

Trans Imaging of Non-Normative Homes:  
The Critical Geographies of Higher Education-LGBTQ+ Student Housing in Delhi  
and Mumbai, India

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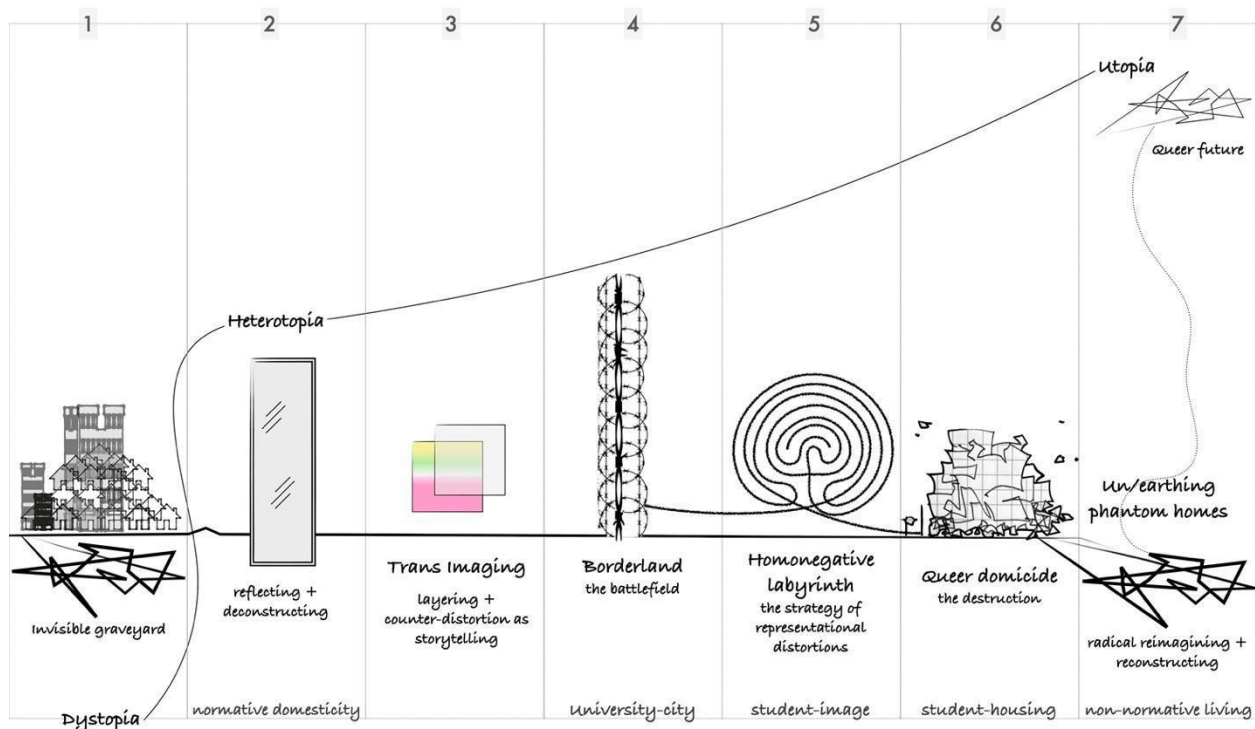
A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO  
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## Abstract



“Student housing” rarely discursively figures in the contemporary urban Indian public imagination because of a deeply rooted cis-heteronormative conflation of marriage, housing, and permanence. This dissertation considers what it means for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer (LGBTQ+) postsecondary students to belong in an everyday trans-/homonegative society. Through empirical case studies of on- and off-campus geographies of student housing at North Campus, DU, Delhi and Deonar Campus, TISS, Mumbai, I analyse and visualize the invisibilized lived experiences of Higher Education (HE)-LGBTQ+ students in two of India’s megacities. These two campuses are home to radical student-led gender-based housing activism against the patriarchal and cisnormative codes of student accommodations. Gender, however, cannot be activated in isolation, as it intersects with a range of identity axes such as class, caste, region, religion, and (rarely specified) sexuality. This dissertation is based on two phases of



research (August 2020 to April 2021 and June 2022 to October 2022) conducted virtually during the Covid-19 global pandemic. In-depth interactive spatial storytelling with 23 HE-LGBTQ+ students was combined with semi-structured interviews with 12 student housing stakeholders (3 urban planners, 5 brokers, and 4 landowners) and autoethnography. My transdisciplinary training as a geographer-artist-architect was used to develop a “trans imaging” technique to see-through and spatio-visually represent how cis-heteropatriarchy codes normative domestic blueprints in ways that enable queer domicile. I argue that queer-domicidal blueprints exceed the spatial scale of marital family homes shaping student spatialities at university-city edges and student housing and homes in India. This dissertation advocates for unfollowing normative domestic blueprints and learning from HE-LGBTQ+ students’ (un)homings and reimaginings of non-normative home-futures.

## **Dedication**

I dedicate this dissertation to Pina, my mother, for initiating me into with a steadfast vision for, and an unwavering faith and selfless investment in my educational pathway.

હું આ મહાનિબંધ પિનાને સમર્પિત કરું છું, મારા માતા, જેમણે મારા શૈક્ષણિક માર્ગની અડગ દ્રષ્ટિ, અતૂટ વિશ્વાસ, અને નિઃસ્વાર્થ યોગદાન સાથે શરૂઆત કરી.

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My gratitude also extends to the members of my supervisory committee: Professor Ranu Basu, and Professor Luisa Sotomayor for their invaluable expertise, warmth, support, and encouragement throughout my dissertation journey. I am immensely grateful to both my doctoral supervisor and committee members for their careful and critical readings of my work and continued professional guidance as I take the next steps towards my academic career.

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walls to think out loud at IIHS, Bangalore was awe-inducing. I absolutely held onto the ‘samahan’-in-my-tea tradition which helped me sustain Toronto winters! At York University, I have been most grateful to my studio penthouse at Atkinson. I imagined a long desk by the window to write my entire dissertation at while seeing the sky shift, and I got just that!

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I have seen this dissertation as a culmination of gender, sexuality and space trilogy preceded by my research paper and thesis as an urban fellow at IIHS, Bangalore, visual art thesis and degree exhibition at AUD, Delhi, and architectural thesis at IPSA, Rajkot. I find myself incredibly fortunate to have had the opportunity to evolve my thesis projects with close mentorships of Drs. Gautam Bhan, Shefali Jain, and Gauri Bharat. I have many more mentors at each of these institutes that I would like to extend my gratitude to, especially to Dr. Sudeshna Mitra, Chayanika Shah, Rekha Raghunathan, Shriya Anand, late Vivan Sundaram, Geeta Kapur, Yesheen Vibhakar, Hitesh Changela, Bakul Jani, Devang Parekh, and Kiran Singh.

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## List of Acronyms

ARSD: Atma Ram Sanatan Dharma College, South Campus, DU

CWG 2010: Commonwealth Games 2010

DDA: Delhi Development Authority

DMRC: Delhi Metro Rail Corporation

DU: Delhi University, Delhi

gnc/nb: gender non-conforming/non-binary

GNH: Gender Neutral Hostel at TISS

HE-LGBTQ+ students: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Queer+ identifying Higher Education students

HEIs: Higher Education Institutions

IH: Internalised Homophobia

IOE: (Higher Education) Institute of Eminence in India

JMC: Jesus and Mary College for women, South Campus, DU

LSR: Lady Sri Ram College for women, South Campus, DU, Delhi

MBD Campaign: *Main Bhi Dilli* Campaign

MMRC: Mumbai Metro Rail Corporation

MPD: Delhi Master Plan

NCR/NCT: National Capital Region/Territory of Delhi, India

NEP: National Education Policy

NGT: National Green Tribunal

NIUA: National Institute of Urban Affairs

PGs: Paying Guest accommodations

POE: Post-Occupancy Evaluation

RLA: Ram Lal Anand College, South Campus, DU

TISS: Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai

TISS ASA: Ambedkarite Students' Association at TISS

TISS QC: Queer Collective at TISS

## Glossary of Trans-Intervened Terms<sup>1</sup>

**Disbelonging:** A distorted sense of belonging that cannot neatly fit the binary of un/belonging (see also *Spatial Dysphoria*).

**Domifeticide:** (from “domicide” and “feticide”), is one of the three interim conceptual terms to expand and re-vision “queer domicile” that underscores the intentional and selective destruction of non-normative homes in their conception stages, thereby, denying them materialisation.

**Domipanopticide:** (from “domicide” and “panopticon”), is one of the three interim conceptual terms to expand and re-vision “queer domicile” that reveals the discrediting of privacy needs by constant micro-surveilling and warding of single young adults with the intent of instilling and internalising cis-heteronormative moral sensibilities.

**Domitericide:** (from “domicide” and “iter-”), is one of the three interim conceptual terms to expand and re-vision “queer domicile” that refers to the intentional and selective destruction of non-normative housing pathways (and not just the plot site of a home).

**Materealizing:** the wordplay of *matereal* challenges and disrupts the cisnormative equation of material as “real” in counterdistinction to the felt, imagined, virtual, augmented, and trans dimensions as unreal, even fake.

**Phantom Homes:** drawing from the scholarly discussions from the emerging neuroscience and regenerative sciences with trans studies on the “phantom limb/penis” phenomena (Case and Ramachandran, 2012; Ramachandran and McGeoch, 2008) where one’s sense of

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<sup>1</sup> Trans-individuals are often at odds with for not coherently fitting within the cis grammars whether of languages (words and pronouns), of visual embodiments (gender expressions and fashion), or of gender neutral spatialities. In the context of trans artists and activists countering cis perceptions with trans interventions to be able to see ourselves in the cis world of misgendering, if not entire invisibility, I offer these terms as my own construction and contribution of this thesis as “trans-intervened terms”.

belonging is in fact located in the incorporeal body part, “phantom homes” is conceptualised to carry a similar *trans* desire and potential for bridging, disrupting, and reworking the spatial world of normative binaries—real/imagined, present/absent, in/corporeal, permanence/transience.

**PsychoDigitalGeographies:** is introduced as a sub-disciplinary exploration in art-based creative research methodologies utilizing the emerging digital technology (e.g., VR, AR, and AI) as interfaced with the human mind to counter and transform cis perceptions with trans codings.

**Spatial Dysphoria:** the spatial extension of gender dysphoria or body dysphoria speaks to queer ways of living that are forced to either fit or fight cis-heteronormatively informed spatial configurations. (see also *disbelonging*).

**Trans imaging:** as see-through layering techniques that allows creative possibilities to represent the invisible (/invisibilized) and unheard (/muted) dimensions of non-normative lives, living, and homes.

**Trans subjects:** is a conceptual category formulated to consider both the figure of transient and liminal bodies on the threshold of normative binaries (e.g., students, migrants, trans/gnc, single, divorced, and widowed individuals, and tenants) as well as transient and liminal spaces (e.g., borderlands, institutional, student, and rental housing and homes).



# 1

## Introduction | Beating Queer and Trans Graveyards

# 1

## Introduction: Beating Queer and Trans Graveyards

*April 11, 2022*

*With two of my friends, I head to the cafeteria for lunch. It is busy. Several students and faculty members are eating. My friends order prawn tacos. As soon as we get served and begin eating, one of the waiters comes and sits in the empty seat across from us at our table. Unexpectedly, he starts talking to us, drawing our attention to the food ordered on other tables. It seems friendly at first but soon turns bizarre as we realised, he was pointing to us only those who had ordered and were eating vegetarian food. Trying to make sense of what exactly is going on, my friends and I decide not to engage him to make him leave. He keeps talking to us, however, and becomes increasingly aggressive. One of my friends gets up from his seat, while another finally speaks up. I look at him as his tone and face turns threatening. I ask my friend to stop engaging him and that since it did not seem like he would leave our table, we should. He gets up and I anticipate him attacking us. He picks up a fork from the table to attack with straight at my friend's eyes—thankfully, my friend is wearing specs. I at once get up from my seat, pulling my friend away, ready to run to save our lives calling for help. Amidst all the chaos, we find out he is an imposter who did not even work there—*

—I gasp at the petrifying dream and wake up, 7500 miles away in Toronto, to the Sunday news of the JNU attack (Jain, 2022, April 11). At Kaveri Hostel, students who were eating non-vegetarian food in the hostel mess were attacked by a group of Hindu right-wing students leaving 16 students severely injured.

(Author's field journal, 2022)

Normativity in India, in particular, is intersectional. Many forms of normativity—class, caste, religion, region and sub/ethnicity, age and ability, and most dominantly internalised gender and sexuality—intensify at the domestic scale (Hubbard, 2012), whether institutional or private.

Growing up as a left-handed child, I was surrounded by well-meaning adults who tried adamantly to convert me. Although they failed in their endeavour, much before I had learnt the language, I cultivated an embodied knowing that certain parts of my identity will be deemed

non-normative by the dominant society; that societal norms will discriminate against and refrain some of us from living, practicing, and expressing a voluntary self. I also observed how dominant societal norms worked to dictate not just how we imagine and inhabit our own bodies (independently and in relation to others), but also different spaces, especially in the everyday intimacies of homes. Dominant social norms in contemporary India naturalise and are foundational to imagining domesticity (namely, ‘home’) and how we must inhabit it every day for the rest of our lives. However, homes are made in many different kinds of places outside of familial relations, including between roommates, friends, and lovers, or simply with the self. A range of different “homings” are studied across different on- and off-campus student housing typologies as they challenge the norms of marital reproductive domesticity.

Micro-geographies of university residential campuses often replicate and extend the normative domestic codes of an upper-caste, cis-heteropatriarchal, monogamous, reproductive family home, including, among other things, student hostels<sup>2</sup> coded in gender binary, policing of the food provided in the hostel mess (often run by student committee) as reported above, exclusive gender-based uneven access to several on-campus amenities and hostel rules for women students and women’s hostels, as well as denied inter-hostel mobility between men’s and women’s hostels. Similar normative home-script dominates the off-campus student housing landscape, including private rental apartments and exclusive to the case of India, Paying Guest accommodations (colloquially known as PGs) where a private cis-heteronormative family home is in part or fully converted to house migrant students. Like university hostels, these are also gendered establishments with exclusive restrictive rules for resident women students. Student housing, throughout this dissertation, is posited as a critical site of double crisis in education *and*

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<sup>2</sup> Hostels in India refer to the on/off campus dormitories. These are gendered establishments to house students during the course of their study, with often disparate sets of rules for women’s hostel building.

housing.

In the wake of ongoing governmentalist violence on university campuses in India where Dalit<sup>3</sup> and Muslim students are forcibly evicted from, found committing suicide in, and gone missing from their hostel rooms on university housing, academic residential campuses across megacities in India have become explicit sites of oppression and resistance based on caste, class, region and religion. Issues of gender and sexuality, however, remain elided even within radical student political groups. The historically intertwined casteist-patriarchy fundamentally shaped the first University Education Commission (1947) in post-colonial India, that not only disabled women's access to education, in fact imagined education as a disability for women who were expected to lead their lives as dutiful housewives (Agrawal and Aggarwal, 1992). Although feminist resistance has since led to changes in the education system increasing the literacy rate of women in India, spatial configurations of hostels and PGs for women students remain deeply patriarchal. In 2015, women students at the University of Delhi (DU) came together with the Pinjra Tod Campaign (literally meaning "break the cage") against the patriarchal hostel rules. Although not the first initiative, PinjraTod has gained momentum at a nation-wide scale unlike any other student-led activism at the intersection of gender and housing. From its campus-based origins, it has mobilized dissent off-campus to PGs for women students in adjacent campus neighbourhoods within the capital city and has developed national campaigns to connect women students across city-regions through social media networks. Removal of exclusive rules for women students and women's hostels such as curfew times and unequal access to on-campus amenities such as libraries has been on top of its agenda. The PinjraTod movement, however,

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<sup>3</sup> According to the Hindu caste system that is deeply embedded in the notions of im/purity and un/touchability, Dalits are members of the lowest caste socially responsible to work as manual scavengers for the upper castes, whereas Brahmins as members of the uppermost caste are entitled to practice knowledge production.



remains largely focused on cis-gender feminist issues to the neglect of its intersections with queer and trans<sup>4</sup> politics.

Despite several scholarly works showing a diverse genders and sexualities history in ancient India (see, for example, Vanita, 2005), the anti-sodomy law of Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) during the colonial rule in India continues to dominate the socio-legal realm across the country. Queer activists in Delhi first held the Queer Pride March on June 30, 2008, as a way to lobby against discriminatory laws and to decriminalise same-sex love. A year prior to Delhi hosting the global mega sports event of the Commonwealth Games (CWG) 2010, in 2009, the Delhi High Court partially struck down Section 377 only to be reinstated in 2013. It was not until 2018, when the Supreme Court of India repealed Section 377. India, however, is yet to recognise same-sex marriages, an ongoing petition filed by queer lawyers and activists in early 2023 (Khan and Jain, 2023), being considered by the Supreme Court as we speak. Similarly, trans individuals and their rights in the socio-legal realm of India have largely been unregistered and misrecognized. On the one hand, dominant understanding of transgender in mainstream Indian society is limited to the hijra communities, treated as social outcasts from the civil life and spatialities, to the neglect of the wider range of spectrum of gender non-conforming individuals. Advocacy for queer and trans rights, on the other hand, neglected the lower socio-economic and religion based trans lives of the hijra and kothi communities, rendering the queer political

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<sup>4</sup> Trans describes a person who does not identify with the gender they were assigned at birth. It is an umbrella term that encompasses a range of dissimilar identities and experiences (Cromwell 2002). In the context of India, “transgender” identity commonly lies at the intersection of caste/class, religion, and gender and predominantly understood to refer to Hijra and Kothi communities historically excluded from the social institutions in India, while being ignorant of the wider range of gender non-normative individuals. I use the term transgender, or trans, in this dissertation to describe the diverse gendered experiences of student-participants, many of whom used the term trans, non-binary, and gender non-conforming (gnc) to identify themselves.

movement in India often as elitist. Much work remains to be done to queer the socio-legal India, and its direct implication on the everyday life of LGBTQ+ citizens of the country.



**Figure 1.1. Beating queer and trans graveyards.** Source: Author's (2023) vision, primary sketch, and text-prompt rendered by MidJourney and followed by digital layer-edits.

Following the legal recognition of the third gender (NALSA v. UOI, 2014)—and protests criticizing the amendments in the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill 2016 and 2018 from the queer and trans community—in 2018, the students’ Queer Collective (QC) at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai was able to set up “India’s first and only gender-neutral hostel” prioritizing the creation of “an inclusive and a liberal space” for trans and gender non-conforming (gnc) students (Sahoo, 2018). Yet, cis-heteronormative<sup>5</sup> notions of family home, domesticity, and non-normative genders and sexualities<sup>6</sup> identities in India intertwine to occupy what can be understood as tacit geographies of everyday discrimination. It is from this place of beating queer and trans graveyards buried beneath the footings of normative family homes (Figure 1.1) that I stand to tell the stories of higher education (HE)-LGBTQ+ students in India. I use the metaphor of graveyard as a tacit site of non-normative homes that are denied the language, the law, and the land to express, surface and develop (unpacked in detail below). Therefore, legal geographies (material visible) as juxtaposed with psychogeographies (mentally invisible) of LGBTQ+ lives in India are indispensable as a framework for this doctoral research project (see Chapter 4).

Coincidentally, like the language of queerness, “student housing” as a term is not readily applicable to the Indian context. In fact, I recount in Chapter 6, how “student housing” is considered an oxymoron reflecting the spatiotemporal norm on a straight time pathway where a student life is considered as a transient phase whereas housing is meant as something permanent. Across India, the term used for student housing is “hostels” which in the west can be equivalent

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<sup>5</sup> ‘Cisnormativity’ is the assumption that all human beings have a gender identity that matches the either of the two normatively recognized sexes assigned at birth. ‘Cis-’ and ‘cisgender’ thus, are terms used to refer to ‘normatively gendered bodies – and the social privilege that comes with this’ (Johnston, 2016). Although a concept so far used in the context of gender dichotomy, in this dissertation, I extend its theoretical application to various forms of spatial dichotomy, and the compounded socio-spatial implications of cisnormativity with heteronormativity.

<sup>6</sup> Non-normative genders and sexualities is used as an opening to self-identification across definitive “labels”.

to student dormitories. I draw critical implications and limitations of this distinction in terminology—and on the normative notion of housing and home—on the spatiality of non-normative homes in India. Located at the outset of student housing research scholarship in India, I continue to use “student housing” throughout my dissertation to not only contribute perspectives from global South/India to the predominantly Anglo-American-Australian urban geographies scholarship on student housing, but rather to also reclaim housing and homes outside of familial relations and to challenge the cis-heteronormative spatiotemporal conflation of permanence with marital reproductive homes with the implication of queer love—like the student life—as a transient phase to be ultimately grown out of.

While I have the lived experience as a queer and trans-identifying student—like my primary research participants—in multiple mega-city regions of Ahmedabad, Hyderabad, New Delhi, Bangalore, and Mumbai in India that would have each offered a compelling case study for student housing, for this doctoral research project, I have prioritised two university case studies based on student-led activism at the intersection of gender and housing. Two key on-campus student groups have been critical in shifting the on- and off-campus geographies of student housing, namely, as above-mentioned, the PinjraTod campaign led by women students at DU, New Delhi, and the TISS QC led by the queer and trans students at TISS, Mumbai. Accordingly, this doctoral research project focuses on these two exemplary case studies of the 620 acres-wide North Campus, DU, New Delhi and the 21 acres-wide Deonar campus, TISS, Mumbai with an annual student enrolment of 1.89 million and 4000 students, respectively (NIRF, 2020, 2021), and less than 20% of total students housed on-campus. The study, therefore, is not intended to offer a comparative urban study of the two university campuses and the respective campus neighbourhoods. On the contrary, several student-participants testified to a continuum of

educational and housing journeys between the two megacities. Yet, both the campuses are located in distinct urban contexts that play particular roles within the Indian urban system. New Delhi serves as the National Capital city-state Region and Mumbai as the financial capital. Both New Delhi and Mumbai have dense urban fabrics and have witnessed the largest inflow of migrant populations for education and work in the country.

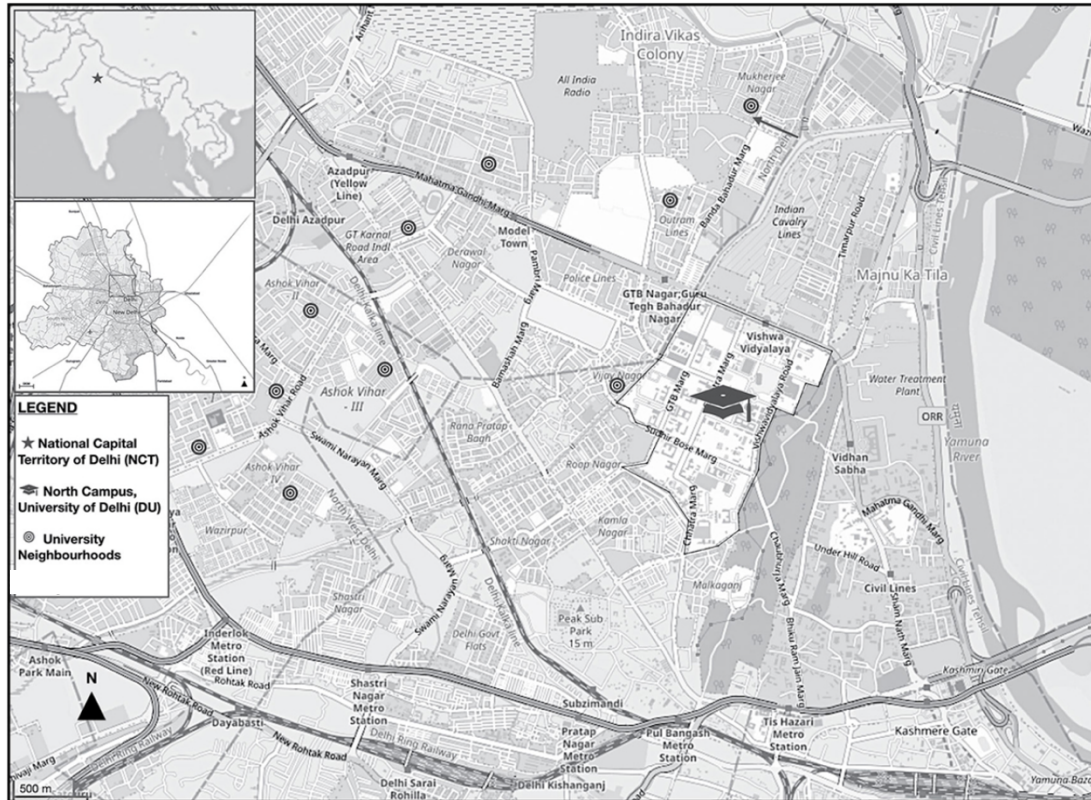
The National Capital Region of Delhi (NCR), located in Northern India on the Yamuna River (Figure 1.2), houses over 30 million people and is projected to overtake Tokyo as the world's largest city by 2030. From Lutyens's British Beaux Arts Plan of Delhi in 1912 to the postcolonial Master Plan of Delhi in 1962, planning has been a powerful instrument for controlling its land uses, bringing "order" to the "disorder" of Delhi's informal settlements (Dupont, 2011). In the last two decades, the vision for the capital city-state has induced a spatial transition from a postcolonial city to a "global metropolis and a world-class city" (DDA, 2010, p. iv). With a rapidly growing population (50% comprising migrants), the ground reality of Delhi cannot be any further from its vision. NCR suffers a massive shortage of affordable housing estimated at 2 million dwelling units, or 10 per cent of the national housing deficit (DDA, 2010). Radical inclusive planning initiatives such as *Main Bhi Dilli* Campaign (MBD)<sup>7</sup> 2020 have been taken on by urban scholars, activists, and artists in the city by bridging the technical plans with the urban publics. Although a range of different urban "permanent" residents are considered within radical inclusive planning initiatives, much like the mainstream planning and policy across global north and global south (Sotomayor et al., 2022), "transient" university student-residents, and especially LGBTQ+ identifying students have not had their voices and stories listened to and represented within community consultation processes.

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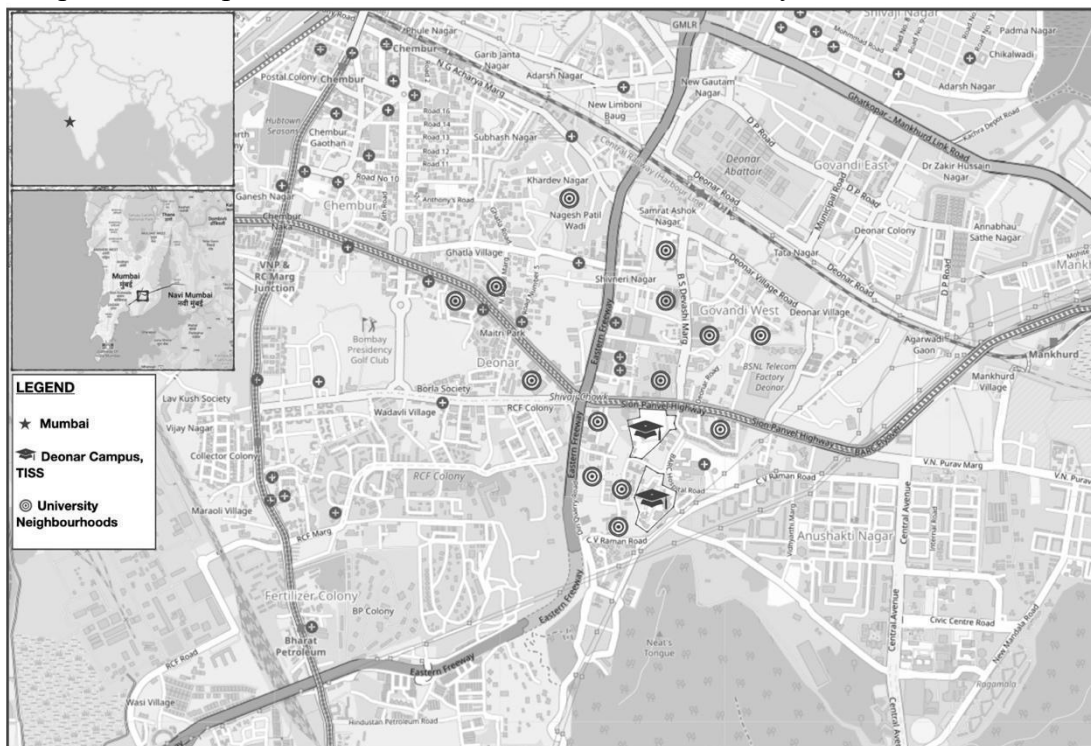
<sup>7</sup> <https://www.mainbhidilli.com>

Mumbai, erstwhile Bombay, the capital city of the Maharashtra, India, located on the south-western coast is the principal port city on the Arabian Sea, and is known as the financial capital of the country (Figure 1.3). It is one of the most densely populated urban areas in the world. Mumbai, like Delhi, has witnessed similar shifts in the planning history from colonial urban spatiality to postcolonial Master Plans to more recent neoliberal Vision Plans (Parpiani, 2012). Mumbai is also home to India's biggest film industry, and textile mills making it the city with largest inflow of migrant population in the country and ranked as "Alpha world city" (GaWC, 2020). Sub/urban spatiality of Mumbai is entrenched with stark socio-spatial contrast with highest slum settlements, working class chawls, cooperative gated bungalow societies, and multimillionaire high rise residential buildings, multinational companies, and headquarters often located proximate to one another. Mumbai continues to be the most expensive city in India to live. Like in the rest of the country, the urban planning remains largely divorced from the housing needs of the floating population of higher education (HE) students in the city, despite the dramatic increase in both the higher education institutions and educational migrants. Throughout this doctoral research fieldwork (and my own lived experience as a professional architect in the country), practicing urban planners, researchers, and activists in both Mumbai and Delhi unequivocally expressed how far the current professional urban spatial practice (and pedagogy) is from being (gender)queered (see Chapter 5).





**Figure 1.2. Map of New Delhi, India, showing the North Campus, DU and campus district.**  
Source: OpenStreetMap overlaid with data from field interviews by Author



**Figure 1.3. Map of Mumbai, India, showing the Deonar Campus, TISS and campus district.**  
Source: OpenStreetMap overlaid with data from field interviews by Author

The primary research question then, that drives this doctoral research project is: *how do university students who identify with non-normative genders and sexualities experience everyday discrimination and precarity in securing housing and making homes in Delhi and Mumbai, India?* To answer this question, three sub-questions are posed and addressed: first, *how do various urban actors (e.g., university administrators, private landlords, housing brokers, and student leaders) conceive of university students and their housing needs vis-à-vis family home and, in so doing, shape and/or contest the socio-spatial contexts within which students secure housing and make homes?* Second, *what are the limits and possibilities of student-led housing activism to confront gender and sexuality-based discrimination and, in so doing, transform the spatiality of student housing?* And third, *what socio-spatial configurations, aesthetics, locations and psychogeographic distances (from familial homes and affiliated university campuses) do the homes of LGBTQ+ university students possess, and, with what re-imaginary possibilities?*

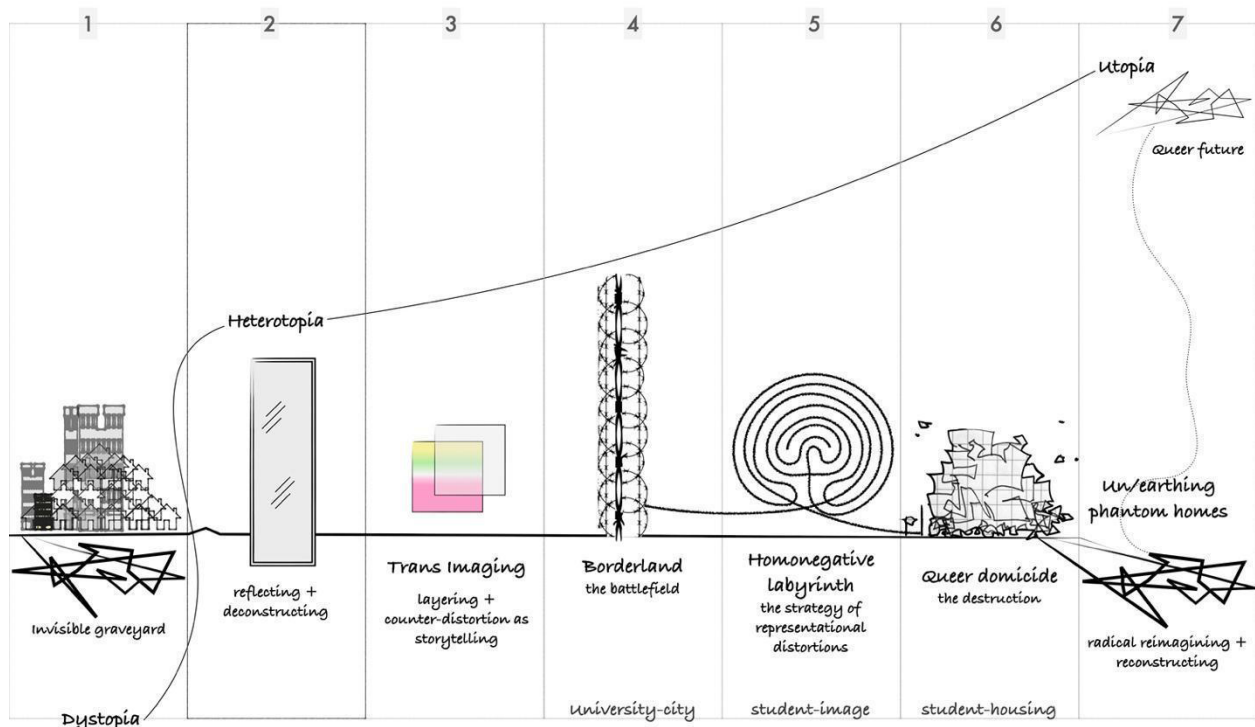
Questions of education and housing crucially entwine in student housing such that they do not necessarily follow, rather may challenge the normative separation between work and home, public and private, as well as education and housing in planning and policymaking. Therefore, my research yields evidence that covers a wide range of issues regarding HE-LGBTQ+ students' lived experiences of on- and off-campus student housing in India. As evidenced in the Appendix, students were not only asked about their experiences of homes, but also a cluster of questions under three themes to elucidate:

- i). their relational understanding and everyday navigation between university, city, and home to speak directly to lacuna of sexuality and LGBTQ+ student-voice within the town-and-gown scholarship;



- ii). individual interpretations of what it means to lead a student-life so as to address different perceptions of the student-image as they emerge from different urban actors in India and from Anglosphere urban geographies of students and student housing; and,
- iii). their housing biographies to offer a long-term understanding of transient housing (and their current place of stay) as in fact in a continuum.

These three themes inform the three main empirical body chapters of the dissertation. Below, I outline the overarching conceptual narrative for the dissertation chapters (Figure 1.4).



**Figure 1.4. Overarching conceptual narrative sketch for chapterization.** Source: Author.

At the outset of this chapter in both its title and subsequent discussion, I introduced the conceptual metaphor of a “graveyard” to refer to the denied language, law, and land for non-normative homes. I further use “beating” in its double meaning of a punishment or assault in

which a specific body/entity is hit repeatedly, but also as throbbing and still alive. Non-normative homes not only lived in queer and trans imagination but also, in some instances, existed in practice (and in memory). I set it up as the site from which I narrate the spatial stories of 23 LGBTQ+ university students, myself included, their lived experiences of student housing in India that get relegated to the invisible realm of a queer graveyard (the queer dystopia), or the uprooted exotic realm of a queer extraterrestrial world (the queer utopia), and as such in either case, treated as phantoms. Chapter 2 then, provides the conceptual framework first, to “deconstruct” (Derrida, 1992) the cis-heteronormative monolith that is the foundation of a monogamous, reproductive, marital family home and to reach the queer burial site, and then second, to disrupt the queer dystopia/utopia dichotomy by intervening with Foucault’s (1967) conceptual theory on “heterotopia”. I further juxtapose Foucault’s spatial concept of heterotopia with the embodied focus in Oswin’s (2010) “queered subjects” and Aizura’s (2018) “mobile subjects” to formulate the spatial-embodied concept of “*trans subjects*” as it may be applicable to at once students and student housing and homes as transient bodies and/in spaces on the borderlands of the university as it interfaces with the city. I go on to localize heterotopia to the intimate scale of home and domesticities and plural dimensions of self in Ortega’s (2014) concepts of “hometactics” and “multiplicitous self” to derive a working understanding of what I have called, “*spatial dysphoria*”. Like body dysphoria, spatial dysphoria may be understood as a form of *distorted* sense of belonging that may not firmly fit the binary divide of neatly belonging or unbelonging. Finally, I apply the emerging and the very nascent work at the intersection of neuroscience, Augmented Reality (AR) digital technology, and trans studies on the “phantom penis phenomenon” where a sense of belonging for some trans individuals is in fact, located in the incorporeal body part perceived to be “absent”. Such absence offers re-imaginary

possibilities for unearthing and grounding non-normative “*phantom homes*”. The entire theoretical derivation is developed in detail in Chapter 2.

In dialogue with the above theoretical framework, in Chapter 2, I place different bodies of sub/disciplinary scholarship in conversation with each other—queer and trans urban geographies, interdisciplinary urban scholarship on town-and-gown and studentification, and critical geographies of home—to attend to the multi-scalar and multidimensional questions of student housing and/as non-normative homes. The rapidly increasing interdisciplinary urban scholarship on town-and-gown and studentification is integral to my research work, most notably for its debates on the changing university-city relationship, and the role of higher education students and rapidly increasing student housing demands in urban renewal and gentrification of neighbourhoods surrounding the university campuses. However, as will be discussed in following chapters, much of the town-and-gown, studentification, and gentrification literatures attends to class, race, and rarely even gender (though only within the framework of cis-binary) dimensions to the utter neglect of sexuality. I identify the need to queer (the student-image within) the studentification literature, and therefore, the queer and trans urban geographies scholarship provides the foundation of my research project. Finally, I integrate a trans critique to disrupt the cis-heteronormative limits of the debates within the feminist and queer geographies of domesticities. Considering cis-heteropatriarchy in the intimate space of student housing and homes as having direct mental health implications on LGBTQ+ post-secondary students in India, I further answer and contribute to the call of a few feminist and queer scholars who have identified a research lacuna at the intersection of mental health, trauma, and well-being, and home(less)nes (Boccagni, 2022; Boccagni and Miranda Nieto, 2021; Ortega-Alcázar and Wilkinson, 2020; Wilkinson and Ortega-Alcázar, 2019 & 2017; Tucker, 2010; Robinson, 2005).

The juxtaposition of these bodies of literature pushes the spatial pedagogy, practice, and policymaking to take notes from the otherwise hidden and unheard dimensions of the lived and felt experiences of LGBTQ+ post-secondary students with transformative reimaginary possibilities for non-normative homes.

In Chapter 3, I employ a transdisciplinary methodological approach to represent the “unrepresentable” dimensions of queer and trans students’ lives. Inspired by Halberstam’s queer “scavenger methodology” that “attempts to combine methods that are often cast as being at odds with each other [and] refuses the academic compulsion toward disciplinary coherence” (Halberstam, 1998, p. 13), I utilize my own transdisciplinary training as a geographer-artist-architect to offer the concept of *trans imaging* as see-through layering techniques that allows creative possibilities to represent the invisible and unheard dimensions of non-normative lives, living, and homes. Equivalent to an X-ray vision capable of piercing through certain bodily solidities to reveal invisible structures, I offer trans imaging as a technique that deploys trans vision to see-through cisnormative solidities of: conventional disciplinary boundaries (in Chapter 3), the university-city campus edge (in Chapter 4), trans/homonegative perceptions of the student-image on a cis-straight time pathway (in Chapter 5), and the invisible queer domicidal violence of normative domestic blueprints (in Chapter 6). I also discuss thus, how this dissertation takes on a crucially hybrid spatial-visual-textual form of scholarship. Through annotated technical architectural drawings, analytical and conceptual diagrams, as well as graphic renderings of student-testimonies, I demonstrate how, for example, cis-heteronormativity manifests spatially through configurations and administration of student housing, and therefore, its everyday impact on the lived and felt experience of LGBTQ+ student-residents. In that, this dissertation considers “image as an integral component of the inquiry process” (Irwin and

Cosson, 2004) and as an analytical-creative visual art form of representing and spatial storytelling of otherwise relegated to the invisible and denied non-normative lives and living. Therefore, the range of images included in this dissertation are not aesthetic art-objects but rather are crucial junctures in the analytical thinking and visualising that push the opaque disciplinary boundaries which as queer scholars have highlighted, fail to register and map the “unrepresentable” (Brown and Knopp, 2008) affective dimensions, such as cis-heteronormativity, trauma, and phantoms in space. Considering the underrepresentation of queer and trans lives, I also draw from my own two decade-long higher educational route as interlaced with housing biography as a queer and trans-identifying student, in part as an autoethnographic approach to informing my research design and methodology.

The data that informs the empirical body chapters was collected in two phases during the Covid-19 global pandemic. In having to flexibly adjust and creatively overcome several constraints of being positioned as a trans-national researcher based in Canada with fieldwork in India during global pandemic-related travel bans and restrictions, I combine a range of trans-disciplinary tools and framework to my research methodological approach that I found handy throughout different stages of fieldwork (research design, data collection and critical analysis, and the creative-intellectual installation of spatial stories) in this dissertation. The first phase (August 2020 to April 2021) comprised virtual in-depth interactive interviews with 23 LGBTQ+ identifying university students, the primary research participants of my study, to construct their spatial stories using Google Earth tracing, mental mapping, photo elicitation, and video tours. Due to the inaccessibility of ‘the field’ during this global-national crisis due to the pandemic or governmental-legal action against student leaders and heightened security on university campuses, I also relied on the content analysis of secondary data, namely, national policies on

education and housing, urban master plans and vision documents, university vision statements and student handbook for hostels, rental housing research reports, print media articles, and open access legal case files. In the second phase (June to September 2022), during partial lockdowns in India, I conducted virtual and in-person semi-structured interviews with 3 planners, 5 housing brokers, and 4 landowners for a total of 12 urban actors involved in shaping the student housing market in the two case study cities. All of these methodological details are discussed in Chapter 3.

Each of the three main body chapters (see frames 4-6 in Figure 1.3) answers the three research sub-questions outlined earlier. Through the analysis of the student testimonies in contemporary urban Indian megacities, I frame critical geographies of non-normative homes in India as a warzone. The first body Chapter 4 sets up *the site of war*—the borderlands of the university and the city. This chapter critically disrupts the spatial dichotomy within the town-and-gown literatures and transforms the couplet, “university-city” to a triad by consciously inserting student homes. This shift importantly queers the studentification literature, undoes the conflation of university and the heterogenous student body positioned against the studentified residential communities, and amplifies the voices of LGBTQ+ students and their mental maps of relational navigating the university-student home-city relationship. Locating the university students and student homes as trans subjects on the borderlands of the university-city, I argue that there is a normative domestication of the university-city relationship, i.e., projecting of and therefore, a ritualistic repeating of the cis-heteronormative domestic script onto the on- and off-campus student housing and homes that works to (re-)traumatize LGBTQ+ postsecondary students who have struggled to mobilize themselves within and beyond their familial homes. It further, crucially merges the site of war and trauma and the intimate space of home, an analytical

bridge built over and across the following two main body chapters. Chapter 5 then unpacks *the military strategic formulation*—homonegative labyrinth of representational distortions of the student-image. It focuses on the role of different urban actors in shaping the on- and off-campus student housing market for HE-LGBTQ+ students. Finally, Chapter 6 is a meditation on *the destruction*, offering a three-fold conceptual revisioning of “queer domicide” (Gorman-Murray et al., 2014; Novicki, 2014). Interrogating the role of queer domicide-enabling blueprints, I conduct post-occupancy evaluation—an architectural study—of student homes as they offer lessons in nano queer openings with reimaginary possibilities for non-normative homes. The study also underscores the resilience and creativity with which LGBTQ+ university students un/make homes within and while countering the multiscalar homonegative labyrinth.

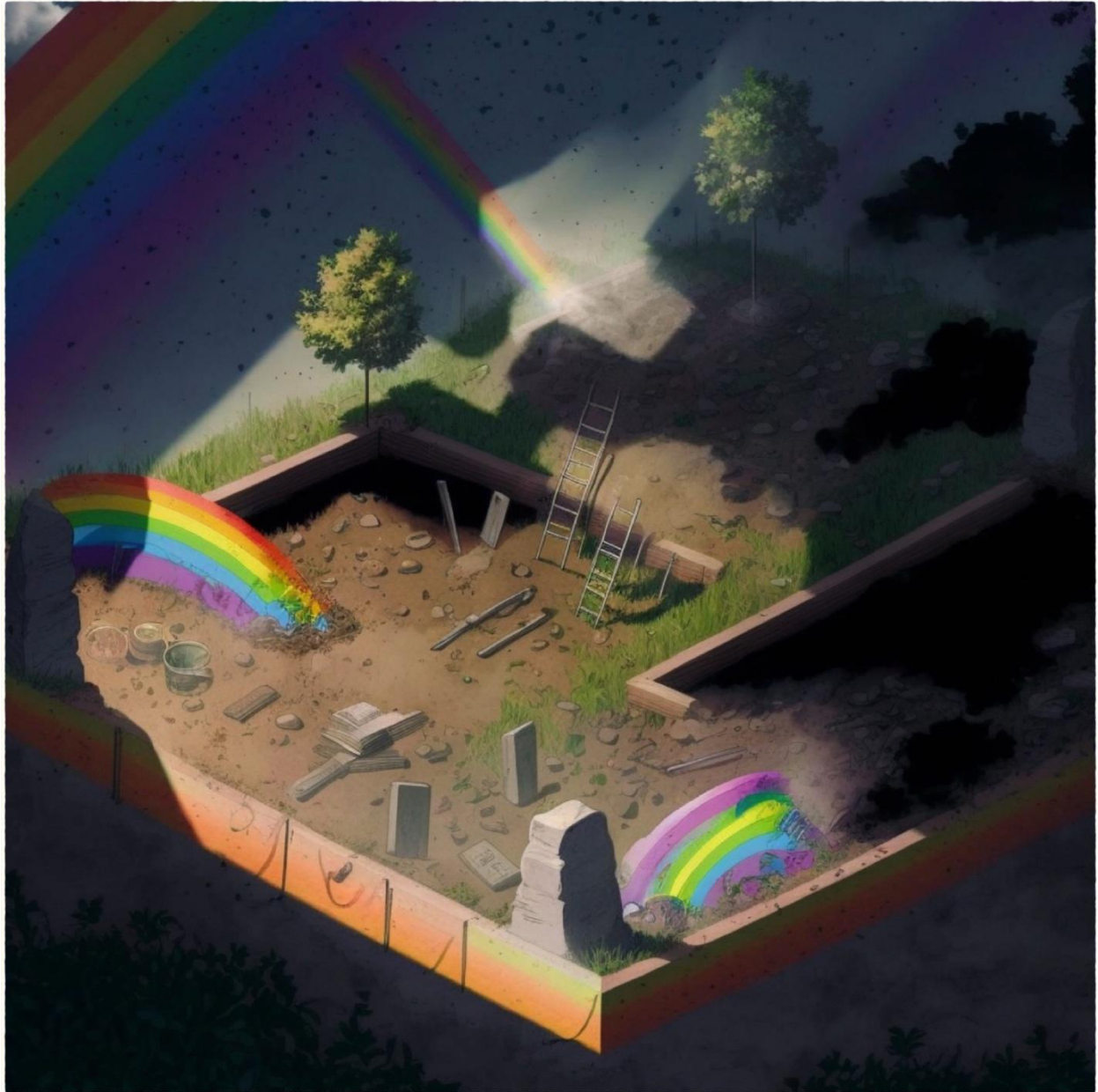
This dissertation reveals the mutually constitutive material and mental geographies of non-normative homes through the cis-heteronormative treatment and approach to spatial codings of student housing outside of marital family home, and its everyday impact on LGBTQ+ university students’ mental health and wellbeing, and sense of socio-spatial belonging in postcolonial Indian megacities. Along with queerphobia and transphobia, I demonstrate intersectional forms of normativities—casteism, Islamophobia, xenophobia and racism, and sexism—that shape the mainstream domestic landscape with disproportionate everyday impact on HE-LGBTQ+ students comprising the multiply vulnerable floating population in India. Doing so is inevitable given the field context of India, as well works to contribute a global South/Indian perspective to the predominant Anglo-American-Australian scholarship on student housing.

Writing this dissertation and engaging with HE-LGBTQ+ students as a queer and trans-identifying student myself, I have shared the lived experiences and/in the urban contexts as my primary research participants. Conducting this dissertation while being based in Toronto,

Canada, further complicated my lived experience (and understanding) of student housing as an international QTPOC student-tenant. I write parts of this introduction while recovering from an unanticipated, and my first encounter with, an anxiety attack. I had just completed writing the first draft of the concluding Chapter 7 with an overwhelming sense of upcoming culmination of my 37-year-long continuous studenthood across disciplines, cities, and countries. I realise and confront a range of questions that intersect with the themes of this dissertation. For example, what does it mean to write about spatial dysphoria and phantom homes, about an ongoing war and trauma of normative domesticities? What does it take to stay connected to my work in Canada and family in India? What does it mean to attend to and balance questions of housing, un/paid work, and visa extension? What does it take to continue to envision a non-normative future for the poststudent self? What does it mean to tread a queer pathway? What resources, support structures, soil and starry alignments grow a non-normative home and a sense of belonging? While the scope of this dissertation does not extend beyond the national context of India, it is important to continue tracing the educational routes as it intersects with housing biographies on queer time pathways for international students and is certainly one of the trajectories that this dissertation holds future possibilities of extension for. At least 5 out of 23 students were already studying abroad in different international contexts at the time of interviews, and 4 more students have been in touch with me for peer guidance in their process of applying for higher education abroad. Questions and the trajectory that I confront personally, I must underscore, are common to international HE studies for Indian young people taking on a “once-in-a-lifetime chance to” socioeconomic mobility along transnational power geometries (Chatterjee et al., 2022; Gill and Walton-Roberts, 2017; Chatterjee et al., 2012), and are especially compounded for QTPOC identifying students yet remain under-researched. This



dissertation, at its beating queer heart, offers critical visualizations of LGBTQ+ postsecondary students' spatial stories and extends an invitation to continue to (gender)queer the discipline of the geography and the academic practice of knowledge production.



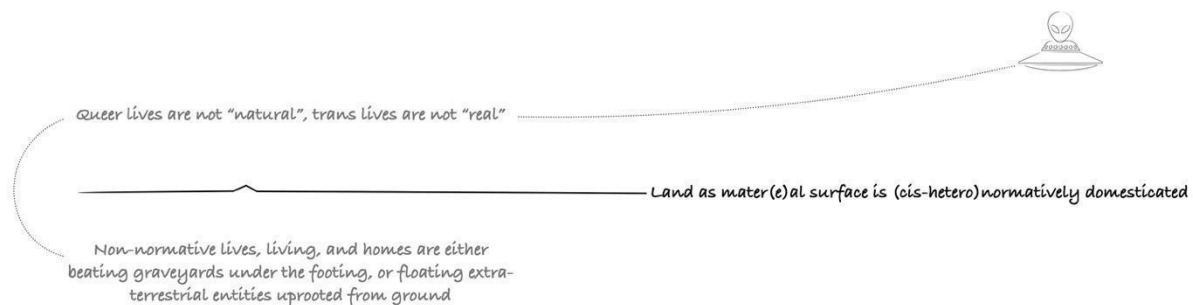
## 2

### Heterotopic Geographies of Student Housing: Deconstructing Normative Domesticity

## 2

# Heterotopic Geographies of Student Housing: Deconstructing Normative Domesticity

## Introduction



**Figure 2.1. Mental map from my fieldnotes.** Source: Author.

To live in society is to live in heterosexuality...Heterosexuality is always already there within all mental categories.

*(The Straight Mind. Wittig, 1992 as cited in Warner, 1993, xxi)*

It testifies to the depth of the culture's assurance (read: insistence) that humanity and heterosexuality are synonymous. This reminder speeds to the ends of the universe, announcing to passing stars that earth is not, regardless of what anyone says, a queer planet.

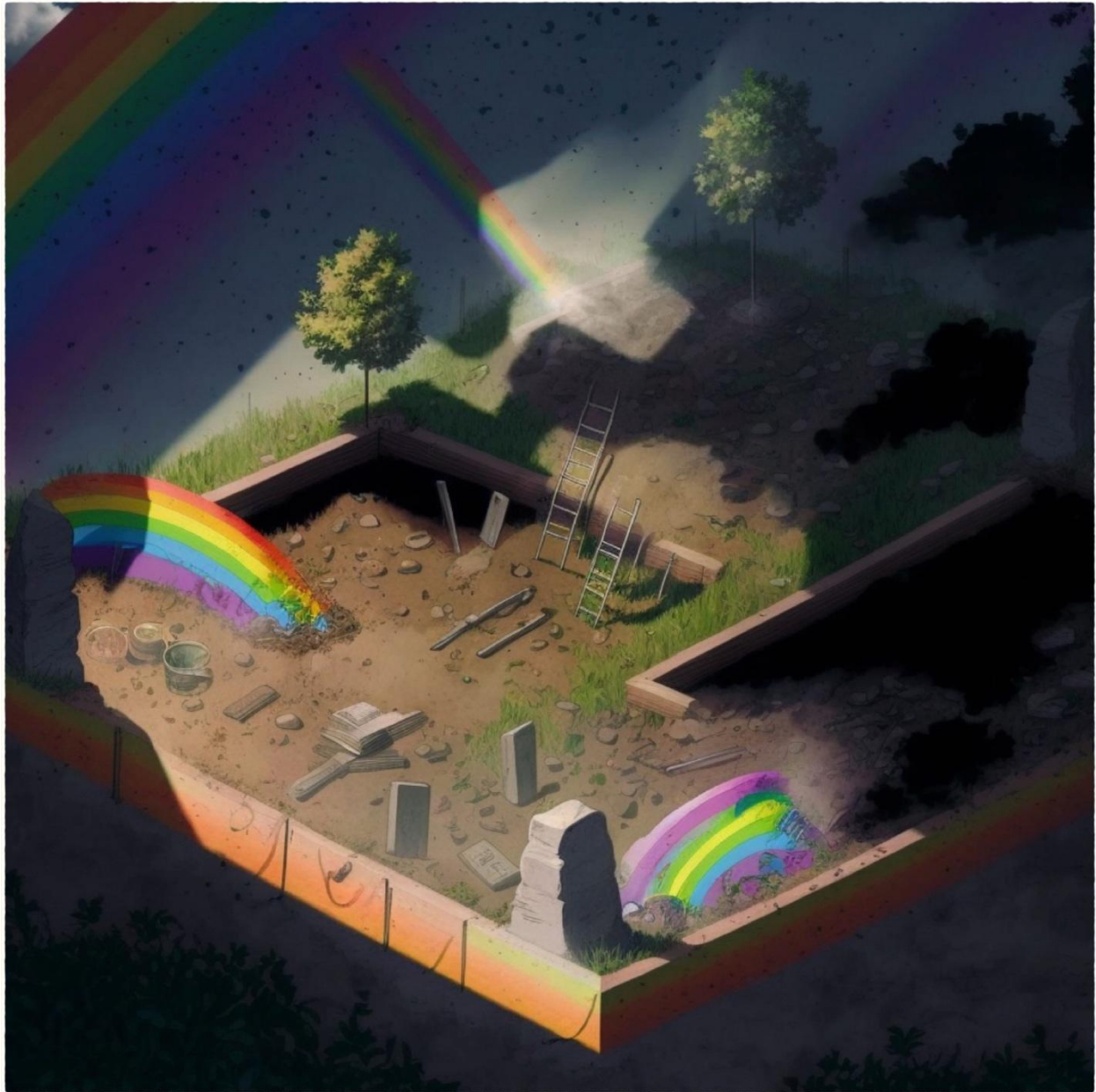
*(Fear of a Queer Planet. Warner, 1993, xxiii)*

LGBTQ+ lives, living, and homes are normatively relegated to the invisible realm of the undersurface, “the psyche” (Wittig, 1992) or of the exotic realm of extra-terrestrial sightings

(Warner, 1993). The land must remain available as a material surface for being—mostly cis-hetero but also trans-homo—normatively domesticated. On this land, non-normative lives, living, and homes are predominantly either buried and dystopian and/or floating and utopian as they must fight the definitively denied ground for everyday identity expressions and alternative livings. For Muñoz (2009, p. 1), “queerness is not yet here”, and is crucially propulsive and future-oriented. “The future” itself, he locates “in the present” thereby disrupting the rigid “binarized logic” (Muñoz, 2009, p. 49). This spatiotemporal “emplacement” of “the future in the present” and of imagined “utopia in the [real] service of subaltern politics” encapsulates Foucault’s spatial concept of “heterotopia”. Foucault’s lesser developed yet widely interpreted and applied concepts of heterotopia is utilised as an overarching theoretical framework for this dissertation project reimagining non-normative homes by studying the HE-LGBTQ+ student housing in India (Figure 2.1). As a space, heterotopia is rooted in *difference* offering the key to critically reflect on and consciously “deconstruct” (Derrida, 1992) the presumed, dominant, and internalised normative notions, in particular at the intersection of gender, sexuality, home, and permanence—the monolith of cis-heteronormative marital domesticity (Figure 2.2).

Derrida imagines a multiple heterogenous self and a divisible foundation against a “monolithic and homogenous” culture, particularly “het culture which thinks of itself as...the indivisible basis of all community” Warner (1993, xxi) . Over the centuries, Derrida’s post-structuralist theory of deconstruction in its opposition of the hegemonic binary system has been crucial to queer and trans theory to actively deconstruct cis-heteronormativity (Watson, 2005; Angelides, 2006; Oswin, 2008; Draz, 2017). De-construction is further particularly useful to this architectural-geographical research inquiry. Application of deconstructivism (Stouhi, 2020, August 11) within architecture remains literal and limited to the “unleashing of infinite

possibilities of playing around with forms and volumes” (Stouhi, 2020, para 2) rather than taking on a critical disciplinary and socio-spatial inquiry of architectural conformities with cis-heteronormativity.



**Figure 2.2. Deconstructing normativity.** Source: Author’s (2023) vision, primary sketch, and text-prompt rendered by MidJourney and followed by digital layer-edits.

Much like the Derridean critique of the monolith structures (of both space and of time), Muñoz (2009, p. 1) reminds us to “strive, in the face of the here and now’s totalizing rendering of reality” to materialize (with parallels to ‘real’) “other ways of being in the world, and ultimately new worlds”. The here and now in Muñoz’s reminder is emptied of queerness projecting a “no future” (Edelman, 2004) and “as generative of a form of intense anticipatory anxiety in the present” inducing a “future fatigue” (Malatino, 2019) for non-normative gender and sexualities individuals. In turn, it germinates the indelible need for the creative exploration of “potentiality or concrete possibility for another world” (Muñoz, 2009, 1). Heterotopia opens the space for all of this striving, thinking, feeling, dreaming and most certainly enacting queerness and transness as a blueprint for alternative living superimposed on and recoding the here and now (see Chapter 3). In each of these above queer theoretical works (as in the works of several queer urban scholars) we are crucially reoriented away from the need to *arrive at the* binary resolve of either a queer and trans-inclusive or exclusively LGBTQ+ future destination, and towards ongoing queer and trans-informed reworkings of the present—something that fuels this doctoral research project.

This chapter first maps the scholarly context to provide sustained discussion and critical engagement with geographical understandings of home and homemaking and the figure of the queer/trans post-secondary student as a particular kind of youth engaged in processes of homemaking on the borderlands of the university as it interfaces with the city. A three-fold approach to the existing urban geographical scholarship is underlined as employed, respectively, in the following empirical chapters. First, moving towards a non-binary approach to the urban scholarship on town-and-gown; second, queering the student-image within the studentification and youthification literatures; and third, disrupting cis-heteronormativity within radical feminist

and queer geographies of home and domesticities. Next, utilising the concepts of “queered subjects” (Oswin, 2010) and “mobile subjects” (Aizura, 2018) compounded with Foucault’s (1967) “heterotopia”, I offer the theoretical formulation of HE-LGBTQ+ students and student housing and homes as “trans subjects” (Arun-Pina, 2021a). I then build out the above theoretical formulation by localizing Foucault’s spatial concept of “heterotopia” to the domestic scale of home and co-locating it with Mariana Ortega’s (2014) concept of “hometactics” to derive a working understanding of “spatial dysphoria” as experienced by HE-LGBTQ+ students that cannot be comprehended within the neat the binary of socio-spatial un/belonging (Arun-Pina, 2023). The chapter concludes by locating heterotopia as the overarching, interlocking theoretical framework integral to this research project on HE-LGBTQ+ student living in India.

## **Bridging Urban Geographies of Students and Geographies of Sexualities**

### **Literatures: Mapping the Scholarly Context**

This section works to bridge the gaps between urban geographies of students and geographies of sexualities and queer geographies literatures. I first map the geographies of sexualities scholarly context, as emerged within both, the global North as well as in India. I then summarize key sub-disciplinary interventions across the global North and global South on town-and-gown, studentification, and critical geographies of home. This three-fold critical review of urban geographical scholarship: undoes the binary of the town versus gown; extracts a queer portrait of students and student living; and disrupts cis-heteronormative limits of domesticities. Therefore, (cis-hetero)normative notions of the university-city relationship, of a student and student life, and of home and domesticity are deconstructed to enable the reimagining of non-normative homes.

Concerned with questions of sexuality and space, the subfield of geographies of sexualities inquiry first emerged over four decades ago predominantly in the context of the global North (Bell and

Valentine, 1995; Binnie, 1999; Johnston and Longhurst, 2010). Entangled with the parallel shift in urban theory “towards cosmopolitan urbanism” (Sandercock, 1997), “the urban” that was then symptomatic of “encountering difference” (Young, 1990), “density and cultural complexity” (Knopp, 1995), as well as “anonymity and diversity” (Brown, 2008), came to represent a haven for “sexual dissidents” (Bell and Binnie, 2004). Subsequently, the liberalization of sexuality in the global North quickly became synonymous with the “spatial narrative” of rural-to-urban migration wherein “the subject moves to a place of tolerance after enduring life in a place of suspicion, persecution and secrecy”, which then got formulated as the queer “metronormativity” critique (Halberstam, 2005, p.37). Scholars observed the uneven “sexual success” in the urban. In the geographies of sexualities literature, scholars were also attentive to undoing the urban/rural binary in the process, which has arguably remained in the queer geographies consciousness to actively disrupt also the global North/South binary. While the “power geometries” across socio-political world regions is undeniable, more research such as that of Browne (2015), Manalansan (2015), Oswin (2010), Peake (2010), and Visser (2008) that finds inconsistencies within and consistencies across cities of the global North/South can open non-binary, intersectional ways of theorizing comparative queer urbanisms (Banerjee and Browne, 2023).

Scholarly attention to intersectionality then emerged as increasingly indispensable to geographies of sexualities. Concerned with the at once hyper-visibility and celebration of some “desirable queers” (i.e., western, white, upper class, gay men) and invisibilizing and delegitimizing of “queers unwanted” (i.e., racialized, immigrants, disabled, and Muslims, for instance) within the rapidly growing neoliberal global production of the pink economy, Lisa Duggan (2002) coined the term “homonormativity” urging scholars to decentre and relocate sexuality at the socio-political intersections of race, class, gender, ability, religion, ethnicity and nationality. Drawing from Duggan’s concept, in the context of post-9/11 US, Jasbir Puar (2007) further proposes “homonationalism” and “queer necropolitics” where she renders explicit the implicit binary split between the sexual other being white and the racial other being straight (Puar, 2007). Several scholars have since invested in and produced research at the intersection of race and sexuality (Haritaworn, 2008; Visser, 2008; Catungal, 2013 also on ethnicity and ability; DasGupta, 2014



also on nationality and ability; Shah, 2015; Rosenberg, 2017). Queer and trans of colour critiques in conjunction with global South perspectives contributed key dimensions to formulating the concept of “queer necropolitics” (Haritaworn, Kuntsman, and Posocco, 2014; Puar, 2007) and “trans necropolitics” (Snorton and Haritaworn, 2013). Queer and trans necropolitics is “a form of power that marks some fraction of a population [queer and trans people of colour] for death even while it deems other fractions [queer and trans white people] suitable for life-enhancing social investment, names the conditions of trans of color existence” (Snorton and Haritaworn, 2022, p. 306). While queer of colour critiques do not as readily apply to this dissertation situated in the field context of India, questions of intersectionality and queer and trans necropolitics remain crucial to the “everyday death worlds” (whether symbolic, social, and/or material) of non-normative embodiments, relationships, and spatialities discussed throughout this dissertation.

While much of the Indian urban scholarship remains divorced from Indian queer scholarship, scholarly attention to queer and trans geographies in India has been gaining momentum (Arun-Pina, 2023, 2021; Banerjea, 2023, 2015, ; Basak and Banerjea, 2023; Banerjea and Borah, 2019; Dasgupta, 2018, 2017; Dasgupta and DasGupta, 2018; Nagar and DasGupta, 2015; Shah, 2015; Sharma, 2020; Sharma, Gandhi and Sabhlok, 2023). Attention to ephemeral queer urban politics such as during Pride walk in Chandigarh (Sharma, 2020; Sharma, Gandhi and Sabhlok, 2023) as well as longer-term queer communities such as Sappho collective in Kolkata (Banerjea, 2015) engage with queer activist community building. South Asian study on Hijra and Kothi communities extends the global North limits of the trans umbrella, while also complicating the role of public/private spaces in queer and trans urban activism within deeply uneven and intersectional geographies of access in South Asia (Hossain, 2021; Nagar and DasGupta, 2015). As discussed earlier in the introduction of this dissertation, there is a limited understanding of the broader range of identifications under the trans umbrella, including say, trans, non-binary, and gender non-conforming individuals, and therefore, there is an urgent need for Indian trans geographies beyond the Hijra and Kothi communities in India. The lacuna in queer geographies literature

to attend to university hostels and adult(ing) students in India (but see Arun-Pina, 2023; Krishnan, 2018) as much as more globally, is further filled in this dissertation.

Over the ensuing four decades, geographies of sexualities, however, has importantly intervened at multiple spatial scales of commercial-consumerist streetscapes and public spaces (Hubbard, 2011; Gorman-Murray and Nash, 2017; but also, Bell and Binnie, 2004 and Oswin, 2015 when conflated with globalization and neoliberalization), neighbourhoods within and beyond gay villages (Bain et al., 2015; Banerjee, 2015; Catungal, 2012; Chen, 2016; Nash and Browne, 2020; Rosenberg, 2017, Ghaziani, 2010), and homes (Gorman-Murray, 2020, 2012, 2008, 2007, 2006; Hubbard, 2012; Morrison, 2013; Oswin, 2010; Pilkey et al., 2015; Cook, 2014; Pilkey, 2014; Schroeder, 2015; Vallerand, 2013; Wilkinson, 2014), territoriality and/of body (Gieseeking, 2016), as well as to a lesser extent spiritual spaces (Campos, 2018; Yip, Munt, and Browne, 2010, Seitz, 2017), and formal institutions (Rosenberg and Oswin, 2015; Krishnan, 2018; Malik, 2018). There is a lacuna of work within the current geographies of sexualities literature at the scale of urban housing (but see Oswin, 2010), with a particularly normative gap (to be filled) between urban sexualities and urban rental housing (i.e., non-ownership based and temporary) and institutional (non-family based and often gendered) housing literatures (but see Krishnan, 2018) to study the consequent relationship of the floating population (i.e., tenants and temporary migrants) in “floating homes” (Arun-Pina, 2021). Geographers of sexualities literature have offered compelling temporal lens critiquing the normative straight time pathway to reproductive domesticity (Freeman, 2010; Halberstam, 2005; Munoz, 2001 to cite a key few). Extending the queer spatio-temporal lens, the focus of this dissertation on on- and off-campus student housing typologies contributes to the scholarly lacuna within geographies of sexualities to attend to *transient* housing and micro-geographies of students literature.

## **A Non-Binary Approach to the Town-and-Gown Scholarship**

In the last two decades, a strand of urban geographical literature has emerged—predominantly in the wealthy Anglo-American-Australian context—that attends to the rapidly changing university-city relationship, also referred to as the “town-and-gown” relationship. More recently, it has attended to a variety of sub-disciplinary foci: urban, political economic geographies of higher education institutions (HEIs) (Ehlenz, 2019 & 2016; Addie, 2017; Addie et al., 2015), overlapping geographies of and planning against studentification, youthification and gentrification (Revington, 2021; Revington et al., 2020; Moos et al., 2019), student geographies (Yu et al., 2017), as well as socio-ecological geographies at the “campus edge” (Croog, 2016). This rich scholarship may study a single campus and its spatial context, a comparative analysis of various campuses within a single urban context or offer a long-term wider census survey of over 20 campus neighbourhood changes. No matter the scale of the project, the question of “territoriality...to describe fully segregated lives [and] non-intersecting lifeworlds” (Ley, 2014, p. 855) deeply rooted in the historical “social rift” and “inherent tensions” between the university and students, and the local community and neighbourhood residents remains of constant concern across the scholarship. Addie et al. (2015, p. 34) observe several reasons that may account for these

inherent tensions between universities and their surrounding communities, including conflicts over the form, function and use of urban space (e.g., insensitive development projects and campus expansions; cultural conflicts between academic and non-academic groups) and potentially exploitative relationships between students and communities as research subjects.

In contrast to above formulations of a tensed dichotomy and unidimensional university-city relationship, Addie et al. (2015, p. 27) find that “universities’ relations are multi-layered, multi-scaled and multiply topological [where] universities have no privileged position in their

communities”. More recently, Sotomayor et al. (2022) and Revington et al. (2020) exceptionally disrupt the power dynamics by studying the “exclusionary experiences” of students in an often-exploitative relationship with their landowners within “expensive housing markets”. Sotomayor et al., (2022) critically observe the “hidden curriculum of student housing” leading up to inadequate students’ experiences of exclusion and marginalisation. This dissertation observes then that the “hidden curriculum” of post-secondary education that is expressed in student housing in India, is crucially also a cis-heteronormative project. Yet, the town-and-gown scholarship at large reinscribes the binary of the university-city boundary and reasserts the privileged position that universities and students hold over the local community. It has attended to various spatial scales such as global, national, urban, and neighbourhood, and even to a lesser extent, body, and mind, but not housing and ‘home’ per se. As well, critical attention is paid to socio-spatial inequality and injustice on and off the campus landscape across the axes of class, race and rarely even gender (though trans-negative) but not sexuality. As such, the city, the neighbourhood residents, and the university students are seemingly de-sexed. The at once missing analytical dimensions of sexuality and domesticity from the town versus gown scholarship cannot be coincidental and calls for further critical inquiry.

Holloway et. al., (2010) observe that urban geographies of higher education and student housing in their current forms can be identified in binary terms as either “inward-looking” or “outward-looking” and thus, often overlooking the links between home and educational spaces. On the one hand, there is an “outward-looking” urban scholarship invested in the macro-level impacts of neoliberal globalization of higher education and the changing university-city relationship. Here, scholars have studied the changing role of universities and their increasing contribution to “urban revival” (Rodin, 2007; Ehlenz, 2018), “college towns” and

“neighbourhood relations” (Powell, 2014) with a particular focus on gendered, classed and racialized “spatial perception of campus and the city” (Yu et al., 2018), and the changing spatial patterns of de-/re-territorialization (Addie et al., 2015). They argue that the outward-looking and macro-oriented town-and-gown scholarship remains sharply segregated from the inward-looking micro geographies of students and student accommodations, also known as the “domestic geographies of students” that foreground “multiple and heterogenous”, if not always “negative experiences” of students in their “term-time homes” (Taulke-Johnson, 2010; Brickell, 2012; Anderson et al., 2012; Holton, 2016). Like Holloway et al. (2015), my research also finds such a dichotomous approach to the territorial town versus gown relationship rooted in the cisnormative notions of boundary keeping and policing. It fails to integrate questions and landscapes of and pathways to education and housing in scholarships as well as in policy interventions with direct implications for student housing.

Within urban and institutional geographies, critical scholars have interjected the need to counter the neoliberal appeal to the “macro-level” ideologies by drawing our attention to the “micro-level” everyday lived experiences (Basu, 2004; Canizzo, 2018). Besides counter-stance strategies, critiques of dichotomous approach are offered by a few queer urban geographers against the urban/rural binary mode of thinking “metronormativity”. Instead, Podmore (2010) offers a conceptual shift by offering “a sexualities landscape” that dismantles the center/periphery model. Caldeira’s (2016, p. 7) work looking at the heterogenous urban formations of global south cities also offers the concept of the “transversal engagements” as a non-dichotomous approach for navigating peripheral/centre processes where “inequalities cannot always be mapped out in simple dualistic oppositions such as regulated versus unregulated, legal residences versus slums, formal versus informal, etc.”. She further notes that “cities exhibit

multiple formations of inequality” and that “categories such as ‘formal’ and ‘regulated’ are always shifting and unstable” (Caldeira, 2016, p. 7). While Elhenz (2019) critically remarks that the urban geographies of HEIs scholarship centralises “the university’s perspective” to the neglect of non-student neighbourhood residents’ perspectives, in her own work on studentification—not uncommonly—she does the opposite. Rarely have scholars attended to students’ perception (Yu et al., 2018) within the binary relationship of university and the city, and/or taken a non-dualistic approach by studying the “campus edge” itself (Croog, 2016).

My research takes seriously the above scholarly interventions to counter, undo, complicate, even destabilize through transversal logics the (cis)normative adherence to rigidly bounded entities—such as, in this case, university, neighbourhood, and home—and accentuates the lived experiences of non-normative genders and sexualities identifying university students who may neither share the privileges of their university of affiliation nor readily “belong” to the wider cis-heteronormative neighbourhood residential landscape. It considers what new analytical perspectives might “a sexualities landscape” approach to on- and off-campus landscapes offer in challenging the sharp scholarly divide between the town *versus* gown in conflict, enabling thus, viewing the university simultaneously in a continuum with the community? And, with what implications for queer/trans students navigating between home, university, and the city? A non-binary approach to the university-city boundary-region, as is undertaken in Chapter 4, necessitates critically studying the links between institutional and domestic spaces not only in conflict but also as a continuum to reveal the underlying normative assumptions about genders and sexualities shaping on- and off-campus student housing.

