encapsulated in 'on the day' and 'to and fro' waiting. The
6 narratives of waiting and circulating that we recount in this paper capture the
7 temporal and spatial impositions that bureaucratic encounters entail.
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10 Our material from Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh has offered new insights into these
11 interactions. First, in line with Auyero (2011, 2012) and Chatterjee (2008), we have
12 shown how temporal processes operate as mechanisms of power and control
13 through which state actors and other mediators seek to produce dependent 'patients
14 of the state' rather than full rights-bearing citizens. These less-than-complete-
15 citizens often find themselves trapped in spatio-temporal interactions that continually
16 thwart legitimate claims. Here, we concur with Chatterjee's argument that the poor
17 'make their claims on government, and are governed, not within the framework of
18 stable constitutionally defined rights and laws, but rather through *temporary*,
19 contextual and unstable arrangements embodied in direct political negotiations'
20 (2008: 57, emphasis added).
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24 Secondly, we have illustrated the role played by money, networks, patronage and a
25 range of performative acts. Abdul's story of the 'Doctor', for example, reveals how
26 waiting times can be reduced by paying the right fee to the right person. Here,
27 wealthier people have a clear advantage by being able to utilise a combination of
28 money and middlemen. Where possible the rural and urban poor seek to avoid
29 payments by calling on whatever connections they have. Visanti's case reveals how
30 even for Dalits, one's social networks is key to reducing waiting times and return
31 visits. Others, such as Joy, resort to various embodied and affective performances:
32 shouting, begging or crying to get things done. Sometimes, as with Rukmani and
33 Rehana, this can be more forceful, extending to open confrontation. Following
34 Navaro-Yashin (2007) we argue that it is not only material documents that are
35 affectively loaded, but also the processes of waiting and queuing through which they
36 are obtained. The interactions through which paperwork is accessed and claims are
37 made are infused with various affective expressions: disrespect, humiliation, non-
38 recognition, anger and determination. However, it is the very same affective terrain
39 that offers avenues for people to appeal to the state and to challenge gendered
40 normativities and forms of subjugation based on caste and religion. In all these
41 strategies, even the moments of waiting, ordinary people activate their agency to
42 subvert the state's temporal impositions. As such, they appear not so much as
43 'passive' patients of the state (Auyero, 2011) than as actors who seek to mobilise any
44 resources available to them, whether material or affective, in their appeals to the
45 state. However, even when claiming their legally ascribed rights, access to schemes
46 and benefits continues to rely on negotiations and mediations that make citizenship
47 incomplete, differentiated, and often temporary.
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Thirdly, our evidence shows that agency often remains hinged on class position as well as structural inequalities of caste and religion. In rural Tamil Nadu, Dalits suffer discrimination from higher caste Hindus, while in Saharanpur Muslims often face disproportionate problems from both local Hindu state actors and national level anti-Muslim politics. Crucially, however, across both localities, poverty, caste and religion intersect with strongly gendered patterns of state-society engagement. Not only do women take the burden of 'work' involved in waiting and queuing, but their time and effort are considered less valuable by both household members and state officials. Male family members refuse to forgo wages and time to queue for new cards. In offices, state actors let women wait and come back as if time doesn't matter to them. By spending time and effort, women play a key role in claiming rights and hence the making of citizenship itself. They queue, wait, return, beg and shout. But in the process, as Salma's observations remind us, they risk honour and dignity and are routinely exposed to disrespect, humiliation and abuse. As women are made to wait, beg and be patient, gendered power hierarchies are being reproduced at the state-society interface. Indeed, the temporal processes of bureaucratic encounters and their affective impacts clearly produce not only state power and control, but also differentiated modalities - or hierarchies - of citizenship and gendered dispositions that entrench vulnerability and violence. As such, waiting for the state includes waiting for the ability to become recognised as Indian citizens and exert full citizenship rights, irrespective of gender, caste, religion or class.

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