## **Transing and Queering the Higher Education Student-Image within Studentification Scholarship**

Studied first in the context of rapid internationalization of higher education in the UK, university campuses confronted increasing demand to accommodate its increasing floating population of students. Institutional housing infrastructures almost always failed to fully meet this rapidly increasing demand for student housing. Consequently, a number of off-campus student accommodation alternatives emerged that have shaped the student housing market through shared rental housing or house in multiple occupation (HMOs) and purpose-built student accommodations (PBSAs) (Sage et al., 2013, 2012). A strand of the urban geographies of higher education institutions (HEIs) scholarship emerged attending, in specific, to the “commodification” of student housing leading to either one of the undesirable socio-spatial neighbourhood changes downgrading of the neighbourhoods with unkempt, party-going student lifestyles or to the “positivist” urban gentrification displacing the local neighbourhood residents around university campuses, invariably leading to socio-spatial segregation between student and non-student communities (Munro and Livingston, 2011; Smith, 2005; Chatterton, 2010; Garmendia et al., 2012; Smith and Hubbard, 2014) which has come to be widely known as the process of “studentification”, a term first coined by geographer Darren P. Smith in 2002. In one of his early works on studentification, Smith (2008, p. 2541) calls for planning and policy initiatives to integrate “enlarged student populations” with the “established communities”. He argues the lack of such an institutional intervention would “obscure the positives of a student population [and] foster resentment and conflict between students and established residents [over] ownership of spaces, services and territory” (Smith, 2008, pp. 2541, 2546). This conflict between student/non-student residents then, is also one between transient floating population and the

permanent resident populations of a city causing what Smith describes as a “demographic imbalance”. Scholars were thus interested in studying “explicitly the interconnections between studentification and gentrification” clarifying that the two terms are not used interchangeably rather as having complex and changing relationships in the context of international geographies of higher education and marginal students. (Smith and Holt, 2007).

“Studentification”, “youthification” and “gentrification” have gained currency as distinct yet overlapping concepts embedded in the contested territorialization of the town-and-gown relationship predominantly across global north (Haghighi, 2018; Kinton et al., 2018; Lager & Hoven, 2019; Moos, 2016; Revington, 2021; Revington et al., 2020; Smith & Holt, 2007; Smith & Hubbard, 2014) contexts with recent studies emerging from global south (Adebawale & Simpeh, 2023; Aher, 2019; Gregory, 2020; Gregory & Rogerson, 2019; Gu & Smith, 2020; He, 2015; Hoseini, & Nematimehr, 2023; Matamanda, Dube, & Campbell, 2021; Menon, 2019; Saket, 2022; Visser & Kisting 2019). A wide range of scholarly research employing the studentification concept, often negatively portrays *a homogenized student-image* as the new young and transient “apprentice gentrifier” (Hubbard, 2009) at once responsible for neighbourhood decline *and* urban change, social segregation, densification and conflicting lifestyles, and the displacement of longer-term residents, even deprived communities (Munro and Livingston, 2011; Smith, 2005). Often owing studentification to the tensions between town and gown, scholars concerned with the gown-side of the equation tend to mistakenly conflate the privileges of the HEIs with that of the higher education students pitted against local residents. Smith and Holt (2007, p. 156) also observe “an increasing blurring between student and poststudent lifestyles” challenging the normative “claim that studenthood presents a distinct period of the lifecourse”. Although more recently, Revington (2022a; 2022b) has separately



focused on the one hand, different “lifestyles” among single students, post-student couples, and non-student families, and, on the other, “studentification as a gendered process” attending to the questions of gender and queerness as “forms of difference”, the (t)ask of this dissertation is slightly different. Throughout this dissertation, gender and sexuality is neither approached nor offered as simply one of the many “excluded” identity axes that needs to be “included” in analysis; rather, it is argued that utilizing gender and sexualities as a critical analytical framework itself is indispensable to defining “a home outside of heteronormative coupledness” (Wilkinson, 2014), and therefore, to fully comprehending the overlapping processes of studentification, youthification, and gentrification. A critical queer analytical framework remains missing from the studentification, youthification, and gentrification literature. How would the displacement narrative and the homogenized student-image shift when the figure of non-normative genders and sexualities student enters the equation?

Central to the studentification and gentrification scholarships, arguably, is the question of ‘belonging’. The homogenized student-image—representative of students’ bodily behaviours and spatial occupations—is routinely perceived in not-in-my-backyard (NIMBY) terms by long-term residents as that which does not belong in ‘their’ neighbourhood. Yet, to the dismay of residents, the transient outsider student-body is gaining power to displace them symbolically and materially from their original place of belonging. The concern of “territoriality” (Boal, 1971) whether in the context of the changing university-city relationship or in the formation of “fully segregated” student lives in exclusive student enclaves, is inherently connected to the geographies of belonging.

In the 2009 themed issue titled, “[G]eographies of belonging”, editors highlight two key strands of scholarship where belonging has emerged as a core concept—geographies of home

and geographies of citizenship. Both these strands of scholarships are crucial to one of the primary tasks of this chapter—queering the student-image within the interdisciplinary and multi-scalar studentification, youthification, and gentrification literatures. Located between the spatial scales of the home and the nation, community neighbourhoods function as “subnational territorial spaces” (Cameron as cited in Mee, 2009, p. 843) that possess many resources for intensifying chrononormative (Freeman, 2010) performances of ‘domestic’ belonging. Therefore, students may experience a temporary sense of unbelonging away from their parental home and presumably on their way to marital home (representative of a spatiotemporal conflation with adulthood). But not *all* students will marry, nor—even if they desired—can marry. In the national context of India<sup>8</sup>, LGBTQ+ students live with an acute and a perpetual sense of socio-spatial *dis*belonging across the spatial scales national, neighbourhood, and home where they are routinely infantilized for “belonging outside” (Probyn, 1996) of marital domesticity. As we currently stand at the outset of Indian urban scholarship with an utter absence of research work attending to student needs and experiences of housing and homes, Chapter 5, queers the student-image within studentification literatures by accentuating the lived experiences and housing needs of HE-LGBTQ+ students in contemporary urban India.

### **Disrupting (Cis-Hetero-)Normativity in Feminist and Queer Geographies of Home and Homemaking**

Feminist scholarship has critically reoriented our attention to the politics of home by complicating if not entirely undoing the public/private binary (Martin and Mohanty, 1986).

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<sup>8</sup> As of 2018, India has repealed Section 377, the colonial anti-sodomy law that criminalized same-sex relationships; however, India is yet to legalize same-sex relationships. Therefore, in the context of contemporary urban India, marital homes would mean heterosexual family households.

Across disciplines of geography, anthropology, and architecture, feminist scholars have opened the critical site of home, turning it inside out. Katherine Brickell (2012, p. 225) traces the historical geographies of home noting the critical turn away from the simplistic notion of home as “a uniform space of safety and familiarity” and “authenticity and experience, provisioning a sense of place and belonging”. The space of home was conveniently segregated away from the realm of the publics, the politics, the capital, and the masculine. This segregation in the case of USA, for instance, Hayden (1980, p. 171) notes quite literally manifests spatially in sub/urban organisation to “separate homes and workplaces”. Domestic spaces were architecturally designed and administered for homebound women, consumption, as well as unpaid care work and (social) reproduction (Hayden, 1980). Like Hayden’s study in USA, feminist architect Madhavi Desai (2008) in the context of postcolonial India, also studies the relationship between gender and the built environment, noting that both the urban governance as well as micro-zoning within the design of homes reinforce patriarchy. Feminist analyses of domestic spaces crucially complicated the narrative of “home as haven” kempt sacred by women as a gesture of loyalty (and love) towards men as they returned home from delivering their loyalties (and love) for the nation (Niranjana, 1994; Barger, 2019). Instead, they have noted how home spaces are in fact an ongoing site of struggle, conflict, oppression, gender-based regulation biased against women in patriarchy, and resistance (Blunt and Dowling, 2006; Blunt, 2005; Pink, 2004; Gowans, 2003; Cieraad, 1999; Domosh, 1998; Hayden, 1982). The extensive body of work of feminist cultural geographer Alison Blunt (1999, 2005, 2008) notes the material and symbolic site of home at once as a “space of belonging and alienation, intimacy and violence, desire and fear” (Blunt and Varley, 2004, p. 3). In her critique, Blunt has analysed how power structures of patriarchy, imperialism, colonialism, and racism work to intensify at the domestic scale.

One of the thin strands of Dalit and feminist Indian scholarship attends to the impact of homes on the mental health of women in patriarchy (Davar, 2008; Ayyapan, n.d.). Frequent cases of women's suicides, killings, and corrective rapes within marital homes by the husband and the in-laws, and at times her own parental family have been reported citing a range of reasons, including but not limited to insubstantial dowry, an argument, disobedience, lack of consent, or infertility of the wife or the husband. In lesser explicit and accidental forms, women's behaviour, self-expression, readily adopting a flexible mode of multi-tasking, and an in-grained sense of guilt for prioritizing her own spatiotemporal need for privacy comprise their exclusively gendered training within parental homes and society. The exclusively gendered leaving of parental home (and name) for women to integrate with the husband's family home in order to create a reproductive marital domesticity establishes the overwhelming patriarchal ground for enabling a growing and a deep-seated intimate socio-spatial inequality, putting the mental and emotional wellbeing and a sense of self-identity of women in an ongoing crisis. Historically, women have been conveniently labelled as hysteric and insane for not "obeying" the husband and her in-laws. These clinical accusations have taken women out of the marital home into the asylum for resisting and standing against domestic abuse and violence by the husband and in-laws. Feminist mental health activist Bhargavi Davar (2008, p. 265) observes this collusion of the state with psychiatry as means to protect "patriarchy through [the] psychiatric labelling of assertive women with labels of "insanity" that were "consistently applied to diminish, discard, divorce or incarcerate" them. Critiquing the traditional clinical discourse, Davar (2008, p. 265) advocates for "madness as patriarchal protest". Through her scholarly work and activism on madness as it intersects with marital domesticity, she adds "political activism and healing" to the feminist list of undoing false dichotomies in addition to interrogating domestic "abnormality"

(Davar, 2008, p. 270 and 267). Such feminist studies of domesticities have, however, largely neglected sexuality from their analyses. See for instance, Dolores Hayden's work in "*The Grand Domestic Revolution*" (1981), or "What would a non-sexist city be like?" (1980) that challenges, even imagines an alternative, modern design of the domestic, although only *within* a heteropatriarchal family household. Here the reimagination of domestic spaces, was limited to considerations of working wives/mothers and to a lesser extent the housing discrimination faced by single, divorced, and/or widowed women/mothers. These limitations are echoed in the Indian (cis-straight) feminist architectural scholarship on domesticities (see Desai, 2017, 2008; Woods, 2016; Desai, 2002).

Radical queer domesticities scholarship followed to render visible the hidden sexuality by critically interrogating the reproductive domesticity by complicating identity, private love, and belonging within and beyond heteronormative family homes (Gorman-Murray, 2020, 2012, 2008, 2007, 2006; Hubbard, 2012; Morrison, 2013; Oswin, 2010; Pilkey et al., 2015; Cook, 2014; Pilkey, 2014; Schroeder, 2015; Vallerand, 2013; Wilkinson, 2014). Gorman-Murray's (2007) work on queer domesticities in the Australian context is all about "reconfiguring domestic values". In his extensive body of geographies of sexualities scholarship, Gorman-Murray (2015, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c, 2007, 2006) displaces normative masculinity in homes by investigating the homemaking practices of Australian gay men and the "queering" of family homes. He observes how gay men "use 'private' homes in rather 'unhomely'—that is, non-heteronormative—ways, by inviting 'external' non-normative discourses, bodies and activities in order to 'queer' domestic space and engender non-heteronormative socialization and identity-affirmation" (Gorman-Murray, 2006, p. 54). Feminist lesbian studies of homes have also similarly disrupted essentialist assumptions of gender and domestic spaces, and the role of homes in the lives of

women-as-homogenised identity (Anzaldúa, 1986; Elwood, 2008; Gorman-Murray, 2015; Johnston and Valentine, 1995). For Anzaldúa (1986), home was a site of “intimate terrorism” where she could never reconcile her plural identity as a as a lesbian Chicana woman. Queer geographies of homes scholarship, then, actively works to “resist the idealization of heterosexual family home, and instead generate homes that affirm sexual difference” (Gorman-Murray, 2007, p. 229) and ultimately, “alternative domesticities” (Pilkey et al., 2015).

Much of the radical queer geographies of homes scholarship, however, fails to disrupt cisnormativity. The emerging scholarship on “trans domesticities” (Andrucki and Kaplan, 2017; Arun-Pina, 2023, 2021a; Felsenthal 2009; Pilkey et al., 2017) works to address this lacuna. Scholarly focus within trans geographies literature has been to move towards a more gender inclusive urban environment. Distinct from cis straight and cis gay masculinities—though not always nor entirely—Andrucki and Kaplan (2017) study trans temporalities without fixity or linearity through their domestic journeys of becoming. Felsenthal (2009) also studies the communal transfeminine solidarities within transy homes. But feminist, queer and trans theories would be redundant if they were simply about adding and “including” a new demographic and their specific needs. Rather, as critical theories their important contribution lies in the ongoing disruption of normative power structures such as cis-heteropatriarchy. Although these goals do align, there are sincere dissonances between and within feminist, queer, and trans communities, activists, and scholars. It is not uncommon to find misogyny within trans and queer communities, transphobia within feminist and queer groups, and homophobia within feminist and trans communities. In critically engaging with these intersectional dissonances and alignments, Chapter 6 disrupts the spatial manifestations of cis-heteronormativity in the blueprint for nuclear family homes which in turn command and code the spatiality of all homes and how they must be

inhabited, in specific the transient student housing and homes as occupied by LGBTQ+ university students. In what follows, I place Oswin's (2010) queer embodied concept of "queered subjects" and Aizura's (2018) trans embodied concept of "mobile subjects" in conversation with Foucault's (1967) spatial concept of "heterotopia" to derive the theoretical formulation of spatial-embodied concept of "trans subjects" as the key to studying HE-LGBTQ+ student experiences of student housing and homes as floating populations and/in "floating homes" (Arun-Pina, 2021a).

### **Formulating "Trans Subjects"**

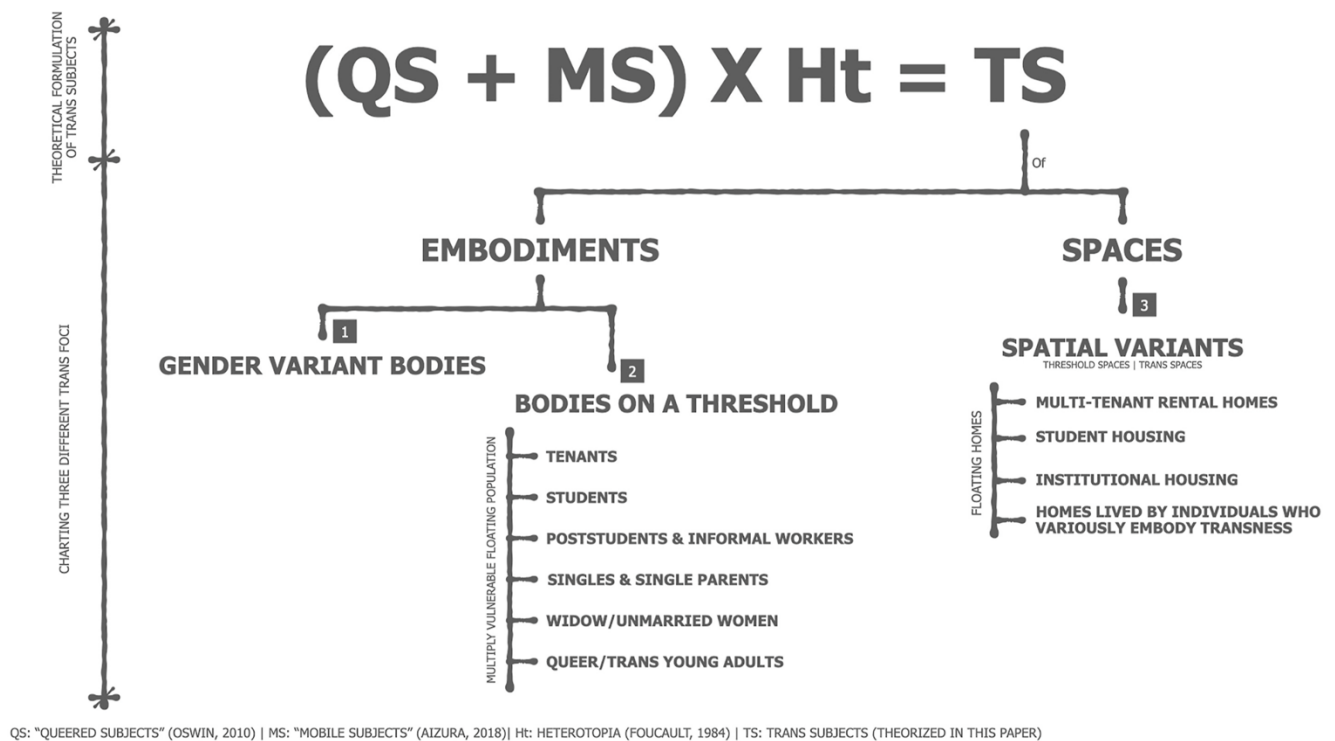
In interrogating the heteronormativity in/of Singapore housing, Oswin (2010, p. 257) seeks "queer approaches that understand heteronormativity not as a universal policing of a heterosexual-homosexual binary, but as the geographically and historically specific coincidence of race, class, gender, nationality and sexual norms". Oswin demonstrates how urban housing, based on heteronormative family values, can and does "render a range of subjects 'queer'...that include gays and lesbians to be sure, [but] also include the single mother, the migrant worker, unfilial child, and many others" (Oswin, 2010, p. 256). "Queered subjects" offers an important distinction between hetero-sexuality and hetero-normativity as well as an alliance across the messy heterosexual-homosexual binary especially relevant to postcolonial India which for the longest shared the same colonial anti-sodomy laws as Singapore. In the context of postcolonial India, Shah (2015, p. 648) also makes note of using the term "non-normative" as against LGBTQ+ to "escape ascribing terms like "lesbian", "gay", "queer", and "trans" to individuals who identify with another term, or who do not use identitarian terms at all", "highlight critiques of normativity", and "acknowledge the politically fraught linguistic terrain that questions of

sexualities and genders in India comprise”. Despite the fight for queer visibility, a deeper everyday inaudibility and non-use of queer terms prevail in postcolonial India. Moreover, the Hindu fundamentalism has led to widespread hate-violence towards a range of love relationships and living arrangements outside of heteronormative marital family home, including, but not limited to, public expressions of love, inter-caste and inter-religion love (even marriages), and live-in relationships. This intolerance translates into and intensifies for single and LGBTQ+ university students away from their parental family homes, living on- and off-campus student housing and homes. More recently, Aren Aizura (2018) unpacks “mobile subjects” referring to the metaphor and the materiality of the “journey” of/for gender transformation by tracing transnational biomedical pathways.

Both the above concepts—“queered subjects” and “mobile subjects”—are indispensable to the primary focus of this research project on HE-LGBTQ+ students’ intertwined educational and housing pathways. Yet, as concepts themselves, these remain insufficient for two reasons: first, “queered subjects” essentially prioritizes sexuality to the neglect of gender, and “mobile subjects” analyses trans issues independently of sexuality. Nash (2010) cautions against such a sharp divide within scholarly approach to analyse gender and sexuality independently and calls for more intersectional analysis. There is a conceptual need, therefore, to investigate the compounding of hetero- and cis- normativity. Second, both queer and mobile subjects primarily consider (only) bodies as subjects whereas spaces, however active and dynamic, are studied as contexts. Therefore, I next formulate a two-step equation: first, both the above theoretical concepts are read alongside one another (rather than independently) to study the compound manifestations of cis-heteronormativity. Following which, second, Foucault’s spatial concept of



“heterotopia” enters the equation to extend both the concepts so as to consider not only bodies, but also spaces-as-subjects (Figure 2.3).



**Figure 2.3. Theoretical formulation of Trans subjects with three different trans foci.** Source: Author.

In “Of Other Space: Utopias and Heterotopias”—his lecture to a group of architects—Foucault (1967, p. 1) historically marks that “we are in an epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed”. In describing space as a “network of relations”, “heterotopia” for Foucault (1967, p. 3) are “counter-sites” that are “in relation with all the other sites, but in such a way as to suspect, neutralize or invent the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror, or reflect”. By this he means that “all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted” (Foucault 1967, 3). Unlike utopias, heterotopias essentially undo the real/virtual and the real/imagined binary by opening the possibility of “emplacing”—almost as a fractal—either inside the other

and therefore “both *mirror and distort reality* as a means of denaturalizing everyday practices and mainstream treatments” [emphasis added] (Brady, 2013, p. 408). Heterotopia is crucially a post-structuralist rearrangement of multiple incongruent spaces and times. Though one of his most abstract and open theoretical sketches, Foucault (1967, pp. 4-9) outlines six fundamental principles to describe heterotopic spaces which reflect difference to the wider homogenous real socio-spatiotemporal context it is located in. He notes how each heterotopia is varied with a specific function within a society, capable of juxtaposing multiple spaces and times within a single real space-time, has a system of opening and closing (i.e., of admission and exclusion), and most important to us here, is capable of exposing real spaces by either creating “other real spaces of illusion [or] of compensation” (Foucault, 1967).

Heterotopia remains one of Foucault’s most malleable and therefore diversely engaging concepts for geographers. A few scholars have criticized heterotopia as such a loosely defined concept applicable to almost all spaces (Johnson, 2013; Harvey, 2000). Yet, many geographers have also found it productive to conceptually engage and apply “heterotopia” to a variety of transient, transitional and/or contained environments (see Arun-Pina, 2021a; Brookfield, 2019; Gallan et al., 2015; Quang et al., 2013; Brady, 2013; Hook and Vrdoljak, 2002). More recently, in observing studentified areas as heterotopias, Brookfield (2019, p. 352) notes:

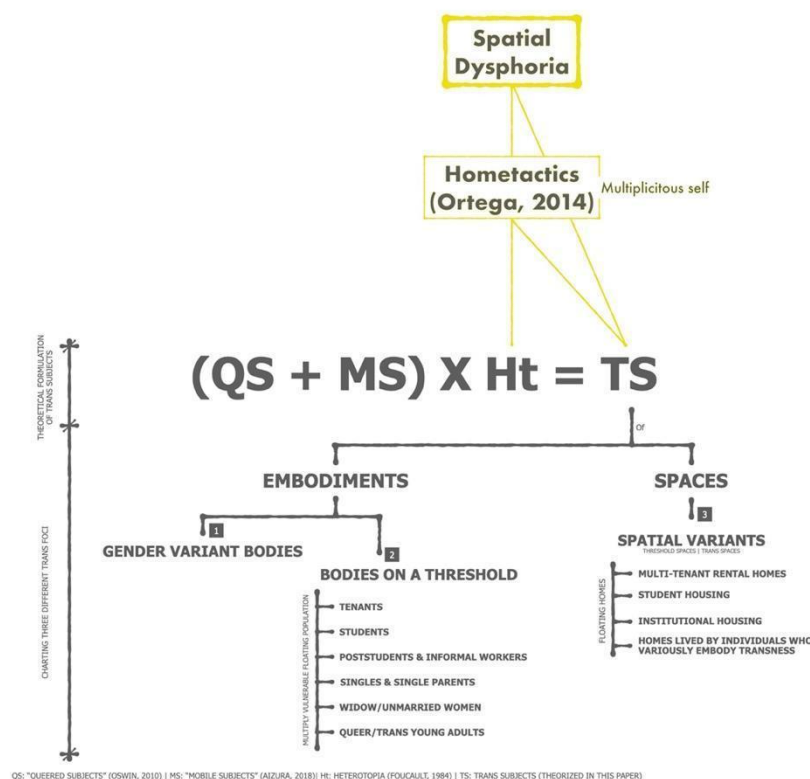
Being in a “liminal, transitional time between adolescence and adulthood” (Munro et al., 2009, p. 1688), in Foucault’s view students might be considered “in crisis” and so studentified areas might be viewed as crisis heterotopias. Alternatively, with previous research indicating that established residents view students’ behaviour as deviating from societal norms, from the perspective of these individuals, studentified areas might be viewed as deviation heterotopias.

Even without adding the identity axes of non-normative genders and sexualities, Brookfield in her study finds how students occupying a spatiotemporal liminal space and leading an alternative rhythm of everyday life at once places them “in crisis” in the context of normative society. To

this, if we are to further consider the deviating queer and trans dimensions of students' identities—as witnessed throughout my research —this liminal state of crisis is stretched and intensified with consequences much beyond the “student phase” for HE-LGBTQ+ students “out of step with” and resisting the straight time pathway. Brookfield (2019, p. 357) further observes that unlike Foucault's conception where heterotopias “typically originated in this state”, spaces can in fact *become* heterotopic through a process she identifies as “heterotopification... steeped in conflict”; in the case of the studentified areas, this would be the conflict between student and non-student residents, spaces and needs, for instance. Citing Harvey (2000), she further refutes Foucault's implications for heterotopic sites of conflict: everything that happens within a heterotopia is “acceptable or appropriate”. In her own study, she finds non-student family residents contesting the deviating from the norm lifestyles of the student residents and “might well prove a heterotopia's undoing”.

In my own study and lived experience as a HE-LGBTQ+ student in multiple Indian cities, I would complicate Brookfield's above assertion. Indeed, the community residents contested student ways of living. Yet, it is important to note that heterotopia is not simply a space but also a time, i.e., we must consider not simply the studentified areas, but also the term-time of student-life. Most cis-heteronormative relatives and residents in Indian cities often echoed a relative tolerance of students' gender and sexuality “promiscuity” by considering it as “simply a phase that will get over” to ultimately “settle down” into a cis-heteronormative “permanent” marital domesticity. This cis-heteronormatively-informed transience/permanence binary crucially built attitude of straight adults in the family and neighbourhood towards queer relationships as a non-adult, passing phase with transient spatiality while positing straight relationships as those with a serious future and permanent spatiality. The figure of the single

person and of the student is certainly “queered” and rendered as “trans subjects”, but the opposite is also true where LGBTQ+ (young) adults are rendered as transient subjects. What Brookfield observes as a “heterotopia’s undoing” by the “process of ‘smoothing out’ points of differences” and conflict is an important call to plan for, not against, difference. In what follows, I build out the above formulation by localizing Foucault’s spatial concept of “heterotopia” to the domestic scale of home and collocating with Ortega’s (2014) concept of “hometactics” to derive a working understanding of “spatial dysphoria” as experienced by HE-LGBTQ+ students that cannot be comprehended within the neat the binary of socio-spatial un/belonging (Figure 2.4).



**Figure 2.4. Localizing heterotopia in hometactics to derive spatial dysphoria.** Source: Author.

## Localizing Heterotopia in Hometactics: Of Spatial Dysphoria

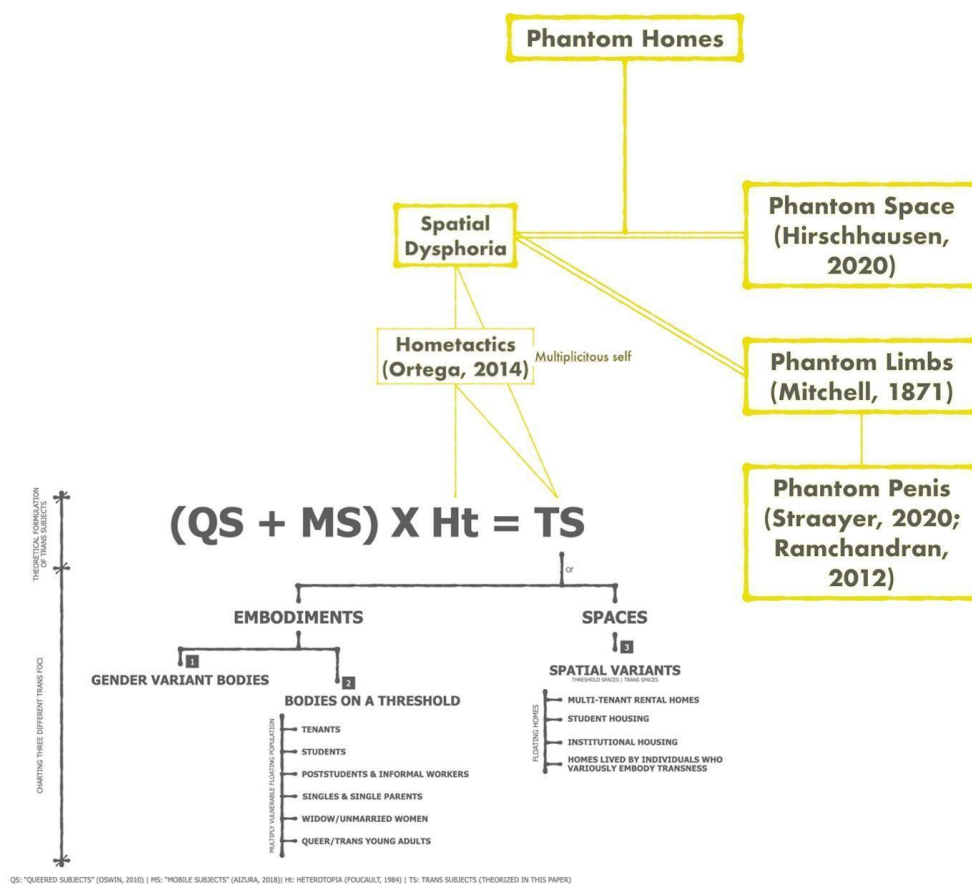
In *Living Alterities: Phenomenology, Embodiments, and Race*, an anthology edited by feminist and critical race theory philosopher Emily S. Lee (2014), Mariana Ortega devises the concept of “hometactics”. Ortega (2014, p. 174) utilizes four key texts in formulating hometactics “to discuss [the] notion of home in connection to the notions of belonging and [socio-spatial] location”: tactics versus strategy by Michel de Certeau (1980) alongside decolonial feminist scholarship of borderlands by Gloria Anzaldúa (1987), “tactical strategies” by Maria Lugones (2003), and Adrienne Rich’s “politics of location” as elaborated by Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2003). Ortega (2014, p. 174) further explains “hometactics” as “practices that allow for a sense of familiarity with and a particular sense of “belonging” to a place, space, group, or “world” while avoiding the restrictive, exclusive elements that a notion of belonging may carry with it”. Here Ortega (2014, p. 176) critically separates “the notion of home as connected to [that of] ‘authentic belonging’” in making evident what she advocates for as “multiplicitous self...capable of occupying multiple positionalities in terms of gender, race, sex, sexual orientation, physical ability, class, and so on, and thus capable of occupying a liminal space or a space of in-betweenness”. For such a multiplicitous self, she argues that “the home question becomes a question of *homes*” [emphasis original] (Ortega, 2014, p. 178). Ortega’s multiplicitous self and plural homes are both comparable to both the above-mentioned Derrida’s multiple selves and the divisible foundation as part of his post-structural deconstruction theory as well as the above-formulated trans subjects on a threshold. This socio-spatiotemporal liminality occupied by multiplicitous selves, for Ortega (2014), places them in an ongoing “paradoxical position” with the normative notion of home and belonging. She calls for a critical double awareness towards our “will to belong that may provide a feeling of security and comfort” and the “limits and

pitfalls of such security” as well as the cost of such “authentic belonging” that may reify certain identity categories to the “expulsion of those who do not fit a version of authentic belonging” Ortega (2014, pp. 177, 184). She cites the examples of both Lugones and Anzaldúa alongside her own self in their multiplicitous (or “trans”) location as Latina and lesbian identities that “cannot be easily reconciled” and therefore, reminds us Lugone’s (1990, p. 143 as cited in Ortega, 2014, p. 178) assertion that “pluralism [of identities] also requires the transformation of those ‘home’ cultures”. Ultimately, she observes an inherent impossibility to “fully belong” to normative notion of home for multiplicitous selves and calls for “a decentered praxis of home-making and belonging” which she calls “hometactics” (Ortega, 2014, p. 181).

Ortega borrows from De Certeau’s (1984) scalar distinction between tactics versus strategies where “tactics are temporal interventions aimed at producing favourable situations but not necessarily at abolishing a system of power” as against and in the context of “regulations or set ways (norms/practices/laws) upheld by a dominant order” (Ortega, 2014, pp. 181-182). Yet, she finds Lugones’s disruption of De Certeau’s dichotomy particularly helpful in her own approach to liminal home-making praxis. Lugones (2003) offers “tactical strategies” as a way to “move from ephemeral contestatory negotiations of sense to more sustained engagements” (Ortega, 2014, p. 183).

Ortega’s intimate observation of a paradoxical, liminal—or in other words, trans—position critically interrogates what it might even mean to “fully belong”. Trans and gender non-conforming (gnc) individuals who occupy liminal spaces between/outside the tyranny of gender dichotomy (Doan, 2010) may variously experience this sense of not fully belonging even to their own bodies what is more commonly known as experiencing gender or body dysphoria. Parallel to Ortega’s extension of multiplicitous self in connection to the homespace, I have observed in

and through listening to the everyday lived experiences of HE-LGBTQ+ students that trying to fit queer and trans/non-binary ways of living in cis-heteronormatively-informed blueprints is equivalent to the body dysphoria and may be understood as a form of spatial dysphoria (discussed in detail in Chapter 5). Here, HE-LGBTQ+ students variously—and, almost organically—employ “hometactics” as “practices that [grant] new possibilities of belonging” and “microtechniques of everyday lived experience” (Ortega, 2014, p. 185) (see Chapter 6). Below, I connect and ground the concept of spatial dysphoria with/in the trans experiences of gender/body dysphoria and phantom penis to consider the othered worlds of non-normative “phantom homes” (Figure 2.5).



**Figure 2.5. Grounding spatial dysphoria in the phenomenon of phantoms.** Source: Author.

## **Phantom Homes: Transforming Othered Worlds into Being**

Within geographies scholarship, the concept of “phantoms” is so far largely explored in the context of historical geopolitical borders that once existed but do not anymore (Hirschhausen, 2020; Lowis, 2015). “Phantom borders” are understood as those that ceased to exist politically or legally yet continue to manifest and structure space “in different forms and modes of social action and practices” (Hirschhausen et al., 2015 as cited in Lowis, 2015, p. 99). Hirschhausen (2020, para 4) explains that phantom borders “are crossed without transgression” and “might appear...for a time and later disappear” and once again, reappear. As a concept “refusing the opposition between mental maps and physical spaces”, he explains that phantom spaces “are tangible traces” with various metaphorical uses to “refer to the complex relationship between space and memory by urban ruins (Edensor, 2005), material traces of painful pasts (Jonker, 2009), or abandoned places (Buchakjian, 2017)”. For Hirschhausen (2020, para 8), a phantom space “opens up an interpretation of cultural spaces which entertains imagined spaces [and] new visions of the future” horizons shaped by lived experiences of powerful hegemonic realities as well as affective mental maps and imagination of a social group.

Elsewhere, Maritime archeologist Chryssanthi Papadopoulou (2016, p. 367) posits shipwrecks excavation sites as a “spatiotemporal fusion of material remains (presences) and the absent functional place (the phantom)”. She employs experimental archeology to unpack the phenomenon of and to (re)materialize the phantom place (Papadopoulou, 2016, p. 368). Citing Jaffrennou and Coduys (2005, 221), she notes a cautionary reminder, “‘there is no way to make a phantom alive without being frightened by its unexpected behavior’ [and yet] despite the unexpected transformations that phantoms can undergo, it is their overall disappearance that should frighten us most” (Papadopoulou, 2016, p. 368). Papadopoulou’s (2016) critical



experimental work on sunken geographies of ships and shipwrecks has theoretical and empirical relevance to heterotopic geographies of HE-LGBTQ+ students as floating population (Chapter 2) and their buried geographies of queer domicile (Chapter 6). She (2016, p. 379) concludes her study with an important remark on materialized phantom places which she asserts, “become the witnesses of the history of archaeological perception, interpretations, practices, successes and shortcomings” while granting “place its polysemy”. It is not our ‘arrival’ (alone) at the materialized phantom place as a celebratory destination, but the witnessing consciousness of historically embedded perceptions, interpretations, lived experiences, and thus, informed practices opening up space for polysemy as an ongoing process of reworking and (re)materializing that should occupy us, something that I will discuss below in this chapter.

All of the above scant scholarly works on “phantoms” derive the concept from the neuroscientific phenomenon of “phantom limbs”, a term first coined by physician Silas Weir Mitchell in 1871 in his medical texts on the Civil War soldiers’ “loss of limbs in war” (Straayer, 2020, p. 252). Several soldiers who had lost their limbs in war reported feeling their absent body part nevertheless present as part of the body with or without pain (ibid). Owing to its “suspect status” as “otherworldly and nonscientific”, both the patients and the physicians were mostly reluctant to express and study, let aside imaginatively materialize phantom experiences (Straayer, 2020). Within the span of last one and a half century of neuroscientific research, much remains to understand about phantoms. Yet a few scholars have made a significant leap in crucially extending the study of post-war and/or post-amputation experiencing of phantom limbs and phantom penises for cis men to transmen’s experiences of phantom penises, phantom beards (as well as to a lesser extent, transwomen’s experiences of phantom breasts) (Case and Ramachandran, 2012; Ramachandran and McGeoch, 2008). Like soldiers meeting skepticism of

their phantom limb experiences, trans individuals' phantom body experiences are traditionally disregarded as fake, unreal, or even illness. So far the study of phantoms—whether in geography, anthropology, archeology, or traditional neuroscience—describe a connection with past tense, that which was once present, but not anymore. This is not the case with trans individuals.

Straayer (2020, p. 256) interjects the cis understanding of timeline in phantom experiences with what he calls a “trans tense”—a conditional auxiliary state of a “should-have-been” tense that trans individuals find themselves in. Instead of the “perfect tense of ‘have been’ indicat[ing] a complete action (in the past), [should-have-been] focuses on the resulting circumstance (the now)” as well as “expresses a futurity, a probability, an obligation” (ibid). He argues that for trans individuals, “an existential, always-already experience of non-belongingness conjures an agential preexistence” where crucially, “the [trans] phantom does not equal absence” rather, it “foregrounds presence, function, and desire” (Straayer, 2020, pp. 252, 257). According to the emerging pathbreaking discovery within regenerative biology, author notes that “the agency of bioelectric coding predate[s] that of genetic coding” (ibid). What this means is that before genes get to work, presence of an electric potential flashes a “not-yet-existing” body-image that may or may not morphologically develop in the future. Trans scholars importantly recognize that this “electric body...is a quantum phenomenon [with endless] regenerative possibilities. Fodder for potent trans\* imaginaries for reconfiguring future/past lived realities, for generating what never was but might yet have been” (Barad, 2015, p. 411 as cited in Straayer, 2020, p. 257). Straayer (2020, pp. 258-259) finds links between Ramachandran's psycho-somatic experiments with the rubber hand illusion (RHI) and mirror therapy to contemporary digital experiments with virtual reality (VR) technology where “the bodily self can exceed the person's corporeal body” and “the phantom is sensate”. In Chapter 3, I discuss my employment of trans

imaging techniques with psychodigitalgeographies to tell queer and trans/non-binary students' spatial stories. Here, I explore and elaborate the connection between trans psyche and the emerging VR/AR and AI generative art technology in their collaborative regenerative capacities of producing electric bodies (and spaces) with non-normative reimaginary codings. Trans perception within predominantly cis binary coded real urban environments, organically exist as AR technology offering what Straayer (2020) calls "hybrid seeing-as" and Veen (2019) as "a hybrid view" where two ways of seeing are crossed. Phantom bodies may be revitalized with prosthesis, however for many trans individuals, "prosthetic produces a disturbingly realistic counter-effect that incites disengagement", meaning "the phantom is not generally mistaken for a real body part" but may find it limiting, and therefore, trans perception utilizing augmented viewing with/out technology "is not delusional" (Straayer, 2020, pp. 253, 274).

Extending the existential state of gender/body dysphoria that awakens the electric body-image, for instance, of a phantom penis for transmen, in Chapter 5 I introduce HE-LGBTQ+ students' experiential state of *spatial dysphoria* when they are forced to fi(gh)t cis-heteronormatively informed spatial coding and administration of on- and off-campus student housing and homes conjuring thus, phantom homes. It is not unusual to imagine cyborg homes from where we are today with smart technology integrated into transforming the ambience, soundscapes and movement patterns within homes and 3D printed homes. In response to the Covid-19 crisis, for instance, London and Barcelona based, multidisciplinary design firm ThirtyOne Design Studio came up with an experimental project of "PostHome" which offers hybridized configuration of space for housing, work, and educational needs. Utilizing digital language "provides an entrance-filter" which like our apps, is perceptible to change, "unhinges traditional layout" with fluid and flexible internal spaces which may seamlessly transition from

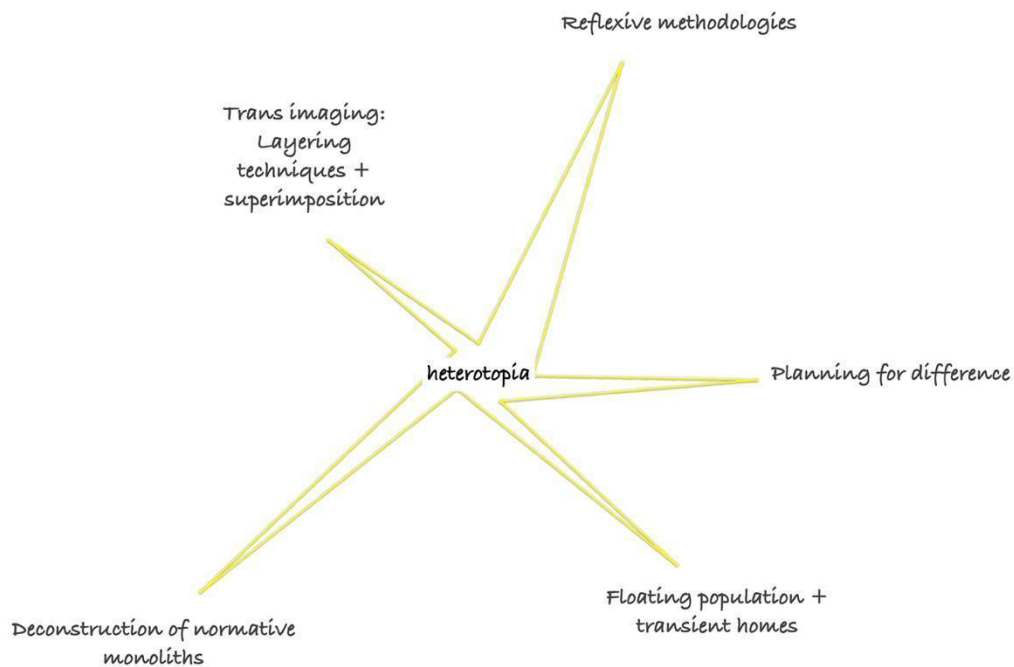
kitchen to sleeping to study, and with “the interconnection of design and technology...features of the home...can be managed remotely via app” (Foresti, 2021). Just like one of student-participants who revised his sketch of a “dream home” depicting half the walls as entirely digital surfaces that he could interact with. What psycho-digital-spatial collaborative potential do VR/AR technology and AI technology hold in the coding and configurations of future homes? And how do we create non-normative algorithms with queer and trans coding so as to not get trapped, yet again, in cis-heteronormatively informed moral codes? Straayer (2020, p. 273) necessitates employment of “imagination [as] vital for willing [phantoms] into existence”. The objective of phantom experiences is not totalitarian—displacing earlier accounts and creating new enclosures with new rigid boundaries; rather is continued polysemic engagement with queer and trans testimonies to critically and creatively re-imagining (non-)normative homes.

## **Conclusions**

In critically engaging with geographical understandings of home and homemaking, like many trans scholars, this research project finds that (straight) feminist geographic and architectural scholarship is not capable of disrupting the cis-heteronormative blueprint for reproductive marital domesticity. On the contrary, it often times is entrenched in its homo/transphobic socio-spatial manifestations. Yet, feminist work crucially contributes to the critical geographies of homes scholarship by bringing the private realm of homes as an affective and political site into question, especially as seen in the works of lesbian feminist scholars. Feminist work intersected with radical queer and trans as well as Dalit domesticities scholarship is integral to this research study accentuating the lived experiences of HE-LGBTQ+ students of on- and off-campus student housing and homes in India.

While the attention to the question of student housing in India has been growing more recently, there is currently no scholarship attending to the LGBTQ+ post-secondary students and their housing experiences within the geographies of studentification scholarship across world regions, including in India. This dissertation queerly extends Anglosphere studentification scholarship by placing Indian megacities of Mumbai and Delhi on the map as more than mere geographical addendum. By attending to LGBTQ+ students' spatial stories of housing and homes in India, this dissertation works to queer and disrupt the homogenised student-image within studentification scholarship and consider the figure of LGBTQ+ post-secondary student as a particular kind of youth engaged in the process of homemaking on the borderlands of the university as it interfaces with the neighbourhood community, and the city. This dissertation argues that gender and sexuality are central to reimagining any form of alternative living and domesticity outside of heteronormative reproductive marital home, and therefore, cannot be left out of the critical analysis of the town-and-gown relationship and of the studentification-youthification-gentrification narratives that govern the socio-spatial context for shaping the on- and off-campus student housing market and certainly queer/trans students' everyday lived experiences.

Heterotopia is applied as an overarching theoretical framework for this research project studying HE-LGBTQ+ lived experiences of student housing in India (Figure 2.6). Heterotopia as a spatial theory is vital for its analytic recognition of space as a subject, and in extension, in the derivation of transient student housing and homes as trans subjects. Additionally, Foucault's example of a boat as a floating piece of space set away from the civilized land offers relevant theoretical insights for the floating population of HE-LGBTQ+ students as trans subjects on the borderlands of the university and the city.



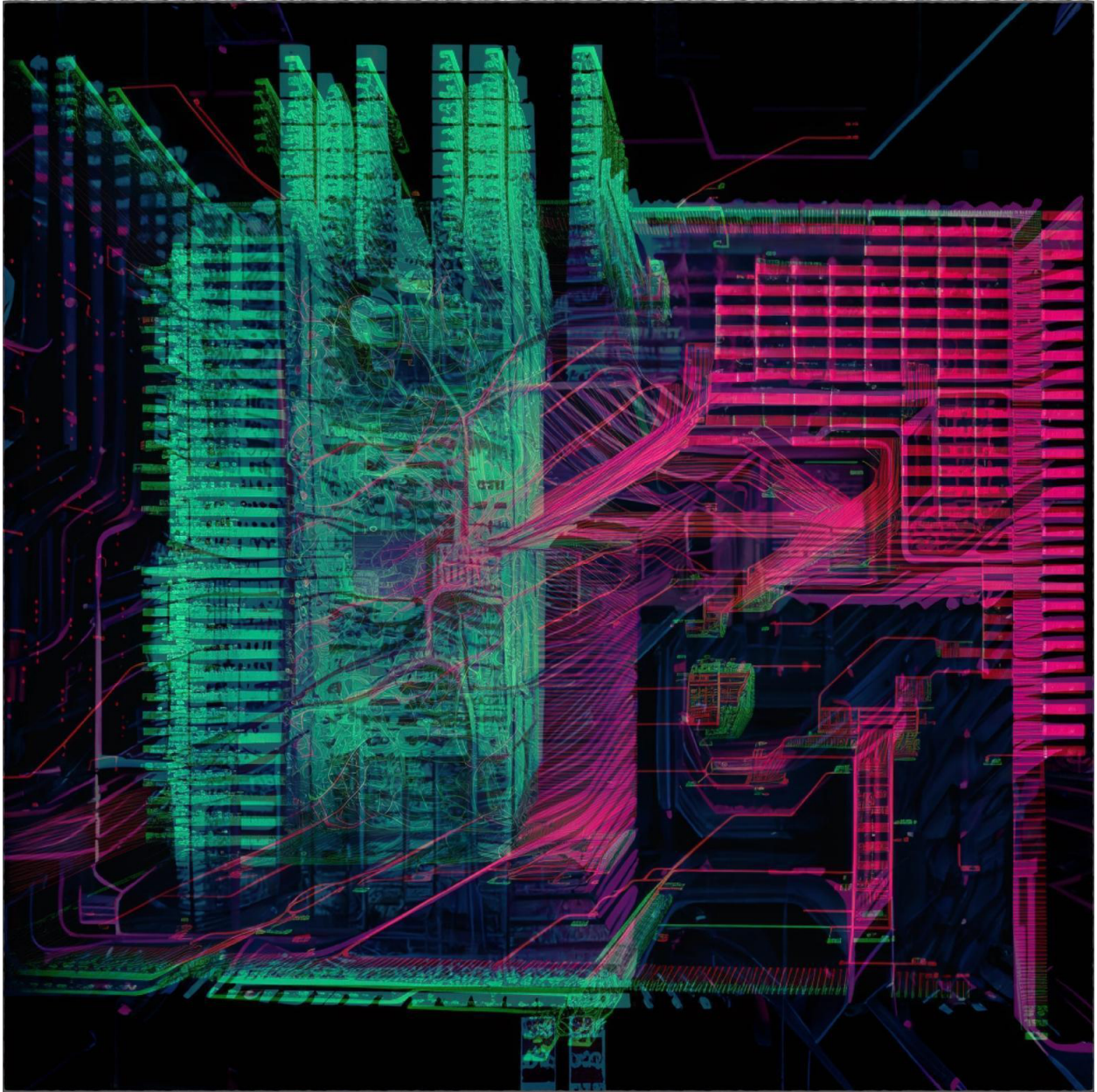
**Figure 2.6. Heterotopia as an interlocking theoretical framework throughout this dissertation.** Source: Author.

Foucault utilises the Greek root of “hetero-” meaning “another” or different to conceptualize, “by way of contrast to utopia”, heterotopias. One could well imagine from his seminal volume on history of sexuality, that he might as well have called it queertopias, but did not. By calling it a queertopia would have further entrenched the exclusive classification of homosexuals as “abnormal”, “new species” to be disciplined and persecuted by or quarantined away from the “civilized” marital reproductive (hetero)sexuality. The term heterotopia then holds the capacity and lessons *to plan for difference without normalizing queerness and transness*.

Foucault also utilizes the example of a mirror as at once a utopian “placeless place” but also a heterotopia for it “does exist in reality [exerting a] counteraction on the position” that the

subject in front of the mirror occupies. He (1967, p. 4) observes that the mirror as a heterotopia is “at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there”. He undoes the real/virtual and the real/imagined binary through the heterotopic function of a mirror that reflects, inverts, and counter-positions the “real”. Here, the real and the imagined *can* coexist in difference, and as superimposed layers mutually informing the other. In that, heterotopia is invaluable to the reflexive trans methodologies discussed in the following chapter.

Foucault’s heterotopia is thus, further localized in the decolonial, feminist and queer theory of colour and to the spatial scale of the domestic by collocating it with Mariana Ortega’s concepts of multiplicitous selves and hometactics. Both these concepts offer a critical framework to deconstruct the monolithic and seemingly indivisible cis-heteronormative spatiality (in specific, of the nuclear domesticity) and thus, to fully comprehend the everyday lived experiences and spatial practices of homemaking of HE-LGBTQ+ students in contemporary urban India. LGBTQ+ students’ spatial stories of student housing in India offer critical reflection and lessons to note in what it might mean to live outside of a cis-heteronormative marital domesticity. Rather than taking reflective notes from LGBTQ+ student living for a broader reworking and reimagining of spatiality for non-normative homes, cis-heteronormative marital family homes blueprints are projected onto, coding all forms of student housing to, on the one hand, feed the monolith cis-heteronormative foundation, and, on the other, bury underneath a beating queer graveyard, the non-normative spatial stories and potential of which is yet to surface.



# 3

Trans Imaging: See-Through Layering Techniques to “Represent the Unrepresentable”



# 3

## Trans Imaging: See-Through Layering Techniques to “Represent the Unrepresentable”

### Introduction

In April 2017, I was on an overnight train from Mumbai to Delhi to complete the second half of my research internship as an urban fellow at the Indian Institute of Human Settlements (IIHS), Bangalore. About four hours away from Delhi, around six in the morning, I woke up to a past-midnight text message something to the effect of “*We are sorry, but we no longer have the room for you. Please find yourself another place to stay*”. In the next four hours, with a broken cellular network, I made many calls to secure myself a temporary place to lay my head until I could find another room to rent. First, to my (never-) to-be landowners who were determined overnight to *not* let me their room, then to my colleague and their current tenant with whose reference I had secured a room with them in the first place, and finally to my friends and ex-housemates in the city to whom I could just show up and stay with until I had found a place of my own.

I was still in Mumbai, wrapping up my research work at TISS when I started looking for a place to stay well ahead of my next research work-base in Delhi, to avoid housing uncertainty. Of the many friends I had reached out to, my colleague interning in Delhi at the time was first to respond in the affirmative. She had immediately approached her PG owners who assured us that there was ample vacancy then, and even more so in May when I would need to move to Delhi, as most students would be moving out for their summer break.

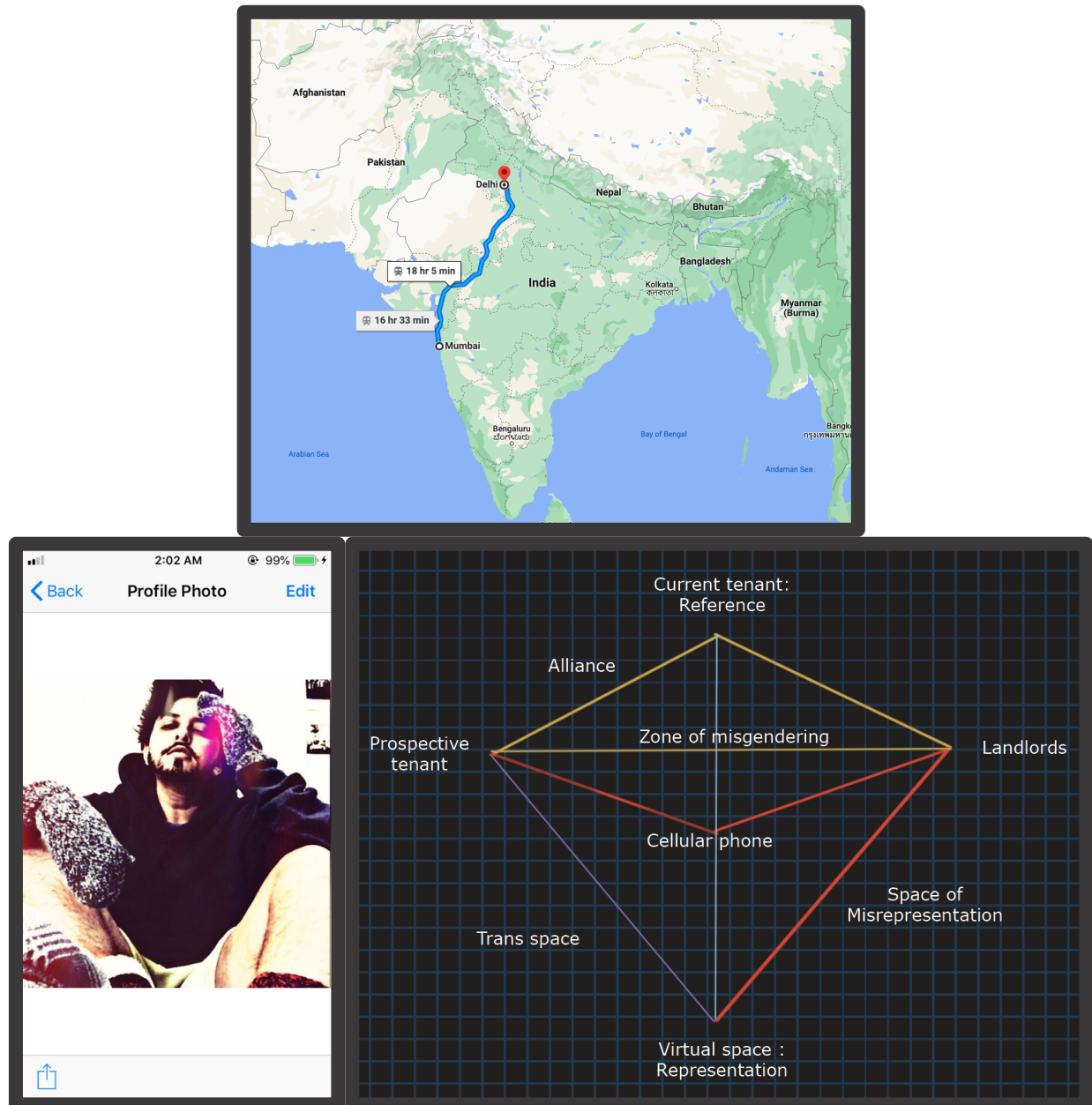
Closer to my move, I contacted the landlady directly for confirmation. The landlady reassured me there was more than one room for me to choose from, once I was there. I offered to pay her the rent deposit to secure my room, but she confirmed that as I came through a “trusted reference”, I could pay it in-person. When we next spoke, her tone had changed, becoming cold and uninviting. She justified her last-minute refusal of housing by asserting that she was unaware that her husband had taken the room deposit from another “girl”, and there were now no single rooms left to rent. She then abruptly handed over the phone to her husband, whom I had not spoken to until now.

I had given up on the prospect of them letting me, but I expected them to be reasonable. Since I was given such short notice, I asked them to let me temporarily take my colleague’s bed—who I knew was out of town for the next week for fieldwork—until I had found another place. He was outraged at the suggestion. He told me that they do not trust “strangers” to share a room with other “girls” and their personal belongings. He even refused to keep my bags with them while I could house-hunt, and then cut the line. I then learned that my colleague—who was also on a train at the time—had in fact received several angry calls from the PG owners at midnight to the effect of how she could have invited “anyone” to their place, a “girls” PG. Whereas I had received just a text-refusal much later. She was equally perplexed by and as a middle person, felt responsible for the PG owners’ sudden outraged behaviour and revocation of housing. She gave me some of her friends’ numbers I could temporarily crash at. I ended up staying with my friend who, upon my reference, was subletting a room from my ex-housemate in the city.

I had many questions that I journaled that night: Why did the PG owners not call and (conveniently) text me past midnight to revoke housing? Did the landlady find out about her

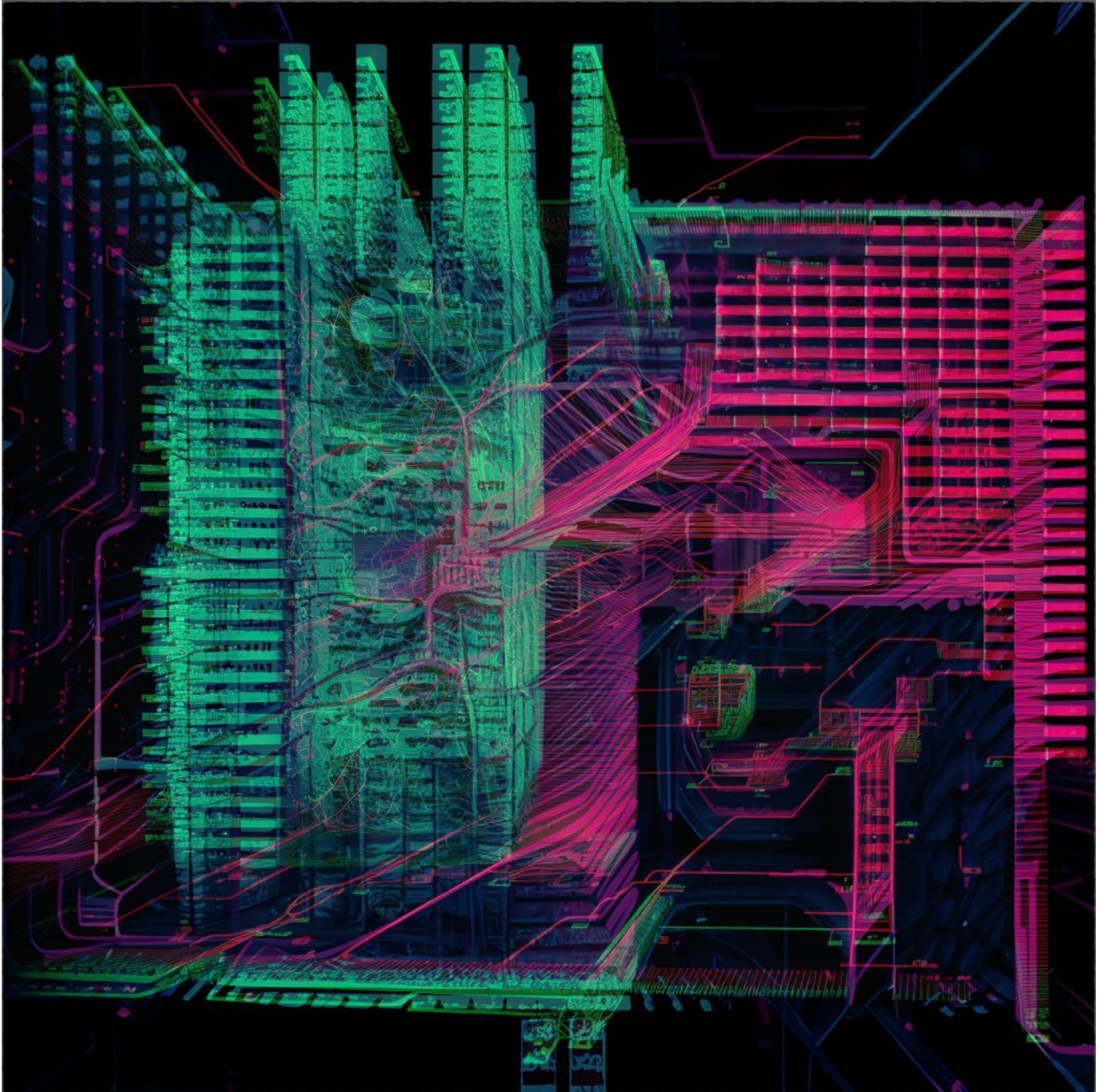
husband's deal with another cis-female student that midnight? What happened to the "many vacant rooms" during the summer term? And most of all, when did I become a "stranger" from somebody who came with a "trusted reference"? I had no certain answers. Only conjunctures. I had a socially confirmed housing agreement—not unusual in India—with the landlady for months of having approached them through the reference of my colleague, their tenant at the time. When I called them directly, the landlady extended her verbal agreement. A week later, the PG owners did not simply want me to show up to their property. The only thing, I deduced, that had changed in this one week was their access to my phone number linked to my WhatsApp account and by extension, to my profile picture (Figure 1). Back then, WhatsApp privacy settings neither allowed selective visibility of one's profile picture nor would I have considered censoring it. What the profile picture represented did not fit the cis-gender coded housing typology of PG accommodations. On the contrary, it evoked for the landlady distrust in and estrangement with me. She was equally unfamiliar with me a month ago. Her presumption of my cisness, however, had allowed her to extend to me warmth, trust, familiarity, and an invitation; all of which were now withdrawn. I was left with my mental inferences on an absent place of living; the explicit refusal I had was in fact an implicit acknowledgement of my trans identity that could not be translated linguistically, socio-culturally or legally. Most landowners are cis-heterosexual individuals with property assets where they can afford to ignore, even deny difference. However, this is not particular to the context of India, for when I moved to Toronto, my stating explicitly that I identify as trans invariably meant assuming the onus of explaining transness. Whether in Canada or India, within current rental markets, it is often at the level of sub-leasing that we may—though, unevenly—come across more trans-aware and trans-inclusive

language. I, thus, neither felt the need to state explicitly nor suppress my identity and self-expression with landowners. Like all queer and trans folks, our identities remain suspended.



**Figure 3.1.** Enroute from Mumbai to Delhi (top). My WhatsApp profile photo (bottom left). Anecdotal diagram to deduce my last-minute revocation of housing (bottom right). Source: Fieldnotes from author's journal (2017).

I soon learnt that my experience of housing discrimination in India was not unique. Ironically, I had moved to Delhi to join the research team of the multi-city project (2017-2019), “*An Exploratory Study of Discriminations based on Non-Normative Genders and Sexualities*”, to inquire non-normative genders and sexualities-based discrimination in rental housing in the capital city. There was another parallel research project that my colleagues were part of interrogating religion-based discrimination in rental housing in Delhi. Both our teams regularly exchanged our fieldnotes and observations, findings and reports with one another. It was our collective observation that caste and religion-based refusal to housing was rather explicit, (i.e., landowners were not hesitant to point out that the potential tenant was a Muslim or ate non-vegetarian food to justify the grounds for housing refusal) (Bhat, 2021; Bhat and Lone, 2021). In contrast, gender and sexuality-based housing refusals (or offerings) invariably took more implicit or covert forms. Owing to the deep-rooted social stigma, using queer terms of reference—if known—in the rental housing market is largely derogatory and thus, actively evaded and/or replaced with alternative exclusionary terms like “*ajeeb*” (strange) and/or “*alag*” (different). The reason of housing refusal remains unnamed. As if, the discrimination never happened. As if, queer and trans embodiments do not exist. Just like the meeting between the PG owners and myself that never happened—they did not see me, and I did not see my room—the two planes of trans-embodiments and cis-materialities do not meet (see Figure 3.1). Even if I was allowed to stay in the “girls” PG, it would be with the unspoken condition that my trans identity would be suspended (Arun-Pina, 2021b). Thus, it is not simply the representable spatiality of housing alone, rather precisely the underlying unrepresentable psyche that codes the *image* of a home, who lives in it and how that drives my research (Figure 3.2).



**Figure 3.2. Cisnormative coding of student accommodations.** Source: Author's (2023) vision, primary sketch, and text-prompt rendered by MidJourney and followed by digital layer-edits.

The key question, then, that I explore is also a methodological challenge that queer urban geographers Michael Brown and Larry Knopp have confronted in “queering the map” in the US (2008, p. 40): how to “represent the unrepresentable” especially with “traditional, orthodox

disciplinary anchors like...conventional cartography and GIScience”? Some of the problems, they share for instance, was the inability to reconcile “addresses from the 1930s and 1940s...with the software’s current address-matching functions” or yet, utter “lack of a specific street address number for a specific site” (Brown and Knopp, 2008, p. 50). Marked by “absences of street names or recognizable addresses”, urban scholar Lee Frederix grapples with a similar question over a decade later —how to document “traditionally unmappable forces” (Frederix, 2019). In his attempts to document contemporary Beirut, he observes that “conventional methods of looking at the city rely on static components and techniques, rendering them inadequate for suitably portraying the fluid realities of today’s city” (Frederix, 2019, pp. 304-305). Brown and Knopp (2008, pp. 43-44) attempt to map gay urban histories by situating their “countermapping project” at the “*intersection* of three somewhat distinct literatures” of “feminist, critical, and participatory GIS”, each of which place value in “critical—one might say queer—forms of visualization that employ GIS as a ‘subversive practice’” (Kwan 2000 and Schuurman 2000 as cited in Brown and Knopp, 2008, p. 43). For Frederix (2019, pp. 305-306, 308), the “unconventional” documentation process—involving “alternative form of mapping” through psychogeography—is initiated through his “hybrid academic background in architecture, fine arts, and urbanism”. He calls this the “practice of art-mapping to evolve and produce new unexpected readings of the city” (Frederix, 2019, p. 306). Although there are no unidentifiable streets or addresses to map in this research project, the representational challenge in this instance is the socio-psychological stigma around gender and sexuality expressions of one’s identity, and the normative absence of a queer/trans+ language that render all non-cis-heterosexual (passing) student-tenants unidentifiable within the student housing market in contemporary urban India.

In my own work, I have recognized spatial experience as crucially layered with built space, lived space, and felt space (Arun-Pina, 2021a). While the built and the lived space are tangible and therefore documentable with relative ease, felt space takes on intangible forms and escapes normative spatial documentation techniques. Here, I document my trans experiences of rental homes by the method of auto-ethnographic re-drawings (AErD). Re-drawing as a method of drawing while reflecting on the affective memory of the built and lived space “reworks certain architectural solidities to reveal its often-implicit cis-heteronormative conformities” (Arun-Pina, 2021a, p. 8). Like GIS, I have found AutoCAD equally limited in its scope and exploration as a spatial tool within the normative confines of the fixed disciplinary boundaries of architecture (and all of its compulsively cis-heteropatriarchal moral sensibilities). In my own academic journey, I consciously felt the need to transcend conventional disciplinary boundaries in order to make spatial re-imaginary possible. Like Frederix, my own approach to “represent the unrepresentable” is inevitably from a trans-disciplinary location. Here, disciplinary tools are not abandoned as I crossed and re-crossed the disciplinary boundaries. They become crucial extensions to my organic system—as the connect between my biological digits and nervous system paving the two-way data-action pathways—like a cyborg (Haraway, 1985; Schuurman, 2002). Now delimited by the disciplinary norms, they find newer relational positionalities, expressions, and dialogues creating an ever-evolving/shifting super-geometry *across* disciplines, engaging more fully in the praxis of transforming perspectives which Muñoz (1999) has famously called, “disidentification”—“a ‘third mode of dealing with dominant ideology, one that neither opts to assimilate within such a structure nor strictly opposes it; rather, disidentification is a strategy that works on and against dominant ideology’”—becoming thus, “transformative tools” (Muñoz, 1999, p. 11 as cited in Tlostanova et al., 2016, p. 219). As



disciplinary solidities gradually fade, a trans-disciplinary imaging as a process—like the overexposure technique in photography that renders the photograph less opaque—emerges. In radiology, for instance, medical imaging as a process utilizes electromagnetic light rays that transcend material opaque layers and structures of skin and bones to reveal the latent structures to ultimately initiate healing. In a similar way, trans imaging is proffered and applied as a process that utilizes trans perception to seeing through the architectural solidities to reveal first, their often underlying cis-heteronormative conformities and codes of design, and further, the hidden layers of queer and trans experiences of normatively designed and administered spaces. Imaging techniques and processes vary and are multiple as are their respective apparatuses, devices and tools requirements. In what follows, I first introduce the assorted toolbox of a transdisciplinary cyborg, specific to my academic trainings. I then ground trans imaging processes that crucially rework boundaries and transform perceptions in what I will identify as psychodigitalgeographies: the bridge exploring psychogeography (the mental layer) and the very nascent and emerging research work on augmented reality (AR) technology (the digital layer) as they coincide in the posthumanist cyborg theory. Next, I apply the above trans-disciplinary tools and framework to the research methods that I have in specific found handy throughout this research project—including the stages of fieldwork design, data collection and critical analysis, and the creative-intellectual installation of spatial stories in this dissertation—in overcoming several constraints of being positioned as a trans-national researcher during Covid-19 pandemic. Within the eventual context of intense national and global unrest since late 2019, I reflect on the changing terrain of power between the researcher and the researched actors where first, the researcher asynchronously belongs to the primary researched community of LGBTQ+ university students with lived experience of North Campus and/or Deonar Campus Districts, India. And,

therefore, second, I occupy the position of a visibly vulnerable queer/trans and perceived young/non-adult researcher and storyteller in a predominantly homonegative field of secondary participants comprising of urban-institutional actors shaping the student housing market such as brokers, landowners, university administrators, and planners. The chapter concludes with an invitation to appreciate the non-normative socio-spatial re-imaginary possibilities of immersive storytelling through the psycho-digital layering techniques of trans imagining.

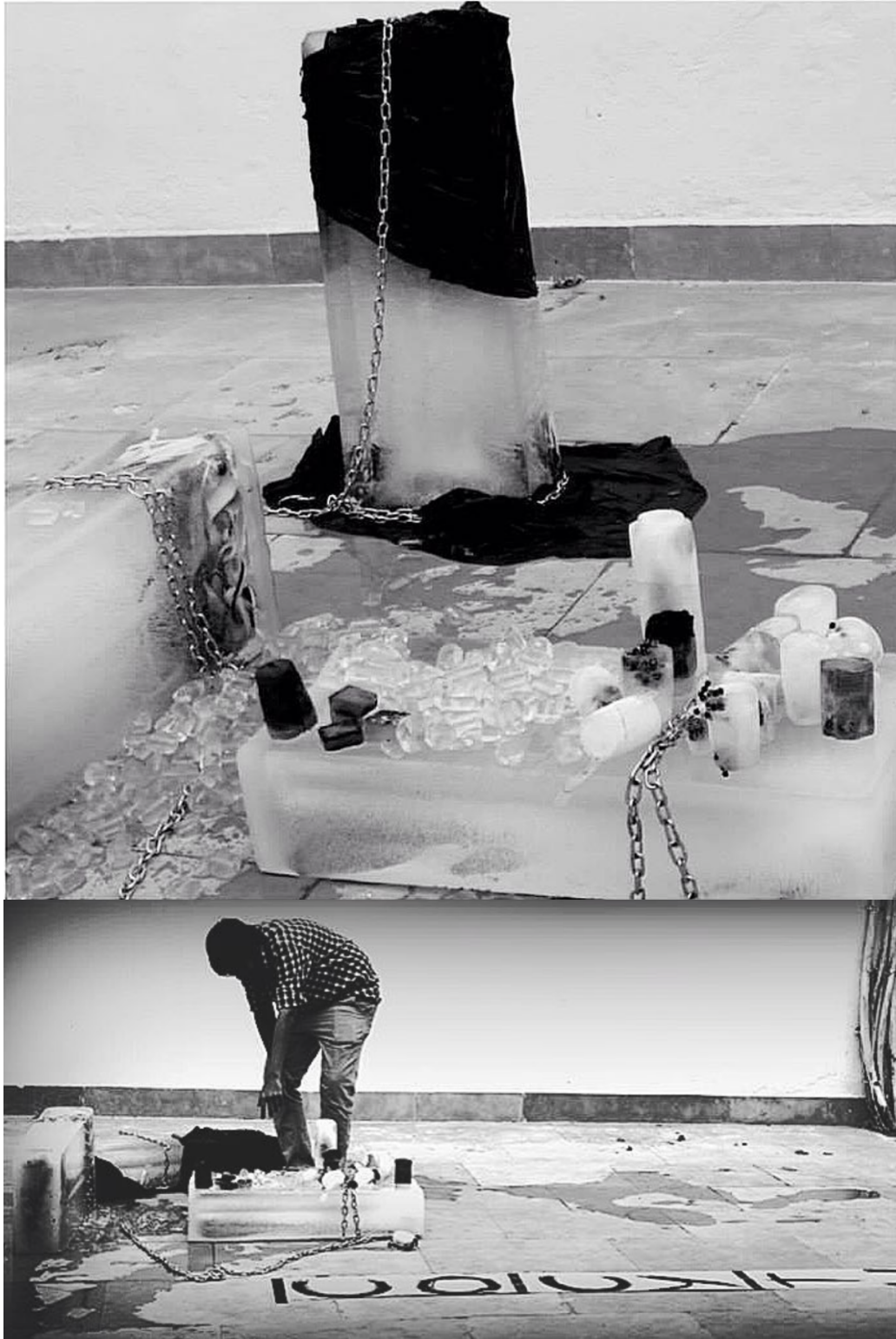
### **Toolbox of a Trans-Disciplinary Cyborg**

In my architecture training, we were progressively exposed every year to different material-based exploratory week-long elective courses—from field sketching to clay, papier-mâché, and POP mural work to screen printing and calligraphy to cyanotype photography and architectural photo-documentation to wood, metal, bricks, and tensile fabrics. Parallely, there was also a scalar progression in our field immersion trips as part of the Related Study Programme (RSP) every year—from a day trip to temporary informal settlements to rural village communities (sense of placemaking), to a week-long trip to community neighbourhoods in small towns (sense of community) to two weeks for urban planning (sense of institution). We would return to our design studios where we would be given a respective scalar design program/problem statement with the proposed site embedded in the socio-spatial context of the RSP field site we had collectively documented. We would then spend the remainder of the term evolving our individual design solution to finally exhibit it and be judged by the jury. Both these processes exposed us to a range of different materials, fundamental principles of design, and immersive architectural-anthropological documentation with and of communities and their built environment. We would live with the communities, and in teams, be participant observers tracing

their everyday life and movements by walking with them, and in/formally interact with them about their lived experiences and cultural history of their built environments, while measure drawing the built structures. We would carry with us drawing boards, drafting scales, tracing papers, maps, camera, measuring tape, grid sketchbooks to take notes and document the built and lived space. At the end of the field day, we would return to our drawing boards and transfer the field drawing to neatly drafted drawings. This was a way to tally if we had errors in or needed more measurements the next field day. Later, we would keep our own field sketchbook to journal our individual thoughts from the day of observations. When we returned to our design studio, we would patch every team's fragmented piece of documentation to generate (manually or digitally in AutoCAD) polished master drawings and 3D models of the entire documented field site with a findings report supported with annotated photo/visual/audio documentation. While above sets of processes attended to and documented the built and lived space, it overlooked affective dimensions, which elective courses in the social sciences and humanities were relatively more grounded in. For instance, we would be asked to take a word or a mood and represent it through material expression in our design. All of these tools and techniques stay with me in how I document, analyse, and think spatially. We were often told that 'drawing' is our language, and that it should speak for itself—our presence as designers should be immaterial. As a language, however, I wondered why we learnt to write it but not to critically read and think through it. Architecture discourse lacked grounding in critical scholarly literatures and not only failed to nurture critical questions interrogating spatial manifestations of oppressive hegemonic power structures, but rather also nipped them in bud.

Following the completion of my architecture degree, I applied to a Master's program in the theory of architecture and urban design at CEPT university, Ahmedabad but I chose not to

attend the interviews for which I was shortlisted because big part of me had already departed the normative disciplinary boundaries of architecture and urban design. Instead, I worked on conservational and indigenous anthropological architectural research projects that employed surveying, photo-voice, participatory drawing with community children and women, walkthroughs, participant observation, interviews, local community exhibition and documentation of their critical reception, and pace drawings. While jury exhibitions did allow to some extent an opportunity to present our ideas and engage in a dialogue and critical review with professionals, I was looking for more ephemeral opportunities to engage with the wider community, and for conceptual exploration and development of ideas grounded in critical cultural theory. I had also just started painting and was looking for academic mentorship to help me review and evolve my material and conceptual expression. My partner at the time shared with me an exciting inter-disciplinary visual art program in the School of Creative and Critical Expressions (SCCE) at Ambedkar University (AUD) in Delhi, that she had learnt of from her artist-colleague. It was and continues to be one of the few programs in the country to offer theoretically-driven art practice. There were no limits to which medium we wanted to explore towards the critical research on and creative expression of the topic of our interest, while our coursework was fundamentally grounded in cultural and media theory. I continued to pursue my research-artistic-architectural inquiry at the intersection of gender, sexuality, and space. One of my first art projects was an ice installation, *“Cocytus: Interrogating spaces of familiarity”*, disrupting the conflation of normative family homes with permanence (Figure 3.3).



**Figure 3.3.** *Cocytus: Interrogating spaces of familiarity.* A mixed-media installation in ice.  
Source: Author's portfolio [https://www.instagram.com/c.anp\\_artwork/](https://www.instagram.com/c.anp_artwork/)

In the two years of the graduate program, I continued to evolve my research questions with different mediums and art forms, including a poststructuralist upscaled book installation, graphic panels narrating rent stories of HE students in Delhi, overlay photography critically disrupting the cis male gaze, a short performance reversing the cis gaze, and urban landscape paintings interrogating the dead weight of urban development and the shape of cities. I was chosen in a nation-wide curatorial search by Kochi Biennale to exhibit my work as part of the Student's Biennale in 2014. My degree show was selected by late visual artist Vivan Sundaram to be moved to his main curatorial project, *409 Ramkinkars*, that was all set to open in the capital city in 2015.

To an extent, I was achieving the ephemeral community engagement I sought through exhibitions. But I wanted to further develop my artistic-research project studying the queer and trans potential of student housing spatiality outside of normative family living in India. Visual Art PhD programs at the time were nascent and I had found their structures too flexible. Instead, I sought a disciplinary structure with porous boundaries of inquiry. In graduate coursework, I first encountered the field of critical human geography as I read affective and emotional geographies and critical utopian geographies scholarships. My compass, pun intended, was already shifting. I undertook a year-long urban fellowship in Bangalore where I drafted student housing policy as part of my field project, employed mixed-methods, learned the basics of GIS, and practiced alternative mapping. I joined the multi-city, gender and sexuality-based anti-discrimination project with a focus on residential university campuses and urban rental housing for my internship where I further explored legal geographies and campus geographies. By then, I had been admitted to the doctoral program in Critical Human Geography at York University in Toronto, Canada and was in the process of making my first trans-continental move. At the

advanced level of PhD, I had a steep learning curve ahead of me. I self-taught myself basic textual analytical tools such as NVivo during my fieldwork. This has been a transversal disciplinary journey where my assorted toolbox kept expanding as integrating into my organic system through which I can at once involuntarily think through and be informed by, just like our biological digits—as a trans-disciplinary cyborg (Figure 3.4). I next turn to the possibilities and challenges encountered in the trans imaging process of employing above disciplinary tools as they occupy new relative positionalities and generate an ever-shifting super-geometry across normative disciplinary boundaries. I observe that trans imaging process is crucially layered, it reworks boundaries and transforms perceptions, and in so doing, creatively enables ways to represent the unrepresentable.



**Figure 3.4. Toolbox of a trans-disciplinary cyborg.** Source: Author's (2023) vision, primary sketch, and text-prompt rendered by MidJourney and followed by digital layer-edits.



## Right to Play: Reworking Boundaries and Transforming Perceptions

Faith Ringgold is an American artist known for utilising art as activism and advocacy for feminist and anti-racist movements through “story quilts”. Below, I share one of her works, *Dancing at the Louvre* (Figure 3.5) for two reasons: marginalized story-quilting technique (the text is in the margins) and play as reworking these margins. She *weaves* the story of racialized children (with adults) visiting the Louvre art gallery and the precise moment they break into playing, singing, and dancing in front of some of the classics in the art. These children fail to register the unspoken codes of an art gallery, and much the like the artists celebrated on the galleries’ walls, they end up “breaking the rules, and have a lot of fun while doing it” (Spivey, 2016, para 2).

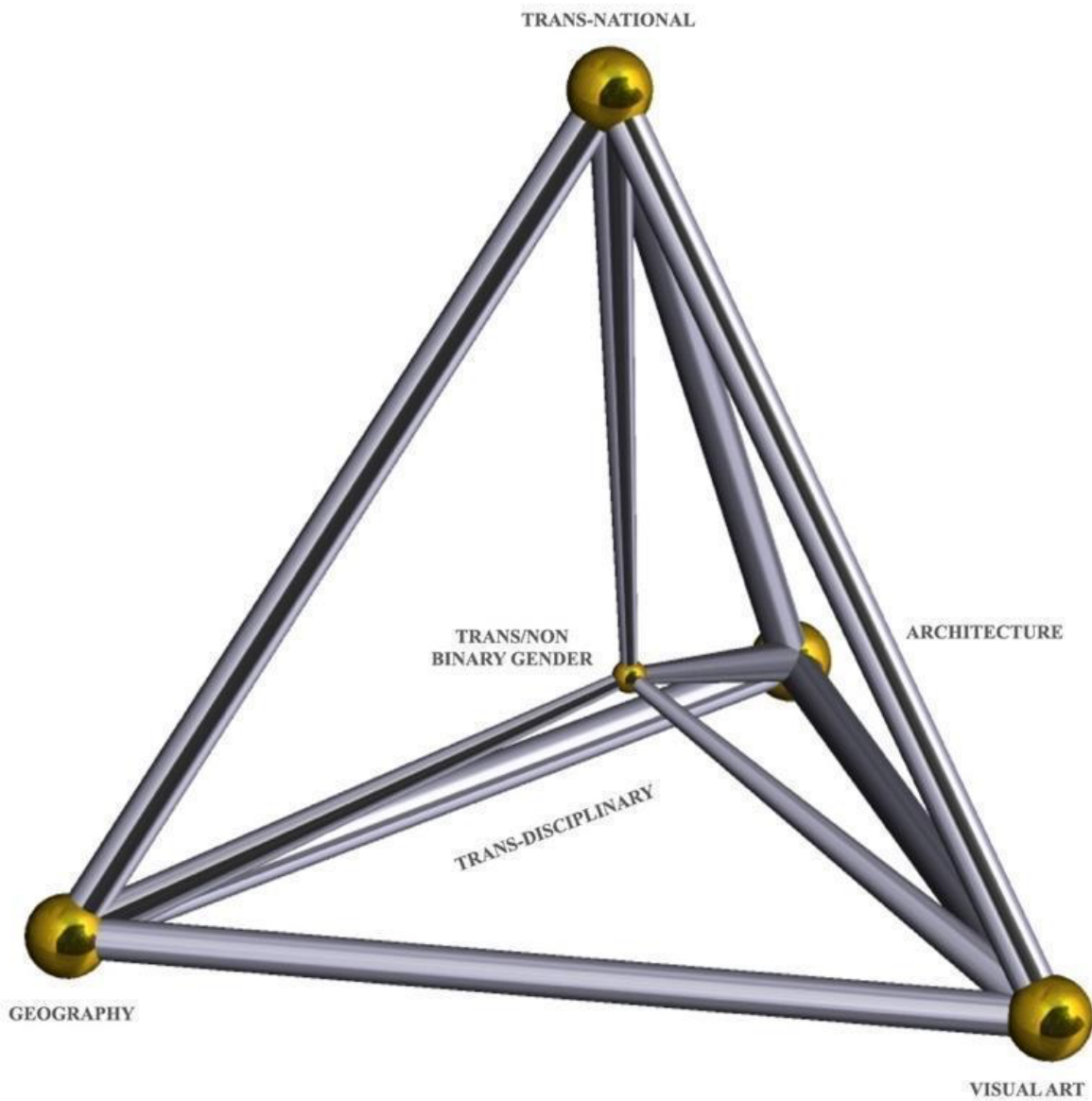


**Figure 3.5.** Faith Ringgold, *Dancing at the Louvre*, 1991. Acrylic on canvas, tie-dyed, pieced fabric border, 73.5 x 80 inches, from the series, *The French Collection*, part #1 (private collection). Source: Khan Academy (2022).



When I first shared my plan to be an architect, I surprised my teachers and my parents who had known me to be a math and physics-oriented student incapable of drawing. I was surprised myself that in that moment, but I could only imagine myself in the realm of design. My mother later recalled that I almost “naturally” read complex blueprint drawings as a very young child at her desk. Three years later, I did not accept admission from medical/engineering institutions and chose an architectural program instead. I soon realised most of my colleagues, unlike me, invariably came from a family of architects, interior designers, constructors, and builders. They even adhered getting trained in cis-gender normative roles where the man would get trained as an architect, and the woman as an interior designer to build a future family practice. It did not take long before I realised as the only young queer and trans student of architecture that I was an outsider to the disciplinary practices. When I graduated, I had no place in the nepotic professional practice. I was pushed to my outsideness from where I pursued higher education. I carried my architectural tools and techniques into my Master’s program in visual art in Delhi. When I joined the MA in visual arts program, most of my colleagues came from a 4-year long training in fine arts. I was still an outsider with a different entry point to learning the new disciplinary language. Here, I was not alone. The trans-disciplinary program also had—though not many—a few students from literature and political science backgrounds. At the doctoral level, I was familiar with the outsider positionality to normative disciplinary boundaries, but not so much with transcending the continental boundaries. Indeed, most of my colleagues in Geography came from social sciences background with long training in the academic textual language, but a few of us did come from practiced-based disciplines. I retained the curiosity to learn a new language and its tools, and much like quilting, to weave trans-disciplinary languages and my multiple trans locations—gendered, disciplinary, and geographical—thread by thread

into a supergeometry equivalent to a *5-cell* (also known as pentachoron or  $C_5$ )—a 4-dimensional structure (Figure 3.6).



**Figure 3.6. 5-cell supergeometry structure informed by my multiple trans locations.** Source: Robert Webb's model applied and annotated by Author (2023).

Two key transformations happen with visualising in higher dimensions: first, the normative 3D inside-outside binary as we know it begins to collapse in a 4-dimensional space<sup>9</sup>. Rid of normative binaries, we are left with an ever-shifting field of trans-disciplinary play (i.e., collaborative, critical, and creative learning, unlearning and relearning of disciplinary tools and techniques) that takes on the risks and responsibilities of reworking boundaries and transforming perceptions. Second, a 3D space begins to become transparent and reveal its' latent faces in a 4D space<sup>10</sup>. Comparable to higher dimensional visualising, trans imaging processes are thus, crucially see-through layering techniques to “represent the unrepresentable” felt space (i.e., affective, emotional, mental, imagined) and virtual space as overlaid onto the representable “real” built and lived space. In a nutshell, what can be understood as psychodigitalgeographies of trans imaging.

### **Psychodigitalgeographies of Trans Imaging**

Psychogeography is relatively lesser explored but emerging cognitive study of “the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behavior of individuals” (Debord as cited in Wood, 2010). Many queer and feminist geographers have used mental maps “as a lens” to represent human-environment behavioural relationships (Giesecking, 2013) and asymmetric power relations (Ley, 2000) that may not be otherwise as apparent. Like the 4-dimensional space discussed above, the mental dimensions often evade “accurate” mappings, and in so doing, come closer to documenting and representing the latent dimensions of spatial and embodied experiences (Arun-Pina, 2021a,

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<sup>9</sup> <https://youtu.be/RU6pcmulIYk> shows the prototype of a 4-dimensional geometry where the inside-outside binary comes undone.

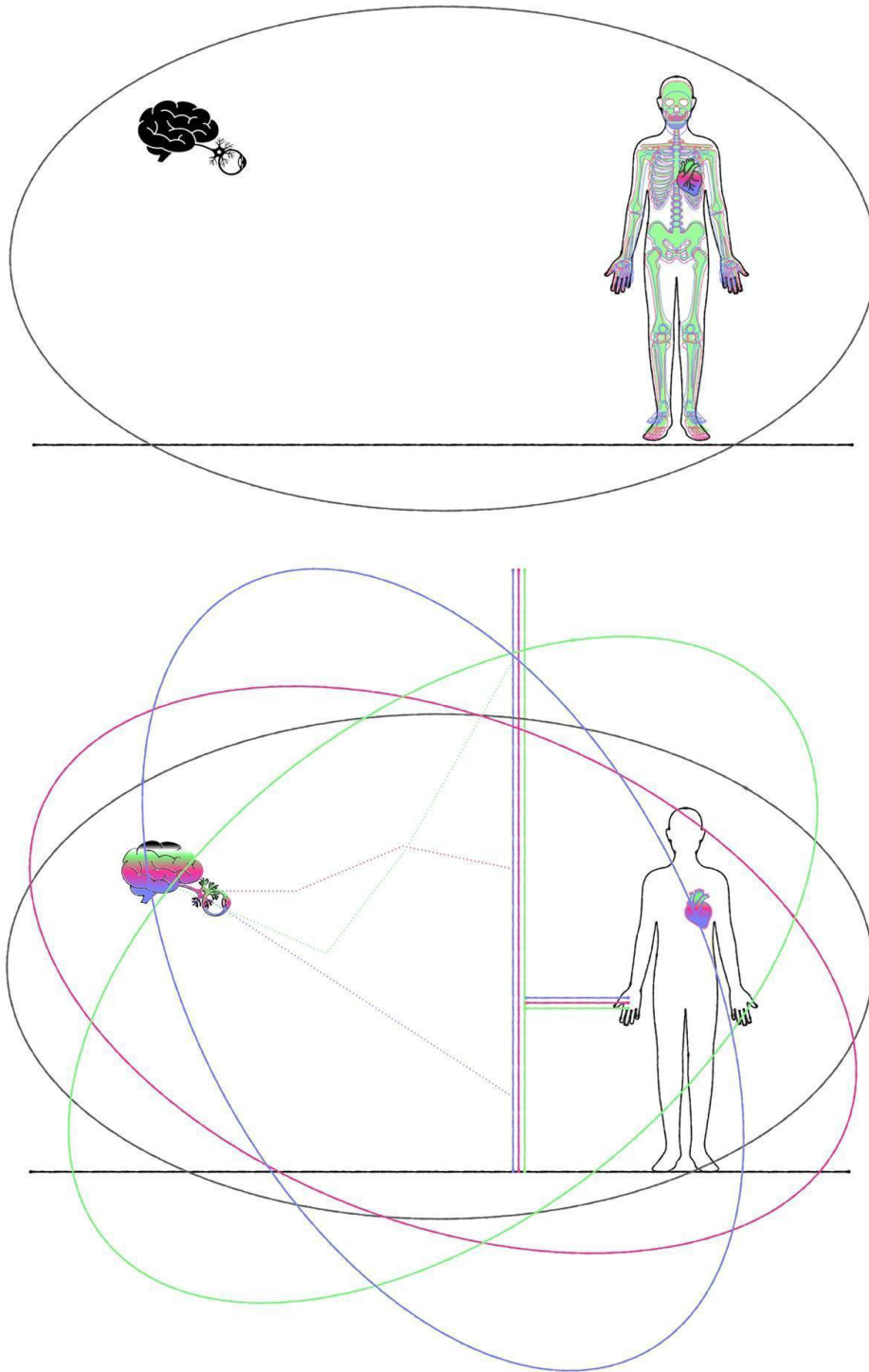
<sup>10</sup> <https://youtu.be/j-ixGKZILVc> shows how lower dimensional objects lose their opacity in higher dimensions.

2021b). Psychogeographers often overlay mental mapping with creative geographical and art-based research methods as they might intersect in non-representational urban research (Pyyry, 2019). In the autoethnographic account I start with, we see how cisnormative incomprehensibility to put the audio call with the visual profile picture as one coherent gendered self in its multiplicity, has direct implications in the real-world access or refusal to housing for trans/non-binary students. When some trans individuals take on the biomedical journey to transition “fully”—though not linearly—they may or may not aim for cis passing and to disrupt cis perceptions. Trans individuals may alternatively either prefer or can afford to transition only selectively or none at all. Instead, they may activate alternative optical-digital discourses and trans imaging processes to bend and counter-distort the cis perceptions (Figure 3.7). Thus, we also see how the spatial layers of the psyche, the digital, and the real (i.e., the non-representational and the urban spatial layers) are not divorced from rather are crucially superimposed onto and continuously inform and influence one another.

Emerging digital creative technology of Augmented Reality (AR) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) take the see-through overlay processes a step further by offering infinite invisible and/or transparent layers where the non-representational space may be coded into and/or projected onto the real environment. In effect, these digital technologies hold the scope for ‘AR’ealizing and recoding of queer and trans imaginaries on/to intercept the monolithic cis-heteronormative urban. German artist and academic, Manuel van der Veen (2019, p. 1189) argues how “Augmented Reality (AR) is itself a technology in which *two ways of seeing are crossed...to calculate a hybrid view*” such that “they blur the boundaries between the digital images and the real surroundings.” He defines AR as “an operation of superimposition” and studies it alongside a range of traditional artistic layering techniques such as “the

phantasmagoria, within which ghosts are projected into the real space and in real time”, “the schüfftan-process [that] establishes an interplay of real fragments with illusionistic complements”, “trompe-l’oeil” (realistic 3D optical illusion on 2D surfaces), “velo” (veil) , as well as “analogue panoramic boards that provide information about the location, at the location” (Veen, 2019, p. 1189). In each case, “the information and object layer” is placed *between* “an imaginary and a real interface” (Veen, 2019, pp. 1189-1190). What we have with such an optical apparatus is a complex overlay of psychodigitalgeographies of a “new field of vision” where the digital information layer occupies a constantly shifting trans space between the psyche and the real.

Veen (2019) above already focuses on the blurring of boundaries between the digital and the real. On its other side, though, we also have the blurring of the boundaries between the digital and the psyche/body, or more vividly known within the post-humanist feminist scholarship as the cyborg (Haraway, 1985). A cyborg rejects the rigid boundaries between the human and the machine, some of this critical approach is emerging in the AI human-machine creativity collaboration scholarship (Mazzonne and Elgammal, 2019). Cyborg, Haraway asserts is “a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction”, “theorized and fabricated hybrids”, “a condensed image of both imagination and material reality” (Haraway, 1985, pp. 65-66). Placed in a “post-gender world”, Haraway’s cyborg theory critically challenges essentialist, coherent, and totalizing constructs of gender within patriarchal, capitalist, and colonial structures.



**Figure 3.7.** Mutually non-exclusive approaches to trans imaging: biomedical transition (top), AR assisted transforming cisnormative perceptions (bottom). Source: Author (2022).

Trans imaging as a visual methodology then deeply intersects with decolonial, feminist posthumanist, and queer methodological frameworks. It finds value in reflexive approach to the field research and analysis, non-binary approach to unsettling the insider/outsider power dynamics, and transversal approach between disciplinary tools and linguistic forms. I now apply the above trans-disciplinary tools and framework to the research methods employed throughout different stages of this research project in the time of the Covid-19 pandemic.

### **Architectural Geographical and Visual Fieldwork Methods during Covid-19**

My trans-disciplinary ‘educational route’ (Archer & Leathwood, 2003; Christie, 2007 & 2009) had led me to live in multiple city-regions in India as a queer and trans-identifying student, thereby parallelly dictating my choices in “housing pathway” (Rugg et al., 2004). At some point after graduating from architecture and before starting my MA program in Delhi, I subconsciously turned into an autoethnographic witness to my own everyday mobility and living as a queer and trans student in a range of small-to-mega urban contexts. On a regular basis, I found myself doing archival self-portrait photography embedded in urban and domestic landscapes—that later formulated in an art show titled “*Self-portrait of a transman: Archiving the subtexts of inhabiting homes*” (2016)<sup>11</sup>, keeping a pocket-sized grid book for taking spatial notes—annotated architectural drawings and anecdotal analytical diagrams of places where certain experiences and/or events had meant of consequence to my journey, blogging of my visions journal with visual imageries and their narrative significations, and reading scholarships that spoke to these experiences while in transit between cities. This became an ongoing meaning-

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.shanak.co/others-i-tales-from-growing-up> documents the curator’s note on the show.

making process for me and continues to inform me today and throughout this queer and trans urban geographies research project.

I had several case study cities in India with a first-hand lived experience as a HE-LGBTQ+ student to choose from, including but not limited to Ahmedabad, Baroda, Hyderabad, New Delhi, Bangalore and Mumbai. I narrowed down to the North Campus, DU, New Delhi and Deonar Campus, TISS, Mumbai—the exceptional two residential campuses in India with student-led groups whose work focus lies at the key intersection of gender and housing—PinjraTod (women students and housing, 2015), and TISS QC (trans/gender non-conforming students and housing, 2016). With New Delhi as the National Capital Region (NCR) and Mumbai as the financial capital of India, these are also the two largest mega cities in India with the highest migrant student populations.

I was all booked to leave for my fieldwork in February 2020 when the world was hit with Covid-19 pandemic. With the guidance of my supervisor, I decided to retain my field sites while adapting my research methods. I was already proposing to employ mixed methods with a psycho-digital exploration considering, among other things, my own and my primary research participants, HE-LGBTQ+ students' gender dysphoria with in-person presence. Virtual methods were one of the viable options pre-pandemic, especially accessible with students, and particularly enabling—with selective frame of views, angles of camera, use of gender-affirming filters, and/or simply turning the camera off while talking/typing—for trans and gnc students who experience everyday gender dysphoria (visually and in voice). However, this changed with Covid-19 pandemic-related international travel bans and lockdowns. Fieldwork during pandemic necessitated “rethinking creative research methods in response to Covid-19” (Fleetwood-Smith, 2021), and exploring alternative virtual methods as part of the remote data collection (Strachan,



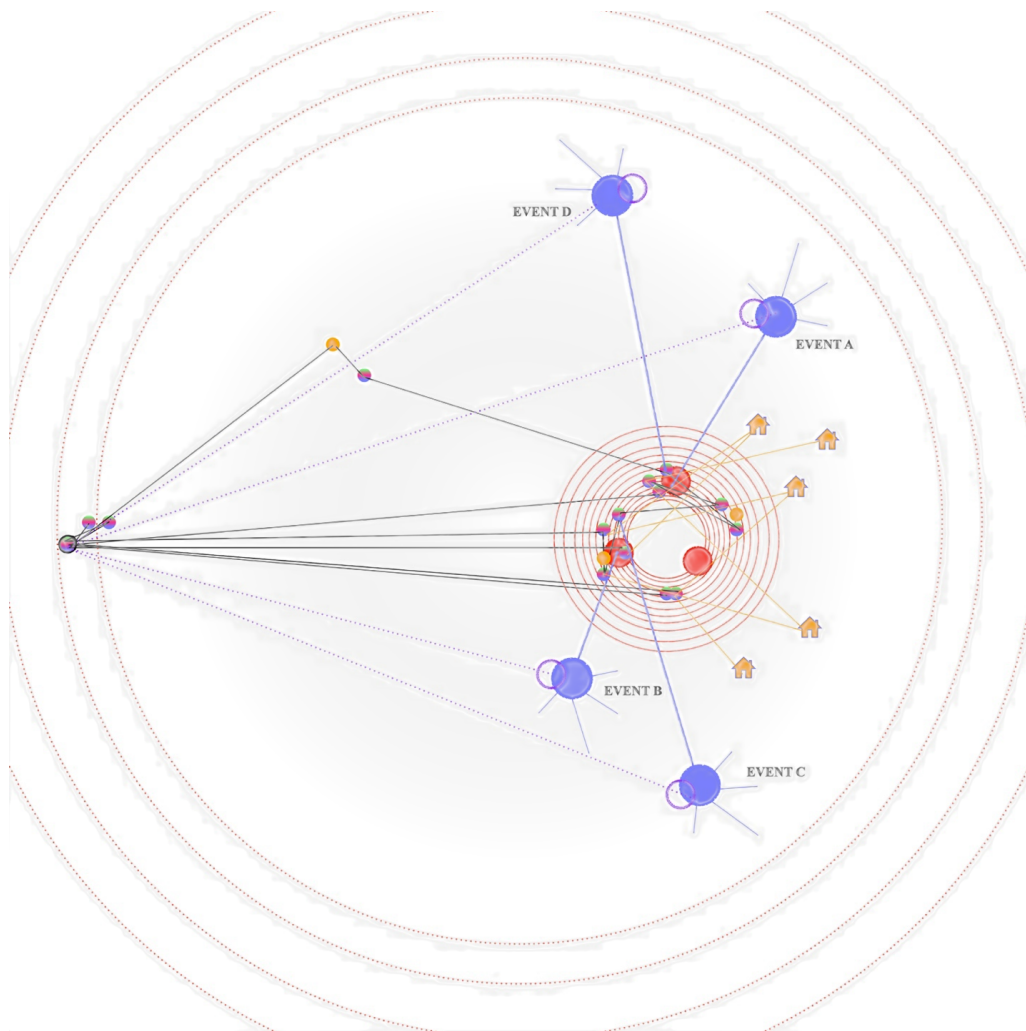
2021, Falco, 2021; Keenoy, 2021) for *all* researchers in a global lockdown and even after who could not physically access their fields and research participants. While much of the scholarship documenting the shifts in methodology during pandemic came after the fact, many institutional and scholarly resources and workshops teaching to adapt creatively with virtual methodologies became available.

Before Covid-19, India also witnessed a massive national crisis with two constitutional changes proposed by the government of India: first in August 2019, the abolition of Article 370 that gave Jammu and Kashmir a special status under “Temporary, Transitional and Special Provisions” due its ongoing locational border conflicts between India, Pakistan, and China. Second in December 2019, the introduction of The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) 2019 that paves the pathway to Indian citizenship for refugees from Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh of all religions except Muslims. There was an ongoing unrest among students due to changing neoliberal policies shifting the cost burden of higher education in public institutions away from the state to the individual students and their families with program and hostel fee hikes with deep class, caste, and religion-based repercussions. Several cases of government violence on campus leading to house arrests of leading faculty members and intellectuals, deleting their hard drives and destroying their libraries, and marginalised student evictions, arrests, and suicides have been reported in documenting the changing and inculcating of a landscape of fear in India’s higher educational landscape. After the above two constitutional changes in 2019, massive student protests erupted in Delhi and Mumbai with one of the most severe government attacks on students inside the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) campus’s student housing and other public places in Delhi. Protests continued and many student leaders including PinjraTod activists Natasha Narwal and Devangana Kalita in May 2020 were arrested

under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) and sent to the Tihar Jail.

Simultaneously, TISS students were also charged for protesting at the Mumbai Pride event in Feb 2020. While in 2018, India repealed Section 377 criminalizing homosexuality, we are far from making enabling non-normative genders and sexualities-based anti-discriminatory policies and/or legally recognizing same-sex relationships. As a queer and trans student researcher myself with the research project focusing on HE-LGBTQ+ student geographies in Delhi and Mumbai, following the York University's ethical protocol, I asked myself "what can [I as a] researcher do to protect" my research project and myself as a "vulnerable researcher" (Tang et al. 2020) as well as my primary research participants HE-LGBTQ+ students to avoid risks and jeopardising safety for myself and my research participants. It was also a crucial decision for me situated from Canada as to where/whom to begin my fieldwork engagement with. State-led violence was intensifying pressure on university and institutional actors. Although there was a sharp left-wing/right-wing political divide it was not as clearly reflected onto the university/state and straight/queer students divide. There are equally right-wing student groups on campus who were involved in perpetrating violence on campus, including actors in the powerful university (housing) administrative positions responsible for student evictions from university student housing. It is also common to find student friendships across political and gender and sexuality identity groups. As an outsider to campus politics (and a visibly queer/trans researcher), I did not want to take the risk of navigating this sharp ideological divide yet blended and unidentifiable network. In this time, it felt risky to circulate my call for recruitment of LGBTQ+ self-identifying university students even among queer email listservs. Instead, I followed a careful and slow snowball technique of reaching out through trusted LGBTQ+ students individually one at a time initially, and then taking further navigational references and branching out from their

trusted network of LGBTQ+ students whom I had personally met during my fieldwork in 2017 before moving to Canada and who had since been direct everyday witness to and/or even recipient of the ongoing governmentalist-institutional atrocities against students in the urban-national and on-campus contexts. It was thus, determined that voices of the HE-LGBTQ+ students will not only be accentuated to fill the sheer lacuna within geographies of student and student housing scholarships, but also be the insider guiding light for my research project to navigate the complex field time of global-national crises and field space of homonegative labyrinth. HE-LGBTQ+ students are my primary informants who not only led me to other queer students, but their stories also referred me to critical student housing events and actors that I followed as a fieldwork trajectory gradually emerged (Figure 3.8). I decided to wait for the global-national climate to calm before reaching out to non-student, non-LGBTQ+ urban actors. I also determined it fitting to utilise secondary research sources of nation-state policy documents on education and housing, university websites and student housing handbooks, and social media handles of the two student-led groups. Further, it was feasible to start the virtual fieldwork across different time-zones (India Standard Time being +9.5/10.5 hours from EST) with student-participants who are often working late hours, flexible, and readily tech savvy themselves. Below, I outline various mixed research methods I employed as part of the virtual fieldwork conducted from my desk, laptop, and cell phone in an apartment on the York University campus yet extending through my own lived experiences and social networks into the cities of Mumbai and Delhi.

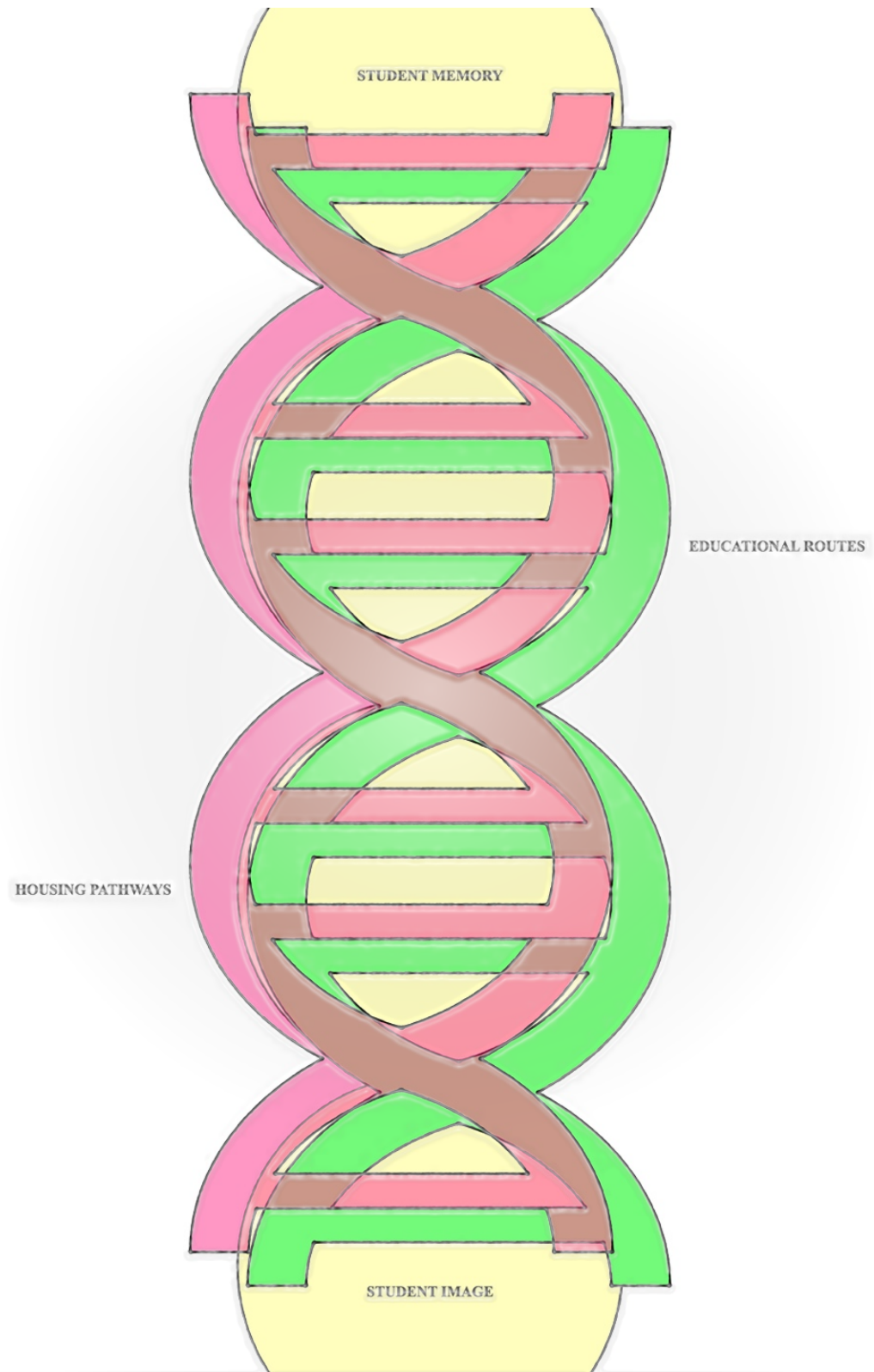


**Figure 3.8. Navigating the field of crises.** Researcher and HE-LGBTQ+ students (rainbow dots), queer allies (yellow dots), key events and social/print media documents (blue and purple), urban actors in the housing market (yellow houses), global-national crisis (red). Source: Author (2023).

### **In-depth Interactive Interviews (III)**

With the Covid-19 pandemic, my fieldwork could not be conducted in a usual one-stretch of timespan, nor could my research process thus, follow a conventional linear process of data collection-analysis-writing. All of the things were happening concurrently, making the fieldwork process itself fragmented, non-linear, and messy—or, in short, queer (Warner, 1993;

Manalansan, 2014; Campbell and Farrier, 2015). After resubmitting and re-clearing my ethics approval, I first conducted my pilot in-depth semi-structured interview with a student in July 2020. Revising the 4-hour long interview to now a 3-hour long interview that could be conducted over 2-3 virtual sessions over zoom, between August 2020-April 2021, I conducted 23 semi-structured interviews online with HE-LGBTQ+ students enrolled in at least one degree program from either or both DU and TISS between the decadal period of 2010-2020. All 23 participants (11 students at DU, Delhi and 12 students at TISS, Mumbai) self-identified as LGBTQ+ individuals: cis lesbian women (5), cis gay men (3), bi/pansexual (6), trans/gnc (10), agender (1), and queer (7). All students came from a mix of class, caste, region and religion-based identity intersections. For most trans/gnc individuals, arriving at a name is a critical journey fraught with experiences of unbelonging and gender dysphoria. Keeping this in mind, I have refrained from providing pseudonyms for research participants because any name would invariably hold gendered connotations rooted in the cisnormative culture of naming in India. I also did not want to lose the cultural roots of my participants in deriving pseudonyms that may be seen as “alien”, or “western” given that LGBTQ+ individuals are already charged with both within the postcolonial Indian context. Instead, I have anonymized every participant’s name with a two-letter code that may not correspond directly to their initials. Below I discuss the formulation of interactive interview guidelines for students as informed by own lived experience as a queer and trans student in India.



**Figure 3.9.** Intertwined strands of “educational routes” and “housing pathways” as DNA-like structural carrier of queer and trans memory as a base model for in-depth interactive interviews with HE-LGBTQ+ students. Source: Author (2023).

Informed by my own “reflexive” and “insurgent autobiographical” (Daniels and Nash, 2004; Purcell, 2007) scholarly journey that opened this section and positing myself as a “spatialized self” (Gorman-Murray, 2007), I visualised a way to map “educational routes” (Archer & Leathwood, 2003; Christie, 2007 & 2009) and “housing pathways” (Rugg et al., 2004) as intertwined strands of DNA-like structural carriers of queer and trans student memory (Figure 3.9). Based on the above conceptual model, I developed three key themes for the in-depth interactive interviews (III) with each HE-LGBTQ+ student: university-city relationship, student life, and housing biography. These are also the themes that continue to frame the three main body chapters of this dissertation.

In my visual arts program, we had a documentary filmmaking workshop in which we learnt about “interactive documentaries” where the viewer decides the trajectory of viewing the film by selecting the frame, even action of a character. Each viewer and viewing may differ in their experiential path of the film and its determinants. Considering limited time and remote methods to engage with students’ most vulnerable aspects of identity-based experiences, even if I shared them, required building trust and comfort. I adapted interactive mode of in-depth interview over 2-3 sessions with each student. Meeting for one hour three times with an in-between break created a deeper sense of familiarity as against a single 3-hour long seating. The in-between sessions time was almost subconsciously the time we spent processing what we had talked about, and therefore cultivating a sense of reflexive staying with one another. Folded under each of the three thematic digital tabs, I developed corresponding cluster of prompts that the student-participant was given the option to choose from (Appendix). Each participant could interact with the interview guideline to design the narrative sequence in which they wished to engage with(in) the three themes. They were often curious what each thematic tab entailed, and I

shared with them the cluster of prompts for them to anticipate and drive the discussion. While most participants preferred to open with university-city relationship and close with housing biographies, there were indeed a few students—surprisingly whom I was meeting for the first time—who chose to open with their most intimate housing biographies, even beginning with live virtual walkthroughs of their homes. Some participants reached out to me multiple times even after our interviews were complete because they had moved to a new rental apartment and wanted to give me a virtual walkthrough of their new homes as a continuation of our conversations. To me, this spoke volumes about the trust I was able to develop—despite being digitally-mediated in our relationship building. I always took the time and scheduled a follow up meeting for these home tours. In my tracing/mapping their housing biographies, these tours further underscored how (transient) housing journeys continue across the life course and call for a longer-term view.

Each interview session was recorded on the digital meeting platform Zoom with the prior consent of the participant. All participants agreed to being recorded, one participant preferred only the audio recording, and at times due to unstable internet network, participants turned their camera off while talking to me. Zoom allowed for auto-transcription, however, many of my participants spoke to me in what is colloquially known as Hinglish – a hybrid of Hindi and English. I kept an A5 grid field notebook for each participant separately and kept in-depth spatial, visual, and textual field notes. After every session, I often digitally transferred data to a colour coded tabular format on google sheets for easier and quick access, including if there was something I needed to follow-up on in the next session. This was a method I had first learnt during archival research seminar by Asia Art Archives (AAA) in 2014 which I kept evolving over time and utilised during my doctoral comprehensive readings to mentally organise larger



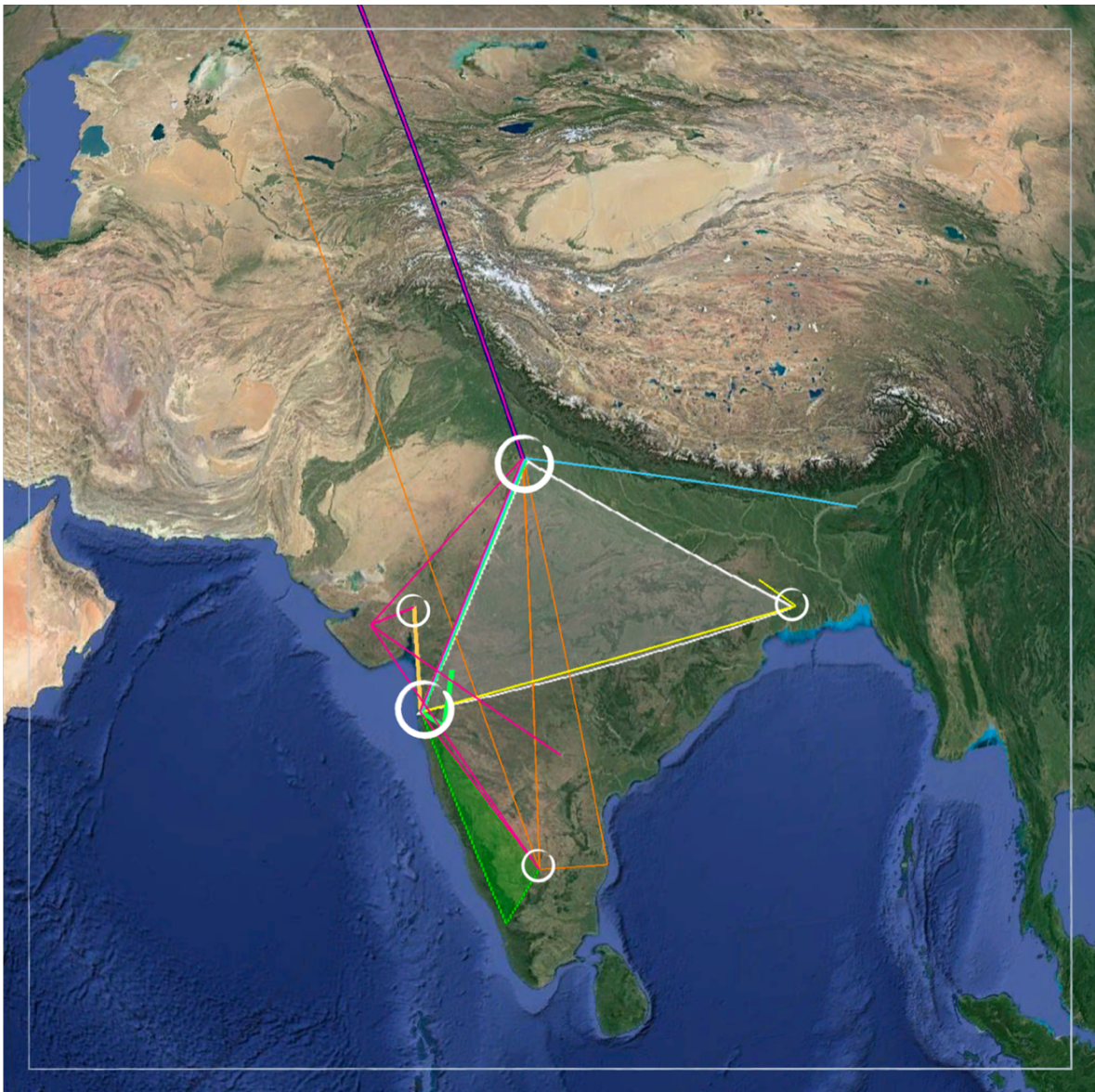
volumes of data. I also would add colour coded tags to my manual fieldnotes with remarks on student narratives that may be or need to be developed as architectural technical drawings, analytical diagrams, and/or graphic narratives. For every student, I kept a separate corresponding master folder with sub-folders pertaining to transcripts, photographs shared by the student, mental maps, geographical maps annotated by students, and drawings by participants and by myself—gradually growing these into spatial stories.

### **Spatial Stories**

Michel de Certeau (1984) emphasised that spatial stories are a way to mentally organise and understand spaces. That spatial stories represent both personal and culturally rooted accounts. For him, “every story is a travel story, a spatial practice” (de Certeau, 1984, p. 115). Spatial stories are at once a method of data collection, analysis, as well as critical representation.

I frequently began interviews by sharing the Google Earth Maps (GE) on screen, asking the student-participant to trace their educational route on the map. They would take me from city to city, one university to the next, as I pinned each location to “add path” on GE. Starting our sessions with mapping and tracing their education-housing pathways indeed activated the DNA strands and unpacked deep seated queer memories (Figure 3.10). This was very early in the lockdown times when we were just beginning to get acquainted with the possibilities of virtual platforms such as Zoom. Some of my participants were already involved in virtual teaching and NGO works and to my surprise, taught me that while I could gear GE on my device, they could still annotate the maps! They often added notes and arrows to mark points of significance. While I saved educational routes as they intertwined with their housing biographies on my GE desktop application, I kept a separate folder to save all the annotated geographical maps by student-

participants. Above interactive activity proved to not only be a great ice breaker, but one that directly helped both the participant and me to travel together, retracing their travel trajectories and layering them with memories. I had found during pilot interviews that this method worked to activate affective memory through association and gained deeper access to forgotten parts of spatial memory.



**Figure 3.10. Tracing the educational routes and housing pathways of HE-LGBTQ+ students as of 2021 (these have already since expanded). Each colour represents a different student pathway. Source: Author.**

We often followed geographical mapping with mental mapping of the university-student home-city relationship which the participant was free to do it either manually using (coloured) pens and paper, or digitally on the Zoom's whiteboard. Most participants preferred to do it manually as they were struggling to use the whiteboard, whereas others were well versed with and drew detailed sketches on the whiteboard. One student was not comfortable with drawing and preferred to instead verbally narrate a geographical map. They would then walk me through their mental map responding to the corresponding cluster of prompts. Mental mapping was a great tool to reveal their felt dimensions—distance from or proximity to the university-home-city triad—in contrast (or continuity) to the “accuracy” of geographical mapping.

In-between sessions, student-participants often stayed in touch. They shared photographs of their on-campus hostel rooms and/or off-campus student homes, at times the everyday walkways connecting the campus to home, their regular spots on campus, as well as of key LGBTQ+ public events on campus and in the city from their archives either posted publicly on social media platforms such as Facebook or Instagram, or from their private archives. At times, they even redacted certain parts of the photographs to protect the identity of friends in the frame and annotated to add a short narrative from their memory about the photograph. These were interactions they solely explored on their own and varied amongst participants. In the following session, I would take the time to go through these photographs on the screen together with the participant. Photo-elicitation as a participant-driven semi-structured method involves images as visual stimuli “beyond words” (Bates et al., 2017) which gave me as the researcher a sense of what role the contents of the photograph played in the participant's visual narrative, to *see* what they mean (Hunter, 2016). Still-sharing would then be accompanied with a virtual walkthrough of their current place of living, at times suggested by me and other times brought up

by the participant themselves. I let the participants in on the cluster of prompts in the introductory session so they could anticipate what a virtual/remote multidimensional spatial documentation process entailed in my in-person absence, and they could then drive and decide the time of their and their housemates’/partner’s convenience to give me the walkthrough. One participant preferred to record an off-line video-tour which she later shared with me. Pre-Covid 19, in 2017, I was living in-person on TISS campus as an architectural research consultant on the *DISCO project* when I had the opportunity to doing campus walkthroughs and pace-drawings of the campus and on-campus student hostels, overlaid with focus-group mental mappings of the campus environment with the members of the TISS QC. Video walkthrough replaced the physical fieldwork process of pace-drawing<sup>12</sup> to document the field-site for me. After the session, I would spend time reviewing the virtual tour alongside GE maps to fetch accurate measures and draft-document the architectural space to scale on AutoCAD 2020. As a trans-disciplinary method, it allowed me to “interview a house” and not just the “people living in the house” (Stender, 2017, p. 33). In the case of TISS, the field-site itself called for a case-specific architectural research method; with the assignment of India’s first gender-neutral hostel wing in 2018, there was a sharp before/after occupancy spatial experience calling for a Post-Occupancy Evaluation (POE). 13 trans/gnc students I spoke to have the lived experience on-campus student hostels both before and after the assignment of GNH, as well as were directly involved in the housing activism of acquiring on-campus student accommodation for trans/gnc students. I apply and unpack the POE process in detail in Chapter 6.

All of the above, transcripts, annotated geographical maps, mental maps, annotated photographs, and architectural drawings form the base layer now ready for analytical overlays.

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<sup>12</sup> Pace-drawing is a fast spatial-documentation process on field which involves measuring the researcher’s step in prior, and simply walking the field site while drawing to scale the space on the grid paper.

Manually, this is done through either overlaying base layer with transparent tracing papers or underlaying with opaque carbon papers. Digitally, various tools are available to explore the process of overlay. At this stage, I would overlay and code both the architectural spaces in AutoCAD and transcripts of student stories in NVivo and my fieldnotes. I conducted coding in NVivo in layers starting with line-to-line reading of individual student's testimony and open coding with coloured bands. In the second phase, I drew parallels and common denominators (as well as unique perspectives) emerging across student-testimonies informing me of broader themes. Gradually, what emerges is a spatial story which then, depending on the nature of the story and its core argument and theme, I derive the visual art form for. Throughout this dissertation, I have used architectural drawings overlaid with narrative texts, conceptual analytical diagrams, photo-essay, and AI generated graphic renderings. I first came across and started exploring the futuristic AI generative art (and the split views within the artist communities) in January 2023. While there are several open AI generative art platforms<sup>13</sup>, I have exclusively subscribed to MidJourney—a paid platform where my image-creations (along with prompt feeds and draft versions are publicly available in my MidJourney gallery @chan\_arunpina).

Almost two decades ago now, Irwin and Cosson (2004) introduce “a/r/tography” as a practice-based research and pedagogy and methodology that reworks image-text relationship. They derive the methodology out of their own inseparable roles as artists-researchers-teachers. Elsewhere, Boyd (2017) has also identified her practice as a poet-researcher and the

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<sup>13</sup> This dissertation does not use AI-assistance for writing, and exclusively explores generative art on MidJourney. The figures generated with AI-assistance are cited as such (Source: Author's (2023) vision, primary sketch, and text-prompt rendered by MidJourney and followed by digital layer-edits.). All other figures are author's own drawings, creations, and renderings.

corresponding critical trans-disciplinary navigation. I would like to draw our attention to the hyphen ‘-’ and the slash ‘/’ in their praxis. In their book, Irwin and Cosson (2004) explain how the slash ‘/’ is integral part of their praxis which opens a linguistic exchange, an interface between image and text. Both the hyphen and the slash direct us to the liminal space of interplay—though not without challenges and responsibilities—between and across normative disciplinary boundaries. It is an interface that opens the trans-disciplinary collaborative possibilities which need resources for building and nurturing the infrastructure for such trans bridging. Slash ‘/’ is also the key command to initiate a code opening the collaborative human-machine interface.

Specifically, in MidJourney, ‘/imagine’ is the command to initiate human-AI collaboration for generative art renderings. The command is then followed by a text-based prompt feed with as many (or less) details about the content, context, historical-geographical location, composition, and representation-style by the artist-author. We can further accompany the text-based prompt with image feed (I often used my own conceptual sketches, story boards, and field photographs to generate deeply embedded image-stories). The generation itself is a randomized process with four image-rendering options per generation. We can blow up the option that most closely represents the artist-author’s vision and continue to enhance repeating the same process until the desired results are (somewhat) achieved. I would often need to do a post-image processing work creating a digital overlay collage with a mix of multiple images each having an attribute closer to the vision I prompted, entailing cropping, making porous, and overlaying these images to produce a single image to tell the story I needed to. On an average, it has taken almost a hundred image-draft generations and edits before the final visual figure included here (the entire process for each generation is publicly accessible in my MidJourney

gallery). Thus, I have employed the AI tool in a combination with other digital image-making tools, as largely a rapid rendering application, at the final stage after the critical envisioning and conceptualisation was already achieved. Elsewhere, Brice (2018) has distinguished between illustrative drawing—as drawing after the analysis and reflection to simply render—and critical observational drawing—as drawing during and crucially contributing to the conceptual analytical process. In my work, I have proposed *re-drawing* as a process of internal visualisation, i.e., drawing while reflecting (Arun-Pina, 2021a). Through trans-disciplinary layering processes and the exploration of “transformative tools” thus, what has emerged is a multidimensional documentation and representation of HE-LGBTQ+ students’ spatial stories. I now turn to the secondary modes of data collection to attend to the voices of non-student urban actors.

### **Content Analysis**

In 2017, for “reading normativity in legal documents on urban housing in India” (ACWS Report, 2019) as part of the *DISCO project*, I had conducted document analysis for the national housing policies, state Rent Acts of Delhi, Mumbai, and Karnataka, and legal case files for religion and caste-based community housing. A year later in 2018, I re-created the research findings as a legal-art form of a case book on urban housing in India<sup>14</sup> which was exhibited when the project culminated in 2019. I crucially extend both the above research issues and the research methods in my doctoral fieldwork. To supplement the inaccessibility of formal urban actors during the lockdowns (between 2020-2022), in addition to drawing from my own 30-year-long autoethnographic lived experience as queer and trans identifying student in multiple Indian city-regions, I relied on a range of secondary documents across spatial scales: national education and

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<sup>14</sup> [https://tiss.edu/uploads/files/An\\_Exploratory\\_study\\_of\\_Discrimination\\_16\\_March\\_2020\\_compressed.pdf](https://tiss.edu/uploads/files/An_Exploratory_study_of_Discrimination_16_March_2020_compressed.pdf)

housing policies, urban master plan and vision documents, university mission statements and student hostel handbooks, newspaper articles, and legal case files. Certain policy documents and events came up etched in several student-participants' memories during interviews—some of whom had directly experienced the event and/or protested virtually on social media or physically in urban public spaces against the policy— with significant overlap with my own preliminary list of supplementary documents and events. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, and four key events emerged to have significantly shaped students' lived experiences in the 2010-2020 decadal period: 1. sudden student evictions from university hostels during CWG 2010 in Delhi followed by student exploitation by local landowners, 2. Young Builders' proposed construction of a high-rise private residential apartment within the premises of North Campus, DU and a case of anomaly of existing private gated community within Deonar Campus, TISS, 3. arrests of student leaders and student members of PinjraTod and TISS QC under the UAPA and sedition charges in 2020, and 4. recurrent conflicts between off-campus TISS student-residents and local neighbourhood residents in the Deonar Campus district, one of which ended in the detention of student-residents. I focused on four key events and gathered national print media reports. In the case of the second and third legal events, I investigated the open access legal case files available at [www.indiankanoon.org](http://www.indiankanoon.org), as well as the Young Builders' website and prospectus details on the proposed residential project. The recurrent conflict between students and non-students is often unreported nevertheless widely known among student unions who diligently work in resolving the issue for off-campus student residents. I read and analysed NEP 2020 alongside the student protests and open knowledge production for wider community outreach and awareness on social media platforms by student-groups using the hashtags #rejectNEP2020 and #NEPQuitIndia. None of the students mentioned campus or urban plan documents nor national or urban housing



policies. Even when explicitly prompted during interviews, student leaders admitted having never considered orienting to, participating in, or connecting with inclusive planning initiatives in the city. A similar gap in orientation was also seen from the radical planners' end who did not consider the figure of a (LGBTQ+) student in their bottom up and inclusive planning approaches. This gap inspired me to prioritize the perceptions of (in particular, LGBTQ+) students and their housing needs within national and institutional imaginaries. These were then juxtaposed alongside PinjraTod's social media archive giving voice to women students' experiences of hostel and PGs as well as TISS QC-led blog<sup>15</sup> giving voice to queer and trans/gnc student experiences of HE campuses and student housing. I refer to and analyse these events and documents in Chapters 4 and 5.

### **Semi-Structured Interviews**

In the summer of 2022, India lifted its international travel ban. It was then that I planned to conduct the physical component of my fieldwork, involving campus walkthroughs and semi-structured interviews with urban actors such as planners, housing brokers, and landowners. I wanted to hire a Research Assistant (RA) in each case study city to maximise fieldwork time. I was booked to leave for my fieldwork in Delhi first on July 8, 2022, and then Mumbai on July 20, 2022. But I contracted Covid-19 on July 6, and was not able to board my flight. I ended up doing my fieldwork remotely while coordinating with my RA in Delhi. I was still looking for an RA in Mumbai, however TISS was on a summer break at the time and most students were out of the city while the institute itself remained closed. In less than a week, cases were on the rise in both the megacities which went into lockdown once again. As it was no longer safe for the RA to be physically present in the field, and I too stopped my search for an RA in Mumbai. In a week's

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<sup>15</sup> <https://theglassclosetsblog.wordpress.com> is a LGBTQ+ student and faculty members led blog generated as part of the Ford funded project.

time of the fieldwork, she and I (through a video call) did walkthroughs around North campus and its edges and neighbourhoods in the North campus district (see Chapter 4). Due to the long lockdown periods, most brokers found themselves in particularly tensed situations related to property, some even shifted their focus from rental to ownership-based markets. In the narrow window of openings in the market where lockdown was temporarily lifted, there was a general sense of urgency and recovering from the lost time and business opportunity. Both my RA and I found that even the most helpful and willing brokers were on the run and could give at best only 15-20 minutes of their time. My RA would walk-in to the broker's office in the campus district to set up a time available with willing brokers for a phone call interview with me. Most of them were reluctant with scheduling; instead, they preferred an on-the-go approach to speak with my RA in-person there and then. From my own references I approached two brokers who were willing to speak with me via phone call but were also facing a similar recovery from crisis situation, and preferred I called them while they were driving on their 20-minute route from their office to home. They also preferred structured interview given the limited time. I reworked the interview guideline, colour coded questions in an order of priority around landowner-property-tenant negotiation (Appendix). In my interview guideline, I had ordered to ease the brokers into the explicit reference to LGBTQ+ identity of student-tenants, but in most cases, there was simply not that kind of time. I virtually met with my RA to go over the interview guideline, prioritized questions, and the risks of using explicit queer terms of reference. We agreed to gauge in site and make the call whether it felt safe and if the broker seemed open to identity questions. One way to do this was by placing ethnic and religion-based identity question before the queer identity—one of the strategies I had learnt from my fieldwork with brokers in Delhi in 2017. When working with a larger research team of queer researchers in 2017 for the *DISCO project*, we laid out the

fieldwork strategy during meetings which involved sending mostly cis-heterosexual passing queer individuals in the field, or have a young queer researcher accompanied by a senior queer member. Even then, we never used queer terms with actors in the rental market, and there would be instead an unsaid understanding between queer researchers and tenants and queer allying brokers. With university administration, senior queer researcher would strategically place the queer question in conjunction with and *after* the disability and accessibility question.

It was equally difficult to reach out to landowners at their property during lockdown. Meanwhile, with the guidance of my supervisor and York University's ethics protocol, I cut short my fieldtrip to return to my base in Toronto as soon as I recovered from Covid-19 in early August. Between June-September 2022 I was able to connect with and conduct a total of 12 interviews, including 3 planners, 5 brokers, and 4 landowners between both cities, with a slightly greater access to actors in Delhi due to my ability to briefly have an RA in ground. Each interview varied in length. With one planner, we met for a 3-hour long interview over two sessions, another for a single session of 1.5 hour, and third with the senior planner for about 35-40 minutes. I did not find the quality of the interviews compromised due to the disproportionate quantity of time. Similarly, one landowner spoke to me at length for over an hour sharing with me their rental history over a span of a decade. She even shared the renting experience with students of her father who was long in the rental market, exposed to and appreciative of students' educational ambitions, and the reason for her to invest in the rental market herself. The remainder of the interviews the landlords were short, often only 20-minutes. Neither did I nor the RA feel safe explicitly using queer terms with brokers and landowners. Both brokers and landowners evaded questions around identity markers, reassuring it was immaterial to the "sealing the deal". I could ask explicitly about queer issues with all three planners, but only two

of them responded referencing queer issues, while the senior planner preferred to use broader reference of “students-as-aliens” with a different rhythm to everyday life. All of the brokers, landowners, and planners were themselves cis-heterosexual individuals and married with only one planner who identified as a cis-heterosexual single woman.

To overcome lockdown limitations with shorter and fewer direct interviews with brokers and landowners, I also relied on secondary data. First, I utilise my own fieldwork data in 2017 for the anti-discrimination project where I was assigned to develop the interview guideline and conduct fieldwork interviews with housing brokers as the research culminated in the 2019 report (ACWS, 2019); I also draw from to evolve my current interview guideline for my doctoral project from the one I had drafted then. Second, I draw from the few scholarly works that have critically attended to prejudices in the rental market in Indian megacities. I explore and analyse the role of urban actors shaping the student housing market in Chapter 5.

As I return to reflect on the many “pivots” (Johnson and Schweitzer, 2023) my research fieldwork creatively undertook guided by ongoing pandemic constraints, I can see the ways in which digital mediation in my fieldwork limited, but also opened up newer modes of trust building and connection. I had hoped to be physically present to have an enriching multidimensional fieldwork engagement with both the student-participants and/in their student homes. In the physical fieldwork scenario, I would have facilitated the mental mapping activity with drawing materials while actively involved in the creative and spatial documentation myself. I could not provide drawing materials to my participants and had requested them to manage with a blank paper and perhaps coloured pencils. While some participants were comfortable to draw digitally on the whiteboard, many were not. While most students do have access to internet, due to Covid, most students had returned to their parental homes, some of these locations with

broken internet which resulted in prioritizing audio over video and losing an eye-contact, at times when I was listening to the most vulnerable experiences and stories they were sharing with me. Perhaps, it was also helpful to be connected partially during vulnerable moments, when the student-participant could still have their visual privacy. Virtual methods with a “layered” presence through a digital screen, as against a physical presence, is crucially a form of queer/trans methods I talk about earlier in the chapter. The layer of the digital screen as an interface translates and projects all of the meaning that is otherwise taken for granted in being physically present in the same space (even same time). It offers a heterotopic layer—like that of a mirror—that is at once virtual *and* real. Further, drawing from Halberstam’s (1998) “‘scavenger methodology’ as an intentionally multidisciplinary use of data collection techniques and analytic approaches to intervene in the ways that queer materials are often inaccessible, decentralised, and/or erased from traditional repositories of knowledge” (Bain and Podmore, 2019, p. 604), I stitch eclectic scraps and pieces together to re-create and represent complex—rather than a totalitarian view of—lives and stories of queerness.

## **Conclusions: /imagine | prompt: this dissertation as an AR installation of immersive spatial storytelling**

In architecture, we were repeatedly told that *drawing* is our language. I was missing an architectural pedagogy grounded in critical cultural, theoretical and indeed thus, the textual discourse to better comprehend the complex dimensions of spatiality. When I joined the doctoral program in Geography, I was equally surprised to exclusively miss drawing in the geographical pedagogical training. Hyphenated scholarships emerging at the margins of traditional disciplines by artist-geographers and architect-geographers, for instance, are increasingly working to

introduce and evolve “drawing as a critical geographical method” (Arun-Pina et al., AAG 2023; Henrique and Parikh, 2022; Gassner, 2021; Arun-Pina, 2021a; Parikh, 2020; Brice, 2018; McKinney, 2017). (Re-)Drawing is one of the many trans-disciplinary praxis of reworking the normative disciplinary boundaries—certainly one of the key objectives and research pedagogical interventional contributions of this doctoral project.

Trans imaging is offered as a layered process utilising “transformative tools” pulled together and put in a bridging dialogue with one another across rigid and fixed normative disciplinary boundaries. In that, witnessing my own “reflexive” and “insurgent autobiographical” journey encompassing trans-disciplinary educational route as it intertwines with non-normative housing biography continues to inform me and my research design enabling a deeper engagement with queer and trans memories and spatial stories of LGBTQ+ post-secondary students in India. HE-LGBTQ+ students’ realm of lived and felt experiences is in a constant conflict with cis-heteronormative psychical perceptions and material realizations. Given the context of cis-heteronormatively *realized* and rigidly coded opaque world, trans imagining tools such as AR and AI offer transparent surfaces that may be coded to superimpose and ‘AR’ealize alternative queer and trans futures in the here and now.

I depart with a psychodigitalgeographical re-imaginary proposition. I invite my readers—as they continue to the stories I now tell in the following chapters—to ‘/imagine:’ this dissertation as an AR installation art of immersive queer and trans spatial storytelling. ‘/imagine:’ you are on campus, entering the student housing. You have put on a specially provided AR headset that opens the portal to queer and trans students’ inaudible and invisible spatial stories—just as engraved in the queer psyche in homonegative environments—as superimposed onto the normative built spaces of student housing with fragments of stories

scattered across walls of the rooms, staircases and hallways, washrooms, windows, the ceiling.

Both the telling and the reading of these stories is consciously partial, and not in one place rather is a non-linear and interactive experiential journey across micro-spaces.



# 4

On the Borderlands of the Domesticated University-City Relationship



# 4

## On the Borderlands of the Domesticated University-City Relationship

### Introduction

Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish us from them. A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants.

(Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 3)

This chapter invokes the concept of “borderlands” (Anzaldúa, 1987)—arguably, one of the earliest queer-trans/non-binary-feminist political ecological concepts that “destabilizes the boundaries between humans and the natural environment on the borderlands” (Barrera, 2014, p. 29)—to make space for a non-binary approach to the university-city boundary-*region*. In undoing the binary view of territoriality and the unidimensional view of a *borderline*, Anzaldúa (1987) critically opens up the non-binary space of *borderlands* treated often as an exploitative landscape of “intimate terrorism” by those who fit within the normatively bounded identities. She says of borderlands, “it's not a comfortable territory to live in, this place of contradictions. Hatred, anger and exploitation are the prominent features of this landscape” (Anzaldúa, 1987, Preface). In Chapter 2, I demonstrate that HE-LGBTQ+ students and student housing and homes, in particular, become “trans subjects” (Arun-Pina, 2021) living on the borderlands of the university-city relationship, much like the geopolitical, bilingual, and intersectional feminist-queer liminal subjects Anzaldúa speaks of.

This chapter thus, utilises the queer-trans-feminist ecological framework to place gender and sexuality at the heart of the analysis of—and the only way we may begin to fully comprehend—the university-city relationship, and its ongoing implications for HE-LGBTQ+ students in/and student housing. I argue that at the heart of the university-city relationship is the magnification of internalized cis-hetero-patriarchal household—a domestic contract (often-traumatic and spatially dysphoric, despite and at times because of ‘familial love’, for queer/trans young adults growing up)—that HE-LGBTQ+ students are subjected to reliving even after leaving parental homes (Figure 4.1). Utilising the trans imaging technique, I demonstrate the possibility to see-through the cis-heteronormative domestication of the university campus edge as it interfaces with the city. Projecting cis-heteropatriarchal domestic contract onto the university-city relationship entails a certain ‘*wifing*’ of universities—i.e., universities are not only feminized, but also domesticated—by a masculinist state (and all of its constituent institutional actors including private real estate developers and local community residents). Utilizing Meis’s (1986) term “housewifization”, Lyytikäinen et al. (2020, pp. 4-5) develop the notion of “wifesization” as that which –

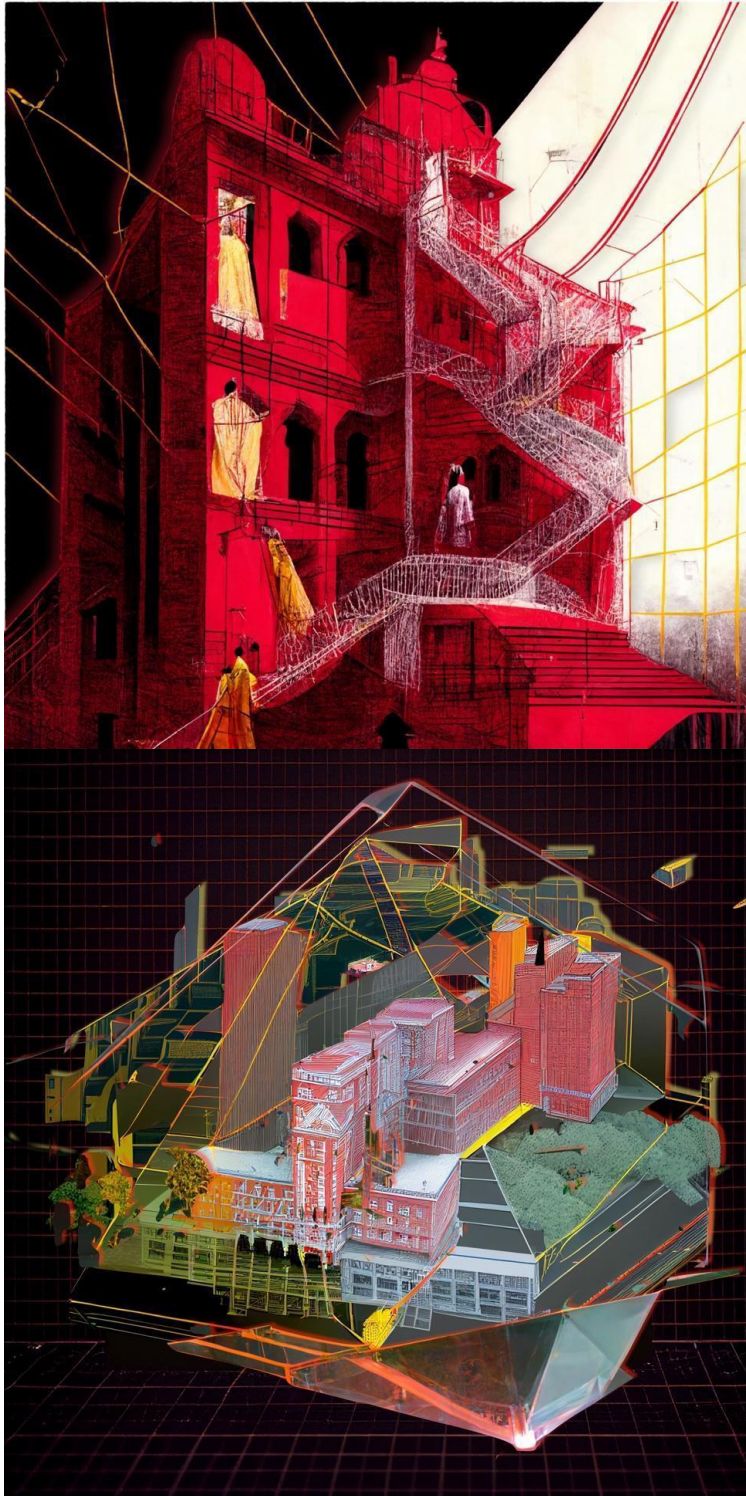
describes the process through which women’s contributions not only are devalued, dismissed, or erased as the concept feminization points to, but through which women are positioned primarily as “appendages” and “helpers” of men, worthy of a “thank you” note, but not considered autonomous producers of knowledge. Wifesization thus indicates an exploitative social relation where “the husband,” “the discipline,” or “the state” insidiously appropriates women’s (feminist) knowledge and intellectual contributions.

In the context of fast-paced neoliberal education policies and contemporary town-and-gown literatures, HEIs have become “the new feminine substitute” to bear the burden of wifing by the ‘city-state-husband’, producing and mothering the ‘post-secondary students-children’, as well as caring relationship-building with the ‘neighbourhood communities-in-laws’. Like women (and working wives and mothers) in cis-hetero-patriarchal households charged with the “second shift”

(Hochschild, 2012) to “complete caregiving and household chores in addition to paid employment” (Lokot and Bhatia, 2020, p. 2), higher education institutions (HEIs) are expected “to perform an increasing array of academic, economic and civic roles” (Addie et al., 2015, p. 34). How much power and recognition do HEIs hold is provisional so far as they remain subservient to the hypermasculinized nation-state’s global aspirations and economic development on the one hand, and duty-bound to the “[invisible] labour of love” (Hutchison, 2012) towards students and the local neighbourhood communities, on the other. Like the irreversible practice of footbinding to ensure women’s obedience and subordination to men while limiting her mobility, HEIs are increasingly tied down by what seems a one-sided responsibility of relationship-building with the immediate communities and are made to feel guilty for prioritizing and nurturing their own ambitions, desires, and selfhood. For queer, lesbian, and trans women, however, whose aspirations and desires are independent of men, marriage, and reproductive domesticity are routinely persecuted, violated, and disciplined. What if the university was a queer woman?

*Reliving the domestic contract* (Figure 4.1) represents the institutional building as being forced to don a bridal wear and enter a domestic marital contract with the state and the neighbourhood communities while reinforcing the cis-heteronormative view of and approach to gendered boundaries, relationships, and spatialities. A wider landscape of on- and off-campus geographies is depicted in the bottom image with university campuses embodying hyperfeminized horizontality of fertile-greenery and the urban housing landscapes embodying hypermasculinized verticality of concrete-grey built structures formulating the domestic contract incentivised by the state. Subsequently, this results in a multiscalar holographic projection of a cis-hetero-patriarchal household onto the university-city relationship that subjects HE-LGBTQ+

students to reliving the spatial dysphoria and almost ritualistically left with the last resort to re-leaving ‘home’.



**Figure 4.1.** *Reliving the domestic contract.* Source: Author's (2023) vision, primary sketch, and text-prompt rendered by MidJourney and followed by digital layer-edits.

Extending the interdisciplinary ecofeminist work that critically analyses the relationship between gender/sex and nature, queer ecology—“intersections between queer theory and urban ecology” (Gandy, 2012, p. 727)—emerged “to disrupt prevailing heterosexist discursive and institutional articulations of sexuality and nature” (Sandilands, 2016, p. 169), and trans ecologies to further undo “carefully constructed binaries man–woman; culture–nature; mind–body, and so forth” (Bedford, 2020, p. 1). Scholars have creatively “embrace[d] the interplay between metaphor and materiality” (Byrnes, 2022) to provide a queer-trans-feminist ecological reading and critique of essentialized “cishetero-patriarchal worldviews” (Bedford, 2020). Queer-trans-feminist ecologists have opened “a wider field of interpretation for rereading the intersections between [gender,] sexuality and [marginal] space” (Gandy, 2012, p. 730) across a range of different landscapes such as cemeteries (Gandy, 2012), lesbian rural lands (Sandilands, 2002), gentrified sites of urban renewal parks and urban forests (Patrick, 2014), desert landscapes (Ach, 2016), and rivers and river infrastructures (Woelfle-Erskine, 2022; Gómez-Barris, 2017; Gaard, 2001). This chapter critically places the domesticated landscape of the university-city borderlands (i.e., HEI campus edge) on the analytical agenda for decolonial-queer-trans-feminist ecologies. To that end, this chapter is divided into three parts. The first two sections provide a critical queer-trans-feminist ecological analysis by juxtaposing legal geographies (land in conflict, as materiality) and psychogeographies (HE-LGBTQ+ students’ mental maps in continuum, as metaphors) of the university campus edges. While the legal documents (land-use zone plans and case files on the land in conflict) rigidly adhere to and work to reinscribe the cisnormativity of the campus *borderline*, the mental maps of HE-LGBTQ+ students variously offer a non-binary, multi-layered experience of the campus *borderlands* and the university-city relationship reaffirming scholarly work by Addie et al. (2015). By highlighting the gaps between

the dichotomous legal rendering of a unidimensional and solid campus boundary and the plural lived/felt rendering of a multi-layered and porous campus edges, this chapter concludes by foregrounding that the design, planning, and policymaking of the university-city edges is specifically a trans/non-binary-queer-feminist ecological project. Finally, the chapter departs by queering Dolores Hayden's (1980) feminist urban/architectural question: what would a non-cissexist university-city edge—and a non-heteronormative university-city relationship—look like?

## **Legal Geographies of the University-City Relationship**

This section provides a queer-trans-feminist ecological reading of two cases on the *borderlands* of the university-city relationship where the question of housing is central to each case. An unresolved legal case ongoing over the past fifteen years between North Campus, Delhi University and Young Builders is analysed. Next, the rare presence of a private gated community within the extended premises of the new campus of Deonar Campus, TISS, is analysed vis-à-vis the presence of off-campus student homes within the residential apartment building for families. Both the legal case studies are unpacked to counter and complicate two claims within the ongoing critical town-and-gown, studentification, and gentrification debates: first, typically portraying the figure of a transient student-body as relatively less embedded and invested in the socio-spatial-ecological politics of the neighbourhood and the city at large than the established local residents. Second, that the university-city edge is a uniformly, well-defined solid boundary that divides the town from the gown. Here, the legal view of the university-city boundary reaffirms dichotomous scholarly approach to the university-city boundary, but the cases

complicate such redundant binary view. Both case studies begin with a brief introduction to the geographic site of the campus edges.

### **Case Study A: North Campus is a Non-Binary Lesbian, Deal With It**

North Campus, DU is an open campus enmeshed with the city as well as with the nature. While the campus is not enclosed with a boundary wall, its four edges demonstrate distinct characters—rather than posing a unified frontier—corresponding to the immediate context (Figures 4.2 and 4.3). On the north side (edge AB in Figure 4.2) the campus edge opens to the upper-middle-class residential enclaves and food places often explicitly listed as and maintaining a decorum of “family restaurants”. It is also on this edge where the Vishwavidyalaya (transl. University) Metro Station and the Young Builders’ proposed high-rise luxury residential apartments complex (discussed below) is located. On the east side (edge BC in Figure 4.2), the campus merges seamlessly with the Kamala Nehru Ridge, also known as the Northern Ridge, or simply “the Ridge” among DU students and faculty members. Part of the Aravalli Hill Ranges, with 87 hectares of the forested area, the Ridge is one of the four ridge forests and the most “prominent landscape feature of the National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi” (Singh et al., 2016, p. 11). Being proximate to the Yamuna River on its east, “the once barren Ridge has now been transformed into a forest” providing a resourceful ecosystem and “the green lungs” to Delhi (ibid), world’s most polluted major city for its air quality (India Today, 2022). Besides being home to biodiversity, the Ridge is also known as the rare safe public spaces for privacy and gay cruising in North Delhi for young couples, lovers, and friends. Both the North Campus and the Ridge also house several heritage sites scattered throughout its premises. Due to rapid urbanisation, “the Ridge is facing threats like encroachment, illegal construction, deforestation



and garbage dumping” (ibid). It is a site of massive attraction for prospective real estate development (Singh et al., 2016, p. 11).

The south-façade of the campus (edge CD in Figure 4.2) is a consumer edge with one of the most prominent Kamala Nagar Market, also known as “KNM” among locals and students. KNM is a mixed-use land with commercial and residential buildings. Unlike the north-façade, the neighbourhoods to the south of the campus are dense and home to relatively lower-middle class families. The street faces are mostly commercial with (though not exclusively) student-friendly and student-oriented leading brands, affordable eateries, stationary shops, and printing services. Finally, the west-façade of the campus (edge AD in Figure 4.2) is the neglected edge with the university campus facing its back to the Najafgarh *nala* [transl. Najafgarh storm water drain]. Although it is in actuality a river called Sahibi River, it is treated as a *nala* due to direct inflow of waste-water from surrounding neighbourhoods. As flood control measure, the drain was widened which led to entirely drying out the once rich wetlands ecosystem of the Najafgarh Lake.



**Figure 4.2. Geographic context for North Campus edges, DU.** Source: Google Maps (annotated by author).





**Figure 4.3a and 4.3b.** North edge AB looking at Vishwavidyalaya Metro Station and Chhatra Marg (top). Source: Fiza Haider (for this fieldwork in 2022). East edge BC looking at the Ridge with heritage sites and trails (bottom). Source: Google Images.

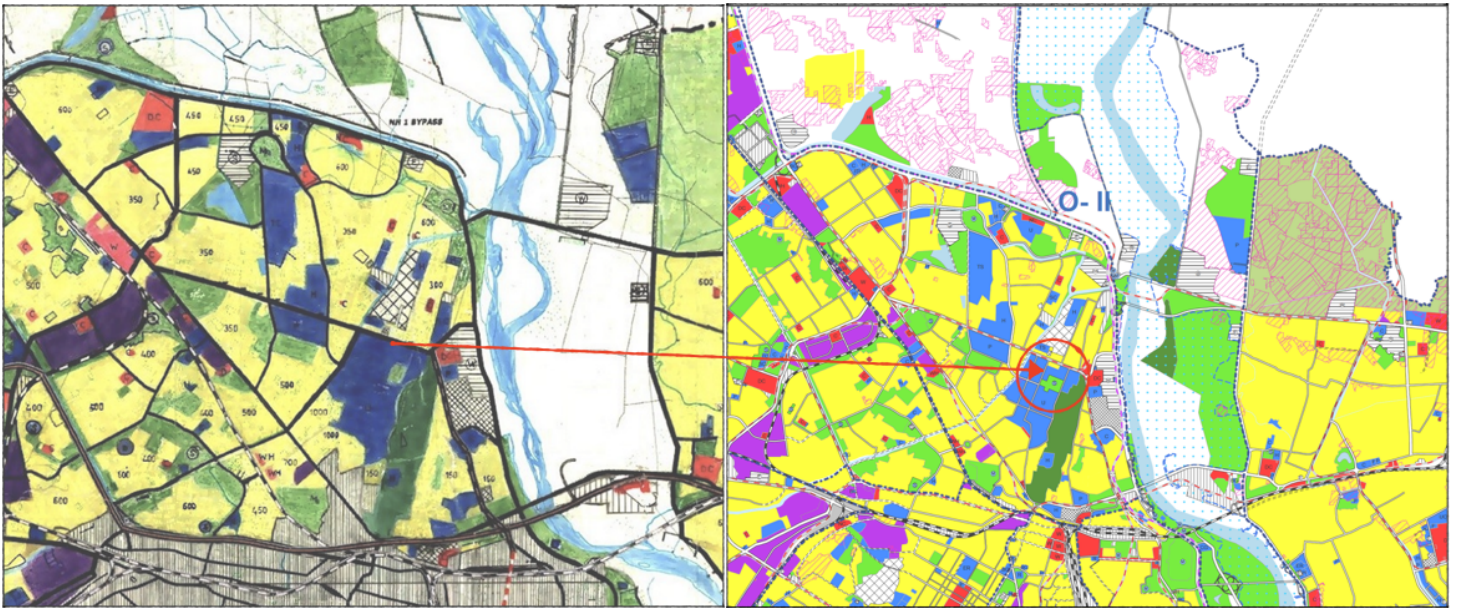




**Figure 4.3c and 4.3d.** South edge CD looking at the Kamala Nagar Market (top). Source: Google Images. West edge AD looking at the Najafgarh drain (bottom). Source: Google Images.



In 2001, Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) acquired 7.5 acres of land from the Ministry of Defense to construct Vishwavidyalaya metro station. The project was completed in 2004 occupying only one-third of the acquired land. To generate revenue, in 2005, with the help of Delhi Development Authority (DDA), DMRC formally converted the land use of the untouched 5 acres of land from public and semi-public to residential (Figure 4.4).



**Figure 4.4.** Land use conversion from Delhi Master Plan 2021 to 2041: Location of the Young Builders' proposed project site on the premises of the North Campus, DU. The land demarcated for "public and semi-public use" (left) is converted to "residential use" (right).

In 2008, DMRC released a call for proposal for land development which was awarded to a private real estate builders' group called the Young Builders. Young Builders' winning proposal is to construct a high-end gated community of 39-storey residential apartment buildings for families, with a total capacity of housing 5000 people on the parcel of land that falls on the rear side of the university metro station. This proposed project has resulted in an unresolved legal dispute over land development between the private developers and Delhi University raising a key

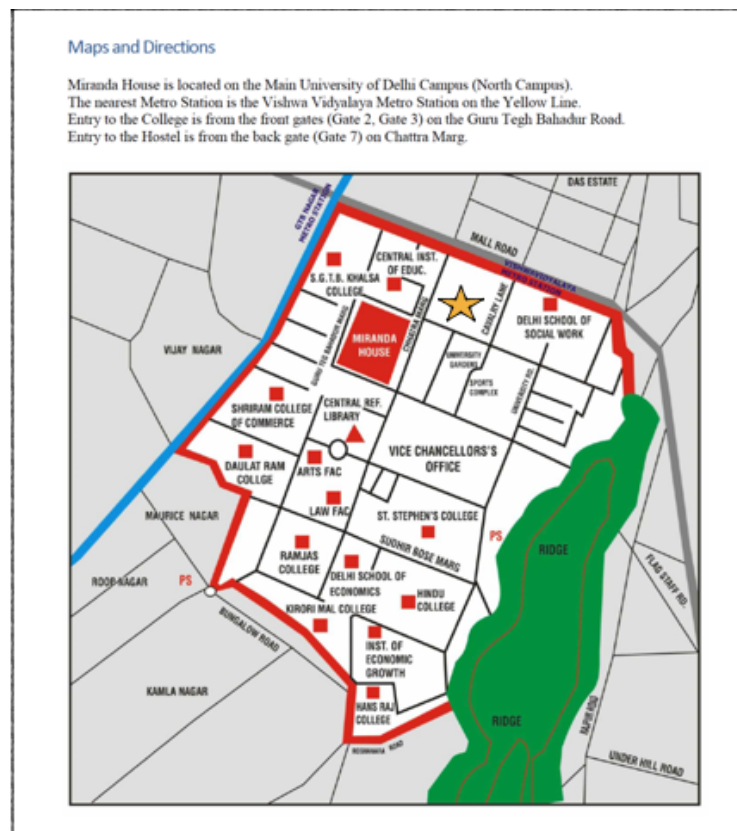
question: where exactly does the North Campus premises end (and the city begin)? Over the last decade, several urban stakeholders have been involved in the decision making and halting the private residential development project. Keeping the above territorial question in mind, key arguments from the ongoing University of Delhi vs M/S Young Builders case's filed history of appeals and responses (2012—2023) are summarised below.

University of Delhi's argument that the proposed high-rise private residential development project would:

- a. lead to cutting down of trees, as witnessed in the case of Mumbai Metro Rail Corporation (MMRC) that cut down over 2000 trees in Aarey protected forest area to develop the metro car shed, as well as of DMRC which has reportedly already cut down trees for the development of the metro station.
- b. risk the safety and privacy of students, especially women students due to the project's proximity to six girls' hostels.
- c. *violate three points of Clause 11 of the Delhi Master Plan 2021* which mandates restrictions on tall buildings in important areas like Lutyen's Bungalow Zone, Civil Lines, and North Campus. The area is demarcated as an educational area, high-security zone with various national heritage sites like Gwyer Hall, the Vice-Chancellor's office and Gandhi Bhawan, the DRDO office and the Lieutenant-Governor's office.
- d. *violate the silent zone*, as it is stationed within 100 metres of DU, an educational institution, and the Vallabhbhai Patel Chest Institute, a super speciality hospital for pulmonary diseases.

The university lost the case both times in 2015 and in 2018. The high court judge(s) ruled that the proposed project “area does not fall under North Campus” and that the university delayed its

action of appeal, thereby, giving the nod for the construction to proceed. However, the official campus plan clearly shows the site of the proposed project *within* the educational area (Figure 4.5). Ironically, the postal address of the proposed project is 4 *Chhatra Marg*, adjacent to the *Vishwavidyalaya* metro station (transl. 4 Students' Avenue, adjacent to the University metro station).

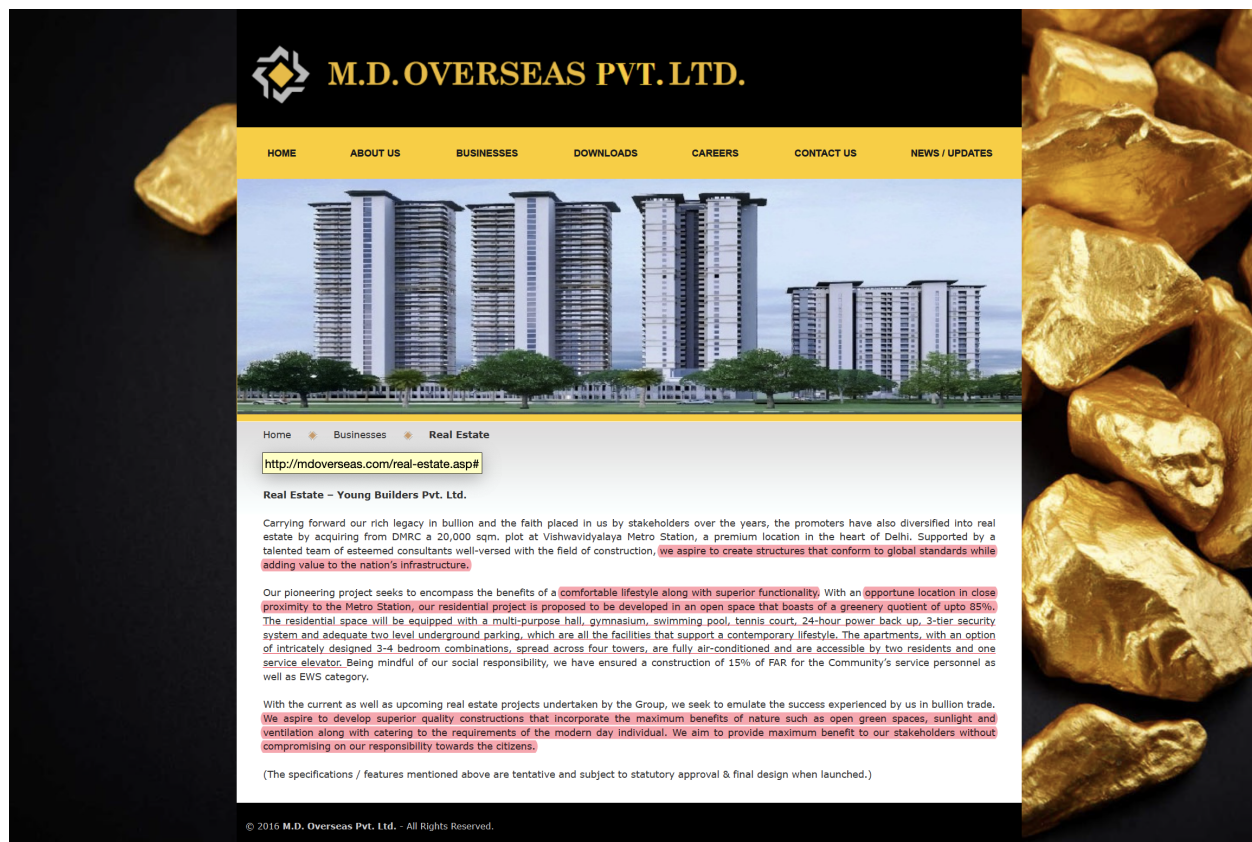


**Figure 4.5.** North Campus Map and Directions flyer on Delhi University Hostel websites illustrating the campus edge (red) and the location of the proposed project (yellow star).

Challenging the High Court's judgement, the university filed another appeal to the Supreme Court, this time with the support of the National Green Tribunal (NGT)<sup>16</sup>. This

<sup>16</sup> NGT is a special body set up under the NGT Act, 2010 by the centre "for effective and expeditious disposal of cases relating to environmental protection and conservation of forests and other natural resources" (<https://greentribunal.gov.in/about-us>).

ephemeral alliance between the university (students and teachers) and NGT against Young Builders and DDA, DMRC, Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change, Central Pollution Control Board, Delhi Pollution Control Committee, and Ministry of Defence among other urban governance bodies has since been successful in halting the project under environmental clearance.



**Figure 4.6.** Promotional project brief on the Young Builders' official website (annotated by author).

Young Builders issues a rebuttal:

We say with deep regret that University of Delhi by *misusing its position* of a premier educational institution, elaborate personnel/finances available with it and *by adopting all unfair means*, has intended to sabotage our *hundred percent legal development project* for past 11 years. One reason amongst others, is that the subject plot, though outside the boundaries of North Campus, is adjacent to Vice Chancellor's bungalow. DU's office bearers instituted *frivolous* litigations to jeopardize the project but failed in

their *mischievous* designs right up to Hon'ble Supreme Court. (Emphasis added)  
[Environmental Clearance Report by Young Builders, 22nd March 2021]

Parallely, on their website, Young Builders flaunts the project as “conform[ing] to global standards” and “adding value to nation’s infrastructure” (Figure 4.6). They further promote the features of their project site for its “opportune location...in an open space that boasts of a greenery quotient of up to 85%”. The promotional page departs by suggesting Young Builders as an ideal partner for the nature, stakeholders, and the nation.

The continued territorial conflict has pushed the university to prioritize integrating and enclosing its North Campus –

In an effort to build a safer academic space, the administration of Delhi University is mulling to turn the university’s north campus into an ‘integrated campus’ within a year. An integrated campus, on the lines of the Jawaharlal Nehru University or DU’s south campus, would mean that outside traffic or construction of buildings not related to the varsity would not be allowed inside the university premises. [Hindustan Times, 27th October 2019]

Four years since the university first issued the above notice to enclose the campus, North Campus remains open today. The threat to close off the campus reinforcing the impermeable town-and-gown conflict, however, looms over the university campus and must be taken seriously. In that, there are two key interpretive ideas to draw from this example that will be discussed in more detail below. First, both the University and the Ridge are essentially femininized (Monk, 1984), whereas the city, real estate market and the (absent) residential community members assume hypermasculine overtones. Second, the university faces what can be ‘read’ as both gender and sexual violation by various urban stakeholders.

Consider the language of the concerns cited by the university: ‘violation’, ‘integrity’, ‘privacy’, ‘risk’. These are desperate cries on the part of the university-feminine to defend her sense of selfhood independent of the masculinist private urban residential development. Consider

in contrast the language used by Young Builders for DU, the institute of national eminence (IOE, 2017): ‘misusing its position’, ‘unfair’, ‘frivolous’ and ‘mischievous’. The language used in the above documents has horrific parallels with the legal texts of many domestic abuse/sexual violence cases. This is equally matched by the High Court who in their dismissal of the university’s appeal likening it to a woman’s appeal of domestic/sexual violence, defend the masculine perpetrator by arguing: first, that the “[project] area does not fall under the North Campus” (*read* there was no penetration, and therefore, no violation of the university-feminine); and second, that a “delay in appeal” on the violated petitioner’s part discredits the allegation of violation (*read* why did the university-feminine wait for so long to speak against her sexual assault?). Sexual violence cases reinscribe patriarchal perpetrations when courts occupy themselves with determining if the penetration actually occurred by testing the woman’s body for proof of penetration, placing counter character assassination of the woman to hold responsible her own self for inviting sexual violence. Young Builders’ response is of a typical toxic masculinity threatened by the phallic rejection by a woman claiming her integrity, self-identity, and pleasure independent of the man. While discrediting the university as an ‘ambitious’ woman (or un-relatable trans/non-binary entity as demonstrated below) in their legal rebuttal, Young Builders, in their promotional material, automatically claims and capitalizes on their proximity to the relatively ‘docile’ and ‘passive’ feminine—the state-protected natural landscape of the Ridge. Despite her “fragile ecology” (The Probe, 2023), the Ridge, however, is a wild landscape. The university-feminine’s rejection of the phallic urban development in alliance with the NGT can be read as the rejection of the cis-heteronormative domestic contract by the North Campus whose express desires and lesbian love lies with the Ridge.



The North Campus can further be read as a *non-binary* lesbian owing to their open campus status with ambiguous campus border. By placing cisnormative expectations onto a non-binary campus entity and forcing it to legibly define themselves according to cisgender binary codes—by enclosing the campus and determining their boundary—urban governing bodies must be held accountable as committing gender-based violation on trans/non-binary/gender non-conforming spatialities. Simultaneously, the university must recognize their right to self-determination rather than merely conforming to the assertion that the campus should have a solid boundary.

Throughout this ongoing town-and-gown conflict between the North Campus and the Young Builders, neighbourhood community residents have been silent and disinvested in the outcome of the state-sanctioned private residential development project and its impact on the ecology or on campus environment and student living. Within the studentification, youthification, and gentrification scholarships, the floating population of students are portrayed as disinvested in the local politics whereas the established community residents deeply embedded in the urban spatial politics. The above ongoing case, not uniquely, counters this scholarly research. Here, students and faculty members with far too limited resources have been active in protesting and generating wider community-accessible knowledge sensitizing how we relate to ecology while resisting and effectively halting urban gentrification. Whereas community residents enjoying the comfort and security of their private homes limit their concerns to only NIMBY politics. The following case study demonstrates when and what exactly do community residents choose to be vocal about and invested in.

### **Case Study B: Deonar Campus is a ‘Good Wife’**

Unlike the North Campus, DU above, the Deonar Campus, TISS is an enclosed campus split in two separate campuses, the main old campus and the new annex campus (Figure 4.7). On the north-façade of the main campus is the Mumbai-Pune Highway (also connecting mainland Mumbai to the Navi Mumbai) with the main gate (A on map) to the old campus. From this major intersection Deonar farm road branches towards south leading first to the neighboring campus of Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC), next to the main gate (C on map) to the Deonar new campus before turning south-west towards the back gate (B on map) to the Deonar old campus followed by private luxurious farmhouse properties and high-rise private gated communities.

Both the new and the old Deonar campuses are not internally linked; rather, the two campuses are connected through the secluded secondary Deonar farm road. There is a security guard placed at all three gates—the main gates to both the campuses have formal security offices with entry registers whereas the back gate of the old campus has relatively informal and occasionally placed security guard. The stretch of the Deonar farm road connecting the two campuses is a popular hangout spot among students used for frequent everyday inter-campus mobility. Campus boundary walls are solid, continuous stone walls, taller than the human height and capped with barbed wires ensuring physical and visual inaccessibility. The faces of the campus boundary wall are non-engaging and uninviting. The narrow long stretch of the open space along the boundary walls of the campus scattered with buildings is untreated leftover space. Certain sections of these open stretches, for instance the open space behind the café, are specifically barricaded and denied access. Immediately outside the main gate of the old campus are tea and juice kiosks, *pan* and cake shops looking over to the main intersection. Outside the new campus, a few street hawkers are stationed to sell fruits and coconut water to students.



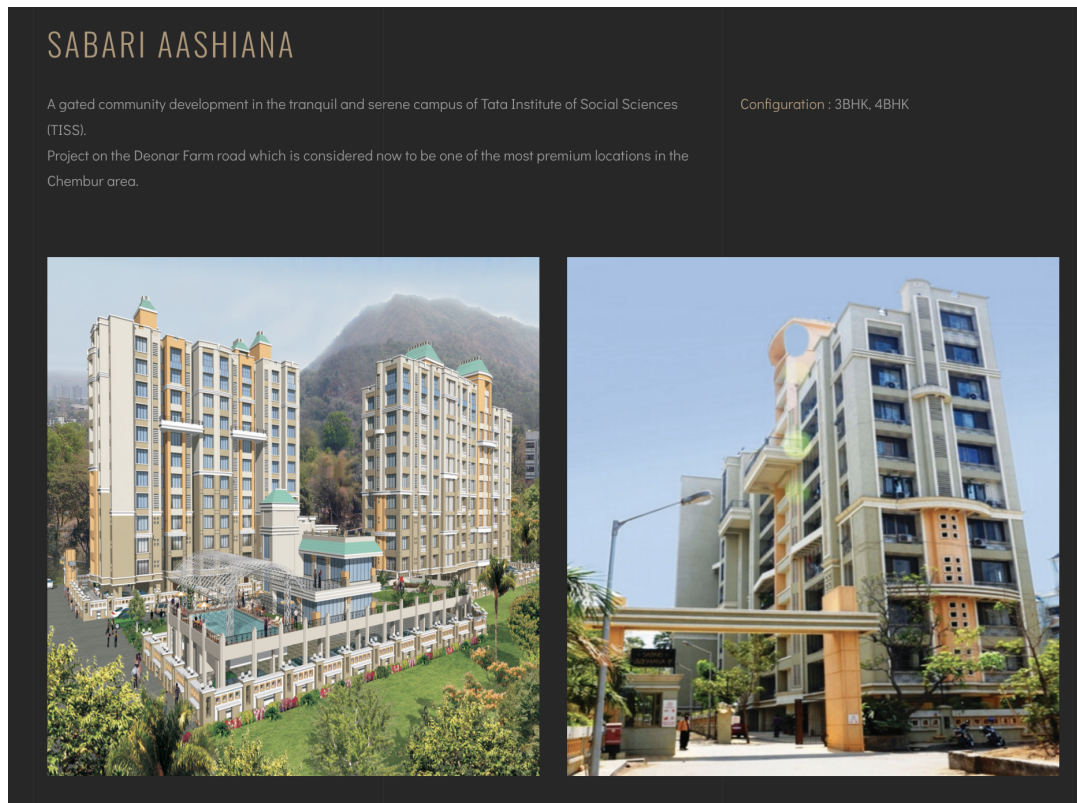


**Figure 4.7. Geographic context for the Deonar Campus edges, TISS.** Source: Google Maps (annotated by author) and TISS website: <https://tiss.edu/about-tiss/overview/>

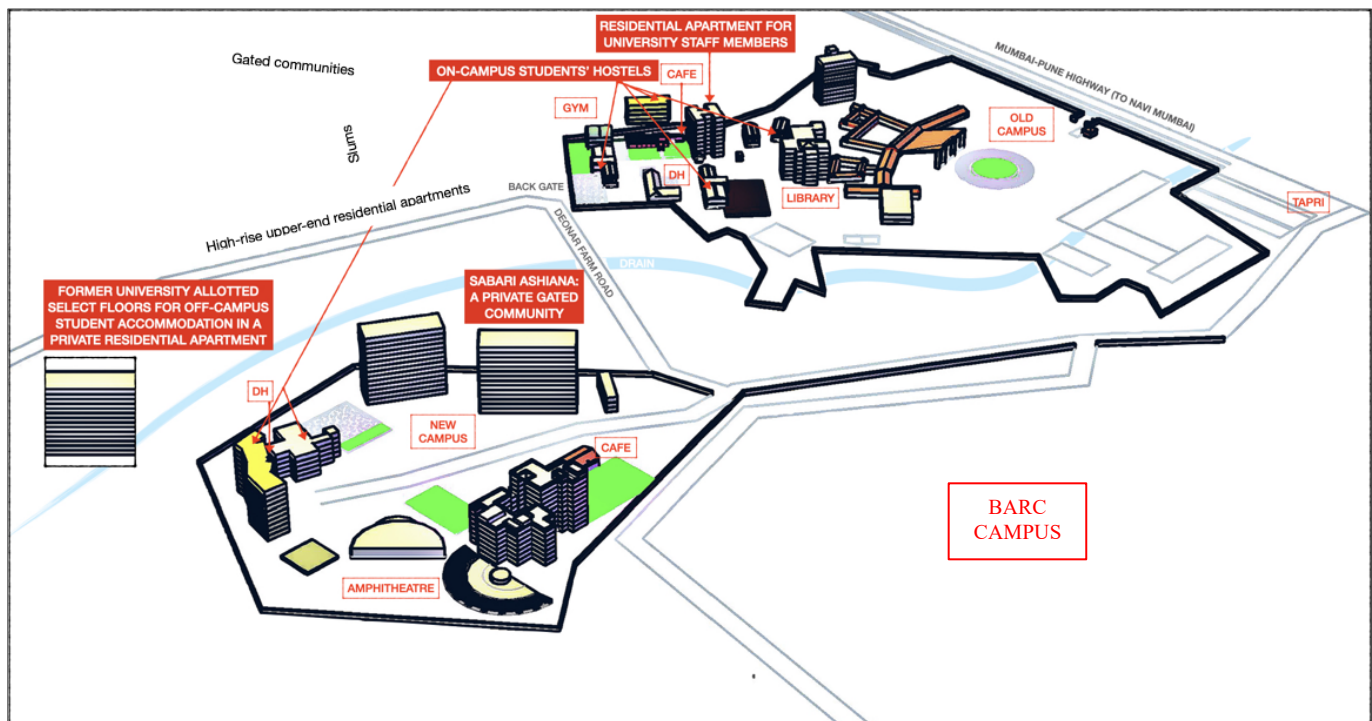


In 2001, TISS decided to extend its main old campus to the new annex campus. The land was owned by two separate owners. While one of the owners—with a bigger parcel of the land—agreed to sell the land to the university, the other did not. Eventually, the university went ahead and built the new campus around the smaller parcel of land it could not own. That relatively smaller parcel of land was later developed by the owners into *Sabari Ashiana Apartments*, a private gated community (with high-rise residential apartments for families) inside the gated campus (Figure 4.8). The old campus also has a university-built residential high-rise apartment for staff families.

In response to the on-campus student housing shortage, TISS setup a few off-campus student accommodation options over time. At one point, the university had arranged an off-campus student accommodation on the select floors of a private residential apartment at a walkable distance from the campus (Figure 4.9). While there have been no cases of conflicts between the university students and the family residents in the gated community living on-campus, there have been instances of “rifts” in the reverse scenario (i.e., students living off-campus). Although the incident has not been formally filed, the story is well known among students and professors who have long lived and/or worked on campus. The residents of the private apartment (all in married family households) were unhappy with the mixed inhabitation of unmarried “men” and “women” students. The apartment residents came together and expressed their displeasure demanding the students to vacate the building. Ultimately, the university had to withdraw the off-campus student housing arrangement altogether.



**Figure 4.8.** Promotional project brief on the Sabari Groups' official website.



**Figure 4.9.** Axonometric view of the Deonar Campus, TISS. Student hostels and family residential apartments on and off-campus. Source: AutoCAD drawing by author.

Similar conflicts have also occurred on-campus from the side of the resident families. The open space in the old campus is a major student-area used for sustained organized collective action and ephemeral events. It is surrounded by the dining hall (DH) with the famous university logo painted on its wall, a cafeteria, a cluster of gender-bifurcated student hostels and the GNH-wing, gym, an ice cream parlor, ATM, 24x7 library. All the amenities orient towards this central open space. Even with the newly constructed amphitheater, dining hall and cafeteria on the new campus, old campus retains its value and popularity among students for its proximity to the only library between both the campuses, as well as students' preferences between different eateries. While the protest organization and student meetings are often held at the new amphitheater, the protest itself is rallied on old campus. This open space between the dining hall and the café is also one of the few recreational places for students studying late in the library or in their own rooms. However, the resident families of the staff quarters had frequent complaints against the students' use of these open spaces, especially near the café. They would argue that mix-gendered groups of students casually hanging out in the open would be a "bad influence" on their children. Resident families demanded urgent spatial modifications including strategically leaving certain paths unpaved, restricted use of open spaces, and raising metal fences between the staff's family quarters and the café. All of these modifications to the open spaces were at once undertaken by the university administration profoundly altering the student-scape.

The Deonar campus administration uncritically took on sacredized "wifehood" and "motherhood" to appease the cis-heteropatriarchal families for social acceptance (Oakley, 2021; Dandekar, 2018). In so doing, she reproduced more internal barricades and boundaries between students and non-students that reflect, reinforce, and reassure cis-heteropatriarchal spatial codes. Here, the community resident families were vocal about and invested in "heteroactivism" a term

first conceptualised by Browne and Nash (2017, p. 643) “to describe activities that promote heteronormativities as being morally superior to other sexual/gender identities and therefore ‘best for society’”.

Rather than exploring the queer and trans/non-binary potential of the critical site of the university-city borderlands, both the North Campus, DU and the Deonar Campus, TISS continuously face cisnormativity to clearly define their bounded entities, and heteropatriarchy to prove their loyalty and subservience to the patriarchal state (and all of its constituent institutional actors including private real estate developers and local community residents). This results in the projection of the cis-hetero-patriarchal household and the socio-spatial reiteration of the normative domestic contract onto the university-city relationship, and further subjecting HE-LGBTQ+ students to ritualistically reliving spatial dysphoria even after leaving cis-hetero-patriarchal familial homes. The following section then explores the queer and trans/non-binary potential of the campus edge(s) by analysing HE-LGBTQ+ students’ mental maps and stories looking for a respite from and/or a rupture in the domesticated university-city borderlands relationship.

## **Psychogeographies of University-City Relationship**

Sometime in the early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, we witnessed a turn to the organic, natural, and cosmic forms within philosophy of art and architecture. Several terms have been utilised to describe this evolving practice, such as, organic architecture, biomorphism, biomimicry, symbiosis, even archology (portmanteau for architecture + ecology) (Senosiain, 2003). Though not interchangeable, these are approaches that undo the binary of the built/nature environment. Of the many ways to do this, largely architects (and artists) drew the built forms from organic

forms and bio and cosmic geometry sequences, and by inviting nature into the built environment or opening up the built spaces to its open surroundings. “There are no straight lines in nature, just free-forms”, writes architectural journalist Virginia Duran (2012) on biomorphic architecture. This dichotomous conundrum of free-form imagination versus solid built entity is often also reflected in mind/body as well as, psychogeographies and legal geographies of the university-city boundary and cross-border relationship. Here, the edge is de(sig/fi)ned not as a façade to divide, but as a phenomenon to interact and integrate (Önal and Karakoç, 2019).

In their mental maps and lived experiences of relational positionality of the university, the city, and their home HE-LGBTQ+ students often utilised metaphors like an octopus with tentacles, a bubble, and nebula among others to describe the university-city edge. There was an uninterrupted flow connecting the queer psyche, ocean ecology, and cosmic regions positing the university-city edge as crucially a feminist-queer-trans ecological project. I noted the sharp contrast between the rigidity of legal documents and university and developer plans and maps (discussed in the section above), and the fluidity of psychogeographic perceptions of LGBTQ+ students’ mental maps of the university-city boundary and socio-spatial relationships and borders. *How would design, planning, and policy initiatives transform the university-city edge(s) if they consulted the LGBTQ+ students’ mental map documents? How would such a transformation of the university-city interface subsequently alter the town-and-gown relationships, and with what implications for non-normative student housing?* To that end, HE-LGBTQ+ students’ mental maps aligned with one or more of the four feminist-queer-trans ecologies themes are discussed below. These themes are not neatly separable, rather they crucially layer and inform one another.



## Safe Space Bubbles

In *The Trauma of Birth*, psychoanalyst Otto Rank (1924) first describes “the desire to return to the womb”. He describes the moment of birth as the first moment of separation, of disconnect—think of the cord cutting. This first moment of disconnect is the child’s first experience of separation anxiety, he argues. Here the desire to return to the womb signals the need for unthreatened connection and being. Some HE-LGBTQ+ student-participants expressed their connection to the university as “a safe space bubble”—what may be analysed as their desire to return to the womb as a way to exit or not enter in the first place, a firmly cis-heteropatriarchal world that threatens all of their connections and sense of (well-)being. To live in connection and difference, they almost preferred the separation of the “two worlds” (though not necessarily physical), echoing the sharp divide of the town-and-gown scholarship though for reasons of protection and empowerment rather than privilege and power. As PK (interview, September 13, 2020), a queer woman and a graduated master’s student at TISS explains,

I felt highly connected to the university. Everything was in and around the campus. University felt like *a bubble* we are living in...it gives you *a new lens to the city*...because the moment you step out of it the world is very different. University campus is *a safe space* where we can talk about inequalities of the city that can be quite mean to you. [emphasis added]

PK added,

One would assume that the university is placed inside a city [but] I think for me the *university became the city. I don’t think the university ends at all*...for me, *it’s not about the geographical space alone rather the time*. For these two years was a very different phase of my life — away from my parents, living on my own for the first time I experienced the city very differently. [emphasis added]

PK’s mental image of the university as “a bubble”, “a safe space” against the “city that can be quite mean” reveals the desirable separation of two “very different” worlds, between which PK locates herself as “highly connected to the university”. Her sense of a safe space bubble does not

necessarily form the enclosed campus boundary wall; rather it is attributed to the ability of the premise to open, facilitate, and nurture critical conversations around the “inequalities of the city”. The university-bubble enveloped PK at all times lending her “a new lens” to see the city, de-limiting her experience of undergraduate college campus when she lived with her parents. PK was expected to firmly keep to the route—timed by her parents—from home to the campus and back without any detours. When PK enrolled in the graduate program at TISS, her parents moved to another state. PK recalled that living independently gave her the “freedom of mobility” to explore the city.

QJ (interview, December 9, 2020), a genderfluid, queer-identifying graduated master’s student at TISS, also reaffirms a sharp split between the university and the city –

*I think the relationship between the city and the university is pretty contradictory—[with] the city [I felt] constant fear of interaction, and conflict and lack of safety; [whereas] the campus was comfortable for me, like the feeling you get when you come home. I never felt at home in my PG. Campus had friends and familiarity...mere jaise log wala feeling [transl. from Hindi: a feeling of my kind of people, i.e., queer friends]. PG had only one place to go to with curfew time; whereas on campus there were multiple options you can go to, and you don’t have to report to anyone...the campus had freedom and friends just like another family. [emphasis added]*

Whereas the city felt unsafe, intimidating, and needing protection from, for QJ, the university offered a “safe space” with home-like quiet, warmth, and familiarity. The PG accommodation where QJ lived before moving to the campus hostel, is akin to the restrictive environment for PK while living with parents. For both students a sense of safe space meant a moral premise that enabled their freedom of mobility, physical, intellectual, and social. This need for a safe space bubble is furthered by the need for a sense of an extended campus (i.e., an informal extension to the formal campus), as discussed below.

## Layered Nebulae

Nebulae, diffused clouds of dust, gas, and star debris are complex celestial geometries with ambiguous and ever-shifting boundaries. Few scholars have employed the celestial phenomenon to study liminal third spaces (McNamee and Peterson, 2014), as well as in the context of queerness and transness (Rice, n.d.). In *Indifference to difference: On queer universalism*, Menon (2015, p. 1), like Ortega (2014), speaks of a multiplicitous identity to disrupt the “belief that identity should be immediately and physically recognizable”. For Menon (2015), “identity is multifarious and unable to be homogenized into a static way of being...an ontology of fractures and intersections, ruptures and expansions without a fixed point of reference”—in short, like a nebula (Whitehead, 2018, p. 199). We can think of such multifarious identity for body or a space, and specifically, in this case, for the university-city boundary in its workings to (re)-define the university-city relationship. Menon (2015, p. 1) calls to “rethink the line of predictability that gets drawn from the body to identity, and from desire to the self”, and to re-theorize Enlightenment universalism that is “too caught up in the chain of signifiers that produces essentialist identities of multicultural and neoliberal politics” (Whitehead, 2018, p. 199) by offering the revolutionary, rather than conforming notion of “queer universalism”—“one that does not describe universalism as wholeness...but rather [as that] ‘refus[es] to make difference coherent’...that ‘does not belong anywhere’ and is ‘owned by no one’” (Menon, 2015, pp. 125-127 as cited in Whitehead, 2018, pp. 200-201). Particularly, queer and trans scholars have found the geometric formulations of the fluid cosmos as an opening to possibilities unlike the rigid cis-heteronormative deterministic constructions of bodies and spaces.

While retaining the desire for a separation of the campus environment from the “outside” world, some HE-LGBTQ+ students also shared experiencing an overlay between the on- and the

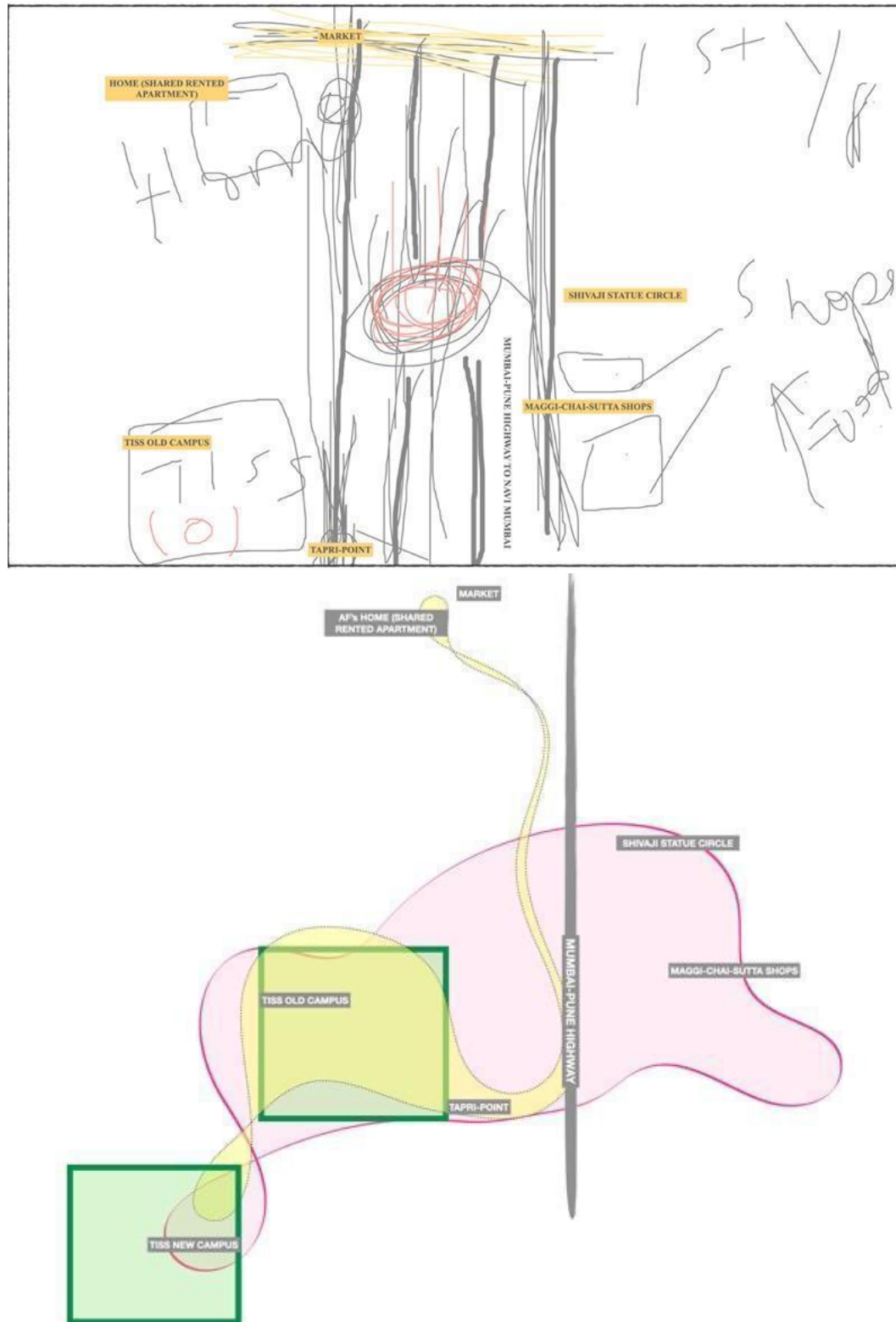
off-campus environments. They experienced university campus as having multiple, flexible territories—*nebulous layers*. As AF (interview, December 10, 2020), an agender, queer-identifying graduated master's student at TISS describes,

You have the campus security, and the campus buildings...it's a very cozy environment. *You're cut off from the [city's] hustle-bustle...you're in a different world.* You see students but not as much the local city population inside the campus. There are so many young people on campus, which is not the same outside. Mostly, *I could dress however I want* [referring to wearing makeup with facial hair] and feel okay about it, which I didn't necessarily feel outside [in the city]. [emphasis added].

AF finds it relatively comfortable dressing up in gender non-conforming ways inside the campus, but not outside in the city. But their sense of campus territory became less solid, and crucially layered when responding to where according to them the university ended. They added,

*I am debating mentally whether my home was part of the university or not. I mean technically it was not.* There were these [off-campus] shops for Maggi, chai and sutta [transl. instant noodles, tea and cigarettes] and *Tapri* [a roadside tea-stall frequented by TISS students] which I would also consider part of the university. *For me, the university ended after I crossed my home.* [emphasis added]

AF's mental map (Figure 4.10) reveals a layered sense of the campus environment with multiple campus boundaries: the first layer of the campus is contained within the formally built university boundary wall with security guards stationed at the entrance. Although this built solidity of the campus offered to AF a sense of “cozy” and “safe” environment for their agender expression, AF has also later described the enclosed and surveilled campus as a highly “toxic environment”. Beyond the built solidity of the university boundary wall, the second layer offers a respite being formed by informal and collective frequenting of students at the eateries and small public spaces immediately outside and across the university. AF describes an additional third informal and individual layer encompassing the university campus and their home. This third tentacle-like layer was unfixed and shifted with the physical location of their off-campus home.



**Figure 4.10. AF's Mental Map (left)** illustrating a multi-layered campus: formal campus boundary wall (green), informal campus-collective (pink), informal campus-individual (yellow). Analytical diagram (right) by author.

For PK too,

Beyond TISS, even if you were at say Hotspot [a local bar close to the campus], or Govindi Station and the binding/printing services around it or Maitri Park and the housing around it, or in Big Bazaar...in all these spaces you would end up bumping into somebody who is a student at TISS. *The fact that students popularly occupied these places in large numbers made it feel like an extension of the campus.* Also, the auto[rikshaw] guys within Chembur know where to drop you. But once you cross the flyover and reach Sion [neighbourhood next to Chembur], you will have to explain the way to TISS. [emphasis added]

To fully experience the safe space bubble, a sense of extended campus was important to PK which was largely attributed to inevitable chance crossings with friends and peers from the university at frequented spots, and an unspoken knowing of students' everyday lives by people "technically outside" of the campus. AS (interview, November 15, 2020), a lesbian woman and a graduated master's student at TISS echoes experiencing informal layers:

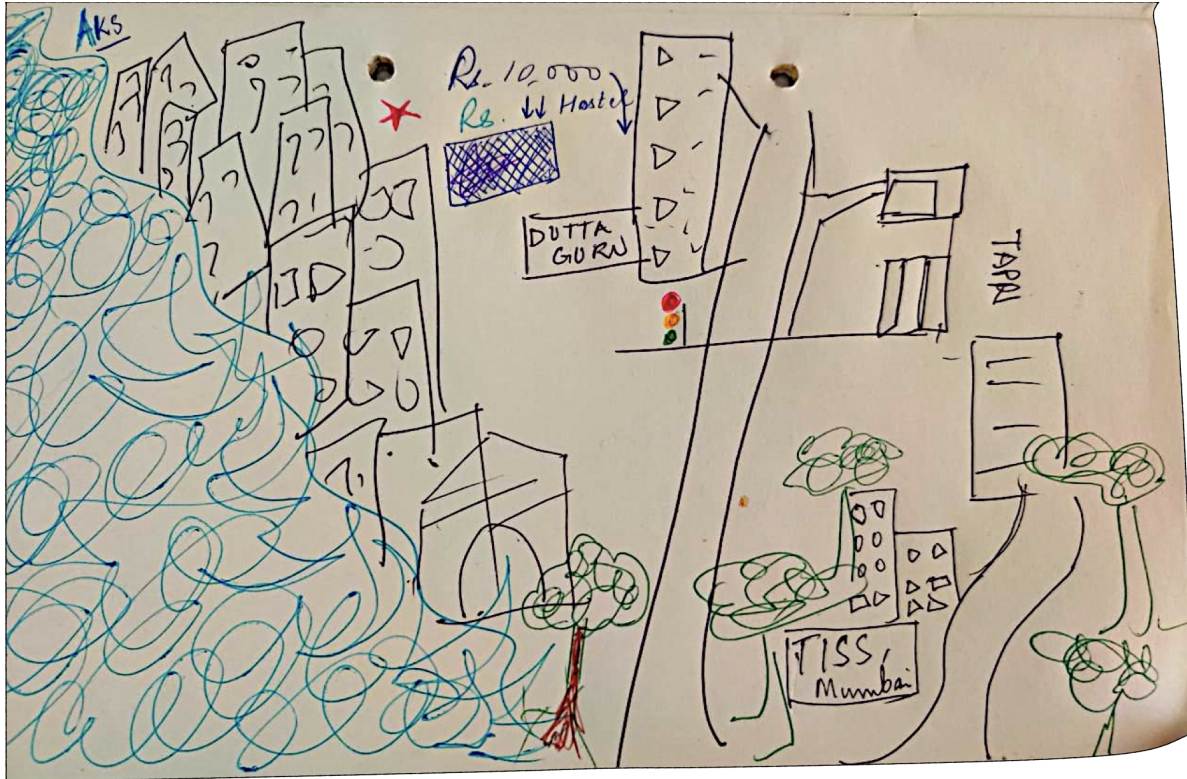
TISS's boundaries are so *nebulous*. Before campus, it was all fields. Deonar Farm Road that connects the old and the new campus through the back gate, is such a part of the campus—there are students standing in the middle of the road, having nariyal pani, smoking...and on the main road, *Tapri* was not part of the campus, but *TISS paved the path[way] to Tapri which kind of officiated semi-formal inclusion of Tapri as part of the campus.* So, the entire Deonar farm road area and the signal near *Tapri* feels like TISS campus to me, and anything beyond that is where the city began. [emphasis added]

AS experiences a residue of the history of open field terrains before the campus. Even with the enclosed boundary wall, to her the campus boundaries are "nebulous" because of informal extensions. While *Tapri* kiosk is formally outside the boundary wall, simply by paving the pathway from the campus to the kiosk, the university effectively renders porosity to the campus edge with informal campus-extension beyond the wall. Similarly, while it is not the intention to celebrate students smoking, it is crucial to note that smoking within cis-hetero-patriarchal middle-class India is exclusively acceptable for cis men and is a big contributor to marking most public spaces as therefore, masculinist. Mix-gendered groups of students smoking works to disrupt and reclaim public space away from cis men. AS experiences a "radical

shift” from on- to off-campus cultural environment in a matter of a single turn on the Deonar Farm Road. She adds,

...if you keep walking on Deonar Farm Road, there are these fancy apartment buildings with highly surveilled areas of well-maintained societies with *markers of safety* where you can’t even stand. Guards will come and say “faltoo mein yaha mat khade raho” [transl. from Hindi: Do not aimlessly/uselessly stand here]. So the kind of *hygiene and sanctity they want to maintain radically shifts the culture*. We used to joke that if you were going to just stand for over an hour anywhere in the world somebody will come and tell you: ‘What are you doing, move on!’. But at TISS, no one will come to disturb you, that’s the kind of space it is...you can sit or stand or loiter anywhere you like and for however long.

AS suggests a certain anti-capitalist affordance on-campus to not necessarily being ‘productive’ or to have an objective goal to being at a place at all times. It is placing a cultural value to wandering, exploring—inward or outward, and simply being in an undisturbed state of meditation which is rapidly vanishing, even reprimanded within the neoliberal cultural world of surveillance and capitalist re/production. AS experiences being out of step with “well maintained societies”. In AS’s mental map (Figure 4.11), we see a certain open flow, breathing space, and heterogeneity of the seascapes and the on-campus studentscapes, whereas the private high-rise residential apartment buildings obstruct the open flow, domesticate and privatise the access to nature inculcating homogeneity in urban landscapes (similar looking apartments with raised densely next to one another).



**Figure 4.11. AS's Mental Map** illustrating the Arabian Sea on the far left and the Deonar Campus on the far right with everything in-between taken over by high-rise apartment buildings.

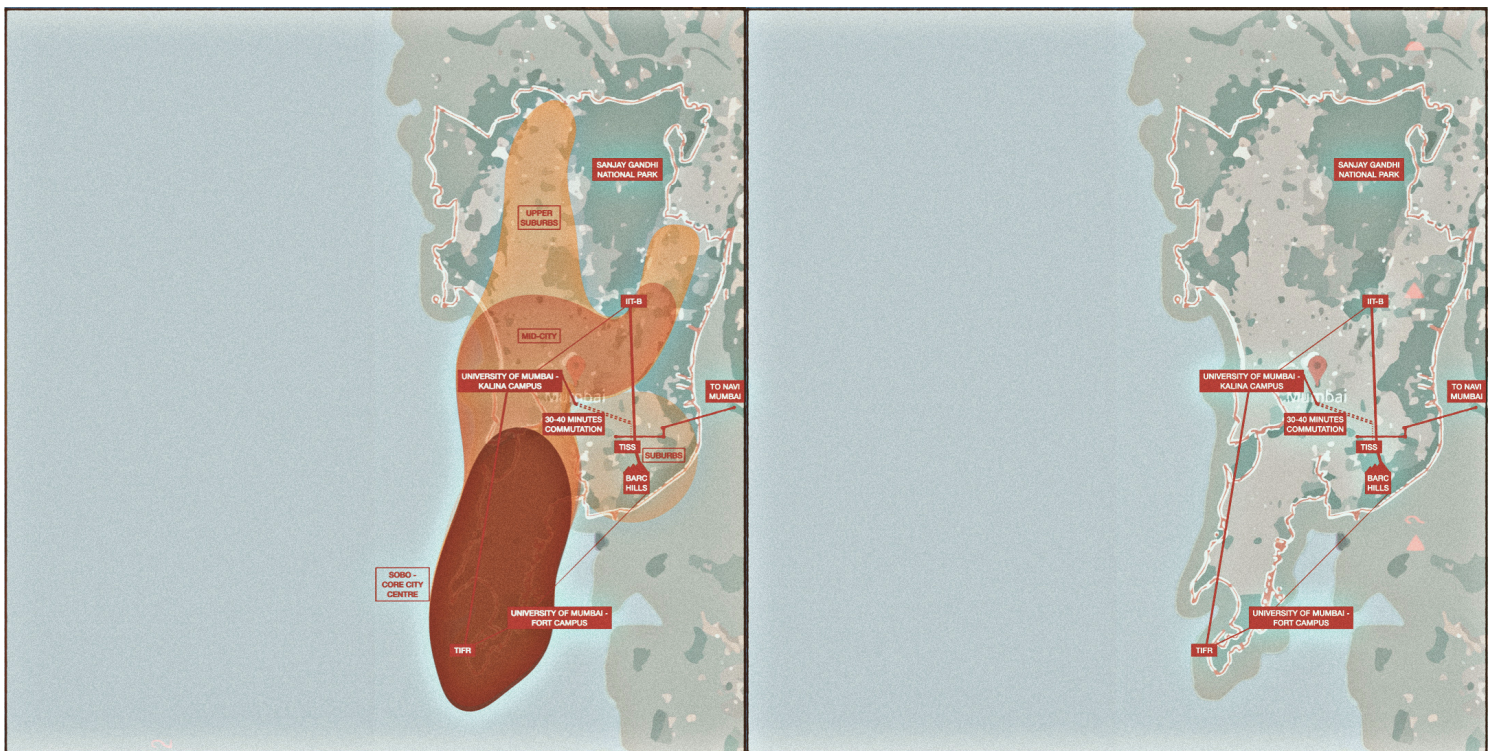
For DL, a queer transmasculine PhD Candidate and a graduated MPhil and MA DL attributes this “university-ish” grey zone and informal layer beyond the formal enclosed campus to the homes of their several friends in the campus district of Chembur. However, it is not simply the geographic proximity to the campus that rendered this feeling of extension. DL adds,

[But when] I stayed in Kalina [a suburban village outside Chembur], it did *not* feel like a lot of commute. Much of Kalina is a student area as well because of its proximity to the University of Bombay-Kalina Campus.

In over a decade-long affiliation with TISS, one of the places DL lived in was a shared rental apartment in the Kalina Village next to the University of Bombay, much farther away from the



Deonar Campus. Kalina Village offers cheaper student living options in an otherwise exorbitant urban Mumbai and is also locally known as an ethnoburb for northeastern migrant population. Informed by sub-ethno-economical living, the location of DL's student home *between* two university campuses rendered the university-city boundaries porous and effectively reducing the psychogeographic distance from their home to the Deonar Campus. DL described a university-city relationship with a wider sense of an inter-university institutional link throughout the four corners of the city, with an especially closely knit Kalina Campus, University of Bombay and the Deonar Campus, TISS due to an overlapping zone of off-campus student housing between them (Figure 4.12). In the decadal period of continuing higher education programs at TISS, DL moved between many different homes, some of which were farther away from the campus district than others as it offered proximity to DL's ethnic identity.



**Figure 4.12. DL's Mental Map.** Source: Author.

Like DL, for KC, a queer woman and a graduated master's student at DU, the decadal period of higher education in Delhi involved being affiliated with more than one universities, leaving and returning to Delhi after having taken a couple of years off between programs, as well as working at a yet another university in Delhi's satellite city of Sonipat. While her affiliation kept changing, KC preferred to always find home and live in the North Campus giving her a sense of a nebulous inter-university region as the city and the university unfolded in layers to her over the decade. KC (interview, December 19, 2020) describes,

I moved from Chennai to go to DU for Masters in 2007. I had *no other ties to the city*. North Campus occupies just so much space, it *felt endless*. I still don't know where it ends. The Vishwavidyalaya metro station signified leaving campus—the way to go to other parts of the city. Like DU, I didn't really know where Delhi ended...it felt so big! [emphasis added]



**Figure 4.13. KC's Mental Map of the North Campus, DU.**

Both the university and the city felt “endless”ly big to KC who found the boundaries of both rather ambiguous and unfamiliar to her, like DL who also described the north campus and the city as a “mishmash”. KC’s mental map (Figure 4.13) illustrates the presence of the university metro station, lots of e-rickshaws outside the station, and lots of trees as signals of leaving/entering the campus. However, her familiarity deepened when she returned to Delhi after a break. KC adds,

But that feeling changed when I went back to Delhi for my MPhil in 2011. Even when I was at AUD [Ambedkar University Delhi], I lived adjacent to DU...but on the residential side of the campus I hadn’t seen before; I hadn’t really realized before that families lived up there. *I only saw young people that I registered as students. I saw the North Campus district as a students’ place—where there were only students—people like me who came from outside of Delhi and were paying their own rent, so they had to live in the places that were cheaper.* [emphasis added]

While it was difficult for KC to neatly territorialize the north campus, there was a loose sense of a *student area vis-à-vis residential family area* due to the commerce, the lifestyle, the ambience, and the encounters. While certain areas remained dominantly residential family areas closed off to student spaces, other spaces willingly opened themselves as informal, organic extensions to formal campus spaces. Rather than productively progressing on the straight time pathway to normative domesticity, KC gets nostalgic about non-normative living in student dreamscapes –

I felt really connected to the area that I lived in. If I were to go back, I would still live in North Delhi. To me, that is Delhi—memorable rickshaw rides at night through the yellow lights and trees everywhere, going through the dark [streets]—*a student’s dream*—so many cafes and cheap food, even family restaurants were frequented by many students and faculty members for after-class socials, print shops and bookstores, lots of cycle-rickshaws, and in general an active nightlife.

In my own first year of the Master’s program at AUD, I lived in the North Campus district. The entire area was alive till midnight making it a rare safe public space in Delhi. In contrast, when I moved farther away to a dominantly upper-caste residential neighbourhood, the streets were dead by 9pm—it was impossible to find public transport from the metro station to take you home. The

last stretch one had to walk back home felt severely unsafe. The few shops were all family restaurants and markets deserted after 9pm. Even a popular public park in the neighbourhood closed by 10pm. Only privately owned and government-run liquor stores remained open which were frequented exclusively by cis men. All of the five student testimonies and my own lived experience in either city reveal the ways in which normative residential neighbourhoods uncritically inculcate and reinforce the cultural acceptance where the public space and the nightlife belongs to cis men and are hostile and unsafe environments for everyone else. Studentified neighbourhoods with layered informal extensions to the campus work to disrupt and reclaim the public space and the night life away from cis men and heteropatriarchy and create safe spaces in Mumbai and Delhi (otherwise known as the “rape capital of India”). These queer ruptures—however ephemeral—in the reiterations of cis-heteropatriarchal domestic *and* urban landscapes offer critical respite to HE-LGBTQ+ students as illustrated in the following third thematic discussion.

### **Embodied Starrings**

Theatre and performance theory critically question the real life versus performance binary. It rhetorically asks if indeed the performance ends when the star is off-stage. Stellar work on gender performativity by Butler (1999) disrupts the notion of gender identity positing “gender as an act”. Trans individuals are often charged by cis folks as “acting” and “faking” the opposite sex. However, Butler’s work crucially suggests that cis people are also “performing” their genders, constantly pressed to “act” masculine and feminine and fit the normative gender “roles”. Butler’s work crucially extends the stage to, by bringing the “real” life cis performances under the spotlight. The theme of starring illustrates how embodied performance in the

ephemeral space of student-led theatre groups at once afforded to LGBTQ+ students *a field of suspension* of the straight time and cisnormative policing of their genderqueer embodiments as well as *a generative field* for queer and trans mobilities. Their non-normative gender expressions that were otherwise unacceptable and invited ridicule from their homo/transphobic colleagues, surprisingly as star performances on stage, their deviating embodiments were elevated, applauded, and cheered.

Unlike AF who felt they could freely dress transfeminine on-campus (but not in the city), for JB, a non-binary, queer-identifying former undergraduate student at the South Campus, DU, the campus itself was hostile and unsafe for their self-expression of transfeminine embodiment. JB (interview, September 20, 2020) describes,

If you're a feminine [person] in a space where you don't find any other queer person, you would always be identified and made fun of—that happened [to me] when I was in school. I didn't have anyone explain to me why I was being made fun of. I started looking at more masculine boys and started to *copy* them—how they were walking and talking, and I would try to do that. [emphasis added]

JB had learnt very early on to mimic cisnormative gendered behaviour to avoid “being made fun of”. Especially in undergraduate college campuses, unchecked cis-hetero-patriarchal spatial and embodied norms retain moral superiority and group target differences by mockery, abuse, even violence. JB adds,

In my BA at Atma Ram Sanatan Dharma (ARSD) College, you would see these men in their big cars just hanging outside the college campus, looking at whoever is walking in and walking out of the campus. *The moment I entered the campus I felt the need to behave in a more masculine and not in a feminine way so that I won't get targeted.* I remember this one person who would get *bullied for appearing feminine*. Once I was wearing something loose and someone commented, “we can see your waist, it's like a girl”. So, I became conscious of not showing any physical signs of femininity in the way I was walking or the kind of clothes I was wearing. [emphasis added]

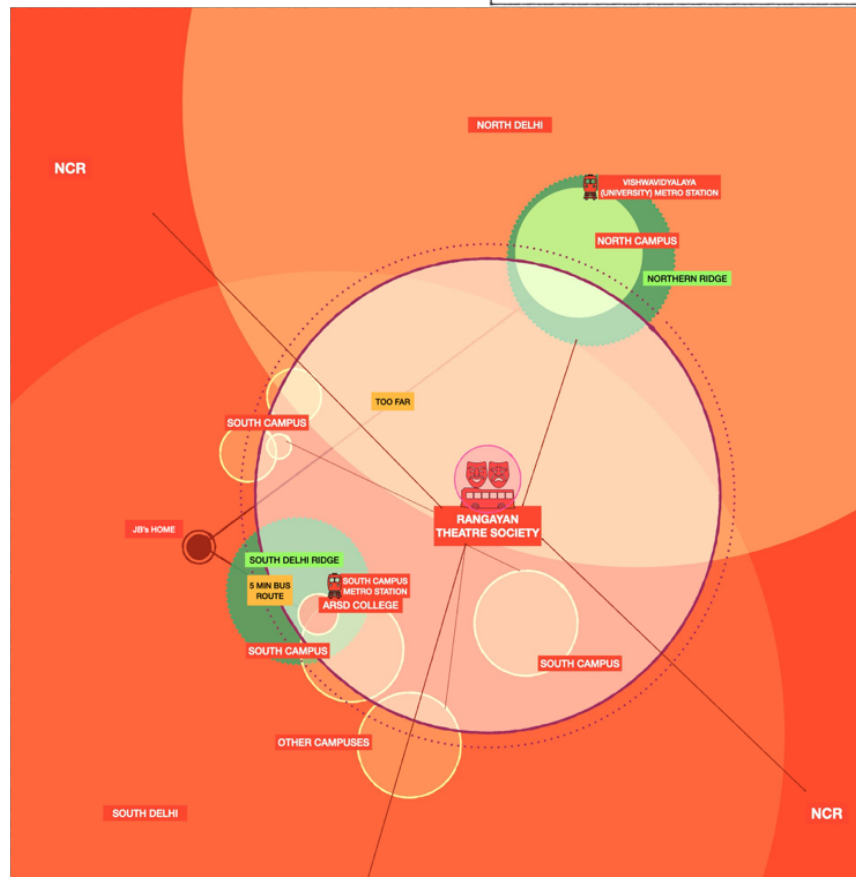
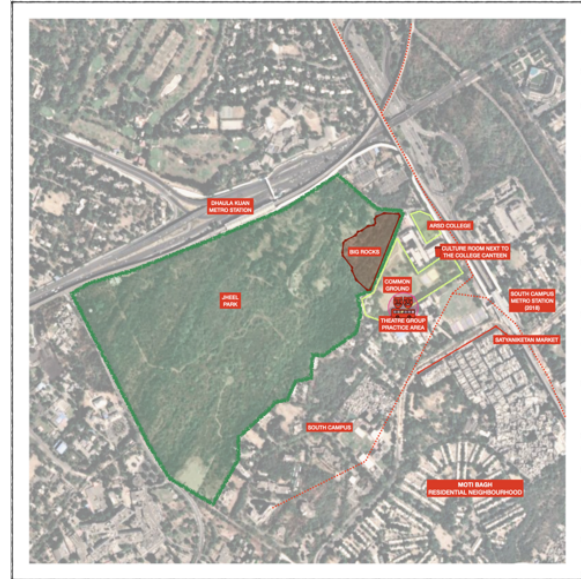
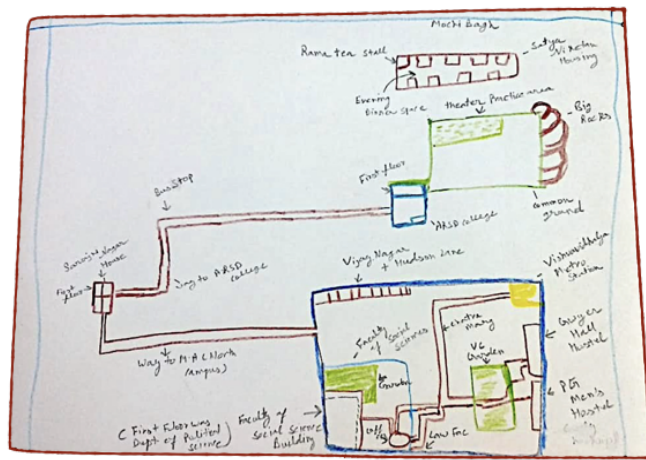
JB recollected reading about some effeminate guy getting raped right outside ARSD and had an embodied knowing that “if you look more masculine, the chances of you *not* facing humiliation

or sexual assault are high”. Here, the campus boundary not only extended but also intensified horizontal cisnormative policing in the form of casual everyday remarks and constant cis gaze passed by friends and peers. Upon entering this campus boundary, JB automatically switched to ‘performing’ cis-gendered behaviour as a defense mechanism to protect themselves. Ironically, it is on the premise of embodied performance that they did find a place on-campus and beyond to express their true self –

There is a huge ground next to the south campus for cricket and football. It was also the ground where we did our theatre practice in a small corner. We stayed practicing late till 9pm in the culture room next to the college canteen. [our performances often] entertained the guards and the canteen runners. To them we were *different*, “*theatre wale log*”, theatre artists. Since our plays were based on social issues, even we felt like activists performing from campus to campus. We took pride in not being an average student stuck in campus and studies.

In their experience, the campus environment is meticulously coded in cis-heteropatriarchy, claimed and monitored by upper caste, cis-hetero male students. They would auto-assume the role to perpetrate the normative script of domestic violence, power and ownership over feminine bodies. Rupturing the continuous field of cis-heteropatriarchal perpetration, *Rangayan*, the dramatic society of ARSD college, gave voice and an opening to JB in breaking through structural suppression (Figure 4.14). Their embodied differences found validation, even cheers and accolades through their work as an artist-activist.





**Figure 4.14. JB's Mental Map** (top left) alongside the geographic map (top right-annotated by author), and the analytical diagram (bottom-by author) illustrates the field of suspension of cis-heteropatriarchal policing and the generative field of queer/trans movement offered by the theatre group, *Rangayan*. Source: Author.

Similar experience of freedom to dress in a feminine way and wear makeup without being mocked and/or questioned in an otherwise hostile campus environment was echoed by AC, a queer-identifying former undergraduate student and performance artist at Ram Lal Anand (RLA) College, South Campus, DU. Ultimately, HE-LGBTQ+ students had greater physical and emotional mobility between campuses in the South and the North Campus of DU, JNU, IIT-Delhi, as well as other public spaces in the city through ephemeral theatre group tours where they would encounter other radical queer student groups and movements. Although spatially, theatre groups are micro-spaces contained within institutional campuses further contained within the urban, through ephemeral and recurrent collaborative ‘starrings’ they transcended both the university-city boundary and the firmly dichotomous cisgendered boundaries. However, not all HE-LGBTQ+ students are artist-activists and thus, rarely find such cultural, anti-capitalist openings to crossover the normatively bounded environments as discussed below.

### **Anti-Capitalist Constellations**

German philosopher Walter Benjamin famously connects the realm of mind to that of the cosmos when he equates ideas to “timeless constellations” (Bain, 2021). Benjamin explains that ideas as constellations locates meaning not in absolute, rather in relative positionality of stars-as-objects, making the reader or the observer an integral part of the meaning making process. Bain (2021) reverse traces the metaphor of constellations as utilised by Giesecking (2020) to map “overlapping and embodied paths and stories that queer the fixed, property-driven neighbourhood models” and to offer alternative navigational routes to LGBTQ+ communities and individuals in cis-heteropatriarchal urban contexts (Bain, 2021, p. 2). Bain (2021, p. 2) finds in the earlier work of Dianne Chisholm as well the use of constellation to have enabled the



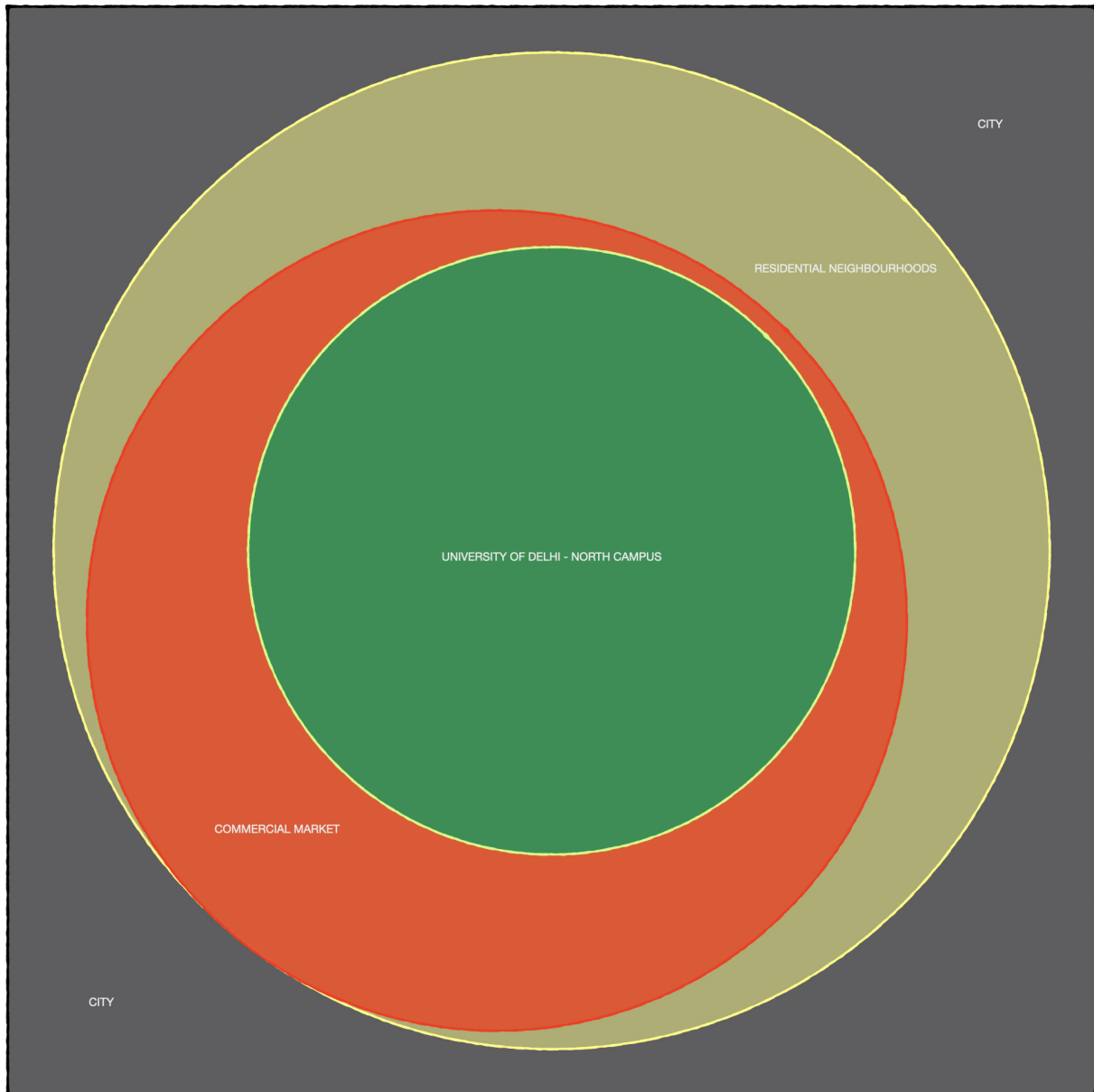
author to transcend and connect across the spatiotemporal divides divergent queer authors and cultures. In listening to the spatial stories of HE-LGBTQ+ students in my own research study, I add and develop this planar shift from the cis-heteropatriarchal “real” to the queer psyche, cosmic, and organic as ways for LGBTQ+ students to “resist and rework oppression, [and be] resilient in the face of injustice” (Giesecking, 2020, p. 92 as cited in Bain, 2021, p. 2).

Seemingly “tolerant” of radical differences, the mediating neoliberal capitalist edge between the town-and-gown protects without disrupting the compulsive cis-hetero-patriarchy and reproductive domesticities while the radical queer cultures get assimilated, even exploited (Figure 4.15). In that, there is often a massive collusion between the interests of the aspiring global city-state, parts of the university administration, the market, and the upper-class/caste long-term neighbourhood community residents. AA (interview, January 9, 2021), a genderqueer, Dalit student activist and a former master’s student at TISS, asserts

*University is a brand. TISS is deeply embedded in the DNA of the city, the fabric of Mumbai. The kind of programs the institute offers directly feeds the pipelines of the city’s market [and] human resource demands. Tata trains and works with the city police, NGOs, local, national and international communities. [emphasis added]*

AA suggests an inherent impossibility in challenging the neoliberal capitalist network with the neoliberalization of the education (spaces). A similar lack of faith in the transactional market constellations was echoed by SD, a cis gay-identifying senior PhD Candidate, Visiting Lecturer, and a long-term student at the North Campus, DU. He (interview, January 25, 2021) observes,

*The relationship between the university and the city is not very connected. The people immediately adjacent to the campus have little or nothing to do with the campus in terms of education. But over the years a certain section of people learned that they could do business with the university. Whether it was a landlord, a shopkeeper, a proprietor of the store, or a hawker or vendor, everyone at different gradations of commercial establishments realized that they could develop a commercial enterprise out of the students and use it to make money. This mindset with their location inculcated an exploitative attitude of the people around. [emphasis added]*



**Figure 4.15. Analytical diagram illustrating SD's psychogeographies of the university-city relationship.** Source: Author.

SD recalled facing sudden student evictions in his second year of undergraduate program from the university hostels during the 2010 Commonwealth Games hosted in Delhi. Every landlord in the neighbourhood took the advantage of students with no alternative housing and overnight

hiked the rent of their properties to double and triple the original rent in the market. Students had no option but to give in to the landowners whimsical rent hikes in order to stay closer to the campus. The extent and the nature of the capitalist re/productive university-city edge is ultimately experienced by SD as exploitative. For him, the true essence of connectedness would lie in the cultural-intellectual engagement, an investment in education and the student community such that it is *not* capitalist re/productive alone. The extent of tolerance towards the student community by adjacent non-student communities is provisional to students as young micro-consumers even if with “shoestring budgets”.

Queer cis women students find it especially difficult to rupture this doubly consolidated capitalist reproductive market constellation. They may find chance alternative pathways to transcend such normatively bounded environments and create anti-capitalist queer constellations through a single or a cluster of “queered” datum(s) in the form of professor-mentors, peer support groups, friends and lover(s), and/or simply books (Figure 4.16). JD (interview, December 14, 2020), a bisexual woman and a former undergraduate and master’s student at the South Campus and North Campus, DU respectively, recalls,

Jesus and Mary College (JMC) didn’t feel part of the South or the North Campus of DU; run by a Christian missionary, they *wanted to be separate from the mainstream South Campus life and management*. Students at JMC were not allowed to have student union elections. Outside the campus, there were frequent instances of men jerking off, flashing and eaves teasing on our one-kilometre walk from the foot-over bridge to the campus; so, women [students] always walked together in groups—it was a very lonely stretch with Chanakyapuri which is an embassy area with high level security, fancy architecture. [emphasis added]

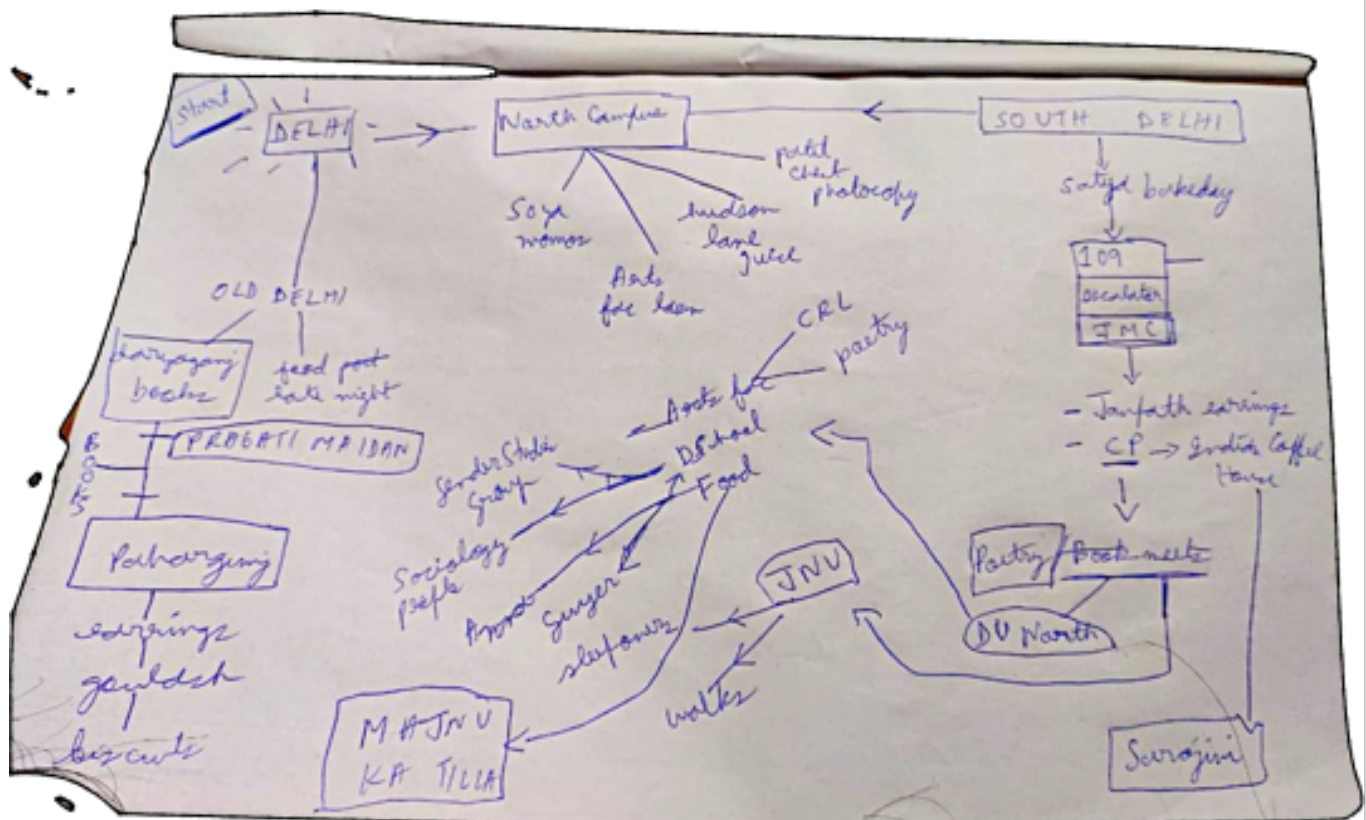
JD describes the ways in which religious fundamentalist, patriarchy, and nation-state power collude to form a particularly unsafe and restrictive environment for women’s mobility and access to public spaces. She adds,

It was in my second year that I *truly started exploring the city* when AT [a gay rights activist and professor based in Delhi at the time] joined our program. He introduced my twin-sister and me to various people across various campuses. That is how I started getting accustomed to the north campus. In CP [Connaught Place, a central public space in the city], we used to have *regular poetry meets* on Sundays at the India Coffee House. AT had organized these meets and a bunch of students from different universities would come there—from Jamia [Millia Islamia University], JNU, DU—to read and discuss poetry and theories in our respective native languages and translate for one another. [emphasis added]

JD recollects her world opening up when the queer professor joined her Christian fundamentalist college as if she were Alice in Wonderland.

There I first met my friend whom I later had fond memories with when I enrolled in the master's program in the north campus. She once told me, "Come, I will show you something beautiful!" and took me to the Central Library. We didn't have IDs, so we snuck in together to see the spectacular collection it has, along with green courtyards and peacocks...*it was very freeing in a way*. [emphasis added]

Perhaps what SD above is looking for, and what JD found is this sense of adventure, wonder, exploration, risk and play and a heterogenous cultural environment against that of the homogenous capitalist reproductive domesticity. The risk of entering without an ID is very different from the risk of getting raped in public spaces. These ephemeral, semi-formal anti-capitalist constellations ultimately opened up for JD the alternative higher educational route that translocated JD from the cis-heteropatriarchal JMC campus to "freeing tiny campuses" in the North Campus.



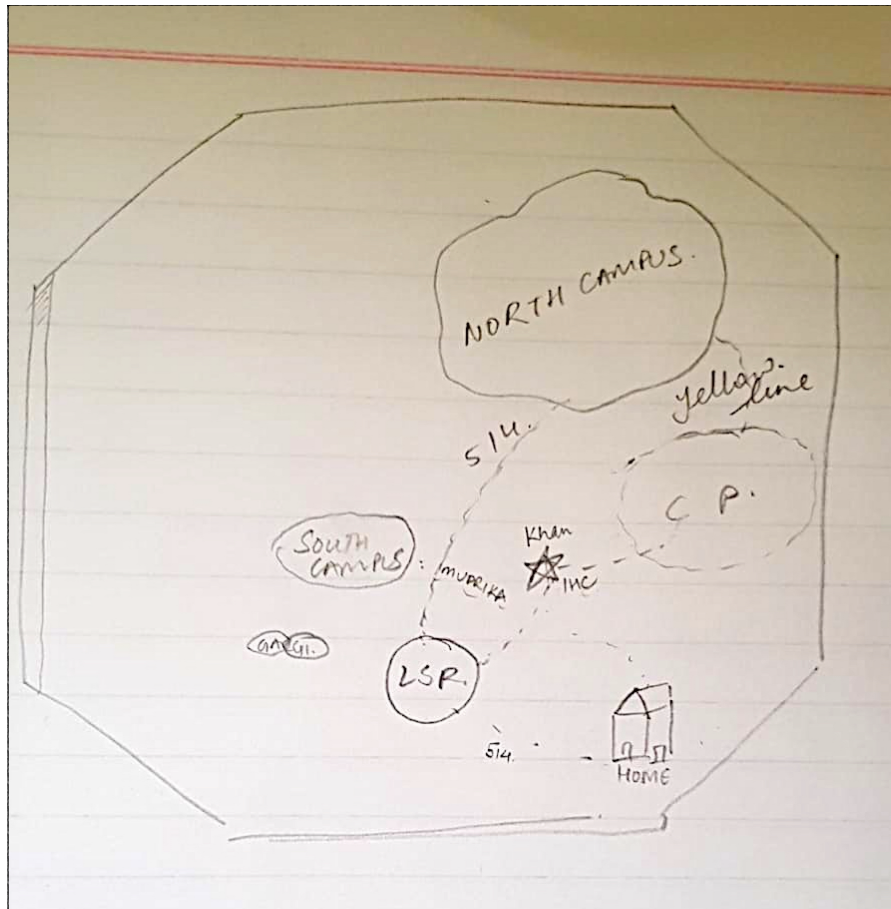
**Figure 4.16.** JD's mental map (and geographic map) of JMC in relation to the South Campus, the North Campus and the city (top). Author's analytical diagram of the university-city as unfolded for JD before and after the joining of the queer professor (bottom).

Unlike JD who had moved to Delhi for studies, LT, a queer-identifying woman and a former undergraduate student at Lady Shri Ram (LSR) College for Women, DU, was born and brought up in Delhi. Both queer women's experiences of studying in women-only college with a cis-heteropatriarchal notion of domesticating and protecting "women" was more alike, however, with different queered datums at their disposal. LT (interview, August 18, 2020), who lived with her parents, recollects the admissions decision-making discussion with her folks –

Going to LSR was influenced by my housing location. I was going to stay at [my parents'] home and not in a hostel. So then, it was a question of how much time do I want to spend in commuting every day. Even though I got into North Campus, I went to LSR because it was closer [to home], and a women-only college.

Like many parents of students entering university, LT's parents too preferred her to go to LSR over North Campus not only because of its' geographic proximity to their home but also because of its psychogeographic proximity to the protective domestic script as a "women-only college" (Figure 4.17). LT experiences the magnification of the normative domestic environment onto the campus environment and its surroundings –

Like other South Campus clusters, LSR was *a gated campus* in the middle of a busy commercial area on the one side and residential area on the other. You could go out of the college but there were *no student spots to go and hangout* [at]. It also has *an enforced boundedness*—there are entrances you could only enter with ID cards. Once we were inside and wanted to go out, *guards would infantilize us, and be suspicious of women* for [frequently] going out/coming back to the campus. So, *you're stepping out of one home in which you are kind of secured and protected into another space where there's a little more to do but still restricted*. [emphasis added]



**Figure 4.17.** LT's mental map of Lady Shree Ram (LSR) College in relation to the South and the North Campus.

LT was looking for a break from the domestic(ated) environments. Living with parents, she had never had the opportunity to explore the city. At best they would become tourists to relatives who visited them in the city. With her parents, her narrative in Delhi was always that of “be safe, be careful, don’t take risks, don’t be out too late”. Ironically, it was through her out-station friends from whom she learnt to explore and navigate the city independently and fearlessly, go to places where she had not gone to with her parents. Gradually, attending inter-college literature festivals and competitions drew LT out of the segregated LSR college and connect her to a wider

inter-campus anti-capitalist constellation. She experienced the North Campus very differently from LSR –

To me, North Campus was where the university life existed—all the fun, festivals happened [there] and they invited other colleges. When I used to take the yellow line to the North campus, it was the last stop on the metro line...*it felt like an end to the city* for me. The moment you stepped out of the Vishwavidyalaya metro station, the field of the North Campus changed—there were buildings one after the other that were all colleges connected by being next to one another with free pedestrian friendly paths between them. For example, there was a famous canteen in Delhi School of Economics, but students from all colleges would come there to eat, sit, and talk. *It was not a place of surveillance and showing ID cards. It was so much quieter and greener. You would see people with books walking around, others on their way to study somewhere, or just loitering, having chai or chhole kulcha.*[emphasis added].

LT's commutation to the North Campus marked for her an end to the city, and a starkly shifted landscape from what she experienced at LSR. The markers of shift in the landscape recollected by LT reveal her desire to psychogeographically distance herself from the reiterations of the normative domestic script. She created an anti-capitalist constellation with her migrant student friends and public events such as literature festivals and seminars that would facilitate this break from cis-hetero-patriarchal coded spaces and re-wire her to queered constellations.

The organic, fluid nature of LGBTQ+ post-secondary students' psychogeographies of the university-city boundaries is unlike the normative dichotomous approach of the legal and the majority of town-and-gown, studentification, and gentrification scholarships. Students' mental maps demonstrated a need for permeability, porosity, and plurality of university-city boundaries that allowed them ephemeral connections, interactions, and integration while nurturing a sense of wonder, curiosity, and exploration of their socio-spatial environments. All of these experiential attributes were strengthened not without but precisely with a sense of safe space for expressing and living in difference.

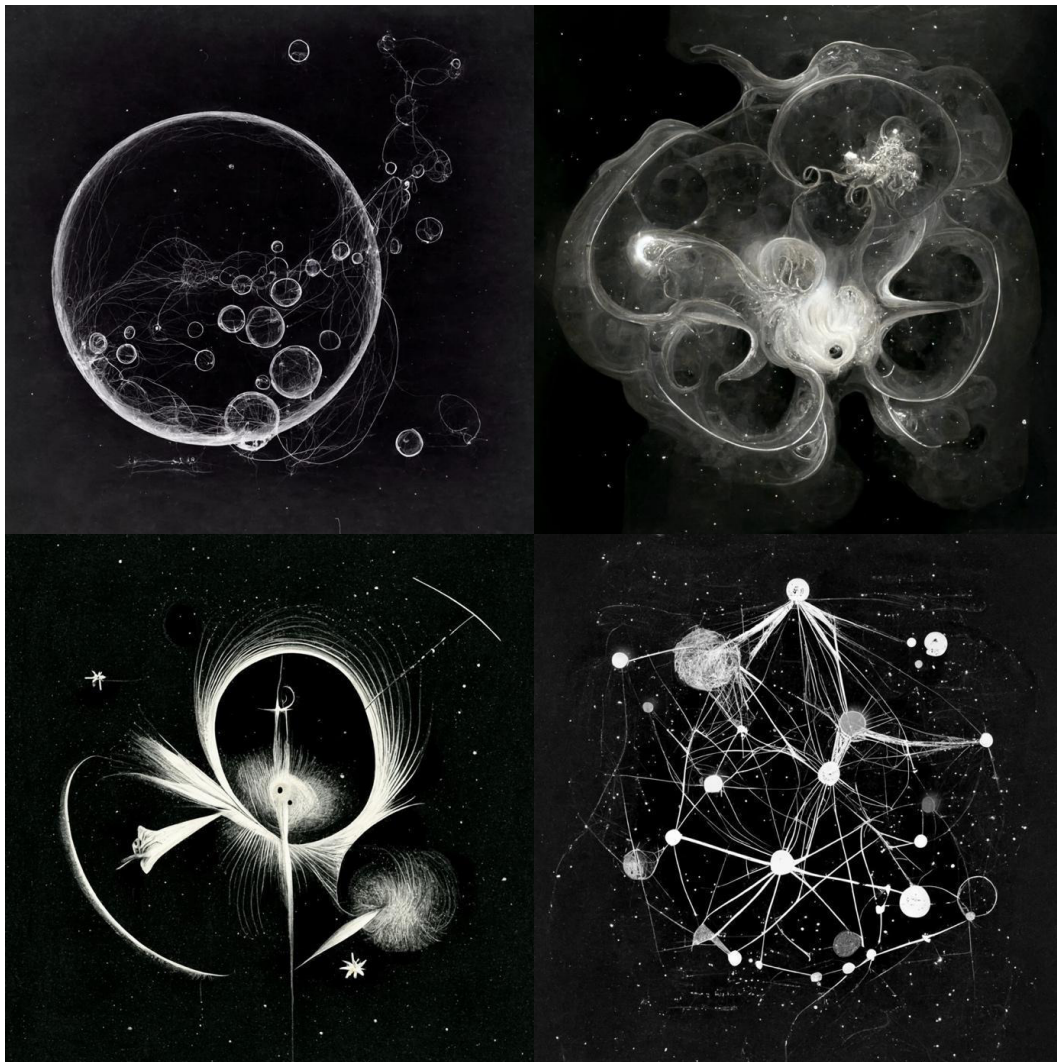


## **Conclusions: What Would a Non-Cissexist University-City Edge Be Like?**

In 1980, feminist architect and urban planner Dolores Hayden critically asked: “what would a non-sexist city be like?”. In answering this question, Hayden argued for revisioning domestic space by attending to the needs of working women and mothers, and dismantling presumptive binaries of public/private, sub/urban, wo/men, un/paid labour. In 2015, women students at North Campus, DU initiated the Pinjra Tod movement to dismantle patriarchal norms projected on the university campuses—women’s on-campus hostels and off-campus PGs in specific—that in the name of “protection” and “safety”, spatiotemporally, intellectually, and spiritually tie down women’s movements. In refuting the patriarchal domestic-institutional cage, the Pinjra Tod movement reclaims women’s access to public spaces, on-campus amenities, and public nightlife advocating for an egalitarian campus and campus district environment. The scope of both Hayden’s radical re-imaginary in the context of the USA in the 1980s and the Pinjra Tod movement’s housing activism in urban India forty years later are limited to cis women and the material site of domesticity—home. But left unchecked, the at once universalised and internalised cis-hetero-patriarchal domestic contract does not remain localized to the normative household. Symbolically and intrinsically, it crucially spills over and projects on to every aspect of our lives coding how we relate to and inhabit spaces.

One such site recognised here is the university-city edge onto which the cis heteropatriarchal domestic contract gets projected, resulting in two normative spatial manifestations: first, the *wifing of the university*, namely the feminising but also domesticating of the university by the masculinist state (and all of its constituent institutional actors including private real estate developers and local community residents). Second, reinforcing cisnormative fixity and solidity of boundaries coding the on- and off-campus landscapes—or

studentscapes/familyscapes—in rigid dichotomy with direct implications for the ways in which HE-LGBTQ+ students get perceived in a societal homonegative labyrinth, and jeopardising their access to and experiences of student housing. Thus, how we approach the design, planning, and policymaking of the university-city edges is the first step in transforming the housing experiences of LGBTQ+ university students. In that, the chapter necessitates recognizing the university-city edges as crucially a feminist-queer-trans ecological project.



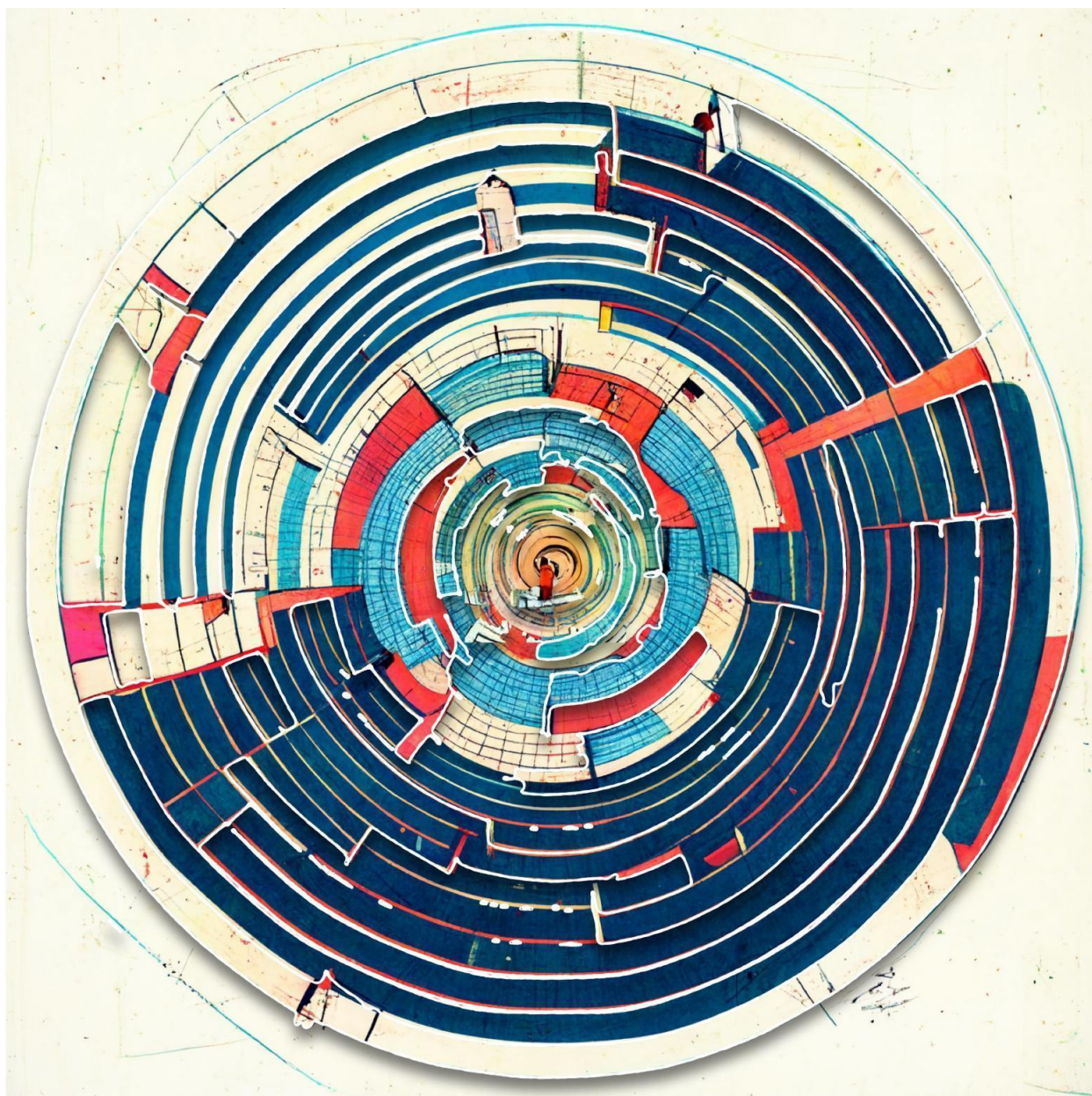
**Figure 4.18. Psychogeographies of Campus edges through HE-LGBTQ+ students' mental maps of the university-student home-city relationship: safe space bubbles (top left), layered nebulae (top right), embodied starrings (bottom left), and anti-capitalist constellations (bottom right).** Source: Author's (2023) vision, primary sketch, and text-prompt rendered by MidJourney and followed by digital layer-edits.

Legal and/or formal approach to the university-city relationship, as discussed above comprises often of fixing, solidifying, and homogenising the university-city *borderline* such that it divides students from non-student families enforcing thus, a boundedness to the campus environment. You are either in or out, on- or off-campus; you are either a single student or a member of a family unit (which is compulsively reproductive and heteronormative), you are either a woman or a man. Such a binary approach was seen not only by the state's legal institutions and private developers but also by the university administration that in response to being violated by private real estate development, proposed resolution by integrating and entirely closing off the north campus. Normative laws work to eradicate any room for interpretation for the ease and uniformity of order and governance of spaces and bodies. Socio-spatial justice, however, is enriched with interpretations and difference. As was witnessed in the psychogeographies of HE-LGBTQ+ students that offered distinct insights on *what would non-cissexist campus edge(s)—and a non-heteronormative university-city relationship—be like*. The four-fold thematic lens with the organic forms of bubbles, nebulae, starrings, and constellations (Figure 4.18) offer permeability, porosity, and plurality of boundaries such that they connect, interact, and integrate differences among and across student and non-student residents. Not only “beyond town-and-gown” (Addie et al., 2015), but critically *between* the university and the city, HE-LGBTQ+ students and/in student housing and homes—as trans subjects on the borderlands of the university-city relationship—perceive a “university-ish” *trans space*, an informal extension to the campus environment as a portal to queer universe in an otherwise cis-heteropatriarchal world, or more specifically, a home within that world.

I have necessitated taking a trans ecological approach to university-city edges in moving towards queer the university-city relationship and generating thus a sense of belonging for

LGBTQ+ students whose housing needs cannot be left contingent on the goodwill and motivation of often cis-heteronormatively informed university administrators. Queer and trans student leaders and housing activist groups may want to consider extending their critical resistance against the state-sanctioned private real estate developments to the uncritical and unimaginative, even undesirable cisnormative preventive measures in response to such violations by the university administrators proposing to enclose campuses with solid boundaries. University administrators must find ways to differently manage such porous and plural boundaries by taking on a critically trans ecologies planning approach. Such an approach would invite a collaborative opportunity by recognizing campus edges as heterogenous and ephemeral, whereby exploring dialogues around “critical edge” with several stakeholders such as student, environmental and urban planners, and non-student communities to soften the hardened town-and-gown edges across which the conflicts between student and non-student communities often take form. One of the crucial tasks of trans planning approaches would be to explore the ways in which different worlds might come together, hear, and learn from each other through the trans space of the university edges. Perhaps to consider then, what would it mean to for the site of the university-city edges to be specially demarcated as “non-binary” on the urban plan document, (i.e., with a multilayered land use neither institutional academic nor residential, but precisely in-between), as a bridging heterotopic space with an informal extension to discursive spaces.





# 5

Homonegative Labyrinth of Representational Distortions of the Student-Image

# 5

## Homonegative Labyrinth of Representational Distortions of the Student-Image

### Introduction

Representations do things—they are activities that enable, sustain, interrupt, consolidate or otherwise (re)make forms or ways of life.

(Anderson, 2019, p. 1120)

This chapter engages with two key questions posited within cultural geography and applies them to urban planning practice: what can “representations do” as a form of practice, and “who speaks” as posed by “feminist, postcolonial and anti-racist movements” (Anderson, 2019, p. 1121, 1125). The question of representation has arguably been central to inclusive and participatory planning initiatives invested in working towards socio-spatial justice and deep democracy. In realizing that inclusive planning initiatives may not be sufficient, critical questions have been raised over the last two decades by urban scholars around representation, including, the question of under-representation of women (Listerborne, 2007), attempts to move away from token-representations towards true partnerships with adolescents (Rhodes and Kovach, 2002), and cultural misrepresentation of participatory engagement of marginalized groups (Kamols et al., 2021) as well as of the aboriginal land itself (Natcher, 2001). Transformative alternative planning processes, however, have yet to engage with, what this paper has called, *distorted* representations and its implications for a distorted sense of belonging

within cities—*spatial dysphoria*<sup>17</sup>—in particular, for higher education (HE)-LGBTQ+ students in student housing and homes.

Distortion as a concept has been critical within historical cartography and political geography to understand and challenge the knowledge and power of maps as “value-laden images” (Harley, 1988). From an iconological discourse of maps, Harley asserts how maps are *not* “inert records [or] passive reflections of world” rather they function as “refracted images contributing to dialogue in a socially constructed world”. He further adds how within traditional cartographical thought, “ideological distortion” emerges as a binary opposite to “accurate” and “true” projections with “scientific integrity”. Maps, then, “are never value-free images” and are manipulated by “the powerful in the society” (Harley, 1988, p. 279). Post-colonial and decolonial geographers have pursued the ontological dimensions of this argument demonstrating how cartography can assert “colonial domination and exploitation” and enforce “a universalist perspective on the world ‘through a colonial matrix of power’” (Oslender, 2021, p.1). To “defend their ways of life”, BIPOC communities must also engage with the “ontological conflict” by employing “counter-mapping” as “alternative mapping practices [that] challenge our cartographically colonized minds” (Oslender, 2021, p. 2). The decolonial cartographic critique may be extended to understand and to challenge cis forms of projection of ‘reality’—a fully comprehensible binary world of gendered embodiments and spatialities.

In addition to being informed by post-colonial and decolonial geographies scholarship, I further draw on distortion theory from social justice framework of psychology. In *The Psychology of Oppression*, authors observe whereas traditional cognitive psychology places the

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<sup>17</sup> In extension to gender dysphoria or body dysphoria, I offer the concept of *spatial dysphoria* experienced when queer ways of living are forced to fi(gh)t cis-heteronormatively informed domestic configurations (discussed in detail in the next chapter).

onus of minority distress on the individual going through it, the social justice framework critically reorients itself to holding the nation and the society accountable for its systemic patterns of oppression and hate (David and Derthick, 2018). Accordingly, these authors assert that:

The multitude and complexity of factors that influence our psychological experiences may lead our thoughts, emotions, and behaviors to become distorted, inaccurate, and biased. In psychology, we refer to these distorted thoughts and beliefs that may lead to unfair behaviors as stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination (David and Derthick, 2018, p. 3).

David and Derthick's (2018) rooting of stereotyping and discriminating behaviors in distorted beliefs is dominantly witnessed and documented against gender and sexualities non-normative individuals and communities. Russell and Bohan (2006), like many other scholars of liberation psychology, discuss the role of distorted beliefs more specifically in the context of a homonegative society<sup>18</sup>. Here as well, authors mark a critical distinction between traditional models of psychology that frames internalized homophobia (IH) among LGBTQ+ individuals and its critique which observes such an approach as "a new pathway to pathologizing LGBT identity" by portraying IH *not* "as a relational phenomenon but as an individual pathology" (Russell and Bohan, 2006, p.346). Authors underline how IH is critically located at "an intersection between interiority and social and political contexts...as an inseparable entity" thus, effectuating an oppressive social environment wherein:

it is not sufficient to rely on 'a [distortion] theory rooted in the individual psyche'; rather, we must attend to 'pervasive and collective experience, rooted in the disruptions of social relations and the distortions of community life' that accompany oppression. The task of liberation psychology is to '[focus] on the problems of identity development within a [homonegative] system of social relations that are aberrant, dehumanizing, and alienating' (Russell and Bohan, 2006, p. 354).

Although liberation psychologists have been able to push the accountability on the oppressive

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<sup>18</sup> Russell and Bohan (2006) define homonegative processes as homophobia and heterosexism in the world and its manifestations in LGBTQ+ experience(s).

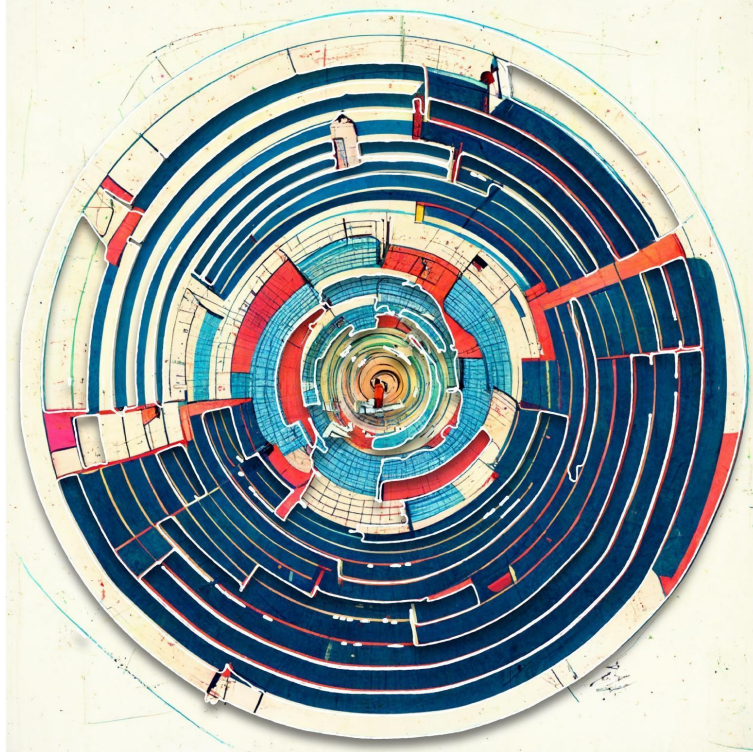


perpetrations of the community away from the minority (groups of) individuals, scholars largely continue to frame ‘distortion’ as (homo)negative. Unlike post/decolonial geographers, liberation and social justice psychologists fail to acknowledge the agency of LGBTQ+ individuals, who like BIPOC communities, do employ counter-distortion practices to disrupt homonegative socio-spatial environments. Trans and non-binary artists’ use of distortion in self-portraits has been indicative of the dissonance between others’ perception of them and their own self-perception. More recently, scholars have studied the role of queer artists’ technological use of “strategic distortion” as a form “of eliciting belonging and emotion that register outside of the [cis-heteronormative] gaze” (Amin, Musser, and Pérez, 2017, p.236). Amin, Musser, and Pérez (2017, p. 237) argue that queer artists reaching for aesthetic opportunities play “an important role in activating queer politics”. In thinking about distortion, aesthetics, and spatiality, it is important to note the ways in which cis-heteronormativity comes to at once inhibit the psyche, the body, and the space, and therefore, the ways in which LGBTQ+ students work at once to activate and queer the mental, the embodied, and the spatial registers.

However, the continued uneven power hegemonies mean that representational distortions motivated by *cisism* and heterosexism have the power to be (mis)taken as a coherent and a comprehensive ‘reality’ or the ‘universal truth’. Moreover, counter-distortions when employed by LGBTQ+ artists and activists to resist cis claims to reality often get perceived as incoherent, unreal, and fake. Counter-distortion practices do result in a range of real-life consequences for LGBTQ+ individuals from “invisibility [to] condemnation [if visible]” to hate violence within “institutional manifestations of cultural heterosexism” (Herek, 1990, p.317), and as will be seen later in this chapter, even homelessness. Gregory Herek (1990, p.317)—whose extensive research in psychology focuses on the societal prejudice against sexual minorities—argues that

there is a complicit mirroring of infrequent and negative portrayals of homosexuality (and, in extension, LGBTQ+ individuals) between “four major societal institutions: religion, the law, psychiatry and psychology, and mass media”. I consider a potentially fifth societal institution – higher education – and, more specifically, off-campus student housing where cultural cisism and heterosexism manifests as *spatial dysphoria* for LGBTQ+ students.

A critical review of the studentification literature from Chapter 2 demonstrates that in its current form, it is lacking a sexualities framework, is trans-negative, and altogether overlooks HE-LGBTQ+ students’ perspectives. Utilising trans imaging techniques, I accentuate the lived experiences of 23 HE-LGBTQ+ students in this chapter to see-through the cis-heteronormative moralities of key urban housing stakeholders—such as brokers, landowners, neighbourhood residents, and hostel wardens—that work in tandem to perpetrate a “psychology of oppression” (David and Derthick, 2018) by contributing to, what I argue are, two mutually feeding phenomena—‘studentphobia’ and ‘cis-heteronormative familification’. This in turn effectuates a *homonegative labyrinth* of representational distortions of the student-image (Figure 5.1). When compounded with an increasingly unaffordable urban housing market in India, it results in relatively acute experiences of *spatial dysphoria* for HE-LGBTQ+ students that cannot be understood within the neat binary of socio-spatial un/belonging. Accordingly, “spatial stories” (Certeau, 1984) of *disbelonging* as experienced by HE-LGBTQ+ students in the two campus districts of Deonar Campus, TISS University, Mumbai and North Campus, DU, New Delhi are drawn upon across the three stages of: (i) securing home (or more colloquially known among students as “house-hunting”); (ii) making home; and (iii) leaving home.



**Figure 5.1. Drawing the notion of labyrinth (above) from the top view of *Chakravayūh* (below).** Source: Author's (2023) vision, primary sketch, and text-prompt rendered by MidJourney and followed by digital layer-edits (above) and google images (below).

I draw the notion of labyrinth from the ancient Hindu epics, *Mahabharata* (transl. epic Kurukshetra War) that depicted the invincible multi-tiered militant formation for both attack and defense called the *Padmavyūh* or the *Chakravyūh* (Figure 5.1). Soldiers placed in a spiral spin as they proceed on the battlefield to attack the enemy while protecting or isolating a person of interest in the centre. The centre of the labyrinth is firstly, extremely difficult to reach by the opponent. If with great prowess somehow the enemy soldier does reach the centre, it is even more impossible to exit this labyrinth alive. Fighting inside the spinning spiral formation of the labyrinth strategically targets to exhaust and damage the enemy soldier both physically, but more importantly mentally.

I equate the unending, multi-scalar homonegative national-urban-institutional-social context LGBTQ+ students find themselves confronting in India with the spinning spiral Chakravyūh formation for its ongoing material and mental impacts for all those who belong outside of normative marital domesticity. “Away from home” and their respective parental family units, ‘free-floating’ university students by their very transient nature are governed by local communities firmly grounded in cis-heteronormative family values. Landowners, in particular, as key community stakeholders in the provision of local student housing assume authority over students’ bodily and spatial relations and occupations. Within the in/formal landlord-tenant agreements, landowners and neighbourhood residents who often self-appoint themselves as the moral gatekeepers of students’ sexual life outside a heteronormative marriage, deny or discredit students’ relationships as “promiscuous” or at best, “a temporary phase” to be outgrown. Whereas students themselves often perceive their student life as that of an ascetic because of rigorous academic demands, meagre financial means, and living far from loved ones. Together these are the roots of tenacious “representational distortions” that any student-image

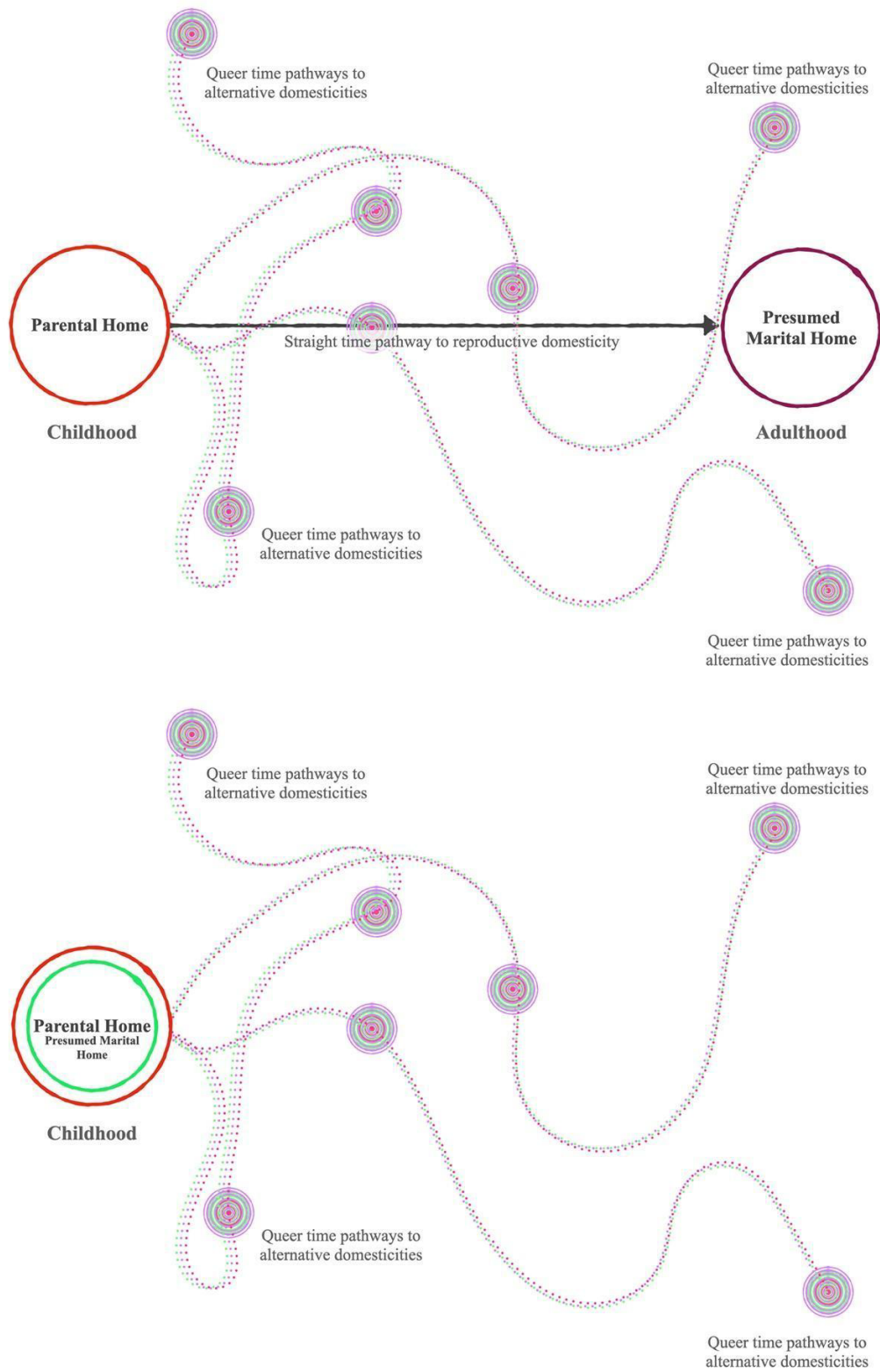
must confront. The ‘home’—however queer behind the “curtains” (Hubbard, 2012, p. 64)—must uphold the ideal image and performance of a cis-heteronormative landscape of ‘pure’ love and reproductive sex. Within this “straight time” pathway (Oswin, 2012, as cited in Bain et al., 2018, p. 13), students, more explicitly in the context of contemporary urban India, are perceived to be transient subjects somewhere in-between their parental home and their presumed, to be marital home. As a result, however diverse, on and off campus accommodation advertisements seeking students unanimously use the linguistic discourse and the socio-spatial proximation to project student housing as a: “home away from home”<sup>19</sup> (Figures 5.2 and 5.3). To ensure that *all* students stay on the “straight time” pathway from their parental to their marital home, not only the student-image, but also transient homes that students occupy during their education witness ‘representational distortion’. This irremissible proximation of the spatiality and the spatial conduct of floating homes (Arun-Pina, 2021a) with a heteronormative marital home as a datum, results in continued experiences of spatial dysphoria for HE-LGBTQ+ students no matter how long or how far they travel away from home to unfollow this “normalized temporal order” (Bain et al., 2018). Marital homes—which is conflated with adulthood—for LGBTQ+ students in India, if desired, is not even an option. Thus, representational distortion has implications for mental as well as material *dis*belonging for HE-LGBTQ+ students in India.

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<sup>19</sup> In India, normatively for men, the parental and marital home is the same, i.e., he joined by his wife continues to stay with parents after marriage, whereas women are expected to make the transitional journey along the straight time pathway from her parental home to marital home to join her husband (which is also her husband’s parental home).



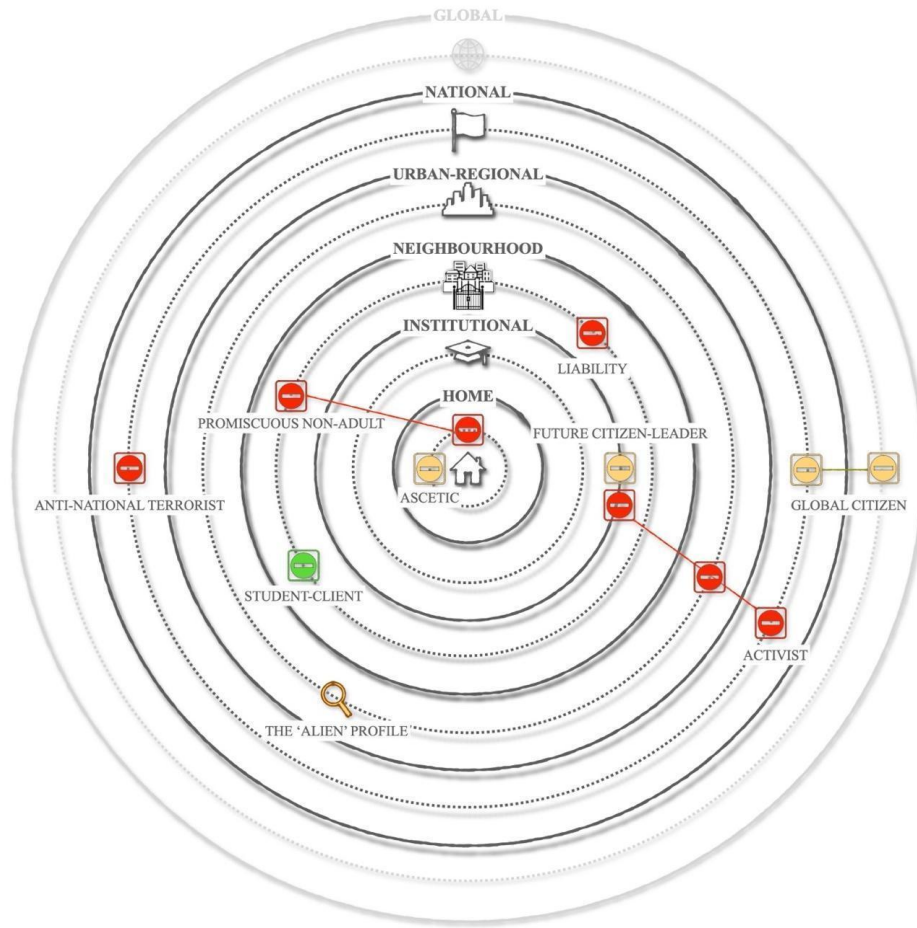
**Figure 5.2. Hostel Prospectus of Hansraj Hostel, DU.** The above singular example represents the common majority of hostels prospectuses of residential universities and PGs in university districts across India.



**Figure 5.3. Home away from home: normatively different for women (top) and men (bottom) in patriarchy.** Source: Author (October 2022).

This chapter is thus, divided in three parts. The first two sections unpack the multi-scalar homonegative labyrinth (Figure 5.4). In that, the first section presents the emerging student-image within the extremist national-urban-institutional narrative of India: the empty signifier—the anti-national terrorist and the future global citizen-leader—and the “alien” profile. The second section then offers three facets of the student-image as they emerge from analyzing HE-LGBTQ+ student-encounters with various formal and informal social actors at the scale of the neighbourhood-home: *the student-client*; *the promiscuous non-adult*; and *the ascetic*. What implications do these representational typologies have on HE-LGBTQ+ students’ access to and experiences of housing? Navigating the homonegative labyrinth of representational distortions for HE-LGBTQ+ students is intensified by the mutually feeding phenomena—‘studentphobia’ and ‘cis-heteronormative familification’—that work together to ‘restore’ residential landscapes to a homogenized “spatial purity and temporal order...and its carefully organized family activities” (Bain et al., 2018, p. 11). Finally, the chapter concludes by considering how, if at all, urban planning in a context where unaffordable housing market gets routinely compounded with ‘studentphobia’ and ‘cis-heteronormative familification’, might enable a sense of belonging for HE-LGBTQ+ students in India.





**Figure 5.4.** Multiscalar homonegative labyrinth of representational distortions of the student-image that HE-LGBTQ+ must navigate on their housing pathways. Source: Author (2022).

### Three facets of the Student-Image: Formal-Legal Encounters

In this section, the student-image emerging at the spatial scales of national-urban-institutional as they collude in their global aspirations in India is unpacked. It sets up the formal-legal context with direct socio-spatial implications for LGBTQ+ post-secondary students' access to and experiences of housing particularly intensified at the scales of neighbourhood and home.

Analyzing formal-legal documents such as the national education policy, institutional prospectus and vision statements, legal case files against student activists, as well as radical perspectives of

3 urban planners, urban managers, and architects involved with inclusive planning and city making initiatives revealed three facets of the student-image that are discussed below: the “anti-national terrorist”, the “future global citizen-leader”, and the “alien” profile.

### **Empty signifiers: The anti-national terrorist and the future global citizen-leader**

The contemporary Indian urban-nationalist project on the one hand, aspires to meet the global standards and, on the other, works to rename and ‘Hinduize’ the urban landscape. These global-national dimensions of urbanism, in fact, co-produce a peculiar brand of neoliberal urbanism that works to fundamentally define who and what belongs to “real India” (Banerjee, 2015; Shah 2015). Such a rebranding of the image is not limited to ‘an ideal city’ alone, but also translates onto the image of ‘an ideal citizen’. In the case of HE students, it translates into an extremist dual student-image. Indian national education policies aspiring global expansion of a knowledge-based economy cast an ideal student-image as “a truly global citizen” (National Education Policy, 2020, p.6). Such aspirations are also reflected institutionally in the university’s vision statement to “moulding responsible and socially conscious citizens and citizen-leaders” (Student Handbook, TISS University, 2018-19, v). Concomitantly, mass criminalization of faculty members, student leaders and activists also occurs when they participate in virtual and/or physical peaceful protests under the anti-terror Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) law, branding them as ‘anti-national terrorists’ (“Those booked by police under draconian laws,” 2020).

Students have protested against the 2020 National Education Policy (NEP) citing, among other things, privatization and centralization of education. Utilizing Twitter hashtags such as

#rejectNEP2020 and #NEPQuitIndia<sup>20</sup>, student groups challenged the NEP and, in so doing, rather ironically, embodied its primary objective of producing “truly global citizen(s)”. Yet, several students were arrested for their activism and a new student-image emerged—that of an anti-national terrorist. Well-meaning adults (e.g., guardians, university officials, landowners, etc.) encouraged students to ‘focus’ on their studies and avoid ‘distraction’ by causing ‘public mischief’ and engaging in “frivolous” activities (Horton, 2020). Therefore, ‘a global citizen’ and ‘a nationalist’ are two personas that, despite a seemingly liberal tone to the former and a fundamentalist tone to the latter, often work together to reinforce a reproductive ideal citizen on a “straight time” pathway.

In their article on the role of “student visionaries”, authors underline how “decades-long work of student visionaries continues to be significant today because it provides a direct counterpoint to the administration’s *depiction of student activists as ‘outside agitators’* engaging in *‘illegal’ activities*” [emphasis added] (FLOCK, F. G. C., 2021, p. 534). Following the charge sheet filed against 50+ students during Mumbai Pride march, the university campus became a panic ground for students who lived in fear of persecution (Bhandary, 2020). One of the founding student members of the TISS Queer Collective (QC) faced campus arrest for 20 days, only to be later evicted from an on-campus hostel where they had lived for over a decade of their postgraduate student-life: “they [the director and the registrar] threw me out of the hostel because I was a threat to the institute” (DL, interview, December 11, 2020). Ultimately, they were forced to leave Mumbai. For another Dalit transmasculine student leader, there was no home to return to upon eviction. At his parents’ home, he confronted being forced into marriage. On campus, his intersectional identity as a Dalit queer/trans student also threatened the dichotomous nature of

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<sup>20</sup> The hashtag refers to the “Quit India Movement” launched in 1942 by Mahatma Gandhi demanding the end of British rule in India.

student politics. Navigating as a member of both the Ambedkarite Students' Association (ASA)—an on-campus Dalit student group—and TISS Queer Collective (QC), VV did not feel safe to come out as trans (VV, interview, January 6, 2021). Forced to leave Mumbai, DL and VV continue to actively work towards building queer and trans community between New Delhi and Bangalore.

### **The “alien” profile**

While several students assume an urban presence as activist-pedagogues, they remain missing from and are largely forgotten “citizens-in-waiting” (Fincher and Iveson, 2008) even within radical participatory planning initiatives in Delhi and Mumbai. I interviewed three architects, urban planners, and policymakers from both the cities involved with different institutions and urban projects. In my conversations with them, I witnessed three distinct responses: lack of faith in the mainstream planning practices, optimism in inclusive planning activism, and the middle path of soft regulation at the scale of institution-urban local bodies.

At the Centre for Policy Research, one of India's leading non-profit public policy think tanks based in Delhi since 1973, senior researcher Mukta Naik detailed how in 15 years of professional experience with issues of internal migration and urbanization she has yet to come across urban planning housing initiatives for HE-LGBTQ+ students despite their synergies with precarious housing needs of migrants, women, and home-based women workers. Naik expressed no faith in mainstream participatory planning and policy initiatives to attend to and foreground HE-LGBTQ+ students' lived experiences. In her experience,

The policy world is still imagining a world from 25-30 years ago in which *log aate padhte hai phir unki shaadi hoti hai, phir woh naukri karte hai bache paida karte hai* [transl. people sequentially first educate, then get married, get job, have kids]. They are not able to imagine a world in which somebody may be single all their lives and still

looking for meaningful choices...they are not able imagine a gay couple; [despite their] upward [class] mobility in the real estate industry, gay couples are not on the radar because [gay] marriage is not sanctioned; *marriage and housing is very implicitly seen together*. [emphasis added] (Naik, interview, July 28, 2022).

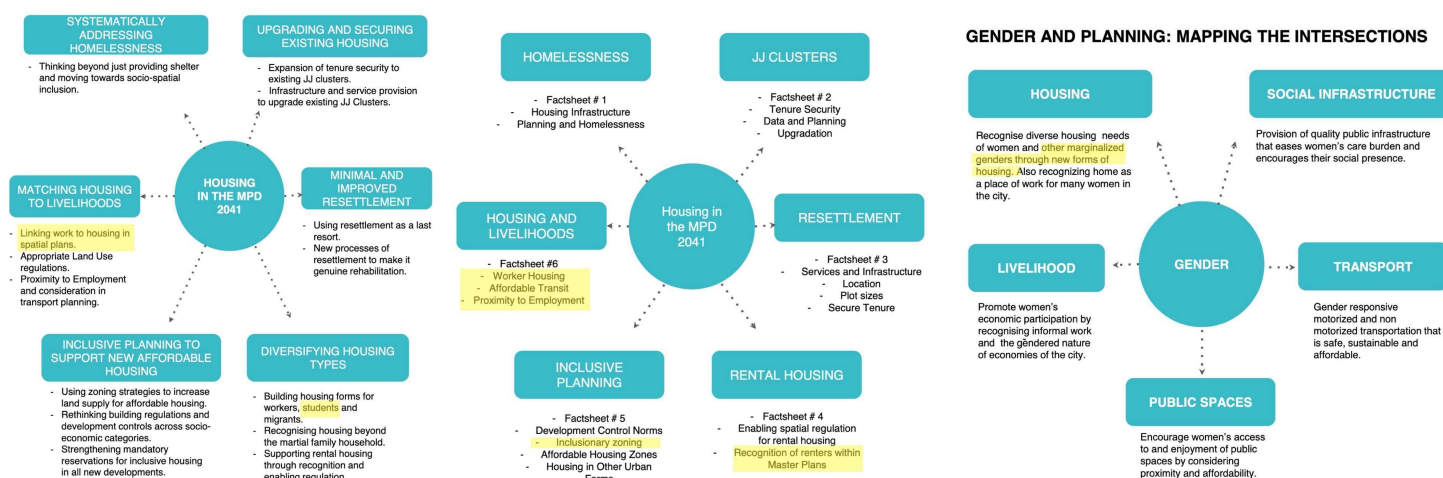
Naik points to the implicit conflation of “marriage and housing” that continues to be the dominant imaginary in the planning and policy worlds. She pointed to the lack of “spatial reconfiguration” that must attend to non-marital households such as single people and LGBTQ+ coupled households in India. In that, Naik asserted the need for us to look for “*the new house...new forms of households*” [emphasis added] which she saw as “very far from coming into mainstream policy or even market responses...it’s going to take time to get there, and unfortunately, the market response comes first and then the policy” (Naik, interview, July 28, 2022). Naik points to the need to shift the policy imaginary that is currently grounded in heteronormative conflation of housing and home with marriage. In that, Naik finds “participatory planning is practiced in an extremely lip service kind of way” (Naik, interview, July 28, 2022) that excludes many interest groups including “urban poor in informal settlements [that] is being unsettled by the housing rights activism”. Yet, her work on rental housing in India (Naik, Harish, and Damle, 2021) critically observes how “migrants and students do not comfortably fit within the housing rights discourse [because] mobilizing [initiatives] from the ground [up] are also [aligning themselves] with the categories of the state [wherein] a livelihood-based category will find legitimacy giving rise to street vendor activism. There is no such framework for students” (Naik, interview, July 28, 2022).

However, the intersection of gender and sexuality-based student housing activism and inclusive planning activism in India remains thin. HE-LGBTQ+ students are neither considered within economically precarious interest groups, nor those whose housing needs also challenge the live/work binary, nor are they part of urban eviction documentations. HE-LGBTQ+ students

also make an indispensable case for critical single people's geographies of home (Wilkinson, 2014). However, the Indian urban scholarship, activism, and policy work is yet to orient themselves and attend to HE-LGBTQ+ students' lived experiences of housing. *An Exploratory Study of Discrimination based on Non-normative Genders and Sexualities* (2017-2019), a Ford-funded multi-city research project marks an exception. I was involved as a research assistant and an architectural consultant for the project for five months in 2017 and was commissioned as a scholar-artist in 2018. Despite one of the focus areas of the project invested in studying campus geographies of student housing for LGBTQ+ inclusivity, planners and spatial practitioners were ultimately not one of the primary, if at all, targeted readers for project outputs—such as a queer faculty members and students-led open blog for collecting LGBTQ+ student-testimonies, exhibition, report, and published book. When I asked one of the founding student authors for the blog, they did not cite mistrust in planners, but simply that they never came up as urban experts they could turn to during discussions—a resonating absence that Rashee Mehra also noted was the other way round where HE-LGBTQ+ students are equally missing from inclusive participatory planning initiatives, including the Main Bhi Dilli (MBD), a people's campaign for making an inclusive ground up contributions to the Delhi Master Plan (MPD) 2041 that Mehra has been a core coordinator for since 2018.

In 2018, a group of Delhi-based activists and academics came together to start the MBD campaign when they learnt that in 2017, the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) had signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the National Institute for Urban Affairs (NIUA) to draft the MPD 2041. One of the primary objectives of the MBD campaign has been to bridge the gaps between people's everyday lives in Delhi and the MPD 2041 by making the “technocratic, densely drafted 400 page” planning document comprehensible to the common public and thereon

take the specific community groups' needs from the city and make recommendations to the NIUA to incorporate into the draft MPD 2041. When the MPD 2021 witnessed delays due to the aspirational mega sporting event, *Commonwealth Games (CWG)* in 2010, the intervention of participatory initiatives was rather belated as they came *after* the MPD 2021 was floated. A decade later, as some of campaigners from then are also part of the MBD 2018 campaign, they are historically informed to interject at an earlier time, i.e., while the MPD 2041 is being drafted to effectively contribute to shaping the capital city-region. Between 2018-2020, the MBD campaign drafted several factsheets from ground up with specific community groups and with thematic focus such as livelihoods, housing, gender, transportation, governance, child-care, informal settlements, and public spaces. Despite a vocal and a visible urban presence by student-led housing activist group such as PinjraTod in Delhi, Mehra acknowledged a shocking failure on the campaign's part in considering and reaching out to the (LGBTQ+) student community. Currently, the factsheet report on housing does underline the need to promote affordable rental housing and "diversifying housing types beyond marital family household" to include workers, students, and migrants, as well as on gender highlight the need for "recognizing diverse housing needs for women and other marginalized gender[-identifying individuals] through *new forms of housing*" [emphasis added] (Figure 5.5). However, on- and off-campus student housing merits a dedicated factsheet to unpack its complex nexus of gender, sexuality, (institutional and rental) housing, and higher education and to take lessons from HE-LGBTQ+ students' homes for "diversifying housing types". In my last conversation with Mehra, she was optimistic about collaborating with me to initiate a dedicated factsheet on student housing in Delhi.



**Figure 5.5.** Factsheets on Housing and Planning: Mapping the intersections in MPD 2041 (top). Factsheets on Gender and Planning: Mapping the intersections in MPD 2041 (bottom). Source: Main Bhi Dilli (MBD) Campaign (2021).

Departing from the multi-scalar governance and planning approaches in the capital city-region of Delhi, the sub/urban context of Deonar Campus, TISS University in Mumbai, demands different planning approaches. Prasad Shetty is a Mumbai-based urbanist, urban manager and the founder of the BARD Studio and the School of Environment and Architecture (SEA). In my conversation with Shetty, he categorically points out that the Master Plan document cannot be the objective document for planning for HE-LGBTQ+ students in Mumbai. His primary concern was arguably the hit and miss in the “timing horizons” between what is normally a long-term planning vision document and the relative transient nature of student housing (Figure 5.6).

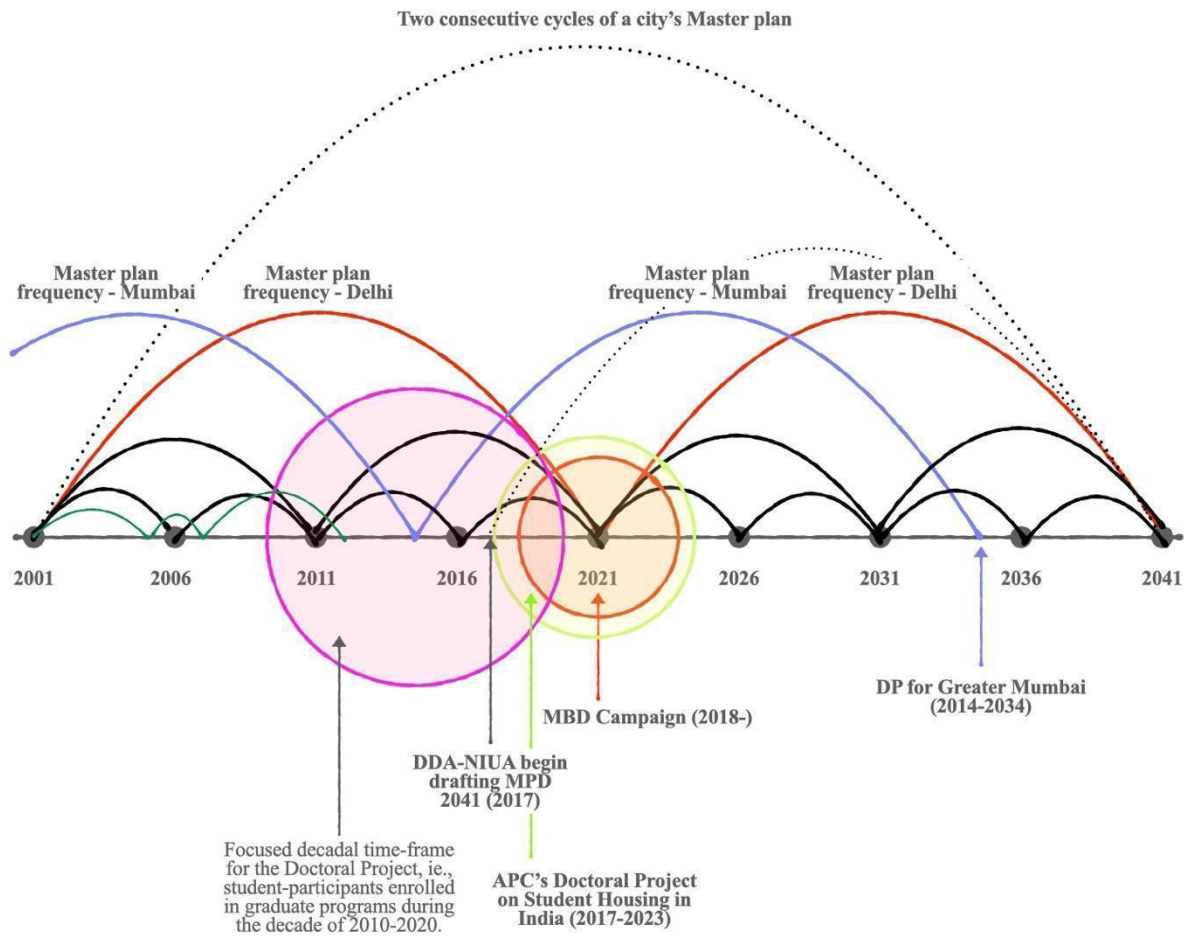
Although the MBD campaign in Delhi does attend to urban floating populations such as renters, migrants, and students, for Shetty, soft regulatory approaches at the level of institution and urban local bodies would be more effective in diversifying the otherwise normative residential landscape. Invested also in experimental architectural pedagogy and practice, Shetty critically observed “the lack of a built form to hold students’ sense of time, rhythm and mode of living other than a moralistic family”. He then considered the possibility “for creating a housing policy



that designs a different household to live in” (Shetty, interview, September 7, 2022). In underlining the pressing need to “think about the housing question beyond its affordability, habitability and tenure activities, ideas, and foundation [so as] to [consider] different forms of living”, he observed that “the traditional idea of housing lies embedded in community and neighbourhood; but students are running away from them because of the constant surveillance and gaze, being perceived by them as “an alien”, and being denied privacy” (Shetty, interview, September 7, 2022). He argued within the design academia, students’ perspectives of housing need to be validated and incorporated which “currently are left to the market”.

Both Naik and Shetty observed that the market is often the first to respond. At the core of all three urban practitioners’ critical remarks is the need to “diversify the [cis-heteronormative] housing type” and “interest group categories” materially in the market and in architectural pedagogy, but also socio-symbolically in the architecture, planning and policy imaginaries.

For the remaining three facets of the student-image, we now turn to HE-LGBTQ+ students’ everyday encounters with informal-social actors on their journey to securing home, making home, and leaving home. Various urban actors such as the university housing administration, housing brokers, landowners and neighbourhood residents, and students’ own community of friends and peers actively shape the socio-spatial context for student accommodations. Often lacking formal-legal (infra)structures, LGBTQ+ students’ housing pathways are contingent on cis-heteronormative moral sensibilities.



**Figure 5.6.** Charting timing horizons for long-term planning vision documents and transient student housing. Source: Author's fieldnotes (2022).

### Three facets of the Student Image: In/formal-Social Encounters

Shifting the focus to the intimate scales of neighbourhood and home, I listen to, analyze, and re-tell the spatial stories of in/formal-social encounters of LGBTQ+ post-secondary students with housing brokers, landowners and neighbours, as well as their own parents and extended families. These stories and the voices of LGBTQ+ post-secondary students in India are yet unheard and are excluded from the radical inclusive and bottom-up planning initiatives and approaches.

Analyzing queer and trans students' perspectives and experiences of securing and making homes in megacity regions in India revealed three key facets of the student-image as perceived by various urban stakeholders directly shaping the student housing market that are discussed below: student-client, promiscuous non-adult, and ascetic.

### **Student-client: Securing home**

When asked how they found a place to stay when they first arrived in the city, all 13 student-participants starting at TISS, Mumbai responded relying on the vetted list of housing brokers, landowners, PG owners and other students looking for flatmates that was posted on the university website. The other 12 student-participants reported, however, no such list was available for North Campus, DU which also happens to have relatively larger hostel infrastructure to house student newcomers. Some of these vetted brokers, in the case of TISS, would also setup a desk on campus to better reach out to student-clients. After securing an initial landing place in the city, students would connect with other LGBTQ+ peers whose first-hand experience of brokers, landowners, and the neighbourhood they could rely on. Often students stayed in the same homes their LGBTQ+ peers had lived in and pre-established a rapport with landowners and neighbours to avoid navigating distressing everyday experiences of micro-policing of their movements, regulation of visitors, violation of privacy, even harassment and discrimination that might include verbal or physical aggression and violence. Housing-hunting as a non-cis-heteronormative student—whether solo, with a friend or a partner—routinely involves confronting cis-hetero-gazing, layered screening and profiling of students' bodies and behaviors, patronizing and discrediting students' sense of *adulthood* outside the chrononormative straight time pathway (Freeman, 2010; Halberstam, 2005; Jaffe, 2018), discrimination and refusal of

housing, prohibiting visitors and their sense of building a community. In a sense then, outgoing LGBTQ+ students informally pave secured and trusted “housing pathways” (Skoba et al., 2023; Clapham et al., 2014; Robinson et al., 2007; Rugg et al., 2004) for incoming LGBTQ+ students. In what follows, I attend to one set of urban actors—housing brokers—the steppingstone for LGBTQ+ student-*clients*’ housing pathways.

Housing brokers primarily act as mediators who cater to the housing needs of their student-clients as well as the tenant-preferences of their landowner-clients. Their role as negotiators is (neo)liberally market oriented. They have developed a keen sense of profiling their student-clients in a flash. They diligently foreground characteristics that present the student to the potential landowner as ‘responsible’, ‘credible’, ‘normative’ and ‘docile’, while tactfully pushing the undesired aspects of their identity out of the landowners’ sight. While brokers are usually unbothered themselves by students’ gender and sexual *identifications*, the *expression and embodiment* of their gender and sexual identity are intricately scrutinized. This entire process is often very quick not only in order to meet student need but also because the demand for real estate is high, supply is limited, and the market is hot.

The moral upper-hand remains with landowners (i.e., the client-with-the-property). Yet, with the inside knowledge of the real estate market and their network of tenant-clients, housing brokers enjoy local power in influencing successful lease agreements. For HE-LGBTQ+ students, securing home in neighbourhoods where cis-heteronormativity is routinely compounded with the unaffordable housing market looks bleak. They noted, however, that their housing needs were often better understood when the network of the housing broker had been gradually queered. Below, I illustrate through excerpts from HE-LGBTQ+ students’ recollections of their house-hunting experiences in the two case study campus districts.

PK, a queer woman, and a former postgraduate student at TISS university, due to her dietary restrictions, could not stay on-campus where hostels prohibited students from cooking in their rooms. She had no option but to rent an off-campus apartment where she was the first single student to live because the landowners preferred to rent only to families. Ultimately, according to PK, she was able to move in because the broker persuaded the landowners to consider PK based upon her upper-class/caste identity. Recollecting her experience of house-hunting, PK says,

My [upper class/caste] privilege has protected me. While I may have [been asked] personal questions on expressing my gender, it has never really affected my [securing] housing. Negotiations were always about the rent and [the prohibition on] getting boys in the house” (PK, interview, September 13, 2020).

In the context of deep social stratification, the majority of landowners prefer, as far as possible, to lend their properties to tenants belonging to the same class, caste, region, and religion as them. For instance, so long as PK is a member of an upper class/caste community, her landowners were unconcerned with her status as a single woman student with ‘queer’ gender expression. They did however prefer to presume PK was an urban-modern straight woman by reinforcing cis-heteronormative rules in prohibiting entry to “boys in the house”. While talking to me, PK uncomfortably admits having *never* encountered difficulty or discrimination in securing housing. Arguably though, what she experienced as an upper-caste queer woman may be understood as “heterosexism, invisibility, and double consciousness” (Wallace, 2002; Lewin, 2018). A part of PK enjoys the caste privilege which then protects her queer selfhood. The oppressively normative network of the student housing market around her ensures to create and to intensify the distance between two selves of PK—the self with privilege and the self that needs protection. As a queer and trans-identifying person born in a Jain family, I share to an extent a similar double consciousness. Although Jainism is outside of the Hindu caste system, as well as demarcated as a national minority, Jains live a privileged social life. The question then truly is,

*who* secured the housing? Arguably, it is the upper-caste-PK who got housing whereas the queer-PK got the benefit. PK, like many other HE-LGBTQ+ students, does not experience a neat un/belonging in urban housing. Rather, she experiences what can be thought as a sense of *distorted* belonging, a form of spatial dysphoria.

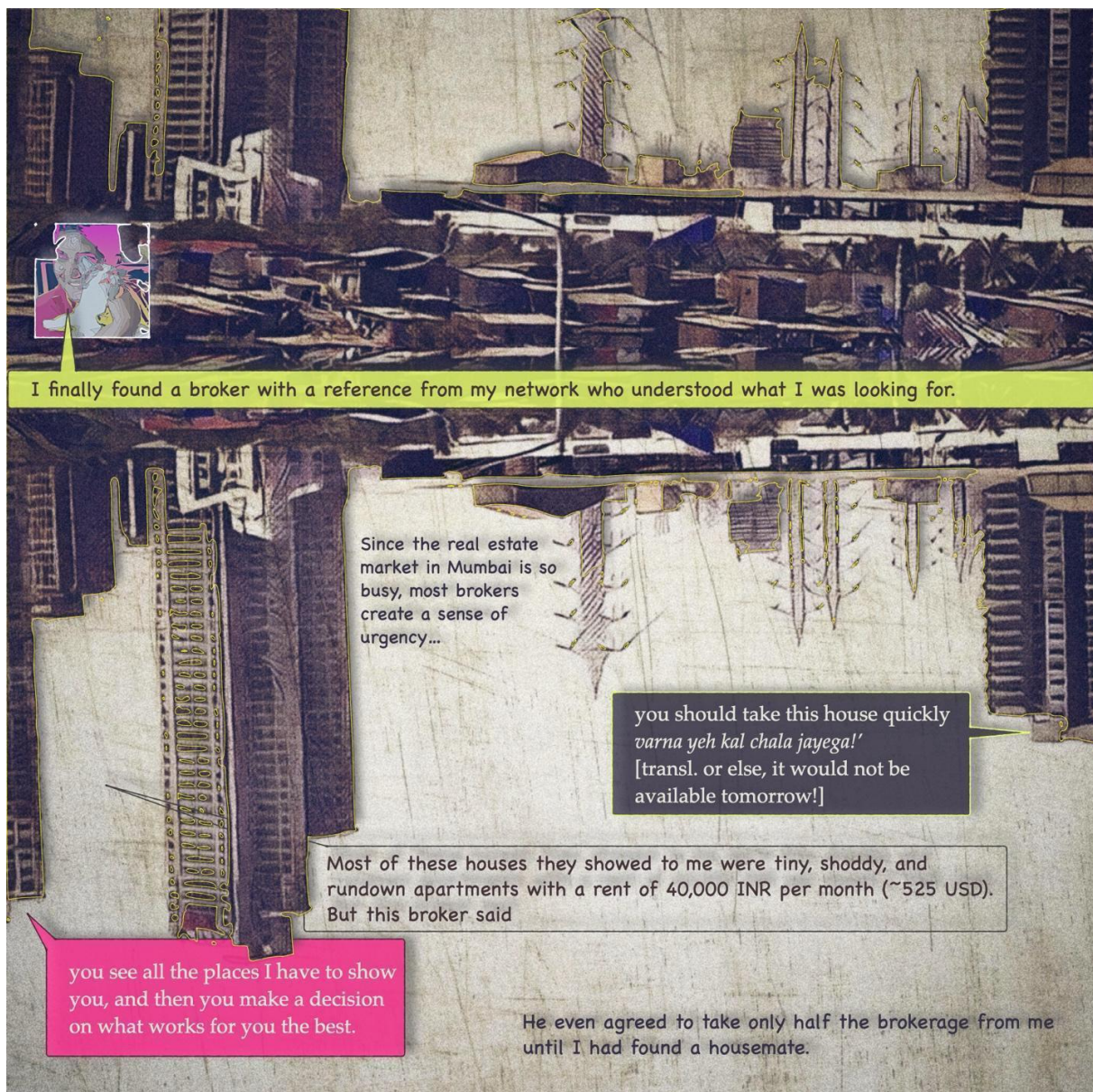
AS, another queer woman student, recollects feeling left exhausted by “screening at so many levels” by brokers while finding herself a studio apartment that she felt like altogether giving up on moving. She recalls:

[F]irst, you get screened whether you are married or not. Then, you are screened based on your gender. Brokers tell you that houses are either rented to only boys or girls which for my trans/genderqueer friends was insufferable screening of their bodies. Brokers kept telling me, ‘[S]ingle woman? *Bohot mushkil hai, nahi ho payega*’ [transl. ‘it is impossible to find a place for a single woman’]. The few places that did match my needs were simply unaffordable (AS, interview, November 15, 2020).

HE-LGBTQ+ students, especially when they do not pass as cis-heteronormative, ubiquitously experience what AS described as multi-layered screening by a cis gaze. Brokers and landowners perform extensive demographic profiling of potential tenants often by asking a line of questions—what Gopal Guru (2012) calls, an “offensive archeology”—to determine their bodies and behaviors for moral acceptability often along the lines of caste and religion, and more implicitly of normative gender and sexuality. Most landowners consider single women as a liability and thus, prefer to rent their homes to young men; for others, however, much like scholarly documentation of the construction of the “bachelor” and the discrimination against them in Dubai (Smith, 2010; Sarmadi, 2013), the house is presumed to be particularly unkempt by bachelor lifestyle of men, and prefer women-tenants who are expected to bear homemaking and other domestic responsibilities. In such residential landscapes meticulously coded with a gender binary, trans/genderqueer students find themselves in a perpetual state of spatial dysphoria in addition to activated state of gender dysphoria. Although several scholars have



highlighted housing discrimination for a range of non-normative tenants including Muslims and Dalits (Harish, 2021; Bhat, 2021; Bhat and Lone, 2021; Vithayathil, 2018; Hameed, 2017; Datta and Pathania, 2016; Thorat et al., 2015; Rashid, 2015), singles and particularly single women (Bhargava and Chilana, 2020), low-income migrants (Naik, 2015), and in my own work on queer, trans, and single students and post-students (Arun-Pina, 2021a, 2023), we are yet to see Fair Housing Act or non-discriminatory housing laws and policies in India.



**Figure 5.7. AS's Spatial Story:** Maintaining a sense of “urgency” in the real estate market.  
Source: Author.

Ultimately, AS could not afford to live on her own even in the smallest available studio apartment close to the campus. Instead, she decided to look for a bigger 1BHK apartment and a housemate to share it with. Sharing an intimate space of home can be tormenting, particularly if the housemate (or roommate) is trans/homophobic. Consequently, LGBTQ+ students uniquely face multiple roadblocks to securing housing which their cis-heteronormative peers and colleagues do not. AS was finally referred to a broker from her network who understood what she was looking for (see Figure 5.7). She further recollected experiencing a deeper sense of belonging in this home because for the first time ever, her landowner was a young single mother who was “very cooperative” unlike all her previous landowners “who were intimidating cis men always threatening to throw them out” (AS, interview, November 15, 2020).

Within the rhetoric of an “urgent” real estate market, voices of HE-LGBTQ+ students and their housing needs are carelessly discredited, neglected, or unheard. Elsewhere, Gorman-Murray et al. (2018, p. 166) advocates for “urgently” giving “voice to trans experiences of disasters, investigating their specific vulnerabilities and resilient capacities” to move towards “trans-inclusive disaster planning”. However, attending to everyday fabrications of “urgency” can result in cumulative and ongoing disasters. Ongoing queer and trans students’ uncertainties and precarity would be an important consideration alongside incidental crisis in housing such as Covid-19 pandemic-induced housing evictions for migrant students (The Hindu, 2020; Hindustan Times, 2020; DHRTF, 2020). In accentuating the voices of HE-LGBTQ+ students in an ongoing disastrous student housing context from global South, this chapter considers: what does this provisional and partial acknowledgement of their housing needs as *student-clients* mean for LGBTQ+ *student-tenants*? Increasingly, megacities in India such as Delhi and Mumbai have young private entrepreneurs investing in student housing startups such as OxfordCaps, Stanza



Living, CoFynd, and more. Marketed as “a new concept”, “student living 2.0” is considered of the ‘millennial’ age. Yet, *all* of their listings are coded with a gender binary. Although student participants I talked to had heard of student housing start-ups, neither themselves nor anyone within their wider network had ever lived in them. While these privately owned and internationally informed student housing startups warn of the changing trends in the gentrifying housing market, HE-LGBTQ+ student testimonies demand complicating this homogenized student-image of a new young gentrifying consumer. As the QC student leaders’ recollection below will illustrate, mediators such as the university and housing brokers may, to an extent, initiate the housing pathway for *student-clients*. However, they soon disappear for *student-tenants* in their journeys to homemaking. For HE-LGBTQ+ students, these journeys are especially exhausting, even hopeless.

### **Promiscuous non-adult: Making home**

Several HE-LGBTQ+ student-participants reflected on how uncomfortable they felt living in gated societies that were heavily surveilled and morally policed environments with religion, caste, and class-based constructions of ‘respectability’. They recollected experiencing—either directly or vicariously through their friends and colleagues—everyday socio-spatial *disbelonging*. As DL, a trans masculine doctoral candidate recollects, “this is not my story, but is still part of my story”:



**Figure 5.8. DL's Spatial Story: *What's the beef?*** Source: Author's (2023) vision, primary sketch, and text-prompt rendered by MidJourney and followed by digital layer-edits.

Ultimately, to avoid controversy and to secure his newly appointed position as a tenured professor, the hosts refused to register a formal complaint with either the institution or the police. A few days later, another similar incident of a mob fussing about “girls and boys partying together” was reported to the TISS Students’ Union. Since the gender-neutral hostel (GNH) wing was the only place on campus where *all* gendered students could stay, students rescued from off-campus housing disputes were temporarily accommodated in the GNH. Consequently, several queer, trans and non-binary students recalled the imposition of excessive surveillance and tighter housing rules in the GNH. It became “the first place to be attacked” by the administration, claimed one of the transfeminine residents. Informed by cis-heteronormative moral sensibilities of the hostel warden and security guards, these exclusive rules made their living environment in the GNH-wing “toxic, scary and repressive” contrary to the university’s proclamation of it being “liberating, progressive and novel” (AF, interview, December 16, 2020).

DL’s remark before recounting the above conflict as “still a part of my story” is critical to note here. It is neither possible nor the intention of this chapter to neatly bifurcate the student-body into LGBTQ+ and heterosexual. The host couple and their guests in their encounter with the community residents get rendered as “queered subjects” (Oswin, 2010; Arun-Pina, 2021a) which require “queer approaches that understand heteronormativity not as a universal policing of a heterosexual–homosexual binary, but as the geographically and historically specific coincidence of race, class, gender, nationality and sexual norms” Oswin (2010, 257). In the contemporary Indian context where marriage, family, and housing and home get conflated with one another as morally inseparable concepts, studentphobia is in fact a subset of queer and transphobia. Even as a heterosexual married student couple, socializing with a mix-gendered group of single students resulted in their persecution by neighbourhood residents. For these long-

term residents, marriage is not a one-time contract. It must be ritualistically performed every day as a reassurance to heteronormativity. For the married student-couple to host a mix-gendered group of ‘unrelated’ students was equivalent to “running a brothel” in their otherwise “respectable” society. Although no LGBTQ+ students were “directly” involved in this account, such reinforcements of the acceptable cis-heteronormative embodiments, relationships, and spatial occupations have disproportionately adverse impact on LGBTQ+ students. In Delhi, for instance, a queer student-couple describe a sense of ‘heteronormative familification’ when their landlady told them to be prepared to vacate the apartment anytime: “*aapka kaunsa family hai. Do bags hi to hai, uthake chale jana*” (transl. “it’s not like you have a family. All you have are two bags to pack and move). Neither their relationship was registered as a family, nor were they registered as capable of being displaced for as students, they are already displaced from and are yet to arrive at (parental/marital) ‘family’ home (see Figure 5.3).

Further, post-students and early career scholars, despite gaining some financial stability, continue experiencing the same discredit and precarity they did as students. Here, gender and sexual identity are intricately interwoven with class, caste, region, religion, and ethnic identity locations in India, especially intensified at the scale of housing and home—a ‘purified’ space that checks and gets rid of all the “filth”. This domesticated desirability for ‘purity’ is at once rooted in: casteism (also ethnophobia and racism), homogeneity over heterogeneity, and chastity over sexual freedom.

“It may be in your interests to deposit your impurities in us, but how can it be in our interests to remain repository of your dirt (moral)?”, asks Babasaheb Ambedkar (as cited in Guru, 2012, p.200), a Dalit jurist and one of the key architects of the Constitution of India who first instituted the Dalit movement against untouchability in India. Notions of morality and

im/purity particularly at the spatial scale of the neighbourhood and the domestic have been critical to the Dalit theory. In the *Archeology of Untouchability*, Gopal Guru (2012) observes that the “domestic sphere offers the space for conducting purificatory functions” and for safely practicing untouchability in modern times where the public realm otherwise exerts pressures due to “social vigilance” (Guru, 2012, p. 219). Guru adds, “some parents hose down their kids after they return home from school, not because their bodies are mired in mud or dust, but because they might have messed with the untouchable kids while in school” whereby “practicing untouchability at home becomes the major source of sovereignty...for the members of the upper caste” (ibid., pp. 219-220). “Purity” is also a governmental tool to project and maintain a political image of “one nation”, a move towards the “uniform civil code”, and considering only Hindi as the national language overruling all other regional languages. Finally, “purity” also represents chastity, especially for women in India. Cis-heteronormative marital domesticity is founded on the same footing of purity, homogeneity, and respectability.

The socio-spatial notion of an academic campus and a home environment is arguably contradictory. An academic campus is supposedly an *expanding* heterotopic environment that exposes students to *heterogeneity* while a home is a *contained* familiar environment expected to reinstate the “*pure*” self. The dispute that student housing—an environment at once academic *and* domestic—confronts then is because of this conceptual contradiction between and its socio-spatial trans-location on the borderlands of the university and the city (Arun-Pina, 2021a). LGBTQ+ students thus, multiply experience a sense of socio-spatial *dis*belonging where they often have no body to turn to in their familiar spatiotemporal context, as illustrated below.

### Ascetic: Leaving home

According to the ancient Vedic Āśrama system in Hindu texts in India, human lifespan is divided into four key stages: *brahmacharya*—the first quarter of a bachelor student-life focused on education while practicing celibacy, *grihastha*—the second quarter of a householder, *vanaprastha*—the third quarter of a forest dweller, and finally, *sannyasa*—the fourth quarter of an ascetic characterized by renunciation. According to this linear four-stage order, *brahmacharya* implies chastity during the bachelor student-stage, *grihastha* morally validates only reproductive sex within the confines of a heteronormative marriage, and the last two stages of *vanaprastha* and *sannyasa* are transitional stages from material life to spiritual liberation. This upper caste system of four life-stages is comparable to what elsewhere queer scholars have critically called the “‘straight time’ of progress, development, and reproduction...against a ‘queer time’ that is out of step, out of place, and, at best, productive rather than reproductive” (Oswin, 2012, p. 1625).

In contemporary cis-heteronormative practice, while the last two stages of the Āśrama system are never taken on, the first two stages remain staunch datum responsible for the marriage-reproductive family-home conflation. Thus, it also conflates the bachelor-life with celibacy, and sexually active life with marriage. This Vedic Āśrama system continues to manifest itself in the configuration and the administration of both domestic spaces of family housing as well as student housing (read non-family homes).

In my conversation with LT, a queer woman, and a former postgraduate student, she said to me:

In the grand scheme of my family wanting me to get married, and *start my life*, I was often able to push back by asking to let me first complete my studies. I knew I just had to keep being a student [to postpone the familial pressure to marry]. However, for my extended family it was still a matter of shame for a 21-year-old woman to be unmarried.

They persuaded themselves by putting me on an *ascetic...asexual...celibate-like pathway living in a different world*. In a way, *being a student has been a shield for me*. Even if it is not naming and ‘coming out’ as such, it was for me, resisting these normative expectations. [emphasis added] (LT, interview, August 18, 2020).

LT’s experience with her family is not unique. For her distant relatives, her choosing to *not* marry at the ‘right age’ (or at all) was equivalent to being on an “ascetic, asexual, celibate-like pathway”—‘the student pathway’. Wilkinson (2014) posits “the single” as the queer subject; here, the opposite also holds true where the queer student must be single. Although in their study on rental housing discrimination for single youth in urban India, Bhargava and Chilana (2020, p. 105) entirely omit the queer and trans analytical dimensions and one can assume their research participants are all straight (described as never married, married, or divorced), they note how singlehood is cast against the norm revealing:

the spectrum of societal acceptance where marriage is sacrosanct, an obvious event in one’s life course; commitment is second in significance to it and singlehood when transitory is acceptable but when it stretches beyond the normative time limit, is considered a threat to the social order.

Bhargava and Chilana (2020) mark the absence of policymakers in matching the resilient agencies of their single tenant-participants. Conflating marriage with reproductive sex works to “domesticate sex” (Hubbard, 2012) and “distort” the single students’ image as sexually promiscuous non-adults if they are openly sexually active but not married. Non-heterosexual relationships—whether polyamorous or monogamous—get perceived as a transient sexually promiscuous phase that ends with the student-life. LGBTQ+ young adults who either *cannot* or do not desire to take on the institution of marriage, get perceived as on one of the either—an ascetic who has forsaken sexual pleasures or a sexually promiscuous individual who swears by them. Neither of whom belong to the normative reproductive social realm. Here, close family members, relatives and loved ones become well-intentioned agents of cis-heteronormative

policing. For many queer and trans students, for instance, their parents accepted their queer relationships and partners on the condition of keeping their relationship and identity in the closet. LT, like many other queer and trans students, found studenthood “as a shield” to defend herself against “normative expectations”. The cost of feeling and pursuing a sense of belonging and being for LT and other queer and trans students is being pushed to “living in a different [if not, closeted] world”. In addition to being forced to experience a double consciousness of our selves (as discussed above), LGBTQ+ students are also forced to experience a double spatiality—spatial dysphoria—where our queer worlds are consistently diminished and subsumed within heterosexual worlds that are often mistakenly represented, and made to feel, universal.

HE-LGBTQ+ students variously confront crisis in housing across all three stages of securing a home, making a home, and leaving home. Their “specific vulnerabilities” (Gorman-Murray et al., 2014) in the case of postcolonial India are deeply intersectional, i.e., their gender and sexuality identities are not neatly separable from their class, caste, region, religion, and ethnic identities. Yet, cis-heteronormative gaze and micro-governance of queer students’ embodiments and spatialities manifest in relatively implicit ways, especially intensified at the intimate scale of neighborhood and home. Through transdisciplinary (i.e., spatial-visual-textual) storytelling, this chapter works to counter the homonegative labyrinth of representational distortions of the student-image in urban India. Layers of intersectional identities play out in the screening of potential student-tenants by housing brokers as well as landowners and neighbourhood residents who assume a morally superior ground as property owners and long-time residents to constantly dictate who do not belong in “their” yards. Often supported by the local police, the interrogation lights are spotted onto the migrant student tenants and every aspect of their identity. The stories above work to counter-reflect the spotlight onto the non-student



urban actors interrogating their privilege in shaping the discriminatory and exclusive housing market based on cis-heteropatriarchal domestic norms.

## Conclusions

My intention with this chapter and by referring to the ancient Vedic text is not to reinforce the stereotypical binary perception of a regressive global South and a progressive global north. At the same time, it is also a reminder to not find comfort in the measure of the ‘modern progress’ of gender and “marriage equality” in India. Instead, I provide here a radical spatial reading as an ongoing praxis that must not be occupied in the neoliberal developmentalist discourse. The ‘objective goal’ is not of a binary resolve: “LGBTQ+ inclusive” or for that matter, “exclusive LGBTQ+” housing. Rather, it is to recognize and be committed to dismantling the socio-spatial normative traps as an ongoing project of reworking. Each of the above student stories (and homes) may be seen to offer heterotopic “counter-site” in relation to and yet critically deviating from and reflecting differences from the normative residential landscapes. Here, queer and trans space is an approach, *not* a location or an un/achievable end goal. Which is also why I formulate and emphasize attending to *spatial dysphoria* and not simply homelessness or domestication; for spatial dysphoria will and did, for instance, continue for HE-LGBTQ+ students even inside the gender-neutral hostel for so long it is configured and administered with—however ‘modern’ and ‘progressive’—cis-heteronormative moral sensibilities.

This chapter works to queer the student-image within interdisciplinary studentification, gentrification, and town-and-gown literatures to counter three key common observations: first, persistent dichotomous approach to studying the university-city territory; second, a negative homogenized depiction of a student-body that is often conflated with power and privileges of the

university; and third, an underlying treatment of students and neighbourhood residents as seemingly de-sexualised. In examining the role of various urban stakeholders in ‘distorting’ the student-image, I have argued that they work in tandem to produce two mutually feeding phenomena—‘studentphobia’ and ‘cis-heteronormative familification’—which in turn effectuate *a multiscalar homonegative labyrinth* that HE-LGBTQ+ students must navigate on their housing pathways. The study revealed that the student-image is particularly susceptible to distortion when students are perceived as ‘free-floating’ transient subjects between their parental home and presumed marital home. Parallel representational distortion of the student-image *and* transient homes by cis-heteronormative urban actors from their fixed location on a “straight time” pathway results in a perpetual sense of spatial dysphoria for HE-LGBTQ+ students in the megacities of India.

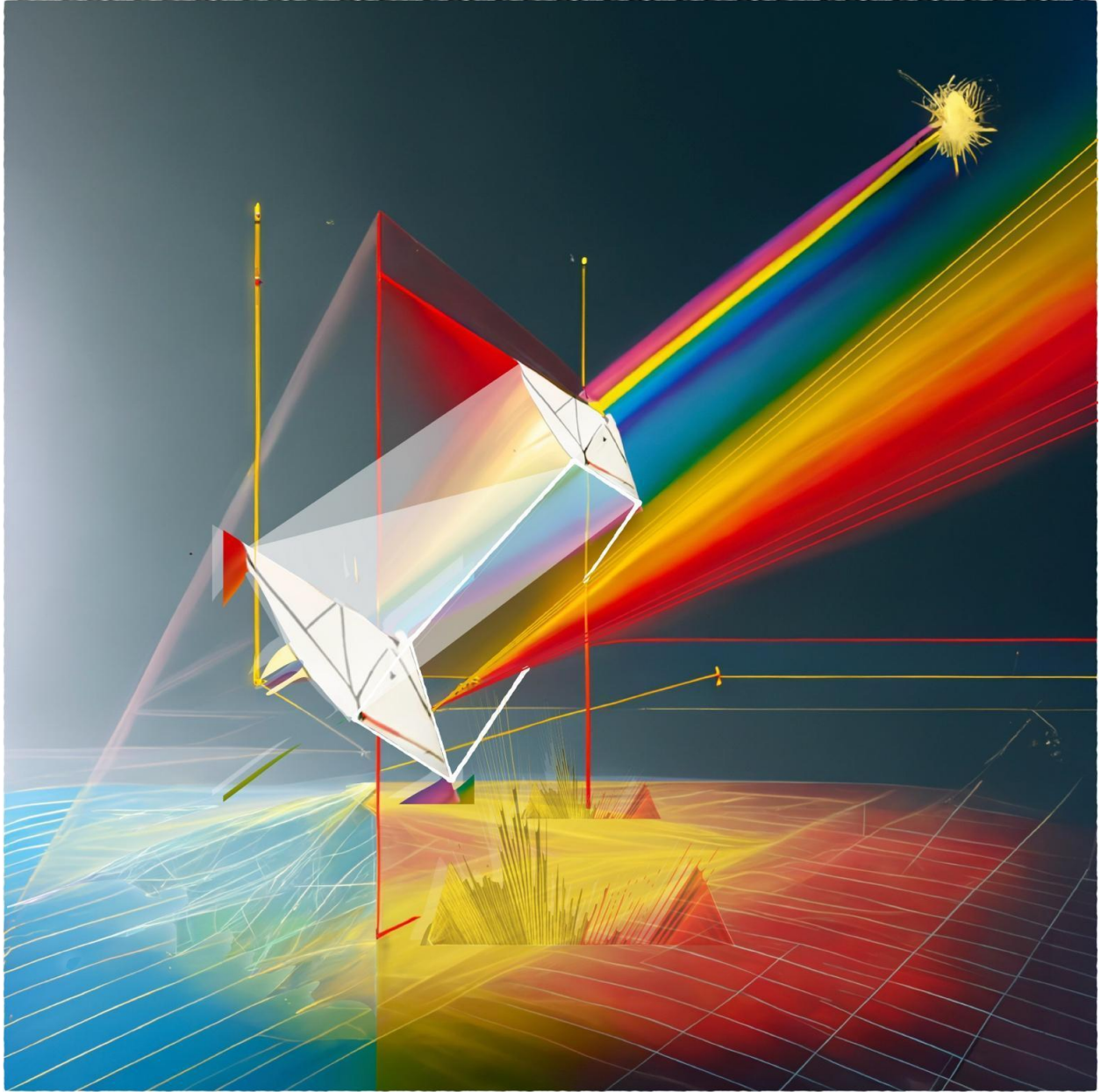
Linking back to the Chapter 4, how might campus planners and administrations and not just urban planners, in a sub/urban context where unaffordable housing market gets routinely compounded with ‘studentphobia’ and ‘cis-heteronormative familification’, listen to different voices of and enable a sense of belonging for HE-LGBTQ+ students in India in their bridging/consulting/policy-generating capacities? Various queer urban scholars in duly noting “barriers that prevent the integration of queer concerns” (Broto, 2021) in planning, have challenged heteronormativity (Broto, 2021; Doan, 2011; Vallerand, 2020). Architect, spatial pedagogue and community activist, Olivier Vallerand (2020, p. 194) critically observes:

The idea of queerness has yet to fully transform the way we practice, teach or even experience spatial design. If queering design means multiplying possible experiences, queering design pedagogy in turn could mean multiplying points of views and resisting design norms (Vallerand, 2020, p. 194).

Urban planner, Petra Doan (2011) points out how “planning lags behind other related disciplines” and sub-disciplines and is “mostly silent on queer issues” (Doan, 2011, p. 11). Urban

scholar Leonie Sandercock (2003) on the discourse of planning for difference has called attention to the important role of stories and storytelling in the practice of planning. Even as I resonate with and have myself employed *spatial stories* in this paper, *storytelling* in planning practice might be belated *if* the pedagogy of spatial design remains cis-heteronormative. Two questions that emerged over a decade apart from spatial disciplines must then be considered: “Who speaks? And who listens?” asks Listerborne (2007), and “Where are the lesbian architects?” asks, Vallerand (2019). Many queer/trans students of spatial studies, like myself, get pushed out of the discipline to pursue the questions that we want to ask of space, gender, and sexuality, but are not allowed to from within the discipline. Queer and trans (potential of) homes get killed in their conception stages (discussed in the next chapter). Socio-spatially fragmented and alienated themselves, LGBTQ+ university students often have nobody in their familiar spatiotemporal context to *listen to* their “everyday stories of queer experiences” (<https://theglasclotblog.wordpress.com>), except, rarely, their own semi-formal LGBTQ+ support network of friends and teachers “beyond ‘the family’” (Wilkinson, 2014). In taking inspiration from Listerborne’s (2007) reorienting the representational question of “who speaks?” to “*who listens*”, this chapter calls for extending the emerging planning advocacy for stories and *storytelling* to *storylistening* as a queer- and trans-sensitive planning practice. While listening may seem passive to practice-based and problem-solving disciplines, active listening is a call to urban practitioners for being receptive in taking lessons from HE-LGBTQ+ students’ spatial stories towards queer and trans *approaches* to diversifying housing and homes by undoing the cis-heteronormative conflation of reproductive marital coupledness and family, adulthood, and (permanence of) home. This may be a herculean task, as noted by all of the three planners’ professional and pedagogical experience working with the heterogenous state-urban local bodies

as well as the stakeholders within the private real estate rental housing market, considering the cis-heteropatriarchal moral alignment of urban planning discourses in the homonegative labyrinth of India. While this chapter does call for planners to pay greater attention to the ways in which spatial distortions happen have lived consequences that can be appreciated in spatial stories of student-residents, I echo the real challenges and gaps in queer and urban planning discourses that the three radical planners from across a range of their professional practice, research, activism, and pedagogy I interviewed expressed. “Queer(ing) urban planning” (Bain and Podmore, 2023; Doan, 2016) is not a challenge we face in the national context of India alone, and has been rigorously sought after even in the wealthier and sexually “progressive” world-regions. As we wait in what seems like a long-term trans/homonegative limbo, it might be a useful strategy to initiate transformation of the normative urban planning practice by investing in queering the planning “studio” practice, i.e., the planning pedagogy.



# 6

Unfollowing the Queer Domicide-Enabling Blueprint

# 6

## Unfollowing the Queer Domicide-Enabling Blueprint

### Introduction

Nothing disappears completely ... In space, what came earlier continues to underpin what follows ... Pre-existing space underpins not only durable spatial arrangements, but also representational spaces and their attendant imagery and mythic narratives.

(Lefebvre, 1991, pp. 229-230)

In 1991, Lefebvre introduced the pathbreaking and incredibly influential concept of the spatial triad—lived, perceived, and conceived—through which he argues social space is produced.

Lived or representational space refers to “the space of the ‘inhabitants’ and ‘users’” and the symbolic meanings attributed to the space due to its occupation by people. Perceived space or the spatial practice refers to the real and concrete space of the everyday lives. And finally, the conceived space or the representation of space refers to the imagined conceptual space—‘the blueprint’. In 1993, Gronlund revisited and reworked Lefebvre’s triad to depict it as a circular relationship between the social space (lived or engaged), the natural space (perceived space) and the mental space (conceived space). Here, Gronlund (1993, para 2), arguably not uncommonly, mistakes the conceived space—the blueprint, i.e., “the space of scientists, urbanists, and architects” as “the conceptualized space without life, i.e., peopleless”. When designers draw a space, however, they do so with a particular user-group in mind, considering (often at length) their ways of living, behavioral patterns and movements, and their identities. Conceived space then is a potent seed *with* a particular blueprint for life.

In my own work (Arun-Pina, 2021a), I visualize how we experience space as layered—built space, lived space, and felt space (Arun-Pina, 2021a). In that, the built space is transformed when it is occupied through different lived experiences; both these spaces have tangible expressions. Whereas the felt space—the mental space of affect, emotions, and imagination—may take intangible expressions unbound by the physical dimensions of a defined space. It is not the focus of this chapter to develop a nuanced extension to the conceptual framework of the spatial triad, rather to posit that if the *production of space* occurs through lived, perceived, and conceived space, the *destruction of space* must also occur on each of these spatial planes of existence.

A decade after the introduction of Lefebvre’s spatial triad, in 2001, Canadian geographers Porteous and Smith introduced the term “domicide” as “the deliberate destruction of home by human agency in the pursuit of specific goals, which causes suffering to the victims”, in short, “the killing of home”. They distinguish domicile from a genocide, terracide or ecocide in that: “domicide has a *special trauma*, because the victims are not killed but *must watch their homes being destroyed* as they are wrenched forcibly from them followed by an attempt *to overcome relocation trauma and to build a new life*” [emphasis added] (Porteous and Smith, 2001, p. 15). “Understanding evil” (Doubt, 2006) as it manifests through domicile—the cruel and sadistic act of war—intimates us that it not only works *to take away life* by destroying the dwelling, but also *to reduce life* by determining the blueprint to the life-path of the dweller-witness.

Over a decade since the first conception of the term, Gorman-Murray et al. (2014, p. 238) first extended Porteous and Smith’s concept of domicile to attend to the often-neglected dimension of “queer domicile” in the context of “natural disaster impact, response, and recovery”. Noting the “under-representation” of domicile within “geographies of home and

home destruction” literature, Mel Novicki (2014, pp. 785-786) rethinks domicide, calling for a “full resurrection” of the concept, and providing a rigorous critical “extension of its original typology”. She asserts that four key aspects of Porteous and Smith’s conceptualization of “domicide” needs critical reassessment, namely, its: (1.) “simplistic vision of home” as a “sacred”, “central” and a “positive factor in people’s lives” (Porteous and Smith, 2001, p. 20); (2.) emphasis on “the loss of the *physical* home”; (3.) “singular heteronormative and familial depictions of homespace and domicide”; and (4.) delimitation of agency and resistance (Novicki, 2014, p. 786). As such, Novicki (2014, p.786), invites attention to home *unmaking*, to socio-symbolic forms of domicide, and to more banal forms of everyday resistance to “aid and abet the damages domicide causes”.

This chapter explicitly engages with Novicki’s call to “rethinking domicide” by providing a conceptual re-*visioning* of queer domicide through the optical apparatus of warfare. Utilising the trans imaging technique, this chapter demonstrates ways to see-through the queer domicidal normative domestic blueprints. The threefold argument is unpacked as follows. First, the commanding blueprints for cis-heteronormative family homes is shown to kill queer and trans potentialities through design thereby reproducing a homogenous domestic landscape. Second, this in-command and on-the-offensive queer domicide-enabling blueprint is revealed to configure, administer, and tame student housing spatialities with the imposition of cis-heteronormatively-informed moral sensibilities. Third, and finally, such a double operation of the destruction of queer habitats followed by the taming of queer domesticities is demonstrated to produce *spatial dysphoria* and activate *phantom homes phenomenon* for higher education LGBTQ+ students. Phantom homes, like the “trans phantom” (Straayer, 2020) discussed in Chapter 2, foregrounds critical question for reflection: what might it mean to *be*, function, and



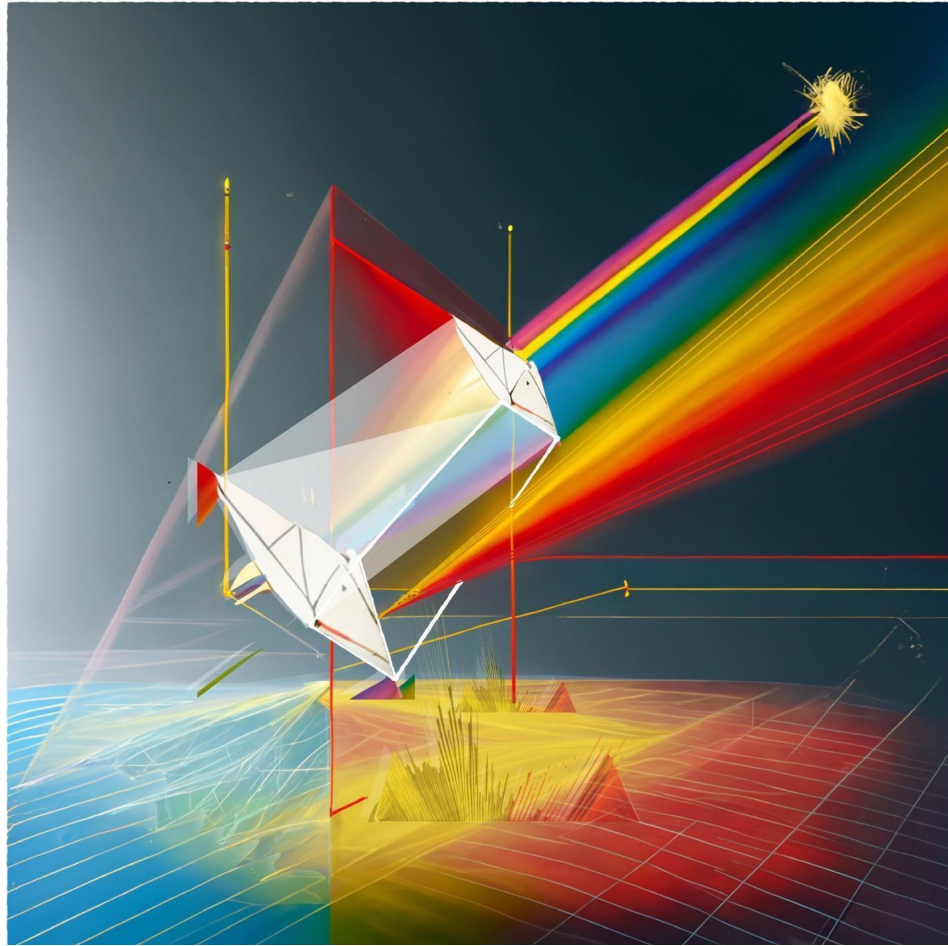
desire in the absences of queer and trans spaces that “should-have-been”? Bereft of a sense of be(long)ing, myself included, HE-LGBTQ+ students unequivocally experience deep longing for *transforming* their lived experiences and demonstrate tremendous resilience in taking painful experiences and exercising imagination in their collective and individual “home *unmaking*” (Baxter and Brickell, 2014) initiatives and practices.

To explore this argument, the chapter is divided into four parts. The first section offers a three-fold extension to queer domicile: *domifeticide*, *domitericide*, and *domipanopticide*. I do not suggest these terms as neologisms. Rather, they are offered here as interim conceptual terms to convey meanings that need to be folded into what counts as queer domicile. To help elucidate, I provide a conceptual drawing that visualizes queer domicile as an optical apparatus. Following which, the second section collates the sparse and emerging critical geographies of home and mental health literatures to consider some of the manifold impacts of everyday living in queer domicile-enabling blueprints on HE-LGBTQ+ students’ well-being. ‘Wings’ of *transformation*—the third empirical section—provides a post-occupancy evaluation, analyzing the queer and trans limits and potentials in four fundamental typologies of student housing in contemporary urban India: parents’/guardian’s home, paying guest accommodations (PGs), on- and off-campus university hostels, and private rental apartments. Taking into consideration and facilitating the painful process of *transformation*, the concluding section calls for nurturing the queer and trans potential in designing student housing on its own terms, unfollowing the queer domicile-enabling blueprint.

## **Re-Visioning “Queer Domicide” as an Optical Apparatus**

This section furthers Novicki’s (2014) critical work of rethinking domicile to re-visioning Gorman-Murray et al.’s (2014) “queer domicile” in the “mundane matters” of naturalized everyday living. In that, this section offers three interim concepts—domifeticide, domitericide, and domipanopticide—to convey meanings to be folded into how we understand and what counts as queer domicile. Queer domicile is further conceptually visualized as an optical apparatus to help elucidate the workings of queer domicile. In his seminal work, Agamben (2009, p. 2) reconceptualizes Foucault’s *dispositif* or apparatus as “the network” between “a thoroughly heterogenous set consisting of...the said and the unsaid” or the seen and the unseen. He observes the intrinsic quality of an apparatus as “essentially strategic”, inscribed in power relations, and has a locational advantage to condition “limits of knowledge”. For Agamben (2009, p.2), an apparatus is “a set of strategies of the relations of forces supporting, and supported by, certain types of knowledge” (Agamben, 2009, p. 2). To visualize queer domicile as an optical apparatus, necessitates attending to the seen and the unseen dimensions of cis-heteronormative strategies that work to limit and condition queer conceptions and *realizations*.

In the below Figure 6.1, a polarizing prism stands in the path of a spectrum of light rays. The prism blocks all but red and yellow rays which are then projected onto a field coded in the binary. The lower left corner of the field represents the potential meeting place of the spectrum of rays and the field that remains unexplored imaginary field with ‘unreal’ised phantom projects. Throughout this section we will keep returning to this Figure demonstrating the three interim concepts to expand the premise of queer domicile.



**Figure 6.1. Visualizing queer domicide as an optical apparatus.** Source: Author's (2023) vision, primary sketch, and text-prompt rendered by MidJourney and followed by digital layer-edits.

### **Queer Domifeticide: the intentional destruction of home *before* home**

Unlike Lefebvre's conceptual framework of the spatial triad that acknowledges the formation of space on three levels – lived, perceived as well as conceived—Porteous and Smith's concept of "domicide" preconditions the existence of a fully constructed and inhabited home for it to be destroyed in the first place. But what about those homes that are killed while they are still in their conceptualization stages, when they are a seed full of potential life denied surfacing? Feticide is the act of killing a fetus, an offspring in its developmental stages *before* it is born.

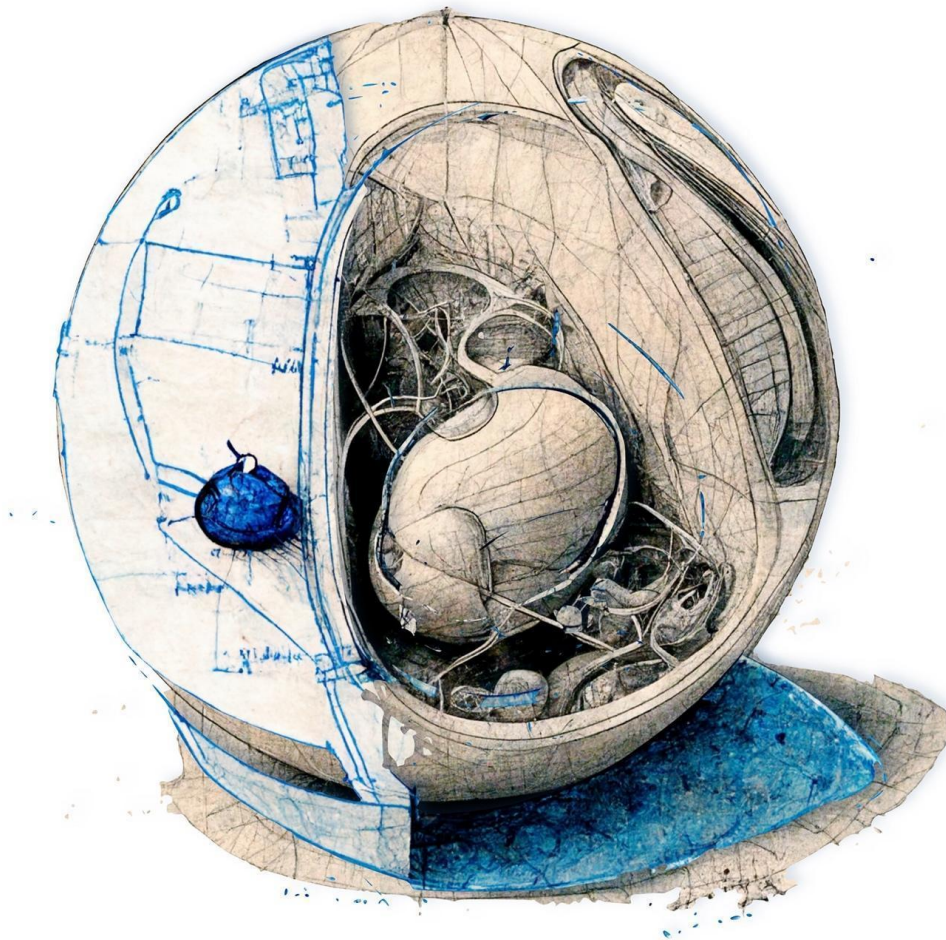
Female feticide is an act of cultural sex-selective killing of female fetuses in a patriarchal system and letting only male fetuses take form and life. Queer domifeticide (Figure 6.2) then, can be understood as the selective cultural killing of queer homes in their developmental stages in a cis-heteronormative system that enables only cis-heteronormative family homes to take form and life.

In my penultimate year in an undergraduate architecture program, we were asked to work on a housing project using our own life experiences. I wanted to work on a student housing project as I had always found it difficult to sustain a student life in a firmly heterosexual household. I had noticed that the houses for nuclear families were designed to produce more familialism and conformation, rather than adventure or experimentation, not to mention the lack of space for any other forms of cohabitation. I was astounded by the level of resistance I encountered when I expressed my ideas. The teacher argued that ‘student housing’ was an oxymoron because housing meant something permanent, whereas ‘student life’ was one of the most transitory periods in one’s life. He then corrected the term I should be using as “student hostels” and not “student housing”. All kinds of hostilities coalesced in this discussion, and, ultimately, I was asked to work on caste-based family<sup>21</sup> housing in Gujarat (my home state in India where I was studying then).

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<sup>21</sup> The term “family” in the case of India, refers exclusively to a heteronormative married family since LGBTQ+ marriages are illegal in India. In a recent 2022 case law judgement, a welcome challenge to the traditional notion of typical ‘family’ was passed. A woman’s plea seeking maternal leave in her second marriage was denied by the Central Administrative Tribunal and the State Court. They argued that the woman’s *second marriage with adopted kids* cannot be considered “a regular family”, and therefore she had no right to avail maternity leave. The state court judgement was challenged and upturned by the Supreme Court under the bench of Justice Chandrachud and Justice Bopanna who pronounced that the woman’s right to avail maternity leave cannot be taken away, if she had earlier availed childcare leave for her non-biological kids. In the same judgement, the court extended the traditional legal meaning of “family” and granted equal protection of the law to an atypical family unit by observing that “familial relationships may take the form of domestic, unmarried partnerships or queer relationships. These manifestations of love and of families may not be typical but they are as real as their traditional counterparts. Such atypical manifestations of the family unit are equally deserving not only of protection under law but also of the benefits available under social welfare legislation” (Deepika Singh v Central Administrative Tribunal and Others, 2022).

What my teacher argued over a decade ago is not unique. Why students as transient subjects should be considered within urban planning practices has often been raised to me by urban planners and scholars throughout the course of this research project. It might seem harmless to temporally refer to family housing as ‘permanent’ and student life as ‘transient’. Family homes are often ownership based with an average expected life span of 40 to 50 years. Students, on the other hand, live in institutionalized or rental homes for anywhere between one and ten years. On its own terms, a decade can be considered a substantial period of time within a city.



**Figure 6.2. Queer Domifeticide.** Source: Author's (2023) vision, primary sketch, and text-prompt rendered by MidJourney and followed by digital layer-edits.

However, I make a slightly different point here. The seemingly harmless and rationalized binary imaginary of ‘student housing’ as an oxymoron owing to its transience and family housing as ‘permanent’ is further rooted in the spatiotemporal straight time pathway with deeper repercussions in the context of India where LGBTQ+ marriages are yet to be legalized. There is no institutional or policy framework for queer young adults to build a ‘family’, even if they wanted to. In such a case, students’ transience is only in part about their term time. The other significant part is about them having yet to “arrive at” or “settle down into” a marital family home. This is the queer domicide-enabling exclusive conflation of a reproductive heteronormative marital family, housing and home, and permanence. Everything outside of which is perceived as a “transitory period” and therefore, contradictory of the spatiality and permanence of housing and home.

For Novicki, “it is integral to extend domicide...to consider the home and its destruction beyond the physical alone [to] the political and personal implications of socio-symbolic forms of domicide” (Novicki, 2014, p. 789). Citing seminal scholarship on the critical geographies of home, she adds:

‘home...is a place, a site in which we live. But, more than this, *home is also an idea and an imaginary* that is imbued with feelings’ (Blunt and Dowling, 2006: 2). The home does not consist solely of bricks and mortar and can be dismantled and destroyed in a variety of forms...*domicide ‘is the erasure of the spatiality of home not necessarily the destruction of property’* (Ó Tuathail and Dahlman, 2006, p. 245 in Novicki, 2014, p. 789).

Queer *domifeticide* then is the erasure of queer spatiality as well as of the queer potential in spatiality. My housing design project ranked highest in the studio that year. The proposed student housing project—holding the queer potential of birthing a housing typology outside of heteronormative marital family homes—however, was killed in its conception. Queer homes, like female fetuses, are unborn victims. In the optical apparatus Figure 6.1, this can be

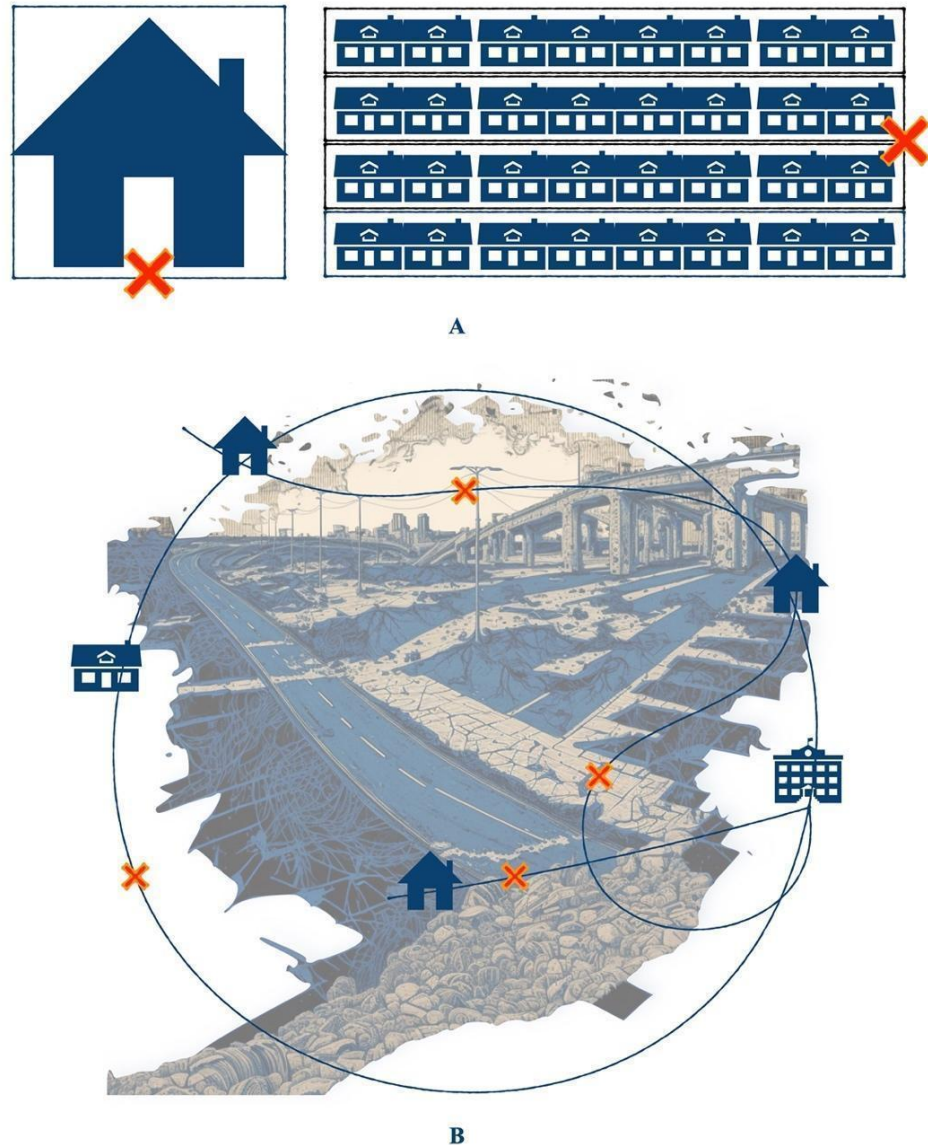
demonstrated in first section of the apparatus where the spectrum of light rays is blocked by the polarizing prism enabling only a binary coded spatiality to take form. To translate further, the queer potential of student housing as a form of alternate domesticity outside of cis-heteronormative marital family homes is killed by cis-heteronormatively informed moral sensibilities (the polarizing prism). Accordingly, the filtered spatiality that takes ‘real’ form is that of a “student hostels” for ‘unmarried’ men and women students coded in a gender-binary. IIT Bombay, one of the five residential campuses that I studied at in 2017, has all gender-segregated ‘hostels’ except for Tansa ‘house’, designated for married students. In another example of IIM Ahmedabad, a new campus, has single rooms with attached bathrooms where students of all genders can cohabit in a single building. And while the married students residential building is called a hostel as well, it follows an apartment style layout unlike ‘single’ students’ hostels. I use these two examples of student housing in India to underline how distance is cis-heteronormatively maintained between the terminology and typology of ‘housing’ and ‘hostels.’ Such cis-heteronormatively informed conditions at once reiterate binary-coded on-campus geographies of student hostels on the one hand, and, on the other, off-campus homogeneity in heteronormative gated housing landscapes inculcating an environment of intimidation and heavy surveillance. Together, they activate the queer *domifeticide*-enabling blueprints.

### **Queer Domitericide: The Strategic Destruction of the Pathways to Home**

Porteous and Smith’s concept of “domicide” limits the site of destruction to the built premises of one or more homes, even if the meaning of home is extended to a homeland. “Iter”, in Latin, means the way, passage, path, journey, or the route. By invoking the concept of



“domitericide”, I advocate for critically expanding the territory of the site of destruction to include even the strategic destruction, underdevelopment, or obstruction of “housing pathways” (Rugg et al., 2004) (see Figure 6.3).



**Figure 6.3. Queer Domitericide.** Drawing A at the top illustrates Porteous and Smith’s conceptual limits of the premise of domicide. Below, in drawing B, I expand the premises of destruction to include the strategic destruction, underdevelopment, and/or obstruction of queer housing pathway infrastructures as queer domicide. Source: Author’s (2023) vision, primary sketch, and text-prompt rendered by MidJourney and followed by digital layer-edits.

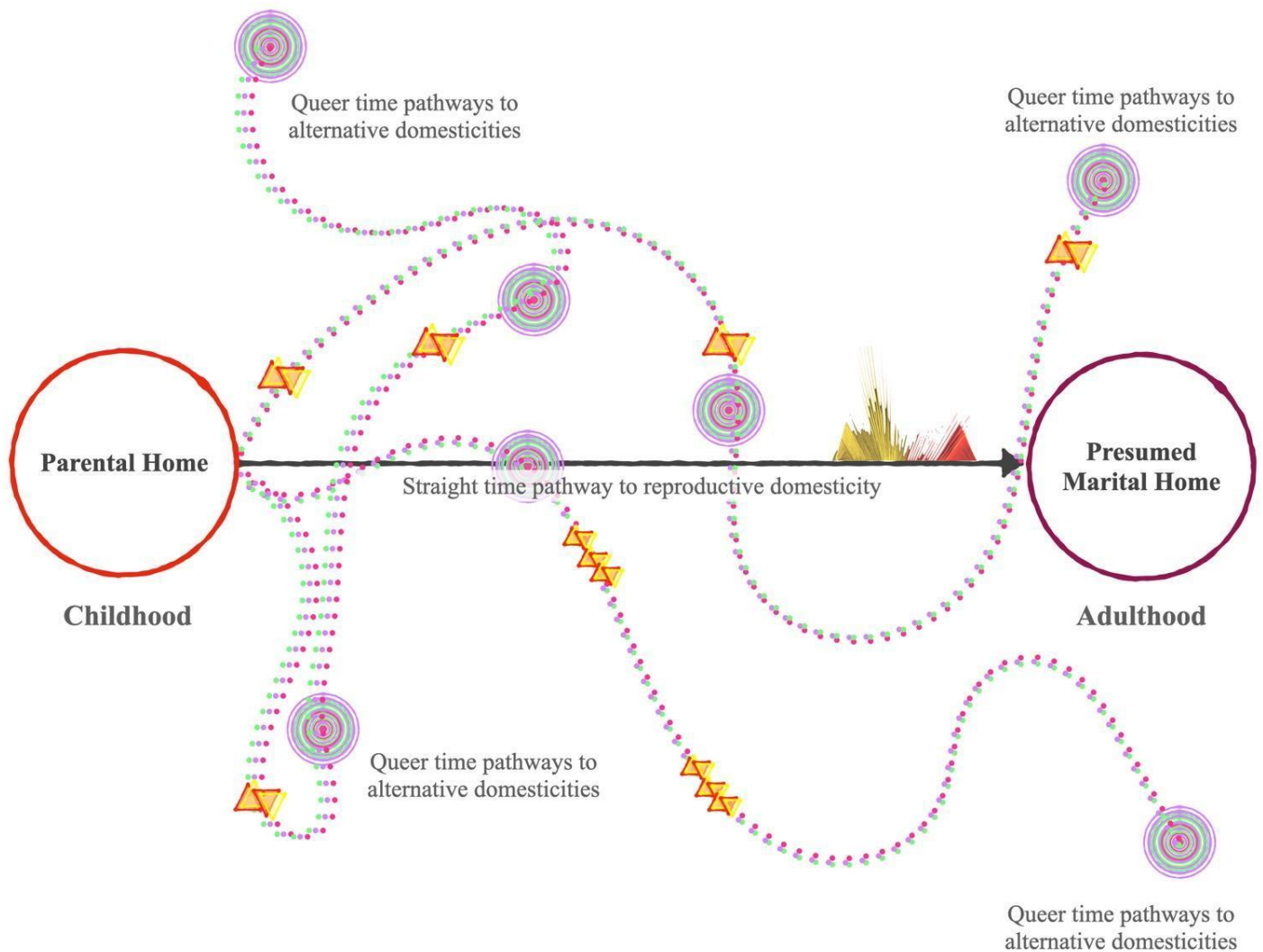


In a German docuseries titled, *Die gefährlichsten Schulwege der Welt* (*The Most Dangerous Ways to School*), young students cross extreme landscapes every day to reach their schools. They often confront a series of challenges and limitations along the way owing to the extreme weather conditions and/or natural landscapes, threatening wildlife, lack of government infrastructures, as well as at times simply the cultural norms which impede their physical *and* their socio-economic mobility. Their journeys are long, arduous, and often untrodden and isolating. On ‘lucky’ days, they may not encounter any dangers along their way to the school. Yet, their journeys are slowed down, tensed, and fraught with fear, risk, distrust, and caution. The risks involved in every step they next take are high, even life-threatening.

I first came across and started following the docuseries almost around the time I was talking to HE-LGBTQ+ student-participants as part of my research fieldwork. The parallels between the two sets of spatial stories were striking. On the one hand, I was following extreme physical geographies impeding young students’ educational routes; and, on the other, I was witnessing extreme psycho-social geographies impeding HE-LGBTQ+ students’ housing pathways. In effect and socio-symbolically navigating the homonegative labyrinth (discussed in the previous Chapter 5), to reach their homes, HE-LGBTQ+ students face what young students in the docuseries faced to reach their schools—icy mountains and riverbeds, lions, elephants, and poisonous snakes, extreme heat or bitter cold, deadly rusty bridges, meagre resources, and underdeveloped infrastructures—sucking tremendous life-force out of them to nevertheless, keep moving.

The docuseries also foregrounds the impact on their student life once the young students finally reached their schools. They sustained severe backlogs in schoolwork unlike their urban classmates who tread well-paved pathways to school and had far more energy left in them to

invest in their studies from not having had to fight everyday battles on their roundtrips between their home and school. In a poetically similar way, HE-LGBTQ+ students must walk the unpaved pathway—whether in securing or in everyday leaving/returning movement—to housing and homes. In the previous chapter I discuss housing pathway in terms of securing homes. However, more than three-quarters of the HE-LGBTQ+ student-participants recollected confronting the cis-heteronormative gaze of neighbours and landowners, security guards, and strangers on their way in and out of their homes.



**Figure 6.4. Cis-heteronormatively informed blueprints force multiply to obstruct queer time pathways to alternative domesticities** (see also Figure 6.7). Source: Author (2023).

Let us revisit to project how queer domesticity apparatus might sit on the “Home away from home” diagrammatic Figure 5.3 from the previous Chapter 5. Queer domesticity-enabling blueprints work to obstruct queer time pathways to alternative domesticities (Figure 6.4). As such they configure, administer, and tame student housing spatialities to follow cis-heteronormatively-informed moral sensibilities. Porteous and Smith make a clear distinction between the natural causes and the deliberate human-made causes of destruction of homes. Such a neat distinction, however, in the case of HE-LGBTQ+ students’ ‘educational routes’ (Archer and Leathwood, 2003; Christie, 2007 & 2009) as intersected with their “housing biographies” (Rugg et al., 2004) is not possible given the at once naturalized and deliberate homonegative labyrinth they must navigate to secure and make homes (as illustrated in the previous chapter).

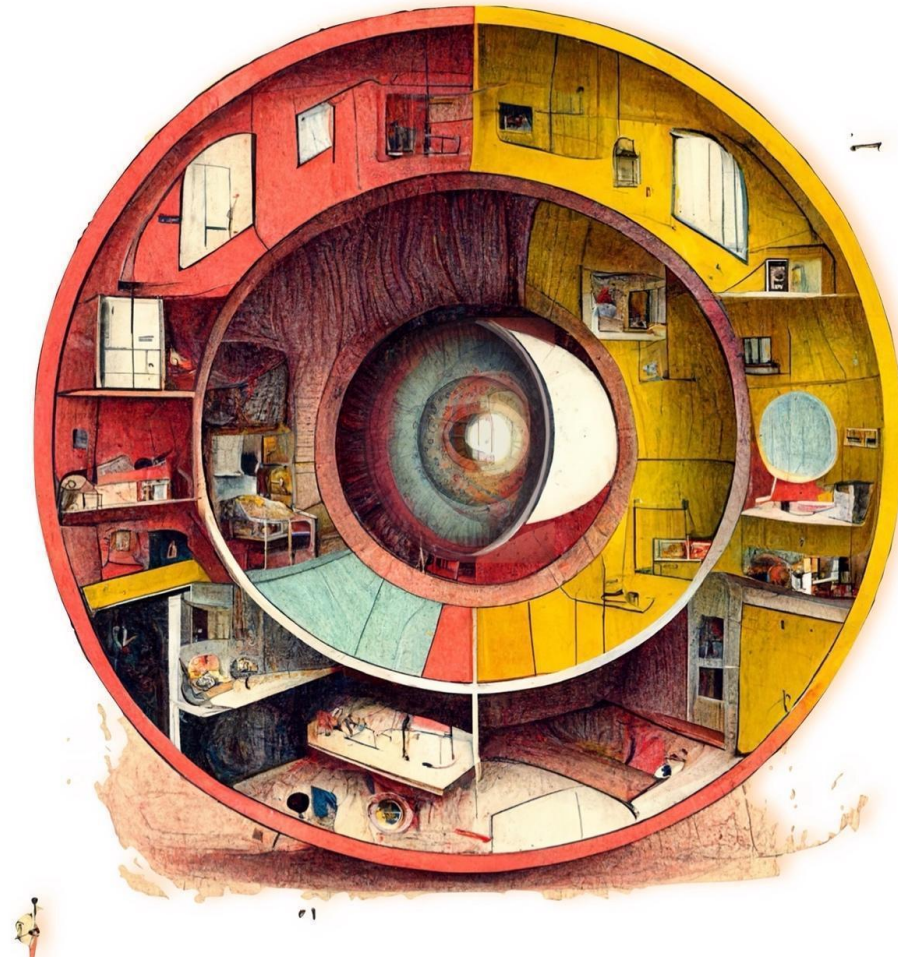
### **Queer Domesticity: Infiltration and Partial Destruction of Home through Warding and Surveillance**

...home is lived, sensed, created and uprooted through everyday practice.

(Wilkinson and Ortega-Alcázar, 2019, p. 5)

Witnessing the killing of non-cis-heteronormative imaginary of student housing in my fourth year, I was motivated to interrogate the social codes of design, configuration, and administration of the institutional architecture of student hostels in India. For my final year undergraduate dissertation in architecture, I applied Foucault’s theoretical framework of panopticon to study the spatial manifestations of hetero-patriarchal power in the institutional architecture of women’s hostels of five universities in the Indian cities of Ahmedabad, Baroda, and Hyderabad. Women’s hostel buildings were intricately designed with layers and shift in axis

in hallways to ensure both physical *and* visual inaccessibility. Women students were never allowed to close the doors to their rooms, be found in a room other than their own allotted room, to change inside their own shared room. In some cases, hostels did not have doors to their rooms, only curtains. Women students were not allowed to use open spaces such as terraces which always remained locked. Most rooms did not have balconies; when they did, they often looked over an interior space or the back of the building. The location of women's hostels was at times strategically off-campus to keep all men away from women's hostel buildings. Women hostels did not allow men to enter the premises even for visits, including for men related to them. Women students' sexuality was rigidly micro-monitored and such hetero-patriarchal governance was supported in and through the institutional architecture of student hostels. The DU women student-led PinjraTod movement grew out of such sexist and patriarchal rules exclusive for women hostels and PGs. *Domipanopticide* (Figure 6.5) unpacks the many forms of warding and surveillance in the nano-geographies of shared student rooms which may not amount to an uninhabitable destruction of home, yet with an ever-present normative gaze, may be understood as infiltration and partial destruction of home, never letting women, queer and trans students feel at home.



**Figure 6.5. Queer Domipanopticide.** Author's (2023) vision, primary sketch, and text-prompt rendered by MidJourney and followed by digital layer-edits.

In most cases, students at TISS and DU campuses live in shared rooms (with a few exceptions of off-campus graduate DU hostel complex with individual student rooms). The nano-geographies of student rooms may have two, three, and four-seater rooms with one or two wall surface(s), a bed(ding), a desk and a chair, and a locker. Hostel wardens, security guards, and nosy landowners infiltrate and perform random checks of student rooms whether on or off-campus. They dutifully spy on students to check if they are cooking inside their hostel rooms, if they are cooking non-vegetarian food inside the house, whether a student is entertaining a visitor of 'opposite sex', if the room is well kept, and even what students are reading. In addition to

‘vertical’ forms of surveillance, ‘horizontal surveillance’ is further enacted by a few cis-straight roommates as insider agents participating in the infiltration of LGBTQ+ students’ privacy. Outside of their rooms too, queer and trans students felt a constant cis-heteronormative gaze policing their embodiments, inter-relationships with friends, and their spatial occupations.

Such an invasion of privacy is often justified to maintain hostel rules, to ‘protect’ students, and in general to maintain ‘reputation’ in the community. Warding and surveillance works to produce and maintain an environment of fear and anxiety—of being watched at all times—to internalize fear in aberrant bodies to be discipline of acceptable normative behaviors (Foucault, 1975). Chemical warfare caused less than 1% deaths in the WW1; however, “its fear factor was formidable” earning it the name, “psywar” (Patton, n.d.). Warding, surveillance, and policing is comparable to releasing the poisonous gas that is slowly ingested until one is suffocated and can no longer breathe. More than half the student-participants described their hostel environments as toxic, suffocating, and hostile. PinjraTod student members routinely vocalize and protest against the maintenance of student hostels and PGs as “a patriarchal cage” where they feel imprisoned. Invasion of privacy, one of the most fundamental human rights, came up as an issue for every student-participant in Mumbai and Delhi. Violation of one’s privacy has added layers of anxiety and fear for HE-LGBTQ+ students in the context of a country that socio-legally persecutes queerness. The National Census Housing of India itself defines a “congested household” as one where a married couple does not have an enclosed, exclusive room. This implicates a socio-spatial-legal affordance of privacy exclusively for heterosexual married couples. Students and young adults outside of marriage in India cannot justify their need for privacy respected by their heteronormative ‘adults’. Cis-heteronormative warding and surveillance (i.e., disavowal, disrespect, and outright invasion of LGBTQ+ students’

privacy) can be recognized as a form of partial domicile. /Imagine:<sup>22</sup> a home with only two walls bombed off while the other two walls and the overhead roof still somewhat intact (Figures 6.6). Such partially bombed homes may be still “habitable”, but it would mean living every day without a sense of privacy and with fear and anxiety of random invasion if not a complete collapse. Wilkinson and Alcázar (2019) study the “detrimental” impacts of forced shared housing arrangements on young tenants’ mental health. Within the nano-geographies of student housing in most of dense Indian cities, students are forced to share even further intimate space of a room. “[A]lthough the material structure of housing may be in place”, invasion to the inconsideration and invalidating of HE-LGBTQ+ students’ need for privacy targets LGBTQ+ students’ “specific vulnerabilities” (Gorman-Murray et al., 2014) amounting to the destruction of one of the critical “psychosocial elements of what makes a house a home” (Wilkinson and Alcázar, 2019, p. 2). Warding and surveillance works gradually over time to have us—HE-LGBTQ+ students—ingest and internalize the toxic cis-heteronormative spatial embodiments.

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<sup>22</sup> “/imagine:” is the start of a visual prompt command within ai generative art. I employ “/imagine” command to counter the cis-heteronormatively-informed blueprints by rendering visible the invisible dimensions of normalized and internalized forms of everyday queer domicile.





**Figure 6.6. Felt spatiality of partial domicile.** Source: Author's (2023) vision, primary sketch, and text-prompt rendered by MidJourney and followed by digital layer-edits.

In the empirical section, I will return to illustrate above-mentioned forms of queer domicile through the post occupancy evaluation of HE-LGBTQ+ students' accounts of home (*un*)making in Delhi and Mumbai. First, this chapter turns to the sparse and emerging critical



psychogeographies of queer approaches to home, (relocation) trauma, and emotional well-being literatures. It will help us to consider the mental health implications for HE-LGBTQ+ students living inside cis-heteronormatively informed, and queer domicile-enabling blueprints.

## **Trauma Geographies of “Homing”**

While there has been extensive scholarship separately on critical geographies of homes and geographies of mental health, direct “[a]nalysis of home spaces and mental health has been limited” (Tucker, 2010, p. 529). The emerging scholarship attending to the mental health implications directly related to one’s (sense of) home is rather sparse, just like the populations it often attends to—war refugees and immigrants in Ukraine and UK (Boccagni and Miranda Nieto, 2021; Suissa, 2021; Lazarenko, 2020; Hua, 2016), homeless young adults in Australia (Robinson, 2005), women and women tenants’ experiences of gender based violence and domestic abuse in Bangladesh, Malaysia, UK and the US (Pain et al., 2020; Tester, 2008), children’s exposure to “intimate war” (i.e., violence at home in the UK (Hörschelmann, 2017)), single and LGBTQ+ young adults’ wellbeing in the context of normative coupledness privileging housing welfare schemes in the UK (Ortega-Alcázar and Wilkinson, 2020; Wilkinson and Ortega-Alcázar, 2019 & 2017), and gay students sharing home with straight flatmates in the UK (Taulke-Johnson, 2010). Their call, however, is consistently loud and urgent. This section recognizes these necessarily sparse research works as “trauma geographies” (Adams-Hutcheson, 2017) of home or critical psychogeographies of home. In attending to HE-LGBTQ+ students’ stories of home (un)making in the two case study cities of India, this chapter adds to the dissimilar yet overlapping critical psychogeographies of home. In that it is noted that in mapping the everyday psychogeographies of displacement and discrimination in housing and homes

leading to a deeper “spatiality of grief” (Robinson, 2005), there is not much work inquiring oikophobia (aversion to home environments) and *phantom homes*.

Baxter and Brickell (2014, p. 134) posit home *unmaking* as “a critique of the centrality of home-making in literatures on home” such that it is “not necessarily a negative process” (Baxter and Brickell, 2014, p. 141). A similar possibility is opened when Boccagni and Miranda Nieto (2021, p. 1) ask: “What is the opposite of home? Is it necessarily something ‘negative’?”.

Boccagni and Miranda Nieto importantly –

reframe non-home as an autonomous concept, rather than an antonym in which the opposite to home, or that which lies outside of it, should fit...It is above all a concept that invites us to explore people’s reactions to their *unsatisfactory housing conditions and their (dis)alignments with the predominant normative views about home* (Boccagni and Miranda Nieto, 2021, pp. 13-14).

Questioning the dominant premise and/or “the normative subtext of home” (Boccagni and Miranda Nieto, 2021, p. 2) and homemaking can be met with distrust and the pathologization of individual experiences. Suissa (2021) calls out the nationalist tactic of invoking love for home(land) to hide “xenophobia, racism, and homophobia” (i.e., their own “hatred for strangers or others”). This works to first, maintain and reinforce “forms of estrangement” (Suissa, 2021, p. 862) for all those who are othered, following which, their structurally and systemically manufactured sense of “not belonging” is pathologized. Such adherences to and deployments of ‘love’ leave no space for expressions of oikophobia without exacerbating the dweller’s vulnerability. It is not unusual, as will be seen through the next section, for HE-LGBTQ+ students having grown up in firmly heteronormative households and extended domesticated homonegative cultures to experience a deep sense of oikophobia and seek non-homes. Similarly, experiencing *spatial dysphoria* as the shifting, messy inhabitation of all that is in-between the neat binary of belonging and unbelonging, and *phantom homes* as imagination in-between

presence and absence, also calls for complex inquiry of the home-field. Here, “question[ing] the underlying cognitive frame: the assumption that attaching a sense of home to a given place [such as, advertising student accommodations as ‘a home away from home’] is a positive value in itself” (Boccagni and Miranda Nieto, 2021, p. 2) needs to be internally explored.



**Figure 6.7. Felt spatiality of treading queer pathways to alternative domesticities** (see also figure 6.4). Source: Author's (2023) vision, primary sketch, and text-prompt rendered by MidJourney and followed by digital layer-edits.

In thinking about the “oscillations of one’s homing desires between past and future” for diasporic and queer groups (Figure 6.7), Boccagni (2022, p. 591) observes that in “an indefinite and open-ended field for homing...moving literally or symbolically toward a ‘chosen home’ is no linear or unambiguous pathway”. He further asserts that:

the queer homing cannot dismiss the influence of the home one comes from. Nor can the latter be reduced to an oppressive burden to be dismissed...familial and heteronormative home is a more ambiguous force...While home as the origin is cognizantly criticized for being intolerant or narrow-minded, it retains some affective influence nonetheless. It is as if people had gone through a loss—psychologically speaking, from the mother’s body (Rus 2006)—that still demands to be coped with (Boccagni, 2022, p. 592).

Boccagni here suggests the inevitable confrontation on the queer pathways to alternative domesticities, or in Boccagni’s words “home-oriented mobilities”, of coping with, and *not* escaping this sense of loss embedded in the “familial and heteronormative” field that demands tremendous “resilient efforts to reach it” (Boccagni, 2022, p. 591). With these two take aways—*coping with loss* and *moving through ambiguity with resilience*—in mind, this chapter now turns to the empirical section, ‘wings’ of *transformation*, offering a post-occupancy evaluation of the limits, challenges, and potentials of HE-LGBTQ+ students’ unfollowing the queer domicile-enabling blueprint.

### **‘Wings’ of Transformation**

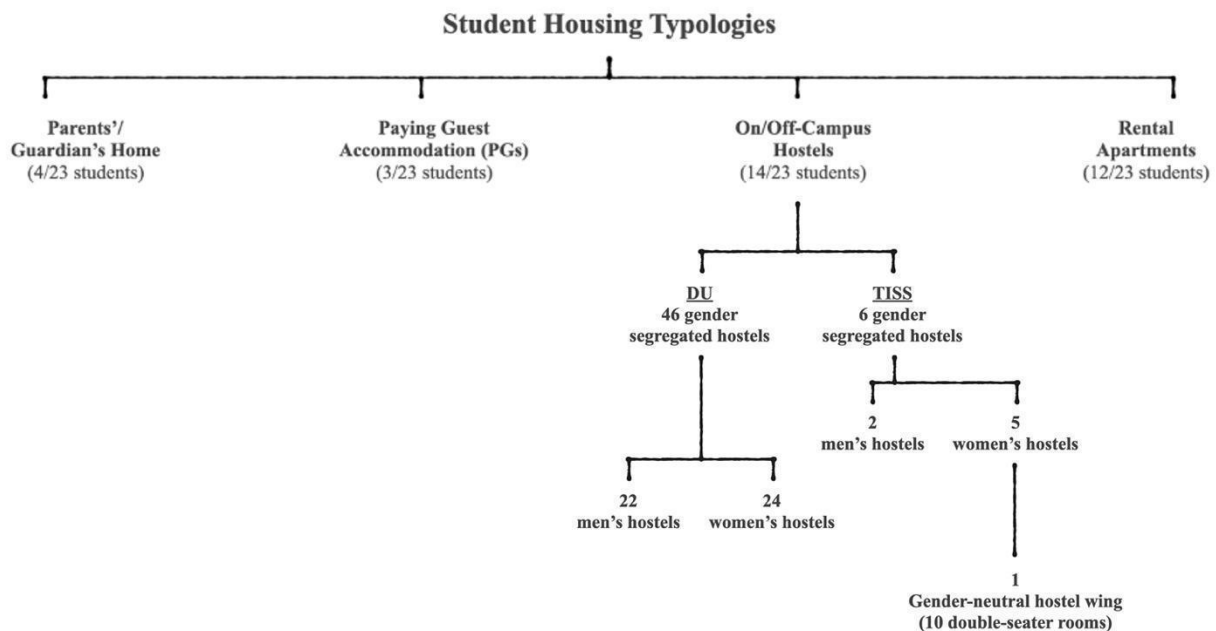
This section draws from post-occupancy evaluations (POEs) of 23 HE-LGBTQ+ students experiences of living across four fundamental typologies of student housing in India, namely, parents’/guardian’s home, paying guest accommodations (PGs), on- and off-campus university hostels, and rental apartments (Figure 6.8). A post-occupancy evaluation is a “multifaceted tool for building improvement” (Vischer, 2002) that in considering the “building’s occupants and their needs, provides insights into the consequences of the past design decisions and forms a

sound basis for creating better buildings in the future” (Preiser et al., 2015, abstract). Here in specific, students’ homes were evaluated for their queer and trans potentials. Virtual walk-throughs facilitated with student mental maps and photographs, as well as “spatial notetaking<sup>23</sup>” by the author were combined to “interview the house” along with the students’ accounts of living inside it (Stender, 2017). Student-participants were invited to share their housing biography to enable a longer-term sense of their place of living at the time. Below is a breakdown of the four typologies of student housing as they emerged in student-participants’ housing biographies. As can be seen in Figure 6.8, between two case study university campuses and a wider landscape of residential university campuses in India, only Deonar Campus, TISS exceptionally houses India’s first and only gender-neutral hostel wing with 10 double-seater rooms since 2018. According to the landmark NALSA judgement (2014), the Government of India recognizes self-determination of “third gender”. Although this judgement is heavily contested within the wider intersectional LGBTQHKPIA+ community in India where “transgender” term and communities are more complex than in the west (Nagar and Dasgupta, 2015), the judgement opened up newer avenues for queer researchers and advocates. One of the immediate follow up modifications was seen by trans, non-binary, and genderqueer students at TISS asking the administration to include “T” alongside the normative “M” and “F” on enrolment forms. TISS students’ genderqueer activism consistently extended to housing activism to mark an exception with India’s first and only on-campus gender-neutral hostel wing. Almost a decade since the landmark judgement, besides the single exception of a gender-neutral hostel wing with 10 rooms, all of India’s

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<sup>23</sup> Spatial notetaking is an architectural method I employed during my fieldwork. It involves creating like a memory palace, associating student testimonies directly in the architectural space of reference and/or occurrence. I would perform a quick sketch in the form of a plan, cross-sectional, elevational, or axonometric view that best captures how students’ spatial story unfolds in that specific space. I would often add a layer tracing students’ movements in the space as their story evolved.

residential university campus landscape remains cisnormatively coded in gender binary to the exclusion, even ignorance and neglect of trans, non-binary and gender-nonconforming students.



**Figure 6.8. Student Housing Typologies in megacities of India.** Source: Author.

In what follows, each typology is discussed (though with a greater focus on the gender-neutral hostel and rental apartments reflecting its larger sample size), summarizing key observations as they stood out from LGBTQ+ university students' housing biographies to reflect on the queer and trans limits and potentials of these blueprints. As a general sense, student-participants were observed leaning first towards a private rental living arrangement, followed by on-campus hostels, whereas certain aspects of parents' home were selectively preferable it was for the most part an adjustment, and students firmly did not prefer living with a strangers' family in the paying guest accommodation. Rental apartments, however, was an option often available

in the advanced stages of higher education. Both, the spatial configurations in combination with the administration of the space has been evaluated through select students' "spatial stories" that best represent the typology and its experience by students at large to unpack the queer and trans limits and potentials of different living arrangements.

### **'The biological family': The zoning and grouping trap in parental homes**

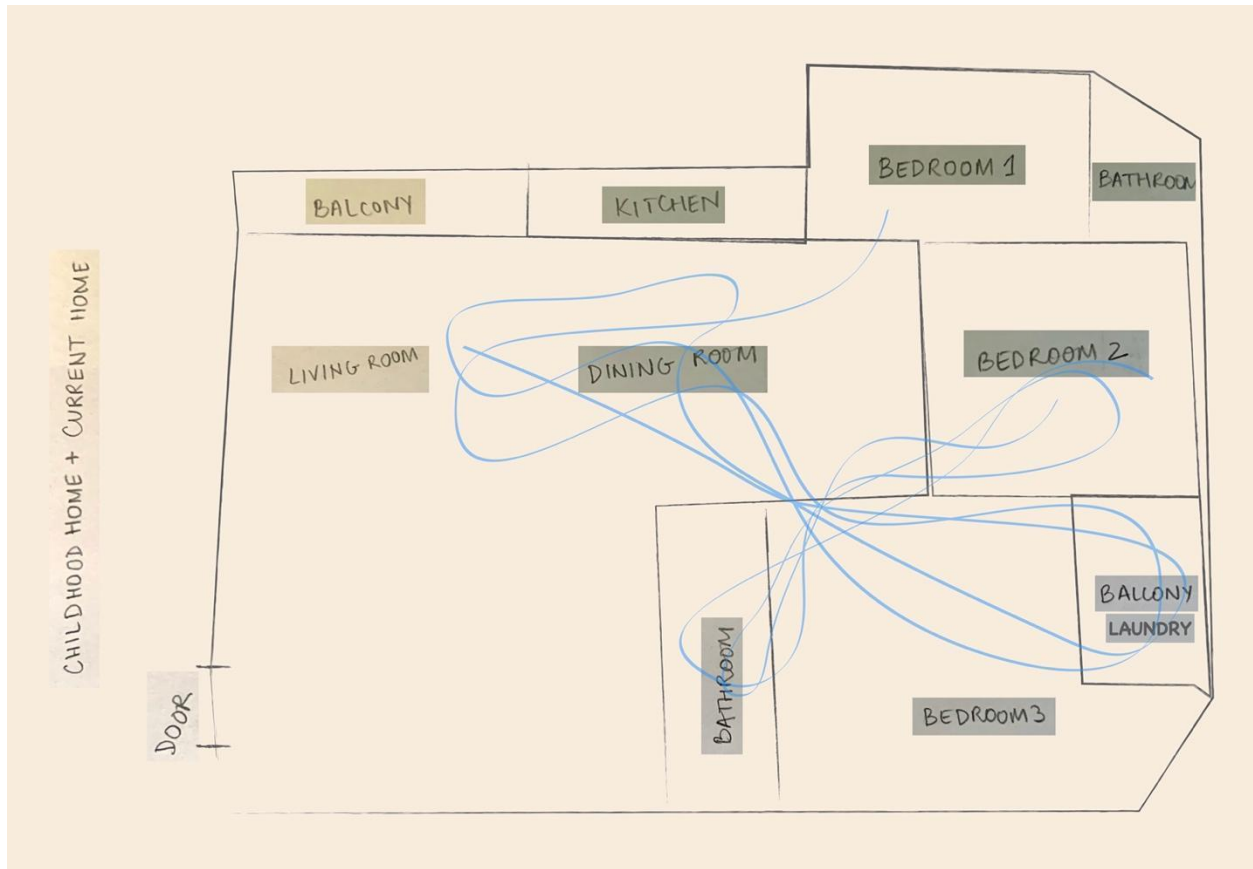
Typical layouts within homes follow micro-zoning that code the spatial configuration determining how different spaces come together with one another under a single roof as a home-apparatus. Feminist architects such as Dolores Hayden (1980), Irene Cieraad (1999), and Madhavi Desai (2007) among others, particularly draw attention to otherwise naturalized patriarchal hegemonies embedded deep within domestic spatial configurations with implications for women's experiences of home. Not long after, the critical geographies of home scholarship turned to investigate queer domesticities (Hubbard, 2012; Cook, 2014; Gorman-Murray and Cook, 2017) "problematizing the familiar space of 'home'" with its deeply entrenched heteronormativity.

The Indian queer urban scholarship is yet to critically study cis-heteronormative spatial manifestations within domestic realms. Below is the first step in that direction through HE-LGBTQ+ students' empirical accounts of living with parents in parental homes. While at the time, only four students were day scholars, parental homes were a significant feature in most students' housing biographies in how it continued to shape the ways in which they spatially arrange their lives. One of the most misaligned aspects of living at parental home for the LGBTQ+ post-secondary students was (being expected to readily adjust to) the lack of privacy, often alongside senior generations in the joint family—both groups desexed within the cis-

heteronormative marital reproductive domesticity. Reducing single young adults' need for privacy to "illegitimate" forms of sexual intimacy and exploration outside of marriage, most parents would rhetorically ask: what do you need privacy for? Students' empirical accounts below demonstrate how queer and trans young adults confront such infantilization and non-affordance of privacy outside marriage within parental homes.

SC, a queer cis woman student at DU, lived with parents and grandmother during her graduate studies. Her parents' home is a 3BHK apartment on the fourth floor of a building. Although she had her own bedroom (bedroom 3 in Figure 6.9) in the house, her private balcony was utilized as a laundry space, and she shared her bathroom with her grandmother. The communal business at the door to her "private" bedroom due to two wet zones (that of laundry and bathroom shared with her grandma) of the household meant she could never lock her bedroom door. SC found "entanglements" of familial spatial relations to directly take away from her sense of privacy. Even when she momentarily lived solo in Calcutta, her extended family in close neighbourhoods kept a close watch on who was visiting her and for how long. More recently, however, as an international PhD student visiting home, she decided she was "too old to lie about this shit [dating]". Although, she admitted, it was easier to tell her family because she was dating a cis man at the time. She found that while she could invite him over or go out whenever, there were gendered expectations projected onto her when he was invited home, or whenever she was out, her family assumed she was with him. She noted "acclimatizing to being at her parents' home" after having lived independently abroad was "very difficult".





**Figure 6.9. SC's parental home (not to scale).** Bedroom 1 is the master bedroom, her grandma lived in bedroom 2, and bedroom is her own. Source: Sketch by SC overlaid with movement patterns mapping by Author (2020).

JM, a cis gay student at DU, similarly found it difficult returning to live with both his retired parents and grandmother in Mumbai after having lived independently in Delhi. Their parents' home has two bedrooms with his grandmother living in one and his parents in the other bedroom. He did not have his own room and he slept in the living room. He ended up spending little time at home. It is not unusual though, he noted, for most people in Mumbai live in dense spatialities, and he was used to socializing outside. Yet, he felt constrained not having privacy for hooking up or simply even for his meetings and classes. He laughed saying, "it's reached a point where I move out or completely go crazy" (JM, interview, February 2021). He recollected visiting an elderly gay couple in the neighbourhood who had become his friends over time and

their home as a spillover home. He also found the emerging rental app in Mumbai called Brevistay quite a respite with its flexible check-ins and hourly bookings for unmarried couples. Even if he was alone, and needed quiet for working on a paper, for instance, Brevistay was a welcome alternative when most other hotels have per day rates and strict rules allowing only married couples with legal documentation to stay.

QJ, a queer student at TISS, moved back with her parents living in their ancestral home in Ahmedabad. A huge three-storey property with front and backyard was home to a big joint family. Over the years, several internal dynamics had QJ's father's brothers move out of home, whereas their grandparents eventually passed. Ultimately, only QJ's parents lived in the ancestral house. Despite the massive built-up area of the ancestral house, QJ found it difficult to have any privacy in the home. The ground floor exclusively had kitchen and storage spaces, and all of the three bedrooms were densely laid out on the first floor. The top floor was abandoned and rarely used by anyone. There was a separate external staircase leading to the spare bedroom in the house which QJ's father, who is a professor, had invited one of his queer migrant students to live in cost-free. QJ appreciated the balcony in her bedroom but the physical-auditory transparency between the densely configured bedrooms in the house gave QJ little sense of privacy. Clubbing together of all the bedrooms as a "sleeping zone" in the blueprint layout for the house left no room for QJ's exploration outside the normative domestic living. The abandoned third floor, in contrast, was often livened with pigeons, old books, and perhaps an in-resident cat that QJ was never certain about. Partially undomesticated and haunted territory of the third floor along with the terrace was QJ's hideout despite (and perhaps due to) its slightly spooky and terrifying features (Figure 6.10). QJ often took walks and talked to her friends from the terrace; also from where one of our virtual interviews was held.



**Figure 6.10. QJ's ancestral house.** Photograph by QJ with layer-edits and sectional drawing by Author (2020).

Reflective of wider students' housing biographies, all of the above three case-studies reflect how the fundamental micro-zoning configuring the spaces for family homes, irrespective of the size and urban context of the home, is likely to conjoin utilitarian spaces (e.g., sleeping zone, leisure zone, serving zone, etc.). Spatial organisation and administration in normative family homes is further ageist and promotes "normative coupledness" by grouping the elderly singles with the single young adults in the family. Such micro-zoning and grouping create more conflict than harmony between and within members of the family living in the household. Yet, the underlying cis-heteronormative sensibilities of such spatial configurations of the blueprint remains critically unquestioned. Normative blueprints not only take away from LGBTQ+ young students' sense of privacy rather, more importantly they limit the queer and trans potential of homes. Spillover spaces such as terraces, abandoned and undomesticated house floors, queer friend's homes, and short-term hotel rooms in the neighbourhood became strap-on dildo spaces at once nurturing the trans potential and materializing trans phantoms for HE-LGBTQ+ students living with parents.

### **'The acting family': Spatial segregation and 'safety' in PGs**

At the time of the interview, most students were in advanced higher education stages and had moved out of PG accommodation arrangement (if they ever lived in it in the first place). PGs are often considered "safe option" by the parents of young students when they first move out of parental homes and to a megacity at an undergraduate or graduate master's degree level. PGs closely follow the norms of a family household with the PG owners' family in-resident offering rooms and meals. Unexceptionally, a section of the heteronormative family home remains intact for resident landowners while the remainder of the home is internally modified on a low-budget

to densely accommodate several single gendered students in shared rooms. Washrooms are commonly shared by an entire floor and rarely attached to the respective room. Visitors of the opposite ‘sex’, even if related to the resident, are firmly restricted from entering the premises. In many cases, PG owners seek to maximize their profits by cramming students into small rooms divided by non-load bearing wooden partition walls. Such proximity can feel suffocating as there is often insufficient light or ventilation. The density within student accommodations varies, improving slightly with higher rents. Students’ accounts below demonstrate how PGs normatively follow and reinforce the cis-heteropatriarchal socio-spatial script of familial love in parental homes to appeal to newcomer post-secondary students’ parents.

For the first two years in Delhi, in preparation of attending the medical college in Delhi, AS lived in a PG. Both the decisions in her life, to pursue the medical field and to live in a PG arrangement, were as per the wish of her parents’. An old, four storey family house, locally known as *kothi* in Delhi, was converted to a PG living arrangement. The ground floor had a separate entrance and was occupied by the PG owners’ family whereas the upper three floors were rented to a coaching agency with in-house caretakers and resident women students. Since the house was designed to be a family residence, most of the common amenities such as living room, dining room, and tv room were all on the ground floor. Each room on the upper floor was divided further into two rooms through dry wall partitions to accommodate two students in each section for a total of four students in the original room. Such modifications would often leave the one of the smaller new rooms altogether without ventilation. In certain cases, these rooms would be provided with an AC so that it does not become “a steam-room” in the hot climate of Delhi.

Contrary to her parents’ aspirations for her, AS was sure she neither wanted to live in the PG nor study medicine. She remembered spending limited time at the PG and lived many nights

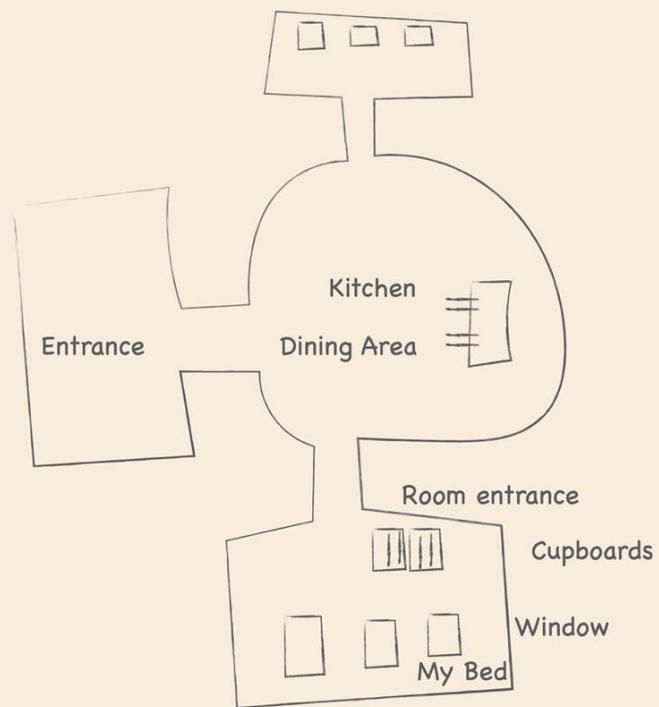
at her sister's place in Ghaziabad, one of the satellite towns of Delhi. Eventually, she withdrew from the medical college and re-enrolled herself in an English literature program. Her ability to transfer the disciplinary programs was on the condition that her living arrangement would continue to be her parents' decision. Since her father was in the army himself, he considered the "army environment as safe and secure" and enrolled AS in an army hostel. AS, however, found the hostel environment extremely "misogynistic". Nevertheless, she felt by this point that she had bargained enough with her parents and accepted her constrained living situation for the next three years.

QJ lived in a PG when first moved to Mumbai which was a bungalow in a gated community (Figure 6.11). Unlike the rare PG arrangement above, most PGs in India have the resident families directly involved in the management and administration of the PG. QJ found the living arrangement in the PG as "inconvenient and unsafe for me [as a genderfluid queer student], and constantly intrusive by the 'aunty' [PG landlady] who would closely monitor my behaviour" (QJ, interview, December 2020). There was no sense of privacy as the room immediately opened into the common spaces of the house: "like all the landladies, she was trying to become my 'family'" to warrant herself to morally police the residents. A cis male friend once dropped QJ to the PG and everyone started calling him "that girl's boyfriend" (discomfortingly revealing both their gendered and sexual assumptions about QJ). QJ found the living arrangement and the culture at the PG "annoying" for assuming and inculcating a cis-heteronormative perspective on QJ's everyday life. At the same time, the shared room was routinely opened to strangers with potential residents who would gaze at and judge not only the room but also QJ's behaviour as a roommate.





PG



**Figure 6.11.** QJ's PG accommodation. Top: Entrance to the gated community (Google images). Bottom: QJ's sketch of the PG (not to scale) (2020).

While PGs need to be officially registered to be run as semi-institutional housing arrangements in the city, there is no provision of resources to or a regulatory body to keep a check on the spatial modifications in PGs to house students in sustainable living conditions. Upper class/caste students can afford to relatively pay higher and find a bigger PG which usually are in gated communities and are invariably moral policed, surveilled, and exclusive geographies of housing. A complicated layer of domestication takes form within PG arrangements whose premise is to closely mimic not only the parental house but also familial relationships. To ensure students' parents, PG owners end up further rigidifying PG rules at times more than the parental homes where students may have relatively more scope for negotiation. Like hostellers, PG residents follow curfew timings, require a permission from parents or guardian for a night out, and if their behaviour is considered as 'morally unacceptable', PG owners would not hesitate to place a call to students' parents. This extended a sense of 'reassurance' for students' heteronormative parents, but in the name of 'safety', subjected LGBTQ+ students to forms of "specific vulnerabilities" (Gorman-Murray et al., 2014). PGs were least preferred among LGBTQ+ students for they actively killed the queer and trans non-normative potential of homings. Most of them circumvented their ways out of the PG living by moving to on-campus university hostels. Both parental homes and PGs are cis-heteronormatively inscribed spaces *within* the marital family home. The following two typologies—on/off-campus hostels and rental apartments—are cis-heteronormatively inscribed student housing *outside* of the marital family home yet within the queer domicile apparatus (Figure 6.1) which compulsively extends the spatial norms of a marital family home to *all* forms of housing.



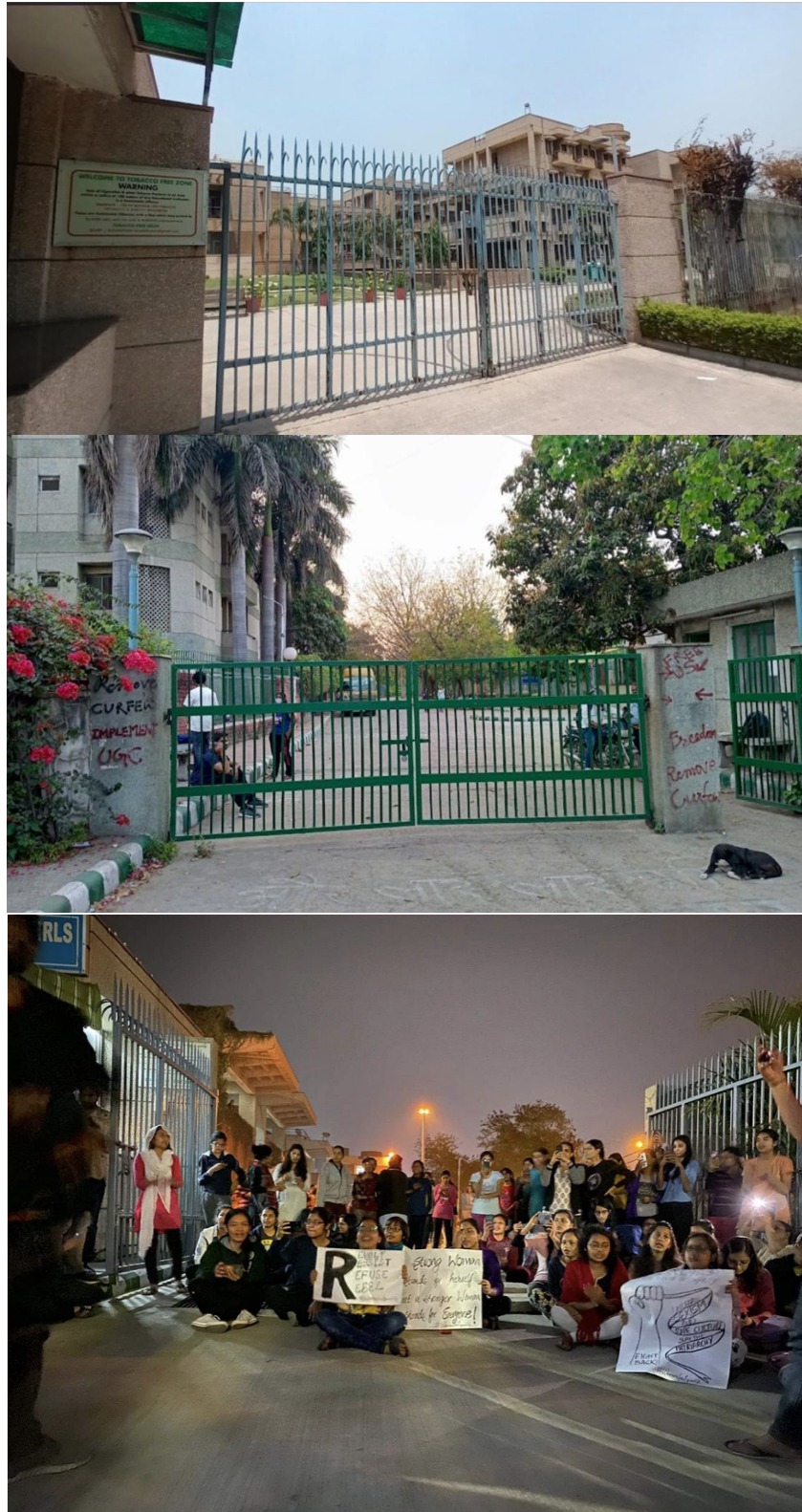
### **‘Wards and wardens in the absence of family’: Gender-concentrated campuses**

University hostels across Indian campuses are gender bifurcated as men’s and women’s hostels. The standard hostel typology may have multiple wings and/or floors with shared rooms and common washrooms at the end of the wing’s corridor, a court (usually internal for women’s hostels and external for men’s), a common hostel dining hall, and at times a visiting area on the ground floor. Warden’s office is usually located within one of the women’s hostels. In exceptional cases where the typology does shift it is usually for married students and international students (IIT-Bombay’s Tansa House, or married students’ hostels in IIM-Ahmedabad, TISS’s international students’ apartment-style housing) which tends to follow apartment-style housing. IIM-Ahmedabad’s new campus hostels also shift from the standard hostel typology with individual rooms with in-built washrooms. This has allowed possibilities for co-habitation for all gendered students within a single hostel building. A few off-campus DU hostel premises also offer single-seater rooms to advanced graduate students, however with shared washrooms in the hallways. Moreover, the entire hostel premise is gated and exclusively for women students within which multiple hostel buildings are laid out according to regionality-based identities with its specific dining hall and festivities (see Figures 6.12 and 6.13). Women students across Indian campuses have raised voice against the exclusive patriarchal hostel rules restricting their movements inside and outside the hostels and limiting their access to library, terraces, or even simply their friend’s room. DU’s women-students led PinjraTod movement widely raises collective action against patriarchal, even misogynistic spatial administration of women’s hostels and PGs.

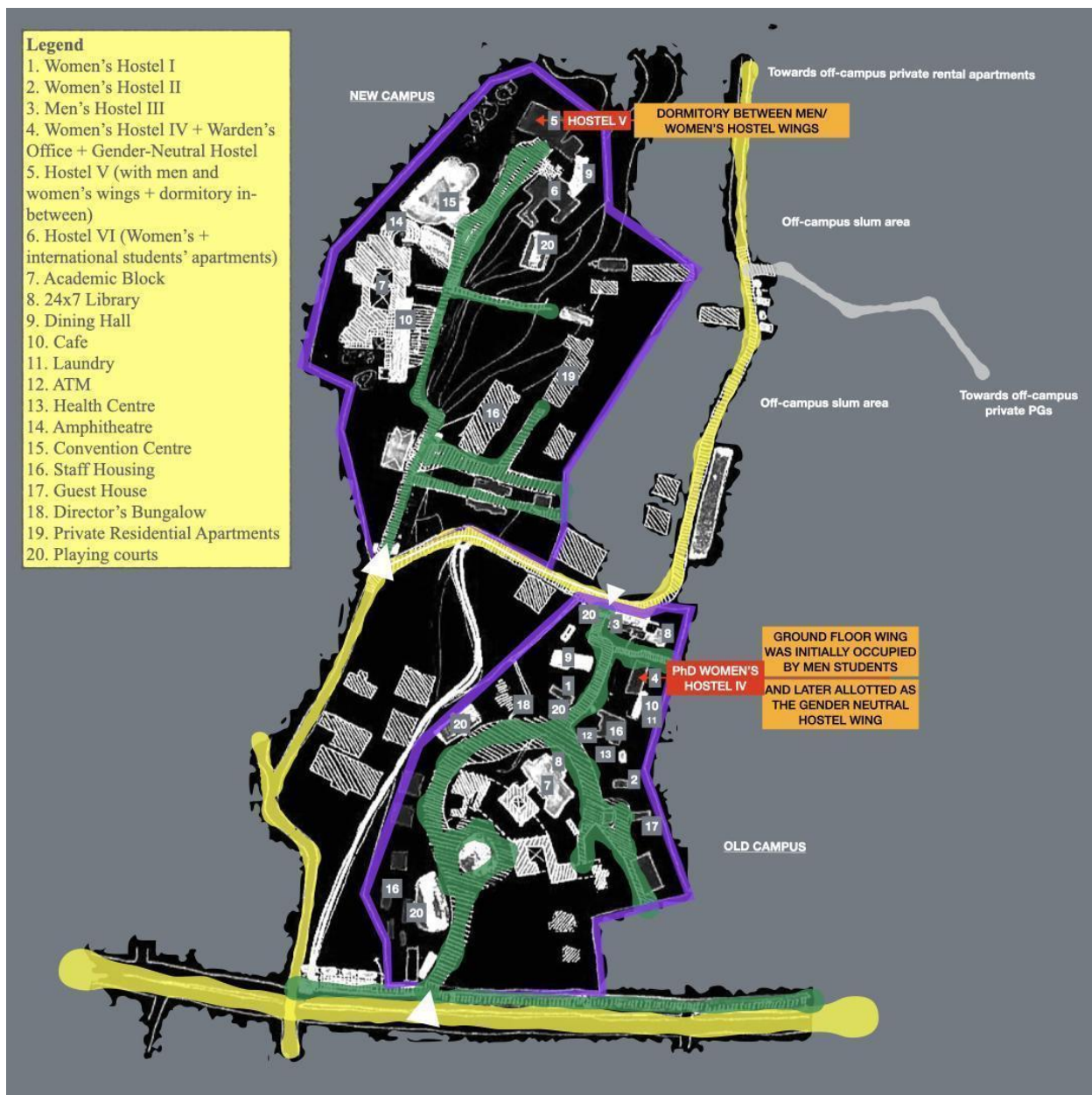


**Figure 6.12.** Off-campus gated girls' hostel complex, DU. Top: North Campus with an off-campus gated girls' hostel premises. Bottom: Zoomed in view of the off-campus girls' hostel premises. Source: OpenStreetMap and Google Maps (2022).





**Figure 6.13.** Authority and Activism at Girls’ Hostels Gates, DU. Top: Warning sign at the gated entrance next to the security check-post to the girls’ hostel, DU. Middle: Student graffiti on the gated entrance walls: “free us, freedom, remove curfew, implement UGC”. Bottom: Women students protesting at the gates. Source: Google Images and Indian Express (2022).

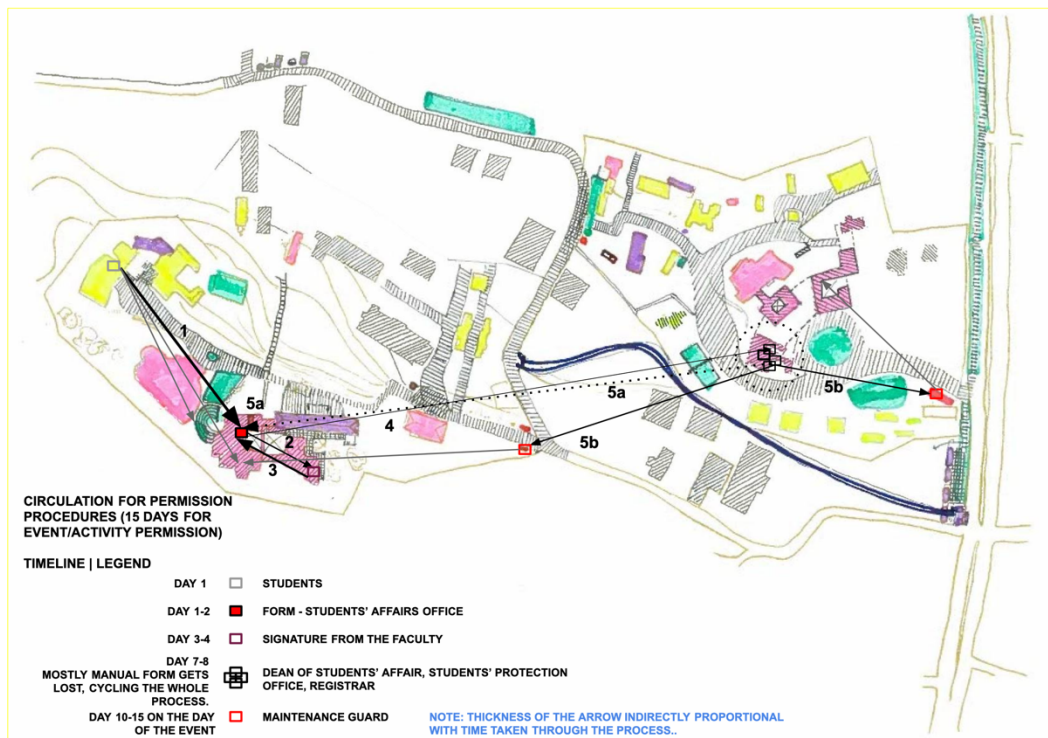
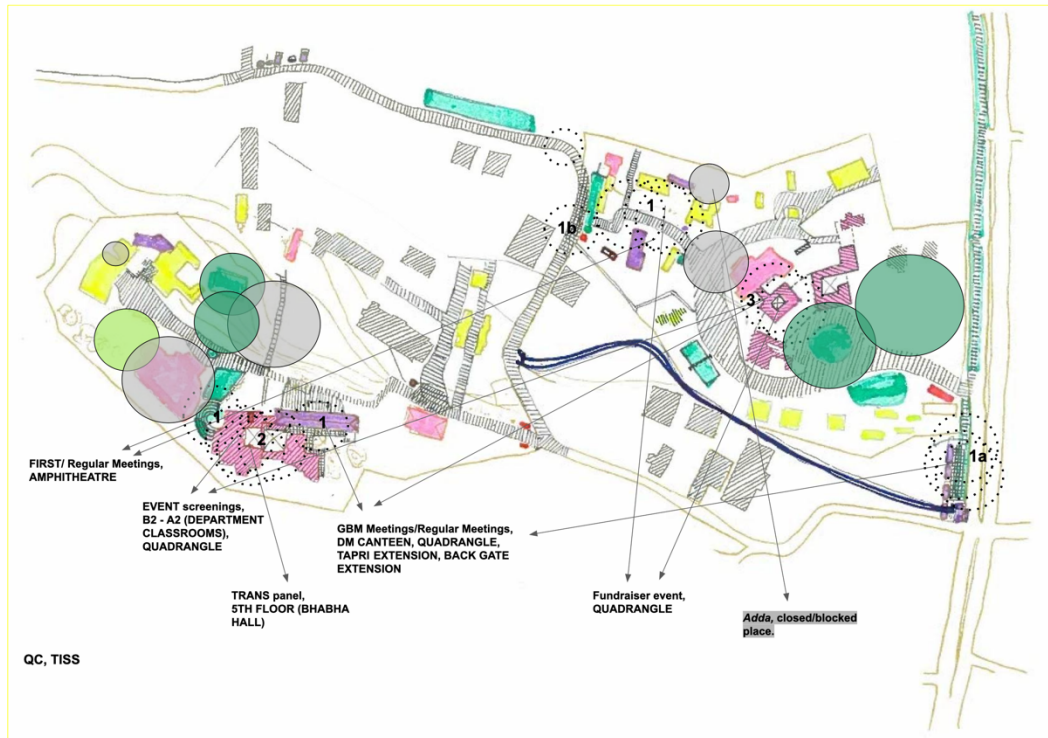


**Figure 6.14. Deonar Campus Plan, TISS.** Source: Author (2017).

Gender-based student housing activism has been, however, for the most part, limited to cis women's issues to the neglect of queer and trans/non-binary students' housing needs. The first key breakthrough in the gender-based student housing activism narrative in India to consider trans and genderqueer students' housing needs was by the Queer Collective (QC) at the Deonar

Campus of TISS University, Mumbai. I first met members of the QC in 2017 when I was an in-resident visiting research scholar at TISS university, Mumbai. I was an architectural consultant and researcher to the Ford-funded multi-city research project, *An Exploratory Study of Discrimination based on Non-normative Genders and Sexualities*. I lived for three months on campus when I architecturally documented the entire campus through pace-drawing techniques (Figure 6.14). I conducted walk-throughs and focus-group discussions with the QC about their lived experiences on campus including mental mapping of trigger geographies, public spaces for collective action, revoked student-spaces, as well as mapping the spatiotemporal process of permission taking for student events and collective action between two campuses (Figure 6.15). At the time, QC had been involved in organized housing activism since 2016 in challenging cisnormative hostel rules such as restrictions on inter-hostel mobility and an utter absence of on-campus housing for students who identified as trans and non-binary. The process was laborious and convoluted with the administration between old and new campus in seeking permissions for every single event or activity to mobilize themselves. After ten days of running around for paperwork, the administration would lose the documents and they had to often begin again. The cost of these delays had direct mental health implications for trans and non-binary students' experiences in shared hostel rooms with cis, often queer/transphobic roommates and/or simply the cis-heteronormative gaze of security guards.





**Figure 6.15.** Focus group mental mapping with TISS Queer Collective. Top: Focus group mapping QC's events leading up to GNH-wing. Bottom: Typical 15 days of permission taking process for any student-led event or activity. Source: Author in collaboration with the QC (2017).

For instance, DL, a transmasculine senior PhD candidate, was unknowingly followed by a security guard as they entered “women’s” hostel V right until their room. The guard blast opened the door to their room to “catch” them. DL was changing inside their room at the time and was flabbergasted and their sense of privacy was deeply violated by the guard’s no-warning show up. The guard laughed off and apologized saying she thought she had seen “a guy come into girl’s hostel”. Not only was DL’s privacy casually violated while they were changing, but they were also further misgendered by the guard’s need to ‘straighten out’ their perspective. For yet another transfeminine student, ML living with cis-men roommates, they were often mocked for their effeminacy—

I was never comfortable using men's washroom where all changed openly, and I was uncomfortable with my body. I was called ‘fruity’ - *khatta meetha* [transl. sweet n sour] - slang used for effeminate men in India. And then they will all laugh. I would call them out and say this is homophobic and they would not argue with me. *They are not the villains in my story...it was a very cis-heterosexual place* [emphasis added] (ML, interview, January 25, 2021).

Trans and non-binary students routinely and rather casually confront gender dysphoria combined with what I have called, *spatial dysphoria*—a distorted sense of belonging in a cisgendered hostel (with all of its shared amenities, especially washrooms). These issues had emerged among the members of the QC, and for quite some time they planned to act against institutional cis-heteronormative violations. In response to QC’s demands and propositions for a gender-neutral hostel, and with the support of the TISS student union (TISS-SU), in September 2018, the housing administration re-allocated one of the ground floor wings of PhD women’s hostel IV as what has come to widely be known as “India’s first gender-neutral hostel” (Figure 6.16). Prior to the re-allocation, this wing housed men students inside the women’s hostel. Two reasons that then allowed for such a rare spatial configuration for men students then and trans/non-binary students now are: first, the wing is markedly separate on the ground floor from the women’s

rooms on upper floors; and second, the hostel Warden's office is housed on the ground floor right next to this wing almost as a check-point at the entrance to the women's floors upstairs.

Home / India / At TISS, India's first gender-neutral hostel: 'all students can come, chill'

Premium

## At TISS, India's first gender-neutral hostel: 'all students can come, chill'

The hostel is the culmination of a long-drawn campaign at TISS by Queer Collective (QC), an informal student body advocating a safe space for LGBTQ+ students as well as the management.

Written by [Priyanka Sahoo](#)

Mumbai | Updated: September 15, 2018 13:58 IST

 NewsGuard



Akunth, who identifies as queer, at Hostel IV at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences in Mumbai.  
(Express Photo by Nirmal Harindran)

**Figure 6.16. India's first gender-neutral hostel.** Source: Times of India (2018).

Between 2018-2020, the ground floor wing of the gender-neutral hostel (GNH) housed about 17 trans/GNC students in ten two-seater rooms with a common gender-neutral washroom. In listening to 13 LGBTQ+ student-participants—who as members of the QC were directly involved in the on-campus housing activism as well as were residents for two years in the GNH



wing—I conduct a post-occupancy evaluation of students’ spatial stories of the GNH before and after its inception in 2018 to ask: what does the success side of a gender/trans-inclusive space look like for its trans/non-binary student-residents? What exactly got lost in the spatial realization of QC’s vision for a gender/trans-inclusive student housing on campus? In contradistinction, I also analyze the trans-potential of yet another wing in the gender-segregated Hostel V in the new campus that is actively administered to function as a cisnormative space.

One of the most critical questions for the QC’s vision for a gender-neutral space on campus was about locational politics. As DL, one of the leading and senior student-members of QC recollected,

A lot of our initial discussions were about what places on-campus can be gender-neutral spaces...we had two options in mind: one was the dorm between boys’/girls’ hostel [V] on new campus, and the second was the ground floor wing in the women’s PhD hostel [IV], because while the entire hostel was for women students, the ground floor wing was already used by men (DL, interview, January 16, 2021) (see Figure 12).

The hostel administration agreed to re-allocate the ground floor wing within the PhD women’s hostel IV as the GNH. DL, like several other trans and non-binary student residents of GNH, sighed that they “unfortunately, did not think the location through; it came to bite us back later on”. According to DL, the reason they “got [GNH] so easily in [women’s hostel IV]” was because “it was right next to the Section Officer and Hostel Warden’s Office” (DL, interview, January 16, 2021) (Figure 617). AF, another resident of the GNH added that women’s hostels are already far more closely surveilled than men’s hostels with placement of a security guard with an entry/exit register, for instance. By locating the GNH-wing within women’s hostel, they automatically subjected themselves to the gaze and scrutiny. With the reassigning of the common washroom in the GNH-wing as now a gender-neutral washroom, open to all genders, the Section Officer—who is a cis woman—strategically started using the washroom with the agenda of

spying on trans/non-binary student-residents. She did not use this washroom before when the wing was occupied by cis men, and the washroom itself was assigned as men's washroom. Genderqueer students also noted when they hugged each other, they could feel their friendships being scrutinized by the cis-heteronormative gaze that projected normative intimacy between heterosexual men and women onto their embodiments and inter-personal relationships. ML recalled --

For security, I am a cis man. So, if they see me hugging a woman in the GNH corridor, they will go complain to the hostel warden who will then call us for a meeting. The warden also used to keep an eye from her office straight into the corridor for any PDA. GNH was envisioned as a safe space, but it was a safe space for only people outside GNH (ML, interview, January 25, 2021).

All the three students' recounting of wider queer and trans students' lived experiences reveals a how their (gender)queerness and relationships did *not* translate in the security guard's and the hostel warden's cis-heteronormative perception with real implications on student spatiality. Very soon, trans and non-binary student-residents of the GNH started feeling their initial sense of safe space fade away as GNH became "the first place that will be attacked" (DL, interview, January 16, 2021). DL marked an absence for a spatial consultant in the QC's on-campus housing activism for GNH. This absence is at large disciplinary—the intersection between gender and sexuality studies and spatial disciplines, and between queer activism, student activism, and housing activism in India remains thin. Queer discourses often lack spatial language and spatial discourses are deeply cis-heteronormative. One of the key aspects to be highlighted in this section then is the collaborative need for a queer/trans spatial consultant—someone with queer/trans lived experiences and spatial tools (from having trained in the language of blueprints and master plans)—for on/off-campus planning including, but not limited to, that of student housing. A queer/trans spatial consultant would have perhaps mediated QC's vision with

alternative spatial strategies and questions: is one wing or one GN residence building really enough to queer and trans-form campuses? A simple question but one that signals the insufficiency of administrative solution to complex and unquantifiable lived spatialities of student housing needs. What to make of “inclusive” administrative solutions that do not disrupt the existing normative student housing spatialities? Or, perhaps queer and trans spatial consultants too could not anticipate the locational politics which is when a queer and trans-sensitive POE of student housing must be seen as an ongoing project of reworking wherein much attention is equally paid to facilitating and nurturing the process of *transformation*.

Following the location of the GNH-wing, admission of student-residents further involved debatable screening process that left many students annoyed. AA, a Dalit queer student leader rather disappointed and enraged at the screening process argued,

*...they don't give a fuck about self-identification.* There were two QC members and one faculty member who were consulted for *screening the student applications to the GNH*. Their rejection was rather arbitrary, based on personal discomfort which shows the upper caste network, because *the Dalit [representative] is absent completely* [from the queer screening committee]. I don't think there has been a single cis gay man who has lived in the GNH. Their applications were often rejected because for the administration, GNH was basically for 'protecting' trans people and women from men [emphasis added] (AA, interview, January 21, 2021).

AA raised questions about internal *and* intersectional queer politics that were resonated by other Dalit queer students. The dis-ease with the screening process was questioned by other trans/gnc student-residents. While the hostel administration did agree to allocating a gender-neutral space, it was on the condition that a queer and trans screening committee will be appointed for resident admission (or rejections) raising critical questions around self-identification. The figure of a cis man (straight or gay) as an antagonist in queer, trans and women's spaces reflects deep conflicts between feminist, queer, and trans scholarships and spaces.



**Figure 6.17. Top: Axonometric drawing of the old campus, TISS. Bottom: Zoomed in Axonometric View of the GNH-wing within the PhD women's Hostel IV. AutoCAD technical drawing to scale by Author (2021).**

On the other end of screening was the important consideration for application to move in and live in the GNH for trans and non-binary students who were already living in cis gendered hostels. It was not an easy decision to make for multiple “specific vulnerabilities” for different students. VV, a Dalit transmasculine and queer student who was a member of both TISS Ambedkarite Students’ Association (ASA)—a Dalit students’ group as well as the QC (as a queer ally at the time), was not out yet as it was difficult to defend themselves as a queer and trans person within their Dalit students’ political group. For them, it was impossible to apply to the exclusive trans/gnc housing at the GNH as it would implicate and out them as a queer and trans person, exacerbating their vulnerability. For separate reasons, ML, while being tormented within cis men’s hostel, found it difficult to make their application to the GNH –

I didn’t apply to the GNH, because I suffer from Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD). I was having a lot of panic attacks, self-harm thoughts...I was dependent on my long-term roommate... [Since] he is a cis-het student, he neither would nor could have moved in with me in the GNH. So, I stayed in the men’s hostel for 3 months (ML, interview, January 25, 2021).

Ultimately, ML gave up going through everyday mockery of their gender identity and decided to move into the GNH, though with a heavy heart and a sense of feeling torn apart:

There was a quick relief in moving to GNH, but the sudden separation from my heterosexual friend...inside me...*a part of me was feeling like I was losing some people...I was feeling the void*. I questioned myself if I took a rash decision to move into GNH (ML, interview, January 25, 2021).

The initial temporary sense of relief for ML was taken over by a deeper and consistent feeling of a void inside them. The split in the integrity of the queer self was spatialized. Either they could live with their close heterosexual friend and suspend their queer/trans identity or embracing their queer and trans identity meant living with a growing sense of void and self-doubt. AA was critical of such an approach to concentrate all queer/trans students with their “specific vulnerabilities” into one small space. They argued,



I don't think the QC or the administration had foreseen what would it mean to put all queer and trans people together; they are all suffering with something or the other. So, if all of them are suffering and all of them are queer and trans, you have basically made a *madhouse* out of them...and there are little resources for residential psycho-social services (AA, interview, January 21, 2021).

The absence of “residential psycho-social services” multiplied with cis-heteronormative housing governance resulted in what AA felt GNH had effectively become—a “madhouse” concentration of all the “specific vulnerabilities” of queer and trans/gnc students. For AF, living in the –

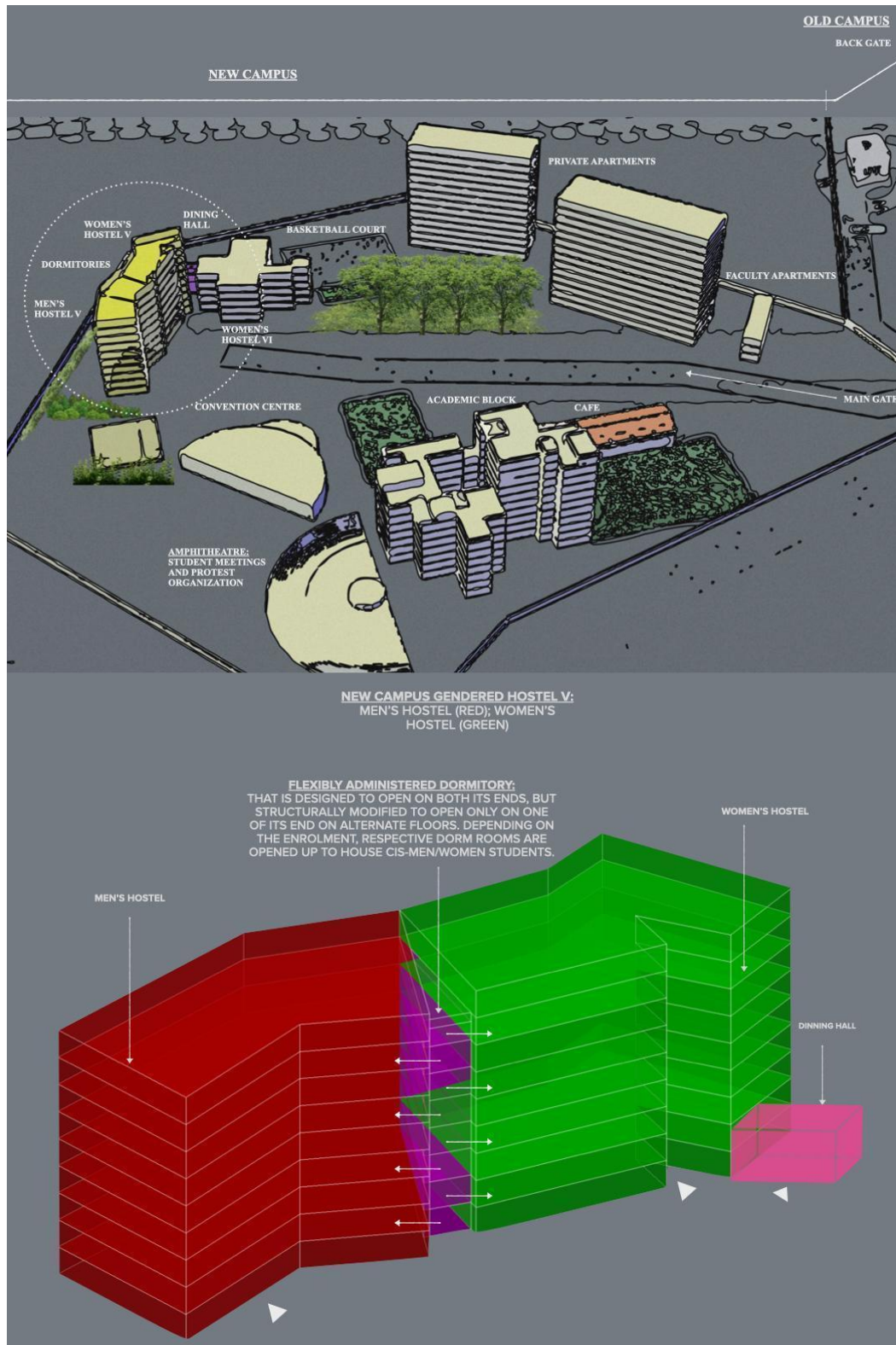
GNH felt like *window dressing*...it felt very shallow on the institution's part, because having a GNH without inter-hostel mobility, meant they would look at us like ‘exotic species’...and that is an issue because then, other students don't want to come forward to share this space with us. They need to also break the idea that ‘girls’ and ‘boys’ can't live together [outside of marriage] (AF, interview, December 20, 2020).

LGBTQ+ inclusive or exclusive queer and trans student housing on campus without dismantling cis-heteronormative codes of *homing* was found insufficient as an administrative solution by trans and non-binary students. Moreover, by spatially containing the GNH within women's hostel, patriarchal restrictions and blames were extended from women residents now onto the GNH residents alike as AF observes below:

...bringing friends over in GNH wasn't as easy as [it was] in boys' hostel where I first lived. GNH didn't feel very welcoming that way...guards would ask a lot of questions: “who is this person, show ID card...”; the hostel warden frequently placed *arbitrary rules for the GNH*: our friends from other hostel couldn't visit us...we were asked to register our every entry/exit. The rhetoric of [women's] protection came onto the GNH due to its location in girls' hostel...it became a *very hostile and toxic environment* for us to live in (AF, interview, December 20, 2020).

Despite the relief of not being housed in the wrong gendered hostel, rather than “liberating”, most trans/gnc students had a growing sense of fear of being tightly surveilled by the cis-heteronormative moral sensibilities of the housing administration. This left the queer and trans potential of spaces not only unexplored and unnurtured, rather nipped in the bud. As demonstrated in the administration-disapproved proposed location for the GNH in

Hostel V in the new campus by the QC demonstrates (Figure 6.18).



**Figure 6.18.** Top: Axonometric drawing of the new campus, TISS. Bottom: Zoomed in axonometric view of Hostel V. AutoCAD technical drawings to scale by Author (2021).

Hostel V is a nine-storey, single building split vertically with two separate wings with entrances—the left wing is men’s hostel, and the right wing is women’s hostel. Each floor has 8 three-seater rooms in both gendered wings. On each floor, located between the men’s and the women’s hostel wings, is a huge dormitory hall that opens and connects on either side of the men’s and women’s hostel wings (see Figure 6.18). However, on alternate floors the dormitory is modified such that it may be accessible only via men’s or women’s hostel wings, while the opening at the other “gendered” end is closed off with a non-load bearing exposed brick wall. These dormitories remain locked and empty until the time of the annual student enrolment. If in a year the university receives higher women students’ enrolment, they would open the respective dormitories connected to the women’s hostel wing, and the other way round if men students’ enrolment was higher. What could have been a critical space of trans intervention was architecturally modified and annually administered according to cis-heteronormative moral sensibilities that work to deepen trans and non-binary student-residents’ experiences of *spatial dysphoria* while disqualifying and closing off reimaginary possibilities for materializing trans *phantom homes*.

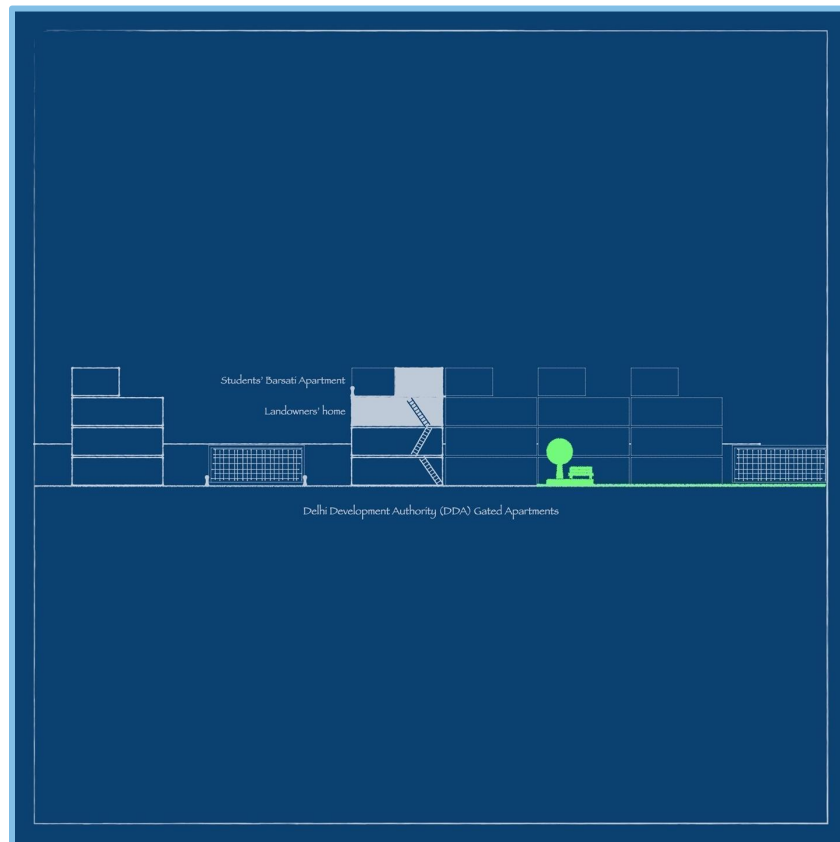
### **‘The chosen family’: (Mis)fitting queer spatial (re)configurations**

Of the four student housing typologies, queer, trans, and non-binary student-participants preferred private rental apartments. Although living off-campus was expensive and put them in direct confrontation with the homonegative labyrinth (discussed in Chapter 5), having a relative autonomy in homing was meaningful to their living as young adults. There was a greater sense of “doing” home *unmaking* outside of the “protective bubble” of parents, strangers’ families, and university administration. Despite constraints, students cherished tapping the queer and trans



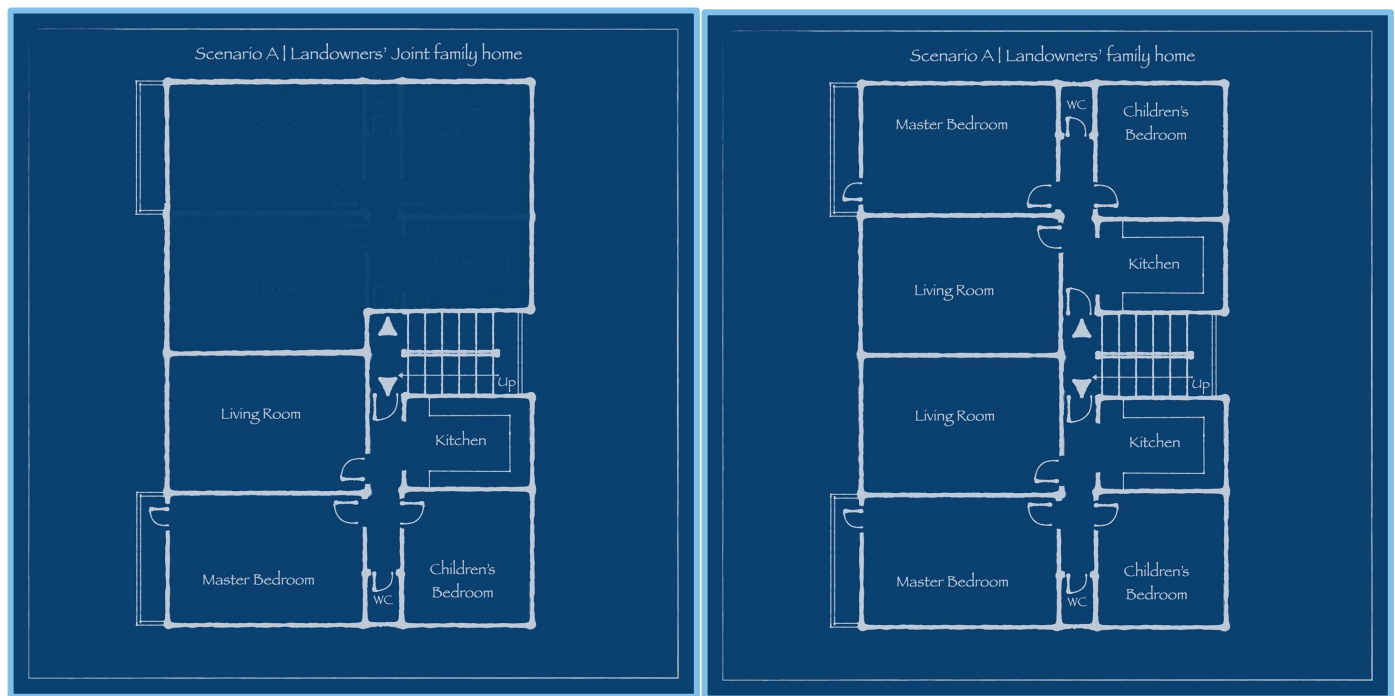
potential within the cis-heteronormative residential blueprints of homes and neighbourhoods. Below, blueprints of four students' rental apartments are spatially analyzed. Spatial configurations and/or elements seemingly 'misfit' for the "normative coupledom" were rather fitting for queer and trans spatialities and relationships. These un/intentional 'nano spatial gestures' are presented as *queer and trans heterotopic counter-openings* within otherwise cis-heteronormative blueprints that nurture, rather than close off, the queer and trans potential of spaces. Below I analyze select blueprints of students' rental apartments to highlight these queer and trans openings in the form of an essay in architectural drawings I drafted in AutoCAD and photographs shared with me by participants.

#### I | *Barsatis*



**Figure 6.19. Essay in Blueprints: Cross-sectional elevation drawing of the *barsati* in a gated DDA flats community in Ashok Vihar. Source: Author.**

Typically, DDA apartments in Delhi are low rise four-storey apartment clusters within a wider gated residential complex with parks and constrained parking places (Figure 6.19). These DDA flats in Ashok Vihar had the lower three floors of each building with two apartments each and the top floor with two *barsati* apartments. *Barsatis*, typical to hot climate domestic architecture in old Delhi, are small rooftop rooms built on a house covering one-third of the area and the rest as an open terrace—lending the name *barsati* from rain. In Delhi, more often than not these are rented to students. AE and GG, a queer student couple moved to one such *barsati* apartment that was previously occupied by two families. Landowners lived on the third floor. Over the span of a decade, the apartments witnessed micro spatial reconfigurations depending on who the apartment was occupied by.



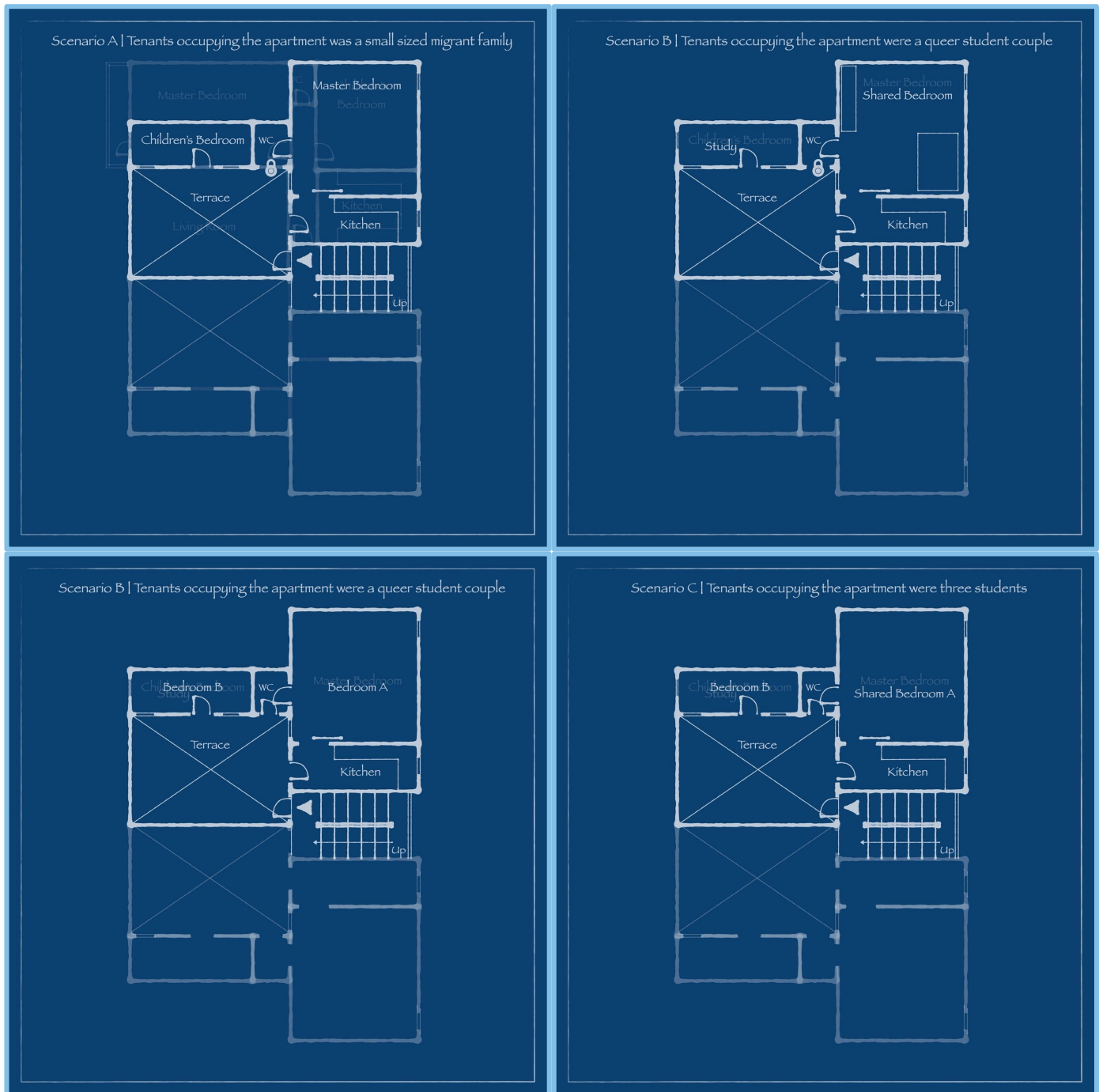
**Figure 6.20. Essay in Blueprints: Transition of landowners' family home on the third floor.**  
Source: Author.

The landowners initially lived in a joint family on the third floor in a 2BHK apartment. The “master bedroom” was occupied by the landlady’s in-laws, whereas the landlady and her husband lived in the smaller “children’s bedroom” until they had two grown up children and the apartment became congested (Figure 6.20: left). At the time, they had the top floor *barsati* unoccupied. Their initial thought was to convert their apartment into a duplex by connecting the third and fourth floors with an internal staircase. However, against the will of her in-laws, the landlady decided to double the asset and rental income by buying instead the apartment (with the *barsati*) across the hallway that was recently up for sale in the market (Figure 6.20: right). Now, the landowners’ family lived in both the apartments on the third floor and decided to rent the two top floor *barsatis* to students. In contrast to landowners’ family home layout, the *barsatis* witnessed a series of micro spatial reconfigurations.

Each *barsati* came with a set of two rooms and terrace. One of the rooms was bigger with attached bathroom and kitchen. Whereas the second room stood independently in the layout. The attached bathroom, however, had two doors; the primary door opened to the master bedroom whereas the second door opened to the terrace. This tiny gesture that would seem rather unnecessary for a small washroom made it possible for all residents of the apartment to access the washroom directly from the terrace without having to compulsorily enter the master bedroom. It was the open terrace—and not an enclosing single roof—that held the entire apartment together, something integral to *barsatis* in contrast to conventional apartments.

The two *barsatis* were first rented separately to two brothers and two sisters all of whom were at the time migrant students. Later, the two brothers married and started their own respective families. With not enough space, one of the brothers with his family eventually moved out. The other brother converted one of the smaller rooms as children’s bedroom and the big

room as the master bedroom and kept the washroom door opening to the terrace locked (Figure 6.21: top left).



**Figure 6.21. Essay in Blueprints: Micro spatial reconfigurations in the *Barsati* apartments over a decade with different tenants.** Source: Author.

Over a decade later, the migrant family moved out. AE and GG, a post-secondary queer student couple, had been looking for an apartment in the neighbourhood and confronting several undesirable encounters with brokers and landowners. Owing to their student/non-family-status, they were repeatedly shown uninhabitable apartments with broken kitchen, broken windows, and upturned bathrooms. Brokers and landowners tried to convincingly sell their broken apartment deals to AE and GG by justifying (out loud) with their transient and frivolous student status unlike families with greater responsibilities and sincerity. AE and GG had finally found the broker-landowners duo who took them and their housing needs seriously and is how landed the above *barsati* apartment. Once moved in, they first decided to repurpose “the children’s bedroom” as a study and kept the secondary washroom door locked as well (Figure 6.21: top right).

Within a few months of their stay, they reconfigured the apartment as two separate rooms to have their own individual spaces and unlocked the terrace door to the washroom. Rather than entering the partner’s room through the main door via kitchen, their independent rooms were now playfully intimate connected via the washroom doors (Figure 6.21: bottom left). Such a reconfiguration through the queer openings of open terrace and terrace doors not only playfully enabled queer coupling and decoupling, but also spatially added “consent” and “boundaries” to the equation of intimate relationships otherwise unevenly taken for granted and violated within normative marital coupledness and their spatiality of a private master bedroom.

When the queer student couple moved out, the apartment was now occupied by three mix-gendered and of different sexual orientation single students. The big room was shared by two students, whereas the third housemate lived in the smaller room. They adjusted the rent among themselves accordingly and kept both the washroom and kitchen doors open (Figure 6.21:

bottom right). Since then, the barsati apartment has witnessed several other tenants and accordingly, more transitions including to the terrace itself being now partially roofed with temporary materials. While traditionally, it may seem irrational for tiny spaces to have multiple openings, in this case, terrace and multiple door openings allowed flexibility of and a sense of play in space to its residents, queering the spatial reconfiguration of the apartment and pluralizing living arrangements to fit the changing interrelationships and spatial needs of student-tenants.

## II | *Atypical openings*

AC, a polyamorous transfeminine student, found it difficult to live in a 3BHK apartment with densely laid out bedrooms under a single roof. They found it particularly difficult to date their person who at the time was also seeing the other housemate in the same household. AC found these typical blueprints to apartments reflecting a moral facilitation and reinforcement of monogamous normative coupled family living. Uncomfortable and dissatisfied with their apartment, they soon moved out and kept moving into several different apartments within the next year. They enthusiastically stayed in touch with me and although unprompted, invited me for virtual house tours every time they moved to a new apartment during and beyond my fieldwork time. In each home, they cherished investing in and organizing the kitchen. To their displeasure, they found how divorced kitchen spaces often were from rest of the house and especially bedrooms. In this one 3BHK apartment, they sighed out of excitement when they saw one of the bedrooms had an atypical internal window looking into the kitchen. Moreover, all the bedrooms had big-sized enclosed balconies extending a sense of translucency to their bedrooms away from and breaking the dense layout of rest of the house.

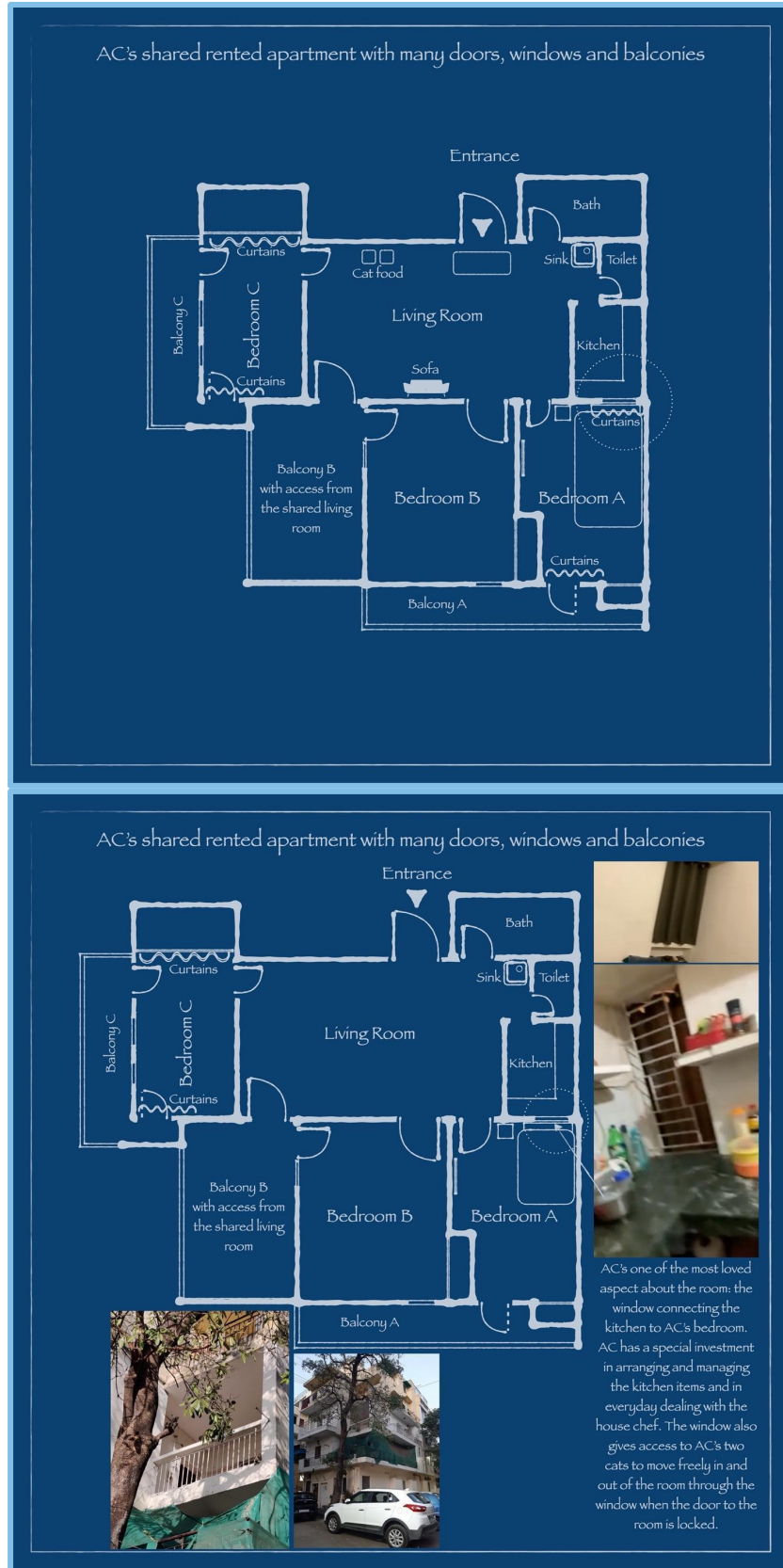


Figure 6.22. Essay in Blueprints: Atypical bedroom window looking into the kitchen. Source: Author.

AC has two cats. Whenever they had a date sleepover, they could lock their bedroom door for privacy, while their cats could still move in and out of the kitchen window. Through the bedroom-kitchen window, AC themselves could also stay connected from their bedroom itself, to the house cook if she needed anything. This connection to and involvement in the management of the kitchen and daily cooking was important to AC. A tiny, atypical opening between the bedroom and the kitchen enabled meaningful spatial play and connect for both AC and their two cats. This internal bedroom-kitchen window queered the otherwise rigidly feminine space of kitchen isolating and closing off both the women and “her” assigned spaces from the rest of the house.

### III | *2-Rooms set*

When DL and VV, a post-secondary queer and transmasculine student-leaders couple, were forcibly evicted out of their on-campus hostel rooms at TISS, Mumbai for being active in student activism, they unwillingly moved to Delhi. Now landed in the new city, they temporarily stayed with their queer and trans senior friends from TISS who had established a safe-home to nurture queer kinships and chosen families. Their queer home greatly helped DL and VV to warm up to the new city, find work, and their own home. It is important to underscore here how trusted social networks make queer and trans-homing often possible.

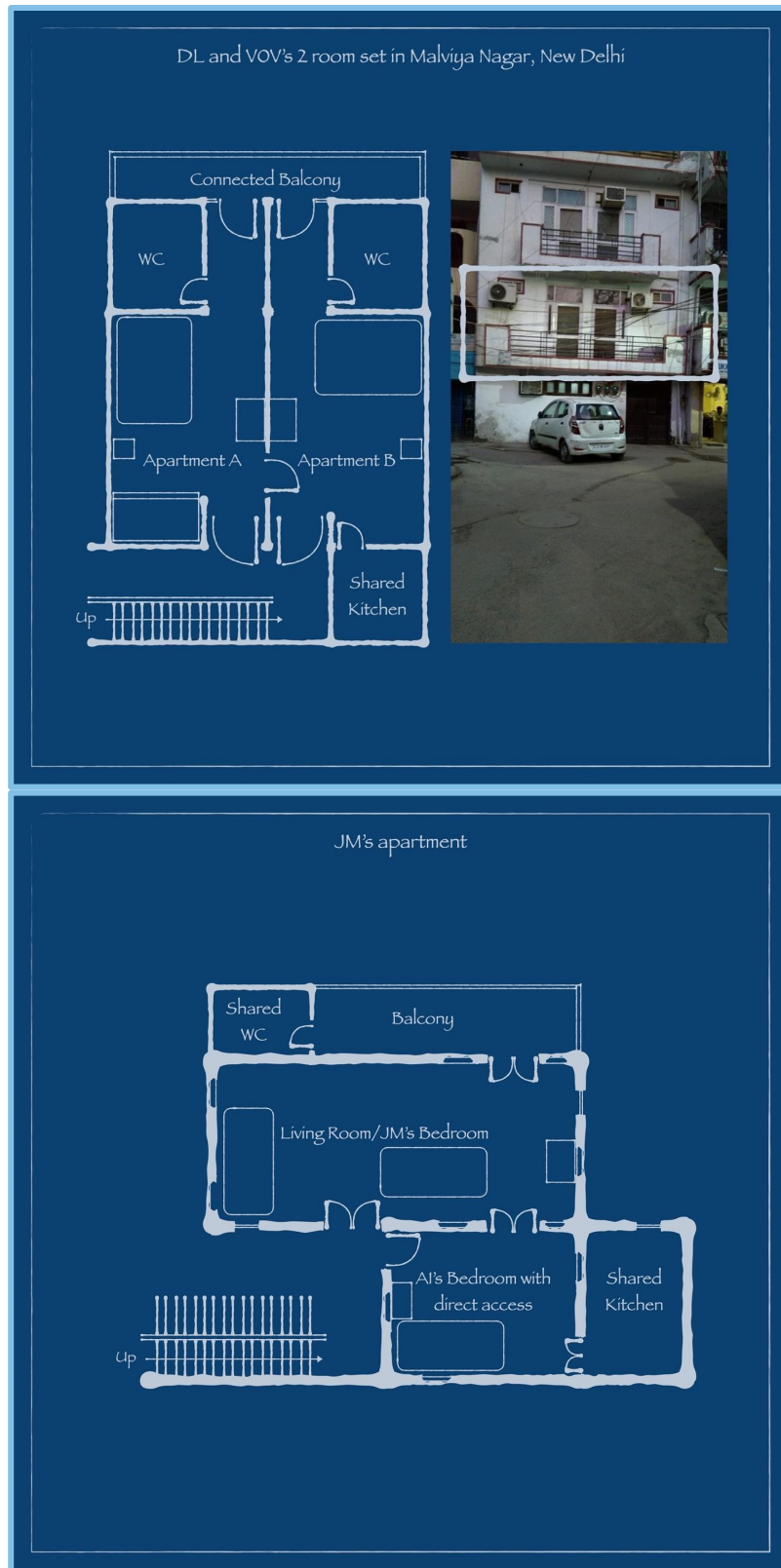
One of the older neighbourhoods in South Delhi, Malviya Nagar also has DDA housing that was originally built for post-partition war refugees. DL and VV’s new apartment was what is known to be in the market as a *2-rooms set*. This blueprint layout is rare to find within modern family homes in urban India. The 2-rooms set comprised of two identical rooms with attached bathrooms with two separate main entrances to respective rooms from the main lobby.



Therefore, from the lobby, these would seem to be two independent apartments. However, both the rooms were internally connected with a door, and shared the kitchen and the balcony between them (Figure 6.23: top). While the kitchen was accessible from only one room, the balcony was accessible from both rooms. Working against the normative coupledness, like AE and GG, DL and VV also enjoy their individual spaces with an internal passage to come together.

Conventionally, design layouts would consult against placing three doors so closely together questioning their functionality. Dismantling such cisnormative codes of design layout for solid walls and porous openings, multiple doors worked as “queer openings” with nurturing the trans/non-binary potential in bridging spaces and enabling *coming together* as against the normative *compulsory togetherness* at all times.

In a similar atypical arrangement in one of the older apartments in Delhi, JM, a cis gay undergraduate student, lived with many housemates. Here as well, the two spaces were externally independent as studio apartments, but internally connected with shared kitchen, washroom, and balcony (Figure 6.23: bottom). Having more openings which may seem a misfit to a normative layout, in these cases enabled a sense of playful exploration in domesticities for queer and trans post-secondary students. Additionally, these queer openings may be seen as important spatial manifestations of “consent” in intimate domestic spaces. Normative marital coupledness and family structures assume “consent” as a one-time pass wherein the individuals give up their individual rights when they “willingly” enter marital contract—which is also a domestic contract. Such a normative conception has resulted in legitimizing marital rapes and domestic abuse predominantly against cis women in heteronormative marriages. However, “consent” may vary and shift requiring an ongoing negotiation that dismantles fixed gendered assignments to and presumed sexual preferences especially within intimate spaces.



**Figure 6.23. Essay in Blueprints: Atypical 2-Rooms Set Apartments.** Source: Author.

Throughout this section, I attend to the ways in which cis-heteronormative blueprints command the spatial codes of *all* student housing typologies to the detriment of everyday be(long)ing for HE-LGBTQ+ students. Parental homes were seen to prioritize normative coupledness by desexualising and zoning together the single senior adults and young adults in the family. PGs are hyper-consumed in appealing to students' parents by rigidly mimicking normative domesticity despite their market-oriented spatially modified blueprints. University hostels take regressive forms exclusively for women students and thereby ruthlessly overriding the egalitarian premises of educational campuses with cis-heteropatriarchal script. Even when the hostel administration takes on a liberal inclusive stance, their gesture and solution is insufficient for leaving the very cis-heteropatriarchal script unchallenged. A similar micro-surveillance of their everyday domestic and extra-domestic movements, expressions, and activities by landowners and neighbourhood residents vastly violate students' autonomy of homing in rental housing. Across student housing typologies in Indian megacity-regions, normative blueprints work to kill queer and trans potential of homemaking through all three iterations of queer domicide (namely, *domifeticide*, *domitericide*, and *domipanopticide*) formulated in the first half of the chapter.

Yet, queer and trans students rework to transform normative domesticities through their creative and resilient home(un)making practices. Unintentional aberrations in the form of nano spatial gestures might act as queer and trans openings within an otherwise normative blueprint. These queer openings worked to disrupt normative notions of compulsory coupledness and togetherness under a single roof as it may conflate with the notion *and* the spatial design of a home. Such a conflation takes consent within intimate relationships and spaces for granted as a one-time pass, thereby, intentionally destructing bridges for coming together with consent. As

seen in the case above, these bridges are important queer passages *within* homes, the destruction of which can be understood as a form of *domitericide*. Similarly, densely packed layouts within family homes that neither afford nor warrant queer students' need for privacy, demanding them to keep the door to their rooms always open, and assuming the boundaries of their rooms flexible and incapable of being violated renders familial forms of *domipanopticide* for LGBTQ+ post-secondary students who (are circumstantially forced to) live with parents at their parental homes. These normative codes of domesticity are extended to student housing where wardens and landowners assume familial roles of well-meaning policing of embodiments and spatialities outside of marriage coded in rhythmic division rather than togetherness.

## **Conclusions: Reconfiguring the Optical Apparatus to Counter the Queer Domicide**

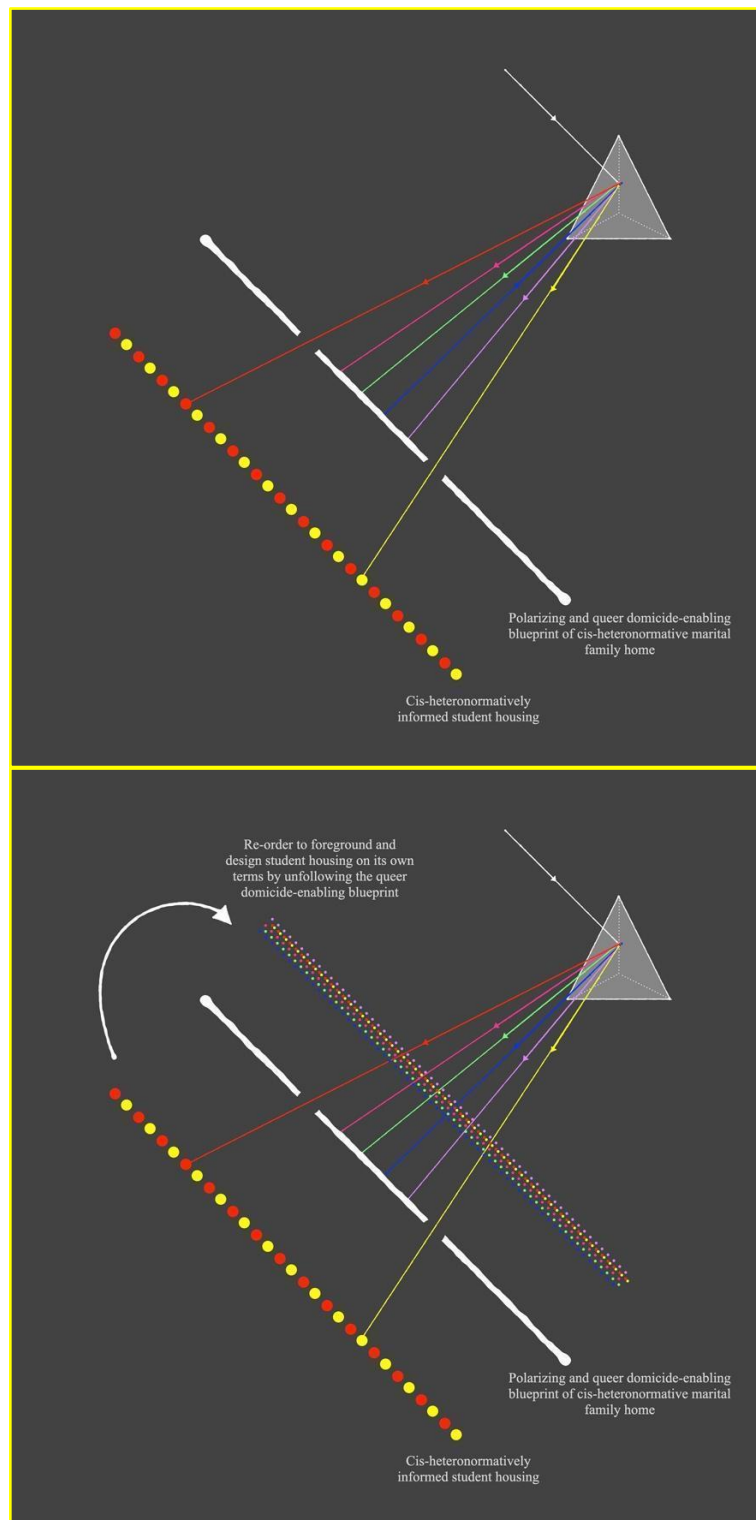
This chapter provides a conceptual re-*visioning* of queer domicile. It is critically observed throughout the chapter that in contemporary urban India, studenthood and student housing are normatively approached as a transitory phase on the straight time pathway hinged between the student's parental home and presumed marital home (normatively though, in the case of a cis man, his parental home *is* his marital home). Such a normative notion works to subsume the spatiality of student housing according to the cis-heteropatriarchal moral sensibilities. It further works to kill the queer and trans potential of spaces, specifically of student housing outside of normative marital homes.

For HE-LGBTQ+ students in India, reimagining and realizing non-normative phantom homes outside of marital family homes is not a transitory, rather an ongoing crisis resulting in the experience of spatial dysphoria. For those of us who have testified every day for the

destruction of our (idea and sense of) home by the normative confluence of love, coupledness, permanence, domesticity, and familial home, we work towards critical home *un*making by unfollowing the queer domicide-enabling blueprint. In Chapter 4, I critically argue how the scale of the blueprint to normative marital domesticity does not remain confined to home, rather gets magnified and projected beyond and onto other spatial scales that of the institutional and urban relationships such as the university-city edges. In recognizing and keeping open the exploratory approaches to *homing*, there is no provision for an alternative blueprint prescription for a queer and trans home. Rather, I offer critical reflection and reconfiguration of the conceptual optical apparatus that this chapter opened with. It is my aim through this reconfiguration to initiate the process of *transforming* and reimagining non-normative homes, including university-city edges.

In Figure 6.24 (top), when multicolored rays of light meet the polarizing surface, it only lets red and yellow to pass through it, thereby, realizing a field of binary coded spaces. Through the empirical case studies, it is demonstrated how cis-heteronormative domestic codes are projected onto *all* forms of homes and homemaking, including especially student housing outside of a reproductive marital family home. Such normative design and administration of student housing is invested in producing not only “future global citizen-leaders”, but also future ‘wife/husband materials’ with social reproductive capital. Some reconfiguration of the apparatus is suggested here to counter the cis-heteronormative projection commanding queer domicide (Figure 6.24: bottom). To that end, the design surface of the student housing must be brought to the fore where it can establish direct contact with *all* rays of light codes and be visualized, reimagined and designed on its own terms, unfollowing the queer domicide-enabling blueprint. Critical reconfiguration of the optical apparatus will facilitate recognizing and nurturing of the

queer and trans potential of spaces, rather than killing it. In the reconfigured optical apparatus, student housing offers heterotopic reflections for reimagining non-normative homes.



**Figure 6.24. Countering the queer domicile.** Source: Author (2023).



# 7

**Conclusion** | Un/earthing Phantom Homes

# 7

## Conclusion: Un/Earthing Phantom Homes

You can grow anything in this soil, but these houses from the other side... These houses don't find root... Houses like this one... couldn't translate into the land. They are phantom homes.

(Isabel, an indigenous Mexican migrant in the US as cited in Walsh, 2017, pp. 195-196)

A “phantom” means “a ghost” or like a ghost, “a figment of imagination”, “something apparent to sense but with no substantial existence”, something that is elusive or visionary, and/or but a representation of something “incorporeal”. As that are only seemingly real, “phantoms” are fundamentally marked by the *absence* of corporeality. Walsh (2017, p. 195) observes how indigenous Mexican migrant narratives demonstrate that “language and land [are] inseparable” from one another, and that therefore, there is a certain incapability of translation and grounding of their cultural imagination on the “other side” in the US, as testified by Isabel, one of her indigenous Mexican migrant informants. Yet, as “phantom homes” they carry the *trans* desire and potential for bridging, disrupting, and reworking the world of normative binaries—real/imagined, present/absent, in/corporeal, permanence/transience—one of the primary objectives that drives this dissertation. Like migrant homes and residents on the geopolitical and cultural borderlands of the Mexico/US, this dissertation centers HE-LGBTQ+ students and student housing and homes as “trans subjects” on the borderlands of the town and gown, the university and the city. Unlike predominant migrant geographies of normative family homes,



however, in this dissertation, by attending to the lived experiences of HE-LGBTQ+ students in Delhi and Mumbai in India, I render explicit the implicit questions about non-normative genders, sexualities, and spatialities in the face of being denied the language, the law, and the land to materialize non-normative homes, selfhoods, and relationships. All forms of non-normative homes in India — housing outside of a cis-heteronormative marital reproductive home, including “student housing”— get excluded from the mainstream psycho-socio-spatial and relegated to the invisible and unheard dimensions of othered worlds of “phantom homes”. The psycho-socio-spatial distancing of student “hostels” from the notion of “housing” and “homes” in India is legitimated owing to the “transient” status of postsecondary student lives and living that are yet to “adult” into the “permanence” of a normative marital reproductive domesticity. LGBTQ+ lives, living, and spatialities that are psycho-socio-legally excluded from normative domestic contracts in India get rendered thus, as “indefinitely transient”; they are visible in *passing* as a blur, a ghost—a “phantom”. In this indefinitely transient meantime, as we long for and work towards delimiting and transforming the spatiotemporal matrix of cis-heteronormative domesticities with queer and trans re-imaginary possibilities, what blueprints of *phantom homes* do we (not) get to experience?

In this dissertation, I have emphasized how a psycho-socio-spatial distance between “permanent” family homes and “transient” student homes is normatively maintained through well-meaning and seemingly innocuous framings of student hostels, PGs, and rental apartments as “a home *away* from home” [emphasis added]. Concomitantly, such a magnified projection of cis-heteronormative marital reproductive homes works to domesticate the university-city borderlands relationship. The first of the three empirical chapters, Chapter 4 then, entitled “On the Borderlands of the Domesticated University-City Relationship”, set up the battlefield—an

‘edgy’ site that reveals how the question of home, love, safety, and stability is also for some of us LGBTQ+ postsecondary students outside of normative marital family arrangement that of an everyday war, trauma, micro-surveillance, and stagnancy. In particular, bringing the analytical framework of sexuality to the centre, I juxtaposed legal geographies with LGBTQ+ students’ psychogeographies of the university campus edge(s) as it interfaces with the city. Next, Chapter 5, “Homonegative Labyrinth of Representational Distortions of the Student-Image”, analyzed the multi-tier martial (ironically also an anagram for marital) strategy effectuated by different cis-heteronormative urban actors—including parents and guardians, hostel wardens and PG owners, housing brokers, landowners, and neighbours, as well as spatial experts such as urban planners, architects, activists, and pedagogues—shaping the student housing market to generate and maintain a sense of spatial dysphoria among HE-LGBTQ+ students. I foregrounded the gaps between radical transformative planning initiatives and queer and trans student-citizens, as well as between queer and trans activism and housing activism that was unequivocally expressed by both the urban planners and the LGBTQ+ university students I interviewed. I offered six facets of the student-image as they come into play with queer and trans students’ formal-legal and informal-social encounters when securing and making homes to culminate in what I critically observed as the “representational distortions” of the HE-LGBTQ+ student-image. I amplified the need to listen to the spatial stories of HE-LGBTQ+ students as part of the queering urban planning and governance initiatives. However, I also noted how cis-heteronormative spatial pedagogies leave such urban planning gestures not only overdue, but also render urban planners incapable of listening to non-normative lived experiences. In that, I echo, for instance, Vallerand’s (2020) call for lesbian architects and Doan’s (2010) call for trans urban planners. Their identity-specific calls reflect the need for embodied knowing alongside disciplinary

knowledge systems. Finally, Chapter 6, “Unfollowing the Queer Domicide-Enabling Blueprint”, meditated on the site of destruction. Re-visioning the scantily researched concept of “queer domicile” (Gorman-Murray et al., 2014; Nowicki, 2014) and utilizing Agamben’s theoretical revisiting of Foucault’s work on “apparatus” (or *dispositif*), from the direct analysis of the lived experiences of queer and trans students, including me, I offered a three-fold extension by bringing and unpacking new interim conceptual vocabulary to be folded into the larger concept of “queer domicile”: *domifeticide*, *domitericide*, and *domipanopticide*. The second half of this chapter revealed transformative openings within queer-domicidal blueprints when inhabited with resilience and “hometactics” by LGBTQ+ postsecondary students. Here I centred the discussion across a four-fold familial arrangement as it corresponds to different typologies of student accommodations in India from living with *biological family*, to living with “*acting family*” in PGs, living in *the absence of family* in student hostels, and living with *chosen families* in shared private rental apartments.

The above site of destruction—of queer domicile—renders a tacit landscape of “beating queer and trans graveyards” of LGBTQ+ student lives, living, and homes beneath the cis-heteronormative footings of normative family homes. It is from this place of the invisible/invisibilized place of longing and mourning while simultaneously resisting normative and (re)creating alternative housing pathways expressed in the spatial stories of Indian queer and trans postsecondary students that the readers are introduced to this dissertation. Critically holding together, the dichotomous placement of non-normative homes in buried queer and trans dystopias and alienated utopias floating in othered worlds, this concluding chapter underlines that non-normative lives, living and homes need the parallel work of unearthing *and* earthing phantom homes (Figure 7.1). This closing argument, then, reflects on the lessons from HE-

LGBTQ+ students' heterotopias, offering psycho-socio-spatial re-imaginary possibilities of *materealizing*<sup>24</sup> non-normative phantom homes. To that end, immersive HE-LGBTQ+ students' spatial stories, metaphorically speaking, may work to fertilize the queer-domicidal soil for the necessary rooting and surfacing of the queer and trans potent seeds.



**Figure 7.1. The parallel work of unearthing and earthing phantom homes.** Source: Author's (2023) vision, primary sketch, and text-prompt rendered by MidJourney and followed by digital layer-edits.

<sup>24</sup> I use the wordplay on *matereal* to challenge and disrupt the cisnormative equation of material as real as against the felt, imagined, virtual, augmented, trans, as unreal, even fake.

Students' spatial stories analysed in this dissertation have accentuated the currently muted voices of queer and trans students in India and have worked to critically queer the figure of the student along with the rich portrait of campus environment within the wider, predominantly Anglo-American-Australian urban scholarship on studentification, town-and-gown, and gentrification. In Chapter 2, in addition to the above key literatures, I also engaged with and revealed the limits of the feminist and queer geographies of homes literature by foregrounding the lived experiences of queer and trans/gnc postsecondary students living across a range of different normative and non-normative domestic arrangements. Much of the feminist and queer geographies of homes literature in their current form neglect cisnormativity in domestic spaces and are largely focused on ownership-based housing and homes to the neglect of transient homes, especially institutional housing, rental housing, and in the particular case of India, an additional typology of off-campus PG accommodations. Concomitantly, within the Indian urban scholarship, we stand at the outset of student housing literature. While there has been exceptional study on women's hostels (Krishnan, 2019), and rental housing discrimination based on religion, caste, marital status and gender (Datta and Pathania, 2016; Bhargava and Chilana, 2020), this dissertation has initiated a much needed critical psycho-socio-spatial study of on- and off-campus student housing geographies in India underlining the invisible yet deeply prevalent cis-heteronormative dimensions of everyday homemaking and housing discrimination.

One of the key contributions of this dissertation is to the lesser researched intersection of home, trauma, and well-being. Largely studied in the context of geographies of warzones and refugee settlements, the trauma of imagining and creating non-normative homes is barely studied. Adding to the scarce current scholarly literature based predominantly out of EU—Wilkinson and Ortega-Alcázar's (2019) study on the well-being of single people's geographies

of homes, and Boccagni's (2022) study on queer migrants' "homing" practices—this doctoral research study based in the contemporary urban Indian context foregrounds the lived *and* felt experiences, and psychogeographies of HE-LGBTQ+ students' homing journeys outside of normative domesticities. For example, most students expressed that their basic need for privacy was not only not met but was not justified and was rather actively undone through micro-spatial reconfigurations whether they stayed with their parents, in university hostels, PGs, or in rental apartments. They found their everyday movements, behaviours, and relationships constantly micro-surveilled by cis-heteronormative parents and relatives, hostel and PG wardens, as well as landowners and neighbours who self-appointed themselves to safeguard and (re-)instill norms around binary gender, reproductive sexuality, and marital domesticity. In this sense, it is not simply homelessness then—although access to affordable housing is important—but also the normative nature of domestication with direct implications for a lack of sense of being and belonging for HE-LGBTQ+ student residents that is brought to the fore throughout this dissertation.

In placing the previous chapters—its key concepts and ideas—in direct conversation with one another, I revisit here the theoretical framework mapped out in Chapter 2. Drawing from an assemblage of theorists, I derived three key concepts from the analysis of student testimonies: trans subjects, spatial dysphoria, and phantom homes. I first utilized Derrida's poststructuralist theory to actively "deconstruct" cis-heteronormativity as foundational to the notion of "home". Next, I placed Foucault's spatial concept of heterotopia in conjunction with Oswin's "queered subjects" and Aizura's "mobile subjects" to develop a working understanding of both the LGBTQ+ students and student housing and homes as what I have called, "trans subjects" located on the borderlands of the university and the city. The analytical concept of heterotopia is

internalized throughout the empirical chapters to reposition and reflect from the HE-LGBTQ+ student perspective and counter the normative domesticity. Localizing heterotopia in Mariana Ortega's theoretical work critically analysing the notion of "home" through "hometactics" in connection to one's sense of belonging as "multiplicitous selves" and challenging thus, what even entails as "authentic belonging", I developed the notion of "spatial dysphoria" which is later discussed empirically in Chapter 5. Finally, connecting spatial dysphoria with gender dysphoria, I drew from the limited research at the intersection of post-war studies, neuroscience, and trans studies on phantom limbs and phantom penis (or beard or breasts) as experienced by war veterans and trans individuals, respectively, to consider locating one's sense of belonging such that it dismantles the (cis)normative binary between in/corporeal, presence/absence, and real/virtual (or fake). Further, I considered the queer and trans potential of phantom limbs and phantom penis phenomena to reimagine and realize the spatiality of non-normative phantom homes.

In Chapter 3, I discussed how this dissertation deploys the power of the visual to bring *othered* worlds into being and *othering* structures into critical light. This is a visual-spatial dissertation uniquely placed at the disciplinary intersection of art-geography-architecture, an interface that is psycho-socio-spatially revealing and transformative. A range of visual images—such as 2D and 3D technical architectural drawings, analytical diagrams, graphic narratives, geographical and mental maps, as well as chapter cover artworks—document, analyse, and tell multidimensional immersive spatial stories of HE-LGBTQ+ students in the two case study megacity-regions in India. I have offered the trans imaging technique as an artist-researcher-architect to be able to carry, hold, and transpose images, stories, and field data beyond and between the solidity of disciplinary boundaries so as to *see-through* normative complicities

of disciplinary praxis and represent the “unrepresentable” (Brown and Knopp, 2008). For example, I have visually demonstrated the many ways in which cis-heteronormativity spatially manifests itself, as well as the invisible and unrealized queer and trans socio-spatial potentialities. Drawing from medical imaging, I offered and employed throughout this dissertation, a trans imaging technique that deploys trans perceptions to see-through cisnormative solidities whether disciplinary as discussed in the methodologies Chapter 3, or psycho-socio-spatial as discussed in the three empirical Chapters 4, 5, and 6. I approached this task by conceptually theorizing *trans-imaging* techniques which build upon my own trans-disciplinary training and autoethnographic account of my academic route as it intertwines with my housing biography.

Besides disciplinary boundaries, I also explore the trans core in collaborating with AR and AI technologies as a key means of disrupting the cis perception of a coherent and a fully comprehensible body and how we must inhabit (and exhibit) it. Drawing from Haraway’s (2000) concept of cyborgs where the digital technology is not separate from rather a crucial extension to our physical and mental bodies, and from Irwin and Cosson’s work on the a/r/tography emphasizing the role of the “/” that opens the interface of human and post-human, I crucially place AR and AI technologies to enable queer and trans coding of our spatial environments, experiences, and perspectives. Therefore, experimental image-making with AI is explored to generate immersive experience for the readers of queer and trans students’ spatial stories analysed and visualised in this dissertation. For instance, the cover image for each chapter is integral (and not an aesthetic add-on) to its respective chapter text, demonstrating how the ideas connect and build on one another across chapters in the overarching analytical narrative (Figure 7.2, see also Figure 1.3). In Figure 7.2, I place all the chapter covers next to one another to



demonstrate the overarching narrative of the dissertation. The first cover image visually depicts the site of excavation—to surface the beating queer and trans graveyards that have been buried beneath the footing of the normative family homes. The following image bears witness to the transformation of previously buried rainbow (tomb)stones emerging now as rays of light from the ground while the normative home disappears. The cover image for the methodologies chapter provides an x-ray visual of the student hostel infrastructure coded in gender binary. The following three cover images for the empirical chapters may be seen to form a triptych that builds the sub-plot of queer domicile (unpacked in detail within respective chapters). Finally, the concluding chapter cover represents the above-mentioned parallel work of un/earthing phantom homes. While the concluding chapter offers the formal close of this dissertation, the very structure of the chapter is intended to subvert a linear progression from 1-to-7, and with a queer folding reconfiguring to circle back in ways like the spinning dial (see Figure 7.3 discussed below). Therefore, the above-provided walkthrough the chapters entering from Chapter 4, further signals a second point of departure in Chapter 3 that has offered the practical guidelines, toolbox, and research methods to rework disciplinary norms (boundaries and languages) and open portals of critical and creative inquiry. Through my own research-art-architectural practice in this dissertation, I have critically engaged diverse communities on the normative script of domesticity investigating and representing where notions of gender, sexuality, and the intimate scale of home intersect.



**Figure 7.2. Visual narrative from queer and trans graveyards to un/earthing phantom homes through chapter covers.** Source: Author's (2023) vision, primary sketch, and text-prompt rendered by MidJourney and followed by digital layer-edits.

In what follows, I underline the practical scope of this dissertation. In addition to contributing to the scholarly literature, theoretical work, and disciplinary praxis, above I argue that as spatial practitioners—urban geographers, planners and policymakers, and architects—we must take lessons from the spatial stories of HE-LGBTQ+ students as they strive to make non-normative homes in India. I offer three critical psycho-socio-spatial prompts as they align with the three empirical chapters on the university-city borderlands relationship, the role and scope of immersive queer and trans students' spatial stories in transformative planning towards queering both the student-image and student housing, and countering with spatial reconfiguration of the queer-domicidal blueprints.

One of the first steps in the direction of queering student housing and homes, I have underlined, is to queer the campus edge(s). By this I mean to recognize and approach the campus edge(s) as crucially a queer and trans/non-binary ecological project. The university as it interfaces with the city needs to be undomesticated first to prevent the replaying of a sense of *disbelonging* and spatial dysphoria for queer and trans students as reproduced in normative marital reproductive homes. To that end, I critically extend feminist urban scholar Dolores Hayden's (1980) question to consider *what would non cis-heterosexist university-city edges be like?* What would it mean to for the site of the university-city edges to be especially demarcated as non-binary and heterogenous on an urban master plan? This could involve on the part of critical student and faculty members who resisted private real estate developers from violating the university boundaries to equally recognize the limitations and resist the university administration's proposed initiatives to integrate by entirely closing off the campus premises and hardening the campus boundary. Such a cis-normative binary coded spatial resolution in response to violation of boundary fails to nurture the ephemeral and heterogenous interfaces of

the campus edges (in plural). Further, trans planning and policymaking approaches can be taken on in demarcating a “non-binary” land use along the campus edge that is neither institutional academic nor residential alone, but precisely in-between the two, serving as a socio-cultural bridge and an informal extension of discursive space. As a “third space” (Bhabha, 2004), it could undo the binary of the town-and-gown and work/home so as to create space to listen to and engage with HE-LGBTQ+ students’ heterogenous lived experiences, amongst others. It is important to actively recognize and disrupt the above binary as like with most binaries, either entity is often effortlessly coded in gender binary. For instance, in Chapter 4, I analysed how university campuses are feminized by and in contrast to the masculinist neoliberal state which then further forces a normative marital domestic contract between the town-and-gown. There is a certain wifing of the university campuses charged with the double shift towards students-as-ideal future citizens, as well as towards the local communities. Left unchecked this binary and the following projection of the domestic contract has direct implications on the HE-LGBTQ+ students who relive the trauma of growing up queer and trans in cis-heteronormative households and homonegative societies. Therefore, campus edges are unarguably critical sites to intervene, queer, and transform in moving towards reimagining non-normative homes.

Concomitantly to undomesticating the university-city edges, and perhaps to the optimal use of new trans edges of the campus, the representational distortions of the student-image within the wider context of societal homonegative labyrinth needs to be countered with immersive queer and trans students’ spatial stories of both gender/body and spatial dysphoria. In that, much can be explored through employing of the emerging AR technology to augment, immerse in and experience the alternative reality. Such embedding of differences *in* reality with see-through layering and superimposition techniques may work towards queer and trans recoding

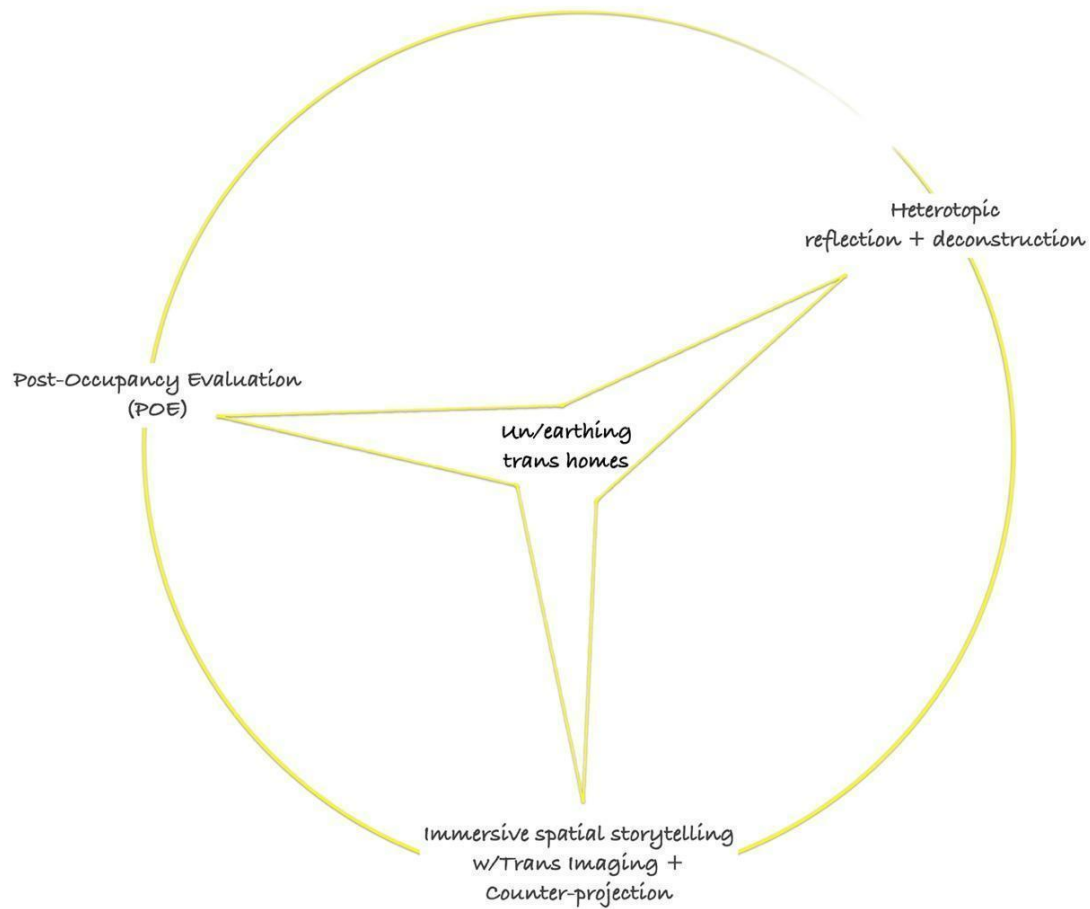
of both the student-image and the image and spatiality of student housing and homes. In the absence of language, law, and land, AR technology has the potential to offer new planes to reimagine and realize non-normative realities within the psycho-socio-spatial contexts of deprivation. As one of the future prospects, I visualize and propose an AR exhibition that tells queer and trans postsecondary students' stories as fragments scattered *across* and embedded *in* the corresponding spaces of student hostels, PGs, and rental apartments. With multiple interactive and non-linear pathways, viewers of this AR exhibition can work their own way to piecing together and experiencing the narratives. Through the employment of AR technology, queer and trans felt spaces and memories are superimposed onto the limiting cisnormative "real" spaces, posing critical questions to the cis-heteronormative spatial coding. Each narrative fragment-in-spatial element would perform thus what I have called in Chapter 3, *psychodigitalgeographies* of queer and trans students' phantom experiences as a research-art-architectural experiential project critically informing transformative urban planning initiatives.

A final objective of this dissertation has been the methodological exploration engaging a trans-disciplinary study of student housing. I underline the gaps between disciplinary methods of inquiry, data-gathering tools, as well as primary linguistic form. I foresee tremendous potential in bridging these disciplinary gaps where geography, architecture, and visual arts can initiate a mutually beneficial collaborative practice. I exemplify such a collaborative practice throughout this doctoral research work conducting a critical architectural-visual-geographical study to first challenge the normative socio-spatial positioning and imagining of transient "student hostels" on the straight time pathway enroute to the permanent marital reproductive home, and second, counter-posit "student housing" as a heterotopic way to reimagine non-normative homes. In the context of postcolonial India, there is a psycho-socio-legal exclusion of both LGBTQ+

relationships as well as non-normative living and cohabitation arrangements between lovers and/or friends. Queer and trans students I talked to have time and again witnessed the relationships of their straight friends' "progress" to next stage of officialising with the socio-legal recognition while parallelly witnessing their own lovers giving into the incentives of the marriage with their own relationships falling apart, being denied, or even criminalized. There is no pathway for queer relationships and non-normative living outside of cis-heteronormative marital domesticity. In more ways than one, we have testified the destruction of our homes even before having a chance to make them. By rendering student housing as transient because of its location outside of normative marital homes, effectively, all queer and trans individuals and their queer relationships in India are rendered as indefinitely transient—as phantoms. Witnessing the selective stunting of growth of relationships, homes, and a sense of selfhood (and adulthood) for queer and trans postsecondary students while their straight colleagues and friends and their relationships get a pass has tremendous trauma associated directly with the spatiality of normative homes and domesticities. Normative homes blueprints are thus, critically observed in Chapter 6 as queer-domicidal. In the same chapter, I offer the parallel third step of spatial reconfiguration to counter the queer domicile by first, blocking the projection of normative marital reproductive family home onto *all* living spatialities, including student housing; second, design student housing on its own terms—*not* as a transient accommodation on a straight time pathway, but precisely as a heterotopic initiation offering lessons in reimagining non-normative homes; and, third, conduct critical post-occupancy evaluation of student spatialities to study what gets lost in the realization and un/earthing of queer and trans non-normative phantom homes.

For instance, the student-led Queer Collective (QC) at TISS initiated gender-based housing activism for trans/gnc students following the successful sanction of the first Trans Bill in 2014. They created the space to hold the conversations around queer, trans and gnc students' lived experiences of *dis*belonging within binary coded student hostels and its rigidly impermeable psycho-socio-spatial boundaries, raising important question: how do we scale such conversations up to mobilise further such trans-formations? They even created a virtual space in the form of a LGBTQ+ student-led blog that invited queer and trans students to share their stories of navigating cis-heteronormativity of residential campus geographies. Parts of these conversations and housing activism led the administration to reallocate (*not* reconstruct an entirely "new" space) one of the women's hostel wings as what has been helmed as India's first gender-neutral hostel. In Chapter 6, I critically unpacked what got lost in the "realization" of QC's vision by conducting an in-depth post-occupancy evaluation of the GNH-wing, but also signalling the larger issue in terms of the kinds of campus edges and housing 'solution' pivots university administrations are more likely thus, to make when faced with activist or state provocations. Most often than not, these are normative governance approaches that would rather doing away with one-time LGBTQ+ inclusive (or exclusive) arrangement rather than disrupting by an ongoing engagement with important queer and trans students' critique of at once internalised *and* universalised cis-heteronormative environment. I critically argued why GNH is *not* an architectural (or in this case, administrative) "solution" but a psycho-socio-spatial question that must be 'spun' over and again with time to generate multiple non-normative reimaginary possibilities rather than an underutilized one-time "trans inclusive" end product that ultimately continues to be cis-heteronormatively administered. Much of the inclusive planning and design discourses, more so at a smaller scale of institutional housing for marginalised

populations, envision a linear pathway to queer and trans inclusive goals. Solution-oriented approaches within architecture and spatial discourse, though necessary, should be considered cyclical rather than linear, and as creative disciplines, should engage in the full capacity of generating multiple reimaginary possibilities than a prescriptive blueprint.



**Figure 7.3. Spinner dial for un/earthing phantom homes.** Source: Author.

As a concluding step in noting lessons in reimagining non-normative homes from HE-LGBTQ+ students, above I devise a *spinner dial* which I posit as one with enabling capacity for



un/earthing non-normative phantom homes (Figure 7.2). Here, I necessitate POE as a critical follow up after realizing queer and trans vision, such as that of QC's vision of a GNH. Being informed by the lived and felt experiences of queer and trans/gnc students of the GNH for my case study has illuminated multiple drawbacks including missing concerns around mental health and wellbeing with the micro-ghettoization of non-normative genders identifying students, limits of the admission process and screening by queer student-administration committee, as well as lack of sufficient queer and trans positive discourse among housing wardens, security guards, and other housing administrative actors who continued to intensify the administration, the micro-surveillance, and normative coding of the GNH with pre-conceived and internalised cis-heteronormative notions of friendship and love, reproductive sex(ual violence), and home. An ongoing critical engagement with HE-LGBTQ+ students' spatial stories would necessarily challenge such normative equation of home with cis-heterosexual love, reproduction, and permanence.

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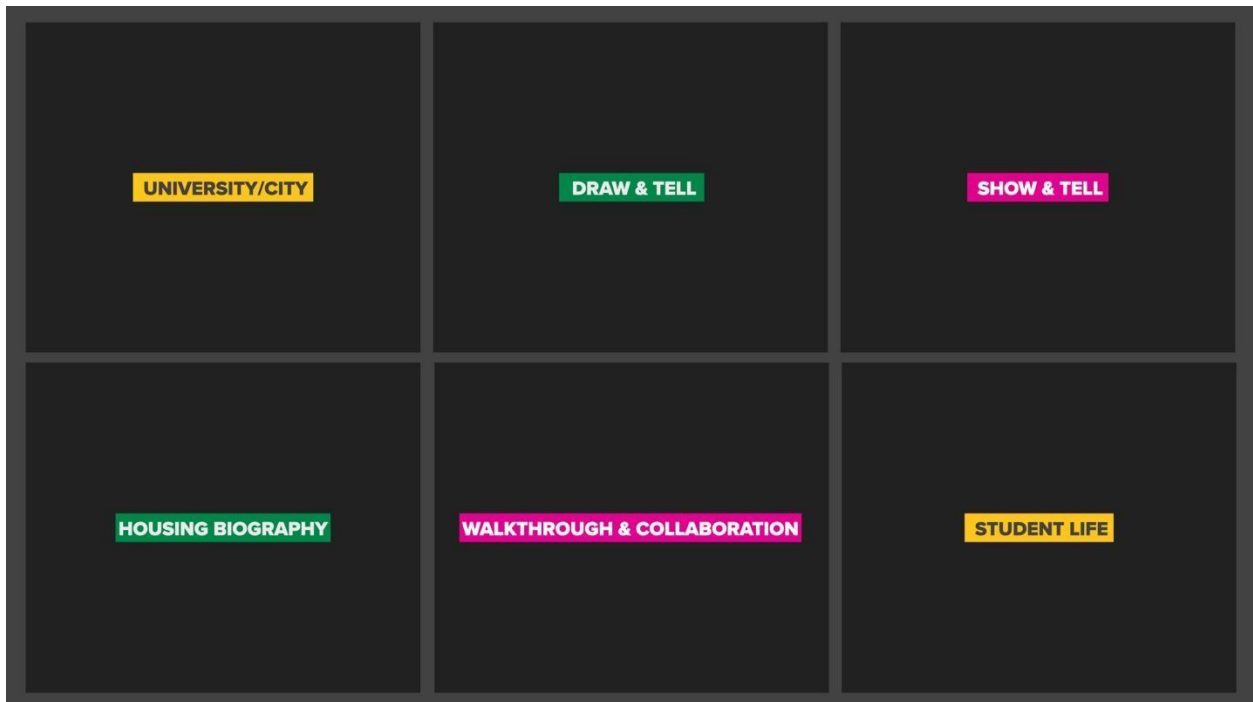
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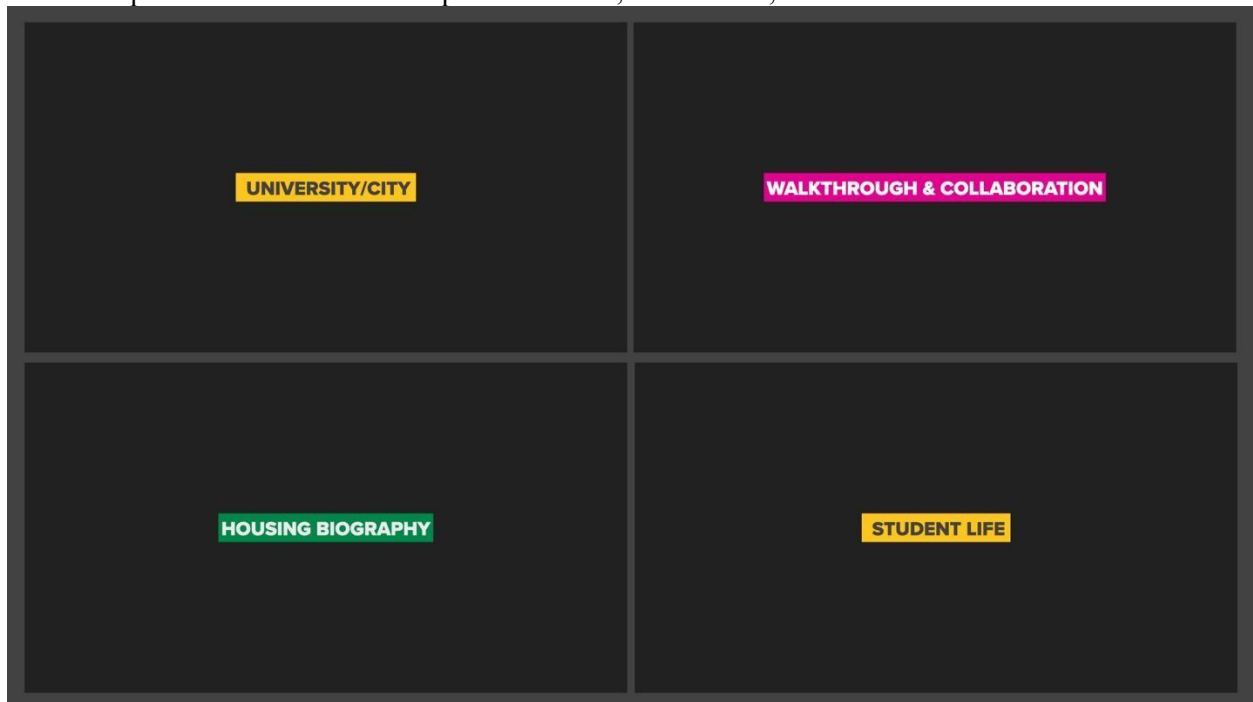
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## Appendix: Interview Documents

### In-Depth Interactive Interview Guideline with Cluster of Prompts for HE-LGBTQ+ Students



After the initial couple of interviews, selected parts of Draw & Tell, Show & Tell were folded into Walkthrough & Collaboration to contain the interview within 3 hours of time. Walkthrough and collaboration, unlike the other three main themes, differed depending on the student's narratives, openness, and interests, and was in part held offline where students shared links to their personal and social media photo-archives, for instance, outside of our interview time.



# UNIVERSITY/CITY

Could you tell me about your educational route?

Take the next few minutes to draw a relational map of the university of your current affiliation, where you live, and the city.

Talk to me about this map. What did you put on it and why? How do you move around/between the three places?

In what ways, and to what extent does the location of the university govern where you live in the city? What are other factors of consideration?

Where, according to you, the university ends? And, where does the city begin? You can use your map or draw a separate diagram. What markers inform you of the shift (if any) in the on/off campus environment? How would you describe the relationship between the university and the city? Can you describe having seen/imagined/desired a different university/city relationship?

On a regular day, how dis/connected do you feel to the university and why? And, to the city? What elements have you found contributing to the times when you feel differently?

How do you understand your own location as a student in relation to the university and the city? You can use your map or draw a separate diagram.

## DRAW & TELL

Take the next few minutes to visualize and draw your ideal living situation as a student, keeping in mind how you identify yourself, how you feel, and what your housing needs are.

Talk to me about this envision. How do you belong here?

In what ways where you live now meets (or not) the image you have drawn?

Can you recollect any place you have lived in as a student that comes close to this image? If yes, can you tell me how?

If no, why do you think that is?

Where is it located wrt the university and the city? What is important about its location?

In what ways have you found the current housing options in/adequate for yourself?

## SHOW & TELL

For the next couple of prompts, you can move us around your spaces/corners of your place, and/or use your own public/personal photo-archive, social media page(s), blog-posts/journal-entries, and/or archived messages.

Can you show me where in your home do you like to work? What do you like about it? How much time do you spend here in a day or a week?

What is your favourite part(s) in/about your place. How does it represent you?

Where in your house do you spend the majority of your time and why?

Can you show me aspects, objects and/or aesthetics that make it your space? What makes your current place different/similar from the one where you grew up?

Are there elements of you that are missing from this place?

Can you show me one or more housing ads(s) you found while house-hunting that made you feel out of place? Can you show me a housing ad that you posted while house/roommate-hunting? What was important for you while drafting it?

Take the next couple of minutes to choose audio/visual/textual posts from your social media pages and/or personal archive (blogs or journals) that show the relationship you have with the place(s) you live in, currently and/or in the past. Talk to me about these findings.

## WALKTHROUGH

Take the next few minutes to take us on a virtual house tour. While you move us around the place, I will measure-draw and document the house/room where you live. You will pace-walk the house to get as many spatial details as possible. (10-12mins)

Both of us will then take the next couple of minutes to make our respective drawings of your place. This will be a collaborative exercise. I will make an architectural drawing (layer 0) of the built environment (I may request, if needed, different angle-views). Parallely, you will also draw your place, and, add as many details as you recollect and desire, through notes and/or colours on the select parts of your drawing to reflect your own everyday lived experiences of the place (layer I). Conversely, you can choose to take photos of different parts of the house on your mobile device, and through photo-editing apps of your choice, write/draw on it. (15mins)



## HOUSING BIOGRAPHY

Tell me about your housing pathway. How many homes/ places do you trace having lived in? How many of these were you living in as a university student? How long did you experience these for? Can you mark where you lived the longest, and the shortest?

What are the various housing typologies you have lived in?

How would you describe your (current/ at the time) living arrangement? How long have/ did you experience/ d it for?

Looking at your housing pathway, do you recollect one or more remarkable experiences (positive or negative) with regards to your housing situation that has left a lasting impression in your memory? How did it make you feel? Your accounts could be about move in/out (i.e., between homes and/ or cities), securing housing, a regular day in the house/ room, your negotiation with the parents/ landlord/ housing authority, co-tenants, the neighbourhood.

In what ways do the homes you have lived in as a student dis/ allowed your self-expression and aspects of your identity? How did you deal with it? Could you describe what goes into your process of making a place your own?

You can choose 2-3 homes (such as short/ long term homes, rented/ sublet places, on/ off campus housing, parents' home) you have lived in to relatively reflect.

How would you describe your experience with long- / short-term living arrangements? Do you recollect your experience of subletting (as a sublessor or sublessee)? Can you tell me how different (if at all) was your sublet experience from other long-term housing experiences?

Could you talk to me about the dis/ continuities you have experienced between familial homes and other student accommodations you have lived in? What does home as a space mean to you?

## STUDENT LIFE

What does being a student mean to you? How does it represent you?

In what ways student life relates to your gender/ sexual identity? How would your life be different if you were not a student?

What does a regular day in your life as a student look like?

How would you describe your experience of student housing? You can tell me about specific living arrangements you inhabited while you were/ are a student?

What aspects of the current on/ off campus living options make you feel as if you don't belong and are not welcome? And, that make you feel you belong and are welcome?

If you are comfortable, could you please describe for me any personal experiences of discrimination that you have encountered based on your identity as a student and/ or based on your gender/ sexual identity?

How do/ did you navigate discriminatory experiences? What places or people made you feel supported, and, in what ways?

Semi-Structured Interview Guideline for Housing Brokers



# INTERVIEW GUIDELINE FOR BROKERS

Saturday, June 25, 2022 2:30 PM

## BROKER PROFILE

NAME:

LOCALITY/AREA/NEIGHBOURHOOD OF WORK:

**A. NETWORK | B. NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS | C. THE DEAL AND THE ROLE OF THE BROKER | D. THE FUTURE**

1. HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING AS A HOUSING BROKER IN THE RENTAL MARKET?
2. HAVE YOU ALWAYS WORKED IN THIS NEIGHBOURHOOD OF THE CITY? WHAT ARE THE PROS AND CONS OF WORKING IN THIS NEIGHBOURHOOD(S)?
3. HOW DO YOU REACH OUT TO CLIENTS (LANDLORDS AND TENANTS), OR THEY TO YOU? HOW DO YOU DECIDE THE BROKERAGE? HAVE YOU EVER BEEN LISTED WITH A UNIVERSITY? WHAT WAS YOUR EXPERIENCE LIKE?
4. WHAT KIND OF **TENANT PROFILES** HAVE YOU HAD MOST SO FAR? HAS TENANTS CHANGED OVER TIME? AND, WHAT KIND OF LANDLORD PROFILES (GENDER, RELATIONSHIP STATUS, CLASS, CASTE, RELIGION) HAVE YOU SEEN THE MOST SO FAR?
- ★ 5. IN WHAT WAYS HAS YOUR EXPERIENCE BEEN SIMILAR OR DIFFERENT IN FINDING HOUSING FOR STUDENTS FROM NON-STUDENTS? DO YOU HAVE A PREFERENCE? IS ONE OR THE OTHER EASIER? WHY DO YOU THINK THAT IS?
- ★ 6. WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS OF LANDLORDS FROM THEIR TENANTS AND THE COMMUNITY THEY BELONG TO, IF ANY? WHAT DO THEY TELL YOU? HAS IT CHANGED OVER TIME?
- ★ 7. WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENT-TENANTS IN THE HOME THEY ARE LOOKING FOR? HAS IT CHANGED OVER TIME?
8. HOW DO YOU SEE YOUR ROLE AS A HOUSING BROKER? DOES YOUR ROLE CONTINUE AFTER THE TENANCY AGREEMENT IS SIGNED/WHERE DOES YOUR ROLE END? HAS IT CHANGED OVER TIME?

- ★ 9. WHAT DO YOU THINK MAKES THE POTENTIAL TENANT COME TO YOU? HOW DO YOU ENSURE YOUR CLIENTS (LANDLORDS AND TENANTS) STAY WITH/RETURN TO YOU? WHAT DO YOU THINK HELPS YOU TO UNDERSTAND THE NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS OF YOUR CLIENTS-TENANTS AND LANDLORDS?
- 10. HOW DO YOU INTRODUCE POTENTIAL TENANT TO THE POTENTIAL LANDLORD? WHAT DO YOU SAY? WHAT HAPPENS AFTER?
- 11. HOW DO YOU MATCH THE TENANT TO LANDLORD/PROPERTY? WHAT IS OFTEN NEGOTIABLE AND DEFINITELY NOT NEGOTIABLE IN THE DEAL? WHAT KIND OF QUESTIONS/SUGGESTIONS, IF ANY, YOU ASK/MAKE TO EITHER THE TENANT OR THE LANDLORD?
- ★ 12. CAN YOU RECOLLECT EXPERIENCES OF REFUSALS OR MOST DIFFICULT DEALS TO SEAL? WHY DO YOU THINK IT WAS DIFFICULT OR IMPOSSIBLE TO MATCH?
- ★ 13. WHEN DO THINGS GO WRONG? HOW DO THEY GO WRONG? WHAT DO THEY SAY? WHAT HAPPENS?
- ★ 14. WHOM DO YOU THINK IS THE MOST UNDESIRE/"BAD" TENANT FOR LANDLORDS? HOW DO YOU MANAGE TO FIND HOUSING FOR THEM? WHO IS A "GOOD" TENANT? WHO IS A "GOOD" LANDLORD?
- 15. DO LGBTQ+ STUDENT-TENANTS COME TO YOU? DO THEY TELL YOU? CAN YOU TELL? HOW? WHY DO YOU THINK THEY CHOOSE TO COME TO YOU RATHER THAN OTHER BROKERS?
- 16. DO YOU-TENANT TELL THE LANDLORD OR DO YOU SUGGEST NOT TO? DO LANDLORDS ASK? HOW DO THEY ASK? HOW IMPORTANT IS IT TO TENANTS OR LANDLORDS OR YOU?
- 17. HAVE THERE BEEN REFUSALS BECAUSE SOMEONE BELONGED TO LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY? WHAT WOULD LANDLORDS SAY TO YOU? HOW WOULD YOU THEN REFUSE THE DEAL/BREAK THE NEWS TO THE TENANT? DO YOU FIND THEM ANOTHER PLACE? WHAT MADE THE NEW PLACE SUCCESSFUL DEAL?
- 18. IN WHAT WAYS HAVE RENTAL PROPERTIES AND THE RENTAL MARKET CHANGED OVER TIME?
- 19. HOW DO YOU SEE THE ROLE OF HOUSING BROKERS CHANGING IN THE FUTURE? WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES YOU ANTICIPATE TO FACE IN THE FUTURE? DO YOU PLAN TO CONTINUE WORKING AS A HOUSING BROKER?
- 20. HOW DO YOU SEE THE FUTURE OF STUDENT HOUSING/RENTAL MARKET?

Colour-coded interview guideline to prioritize the questions depending on the kind of time brokers were able to lend to us.

## INTERVIEW GUIDELINE FOR LANDLORDS

Saturday, June 25, 2022 2:12 PM

### LANDLORD PROFILE

Name:

FAMILY:

RENTAL PROPERTIES:

CURRENT TENANTS + RENT:

#### **A. Motivation & fears + finding tenants**

1. When was the first time you decided to rent out (part of) your property?  
What was your motivation?
- ★ 2. What kind of fears and/or anxieties have you had in investing in the rental market (and staying close to the campus)?
- ★ 3. What kinds of tenant profiles have you had so far?
- ★ 4. What preferences did/do you have for tenants? Why? Is there anyone you are sure you will never choose to rent your home to? why?
5. How did you reach out to potential tenants? Brokers? Ads? Word of mouth within familiar network?
6. How would you convey your needs/preferences for tenants to the broker? What are they?
- ★ 7. What do you look for in a potential tenant? Do you have a list of questions you ask when you first meet them? How do you judge whether or not you want to rent your home to them?
- ★ 8. What do you think students (and their parents) are looking for in their new home and landlords? What do they let you know about their housing needs and expectations when you first meet? What is your response (to students'?

housing needs)?

9. Have you ever had to refuse potential tenants? Why and how did/would you go about it?

**A. Renting experience + rules + relationship with tenants**

10. How would you describe your relationship with your tenants? What things remain the same?
11. What has been your experience in renting out your property to students? Have you had other kinds of tenants? In what ways have your experience been similar or different in renting out to students/non-students?
12. What rules/do's and don'ts do you have specifically for student-tenants?
13. Can you recollect having to deal with any kind of conflicts with student-tenants? How did it resolve?
14. Can you recollect such a time you had to ask the student-tenant to evict? What happened?

**C. Changes & modifications**

15. In what ways have you had to change/modify your house to accommodate students over time? How is it different from your house?
16. In what ways have you had to change/modify your rules/preferences to accommodate students over time? How is it different from your house rules?
17. In what ways would you say has your relationship changed (for the better or for worse) with the neighbours since you rented out?  
Are there more ppl who come ask you how to do it themselves? Do they not like your renting out?

**D. Future plans + the best & the worst part of**

18. What is the best and the worst part of investing in the rental market? What would you propose/suggest to better the rental market? What is the best and worst part of living close to the campus?
19. What is the best and the worst part of renting out to students? Would you keep renting to students in the future, or do you have other short/long-term plans for the property? What are some challenges you anticipate to face if

you continue to rent to students in the future?

20. With the recent LGBTQ+ ruling, law ke mutabik changes jo aa rahe hai bade sheheron mein, what is your response to these changes? Do you think it effects your renting experience in any way or who your tenants will be in future and what their housing needs will be?

## INTERVIEW GUIDELINE FOR LANDLORDS (Hinglish)

Thursday, July 27, 2023 5:00 PM

Shuru shuru mein apne jab first rent out karna theek samja, to apko kya motivation tha? Kaise khyal aya aur decide kiya ha rent out karte hai?

Dar ya fikra/chinta thi kisi baare mein?

Ab tak apke yaha kis kis prakar ke tenants reh chuke honge?

Kafi sare landlords hote hai jo aksar prefer karte hai ki ya toh married couples ko de. Singles ko ghar dena prefer nahi karte. Kuch single women ko nahi dena chahte. Toh aap ko yeh sare sawal kabhi the? Kya apko fark padta hai apke yaha student-tenants ka kya relationship ya marital status ho?

Broker ke saath ki meeting kaise rehti hai jaise? Apki kya needs hai who unko kaise batate hai? Zyadatar kin needs ka khyal rakhna hota tha aapko?

Tenants mein aap kya dhoondhte hai? Kya kuch sawaal hote hai jo aapko puchna zaroori lagta hai first time milte waqt? Aur jaise aapko kaise pata chalta hai/judgement kaise milta hai/ ki aapko unhe tenants rakhna hai ya nahi?

Aapke experience se, students kya dhoondh rahe hote hai unke naye ghar me aur landlords mein? Kya who aapko koi sawal karte hai first time meeting mein?

Kya apko kabhi kisi potential/tenants ko rehne se inkar karna pada hai? Apne kaise deal kiya aisi situation se?

--



Jab aapne rent pe dena shuru kiya ghar, toh kis tarah ke badlav karne paden the tenants ko rakhne ke liye? Aapke ghar se kaise diff ya same hoga?

Waqf ke saath apko kya apke rules ya pasand ko badalna pada tenants ko rakhne ke liye? Aapke apne ghar se kaise diff ya same honge yeh rules?

Neighbours ke saath apke relation kaise badale behtar ya kharab jabse apne rent pe dena shuru kiya ghar? Kya koi permissions leni hoti hai? Kya aise bhi neighbours hote hai jo apse salah mashwara karne aate ho khud rent pe dena soch rahe ho tab? Generally unka kya reaction hota hai? Kya unhe zyadatar pasand ya napsand hota hai ki aap rent pe dete hai?

Abhi to itne saal ho gaye aap rent pe dete hai. Aapke mutabik rental market me invest karne ka best or worst part kya hai?

Students ko rent pe dena ka best or worst part kya lagta hai apko? Kya aap aage chal ke students ko rent pe denge? Ki apke kuch short/long term plans hai apki property ko leke? Aise kya kuch toh challenges hai jo aap poorvanooman kar sakte rahenge agar aap students ko rent pe dete rahe apka ghar?

## Interview Guideline to email

Wednesday, July 20, 2022 11:30 AM

### **MBD Campaign**

I know some of what you do, but to get us started, could you tell us briefly about your work, your current role in the organisation?

How did you come to work as part of the MBD campaign, and what was your involvement in the project?

For those of us who are not aware, can you briefly tell us what is MBD campaign? And, how did it formulate? Is it an ephemeral campaign that comes at the time of MP, or there is background ongoing work even between MPs being floated?

Can you tell about the structure of the campaign--were there different teams?

Can you tell us briefly about what was the planning process with MBD campaign? Which urban actors did you have to meet with? What role did the city planners play?

What was the most difficult part of this negotiation? And were there things/people that were unexpectedly easier to get through?

### **Inclusive Planning and Housing in Delhi**

Besides MBD, have you come across other planning initiatives working towards inclusive housing in Delhi, India?

From your working experience on the campaign, what would you say are some of the biggest challenges to inclusive planning in Delhi? And, to affordable urban rental housing in Delhi? Whom do you think faces the maximum brunt of these challenges in urban housing in Delhi?

### **Institutional Housing for Students (discussion about sub-focus oriented**

What is the nature, extent and scope of the place of institutional housing (specifically HEIs) and Higher Education (HE) students in the vision of the city?

Have you come across any planning initiative where either the university of student groups and/or student leaders were involved in the housing decisions of the city? If yes, can you describe what were their primary concerns? If not, what does this gap mean and how could it be bridged?

From your extensive experience working on the MBD campaign, what possibilities (and/or challenges) do you see for inclusive housing policies for HE-LGBTQ+ students in Delhi/India?

I see MBD campaign makes propositions for land reservations under the housing for women and TG people. Do you recollect any such suggestion coming up for other groups, such as LGBTQ+ students in the city? Why or why not?

In retrospect, what would you do differently in MBD campaign for the next MP? What limitations would you plan to overcome to better reach the goals and propositions of the MBD campaign? Are there different strategies, urban actors and approaches that MBD plans to reach out to next?



## PLANNER PROFILE

NAME:

ORGANISATION:

EXPERTISE:

URBAN ACTORS | URBAN HOUSING | INCLUSIVE PLANNING INITIATIVES +  
DISCRIMINATION | POLICY & HOUSING REPORTS | APPROACH TO INCLUSIVE URBAN  
HOUSING | "SINGLE IDEA OF HOME" -- WHAT SCOPE DOES PLANNING HAVE IN OPENING  
UP TO ALTERNATIVES? | INDIA HOUSING REPORT 2021 - CPR |

1. COULD YOU TELL ME BRIEFLY ABOUT YOUR ACADEMIC/PROFESSIONAL JOURNEY; and, ABOUT YOUR CURRENT ROLE IN THE ORGANISATION?
2. HOW DO YOU SEE PLANNING/ROLE OF PLANNERS IN ITS CURRENT FORM IN DELHI, INDIA? IN WHAT WAYS IS IT SIMILAR OR DIFFERENT FROM OTHER CITIES IN INDIA OR GLOBALLY?
3. HOW DO YOU describe the state OF URBAN HOUSING IN THE CAPITAL CITY/NATION? HAS IT CHANGED OVER TIME?
4. WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE SOME OF THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES IN URBAN (RENTAL) HOUSING IN DELHI? WHOM DO YOU THINK FACES THE MAXIMUM BRUNT OF THESE CHALLENGES IN AND EXCLUSION FROM URBAN HOUSING IN THE CITY?
5. Have you come across any PLANNING INITIATIVES for INCLUSIVE HOUSING IN DELHI/INDIA? DO YOU THINK THESE ARE SUFFICIENT? WHAT COULD/NEEDS TO CHANGE?
6. What would you say IS THE NATURE, EXTENT AND SCOPE OF INSTITUTIONAL HOUSING (SPECIFICALLY HEIs) AND HE STUDENTS IN THE VISION OF THE CITY'S PLANNING?
7. HOW do you think MASTER PLAN DOCUMENTS, HOUSING POLICIES AND PLANNING INITIATIVES PERCEIVE "HE STUDENTS"? AND SPECIFICALLY, LGBTQ+ STUDENTS AND THEIR HOUSING NEEDS?
8. HAVE YOU COME ACROSS ANY PLANNING INITIATIVES WHERE EITHER THE UNIVERSITY OR on-campus STUDENT GROUPS OR STUDENT LEADERS/ reps WERE INVOLVED IN THE HOUSING DECISIONS OF THE CITY? WHAT DOES THIS GAP MEAN AND HOW COULD IT BE BRIDGED?

9. HAVE YOU COME ACROSS ANY CHANGES IN INCLUSIVE PLANNING INITIATIVES AND/OR URBAN HOUSING POLICIES IN DELHI/INDIA particularly WITH THE STRIKING DOWN OF SECTION 377?
10. FROM YOUR EXTENSIVE WORKING EXPERIENCE ON THE STATE OF URBAN HOUSING IN INDIA, WHAT POSSIBILITIES (AND CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS) DO YOU SEE FOR INCLUSIVE HOUSING POLICIES FOR LGBTQ+ STUDENTS IN DELHI/INDIA?
11. YOU CRITICALLY MENTIONED THE NOTION AND THE PRACTICE OF A "SINGLE IDEA OF HOME". CAN YOU TELL ME MORE ABOUT IT--WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY THAT: \*WHAT\* IS THAT "SINGLE IDEA OF HOME" AND WHY IS IT INSUFFICIENT?
12. WHAT MIGHT BE THE PLANNING APPROACHES (AND PEDAGOGIES) TO ALTERNATIVE IDEAS OF HOMES?
13. HOW DO YOU SEE ARCHITECTS AND ARCHITECTURE PLAYING ANY ROLE IN THAT AS WELL? WHAT ROLE DO OTHER URBAN ACTORS PLAY IN MAINTAINING THIS "SINGLE IDEA OF HOME"?
14. How do you see the state of housing in the future in Delhi/India?

0. I KNOW BRIEFLY ABOUT YOUR WORK BOTH IN URBAN PRACTICE AND PEDAGOGY, BUT TO START PERHAPS, COULD YOU TELL ME MORE ABOUT YOUR WORK, ESPECIALLY ON "exploratory research and experimental pedagogy on different aspects of urban form, experience, practice and culture".
1. I HAVE MY CASE STUDIES IN BOTH DELHI AND MUMBAI. ONE OF THE THINGS I AM CONSIDERING IN MY DOCTORAL WORK IN URBAN GEOGRAPHY IS WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO HAVE 2 CASE STUDIES. IS THERE A WAY TO USE A OTHER THAN COMPARATIVE FRAMEWORK. HAVING SAID THAT THOUGH, IT IS INTERESTING TO ME TO THINK ABOUT THE CURRENT PLANNING PRACTICES IN BOTH THE CITIES.

HOW DO YOU SEE PLANNING/ROLE OF PLANNERS IN ITS CURRENT FORM IN MUMBAI and the ways in which it may be DISTINCT FROM or similar to DELHI OR OTHER CITIES IN INDIA?

2. MY WORK SPECIFICALLY LOOKS AT URBAN HOUSING, MORE SO URBAN RENTAL HOUSING.

HOW DO YOU SEE the state OF URBAN HOUSING IN THE FINANCIAL CAPITAL? HAS IT CHANGED OVER TIME?

WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE SOME OF THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES IN URBAN (RENTAL) HOUSING IN MUMBAI? WHOM ACCORDING TO YOU FACES THE MAXIMUM BRUNT OF THESE CHALLENGES IN AND EXCLUSION FROM URBAN HOUSING IN THE CITY?

3. HAVE YOU COME ACROSS/BEEEN PART OF PLANNING INITIATIVES TOWARDS INCLUSIVE HOUSING IN MUMBAI/INDIA? HAVE YOU FOUND THESE SUFFICIENT? WHAT COULD/NEEDS TO CHANGE?
4. MORE RELATED TO MY WORK, WHAT WOULD YOU SAY IS THE NATURE, EXTENT AND SCOPE OF/PLACE OF INSTITUTIONAL HOUSING (SPECIFICALLY HEIs) AND HE STUDENTS IN THE VISION OF THE CITY'S PLANNING TODAY?

5. HOW WOULD YOU SAY MASTER PLAN DOCUMENTS, HOUSING POLICIES AND PLANNING INITIATIVES OR SAY MMRDA, PERCEIVE "THE STUDENTS"? AND SPECIFICALLY, LGBTQ+ STUDENTS AND THEIR HOUSING NEEDS?
6. HAVE THERE BEEN ANY PLANNING INITIATIVES WHERE EITHER THE UNIVERSITY OR STUDENT GROUPS AND/OR STUDENT LEADERS WERE INVOLVED IN THE HOUSING DECISIONS OF THE CITY? WHAT DOES THIS GAP MEAN AND HOW COULD IT BE BRIDGED?
7. UNLIKE OTHER UNIVERSITIES, TISS MUMBAI HAILS INDIA'S FIRST GENDER-NEUTRAL HOSTEL.

HAVE THERE BEEN ANY CHANGES IN INCLUSIVE PLANNING INITIATIVES AND/OR URBAN HOUSING POLICIES IN MUMBAI/INDIA WITH THE STRIKING DOWN OF SECTION 377?

8. FROM YOUR EXTENSIVE EXPERIENCE WITH THE STATE OF URBAN HOUSING IN INDIA BUT ALSO YOUR EXPERIMENTAL AND EXPLORATORY APPROACHES TO SPATIAL PEDAGOGY, WHAT POSSIBILITIES (AND CHALLENGES) DO YOU SEE AHEAD OF US FOR INCLUSIVE/NON-NORMATIVE/TRANSIENT HOUSING POLICIES FOR LGBTQ+ STUDENTS IN DELHI/INDIA?
9. WHAT MIGHT BE THE PLANNING APPROACHES (AND PEDAGOGIES) TO ALTERNATIVE IDEAS OF HOMES? HOW DO YOU SEE ARCHITECTS AND ARCHITECTURE PLAYING ANY ROLE IN THAT AS WELL? DOES INTERDISCIPLINARITY INFORM ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES?



## Informed Consent Form

### **Informed Consent Form**

**Date:**

12<sup>th</sup> May 2020

**Study Name:**

The Critical Geographies of Non-normative Homes: Student Housing in Delhi & Mumbai, India

**Researcher name:**

Chan Arun-Pina (they/them)

PhD Candidate

Department of Geography, York University

Principal Investigator

E: [chan09p@yorku.ca](mailto:chan09p@yorku.ca)

**Purpose of the Research:**

This research study is conducted for the purposes of doctoral research dissertation. It will be conducted using trans-disciplinary methodologies for an in-depth study of social in/exclusion based on non-normative genders and sexualities in student housing in Delhi and Mumbai, India. Data collected and analyzed as part of this research will be used for dissertation, journal articles, conference presentation, and artwork as part of the creative visual component.

**What You Will Be Asked to Do in the Research:**

You will be participating for *spatial stories* where you will recollect and share your lived experience of student housing (current, past and imagined). This will be conducted virtually. I will be making architectural drawing of your space of living (i.e., the *built* environment) which will be further overlaid with your *lived* and *felt* experience of student housing. Your spatial story in/of the student housing will be conducted over two sessions of approximately 90-120 minutes each and scheduled about 3-5 days apart. For your time and work as part of the research participation, you will receive inducements of \$20/session and memorabilia in the form of artwork representing your housing narrative.

**Risks and Discomforts:**

As a trans-identifying university student from India myself, I find myself a part of the non-normative gender and sexualities identifying student community that the research project primarily engages with. Therefore, I have a close understanding through my own ongoing lived experiences that informs my sensitivities and sensibilities towards my research participants. There are some risks associated with the study, including the voluntary disclosure of gender and/or sexual identity, but this information will be held in confidence by the researcher and kept anonymous. While the national context of India as of 2018 has decriminalised the colonial law of sodomy under section 377, it is well understood that legislation does not necessarily impact all queer lives and their livelihoods equally; and, that social structures immediate to queer/trans individuals routinely impact and shape their everyday lives (Browne et al., 2019). It is well taken that the privacy of the data and the anonymity of the research participant may be a priority. Your individual information will not be shared with others and will be kept confidential to the fullest extent possible by law. The results of this study will be stored electronically on my computer, and in a locked cabinet in my locked office at York University. Further, if desired, your anonymity will be maintained in all forms of submitted research work. If you have any questions or concerns about the research or your role in the study, please contact me, my Graduate Supervisor, Dr. Alison Bain (416-736-2100 ext. 66192, [abain@yorku.ca](mailto:abain@yorku.ca)), or the Geography graduate program office (416-736-5106, [gradgeog@yorku.ca](mailto:gradgeog@yorku.ca)).

**Benefits of the Research and Benefits to You:**

1

This research will benefit a critical understanding of non-normative gender and sexualities identifying university students, their housing needs, and their everyday lived and felt experiences of securing and making homes in urban Indian cities of Delhi and Mumbai. It will in turn benefit the urban housing scholarship and practice in reimagining possibilities of housing policies for one of the most vulnerable urban floating populations, and to critically rethink homes beyond cis-heteronormative monogamous family values. The trans-disciplinary approach of the research also aims to benefit the inter-disciplinary dialogue between architecture, urban geography and planning, geographies of sexualities and transgender, and geographies of higher education (institutions), and appeal to a reading audience who are inclined to work within and across above disciplinary expertise. Therefore, the project works to benefit at each level of practice, pedagogy and policy literatures on institutional and urban rental housing for university students.

This research project will be crucial to my own academic completion of my doctoral degree and set me in motion to further develop my own research inquiries and methods of teaching. I also aim to continue to engage and utilize my professional training in architecture, visual art and urban studies in critically and creatively collecting and analyzing the data and writing/drawing dissertation that challenges and reimagines the disciplinary image-text relationship.

**Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal:**

Your participation in the study is completely voluntary and you may choose to stop participating at any time. Your decision not to volunteer, to stop participating, or to refuse to answer particular questions will not influence the nature of the ongoing relationship you may have with the researchers or study staff, or the nature of your relationship with York University either now, or in the future.

If you decide to stop participating, you may withdraw without penalty, financial or otherwise, and you will still receive the promised inducement.

In the event you withdraw from the study, all associated data collected will be immediately destroyed wherever possible. Should you wish to withdraw after the study, you will have the option to also withdraw your data up until the analysis is complete.

**Confidentiality:**

Unless you choose otherwise, all information you supply during the research will be held in confidence and unless you specifically indicate your consent, your name will not appear in any report or publication of the research.

The data will be collected through handwritten notes and drawings, visual recording and audio recording through digital device. Your data will be safely stored in a locked facility, and electronic data will be stored on a password protected personal computer and external hard drive, and only the researcher will have access to this information.

The data will be stored and archived in password protected hard drive up to December 2030. Data collected and analyzed will be used for dissertation, journal articles and conference presentations, critical artwork, as well as for teaching purposes.

Confidentiality will be provided to the fullest extent possible by law.

The data collected in this research project may be used – in an anonymized form - by members of the research team in subsequent research investigations exploring similar lines of inquiry. Such projects will still undergo ethics review by the HPRC, our institutional REB. Any secondary use of anonymized data by the research team will be treated with the same degree of confidentiality and anonymity as in the original research project.

#### Questions About the Research?

If you have questions about the research in general or about your role in the study, please feel free to contact me at [chan09p@yorku.ca](mailto:chan09p@yorku.ca) or my supervisor, Dr. Alison L Bain at [abain@yorku.ca](mailto:abain@yorku.ca). You may also contact the Graduate Program in Geography at [gradgeog@yorku.ca](mailto:gradgeog@yorku.ca) and/or +1 (416)736-5106.

This research has received ethics review and approval by the Delegated Ethics Review Committee, which is delegated authority to review research ethics protocols by the Human Participants Review Sub-Committee, York University's Ethics Review Board, and conforms to the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Research Ethics guidelines. If you have any questions about this process, or about your rights as a participant in the study, please contact the Sr. Manager & Policy Advisor for the Office of Research Ethics, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor, Kaneff Tower, York University (telephone 416-736-5914 or e-mail [ore@yorku.ca](mailto:ore@yorku.ca)).

#### Legal Rights and Signatures:

I <<fill in participant name here>>, consent to participate in <<insert study name here>> conducted by <<insert investigator name here>>. I have understood the nature of this project and wish to participate. I am not waiving any of my legal rights by signing this form. My signature below indicates my consent.

Signature  
Participant

Date

Signature  
Principal Investigator

Date

#### Additional consent (where applicable)

##### 1. Audio recording

☐ I consent to the audio-recording of my interview(s).

- [For video recording/authorize use of photographs, please include the following:]

##### 2. Video recording or use of photographs

☐ I consent to the audio-recording of my interview(s).

I <<insert participants name>> consent to the use of images of me (including photographs, video and other moving images), my environment and property in the following ways (please check all that apply):

|                                  |         |        |
|----------------------------------|---------|--------|
| In academic articles             | [ ] Yes | [ ] No |
| In print, digital and slide form | [ ] Yes | [ ] No |
| In academic presentations        | [ ] Yes | [ ] No |
| In media artwork                 | [ ] Yes | [ ] No |
| In dissertation materials        | [ ] Yes | [ ] No |

Signature:

Date:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant: (name)

**3. Consent to waive anonymity**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ <<insert participants name>>, consent to the use of my name in the publications arising from this research.

**Signature:**

**Date:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant: (name)