

# Children of the city

A study of street children in Kathmandu,  
their social practices and territoriality



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## Preface

To my surprise I fight to keep sentimentality at bay when I now write these final words. Writing a thesis concerning street children has been a privilege. Nevertheless the road towards this final product has been full of contradicting feelings. I have been in all phases of the thesis been assisted by a number of people who all deserve my unreserved gratitude.

Firstly I want to express my gratitude to all my informants. It was a great joy to learn to know you and you will all be with me for the rest of my life. I want to thank my interpreters Krishna Gopal Majarajan and Shamsheer Nuchen Pradan for all their help. Special thanks to the executive comity at Jagaran, Dr Suddha Rauniyar at 'Children's Food Pram Nepal' and to Mr. Parajulie at the daycare center in Thamel.

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## Abstract

*There are as many reasons for being on the street as there are street children. Mutual for all the urchins on the streets of Kathmandu is the city's significance in their lives. The children no longer depend on their family to provide their fundamental needs. The city has become their replacement of a variety of functions. It is therefore likely to presume that there is a special relationship between the street children and the city.*

*Within Kathmandu the street children choose to stay in different places. Each place offers several practices in order to maintain daily life. The gangs socialize new street children into the practices in the place, including the territorial practices. Through their daily life and daily routines the street children appropriate place. The street children's territorial expressions depend on context and who they are interacting with. They exclude other street children from their place in order to defend their resources. The street children are by representatives from mainstream society considered to be abject and on the margin of society. Ironically the mainstream society's fear of abjection and dirt partly empower the street children to appropriate places.*

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## Chapter 1 Theme and research questions

### 1.1 Introduction

Street children represent a phenomenon which appeal to people's feelings and awake their sympathy. Most people have through the media been introduced to different aspects of children's street life. Such reports mostly begin or end with the misery of these urchins' life. The suffering of street life has been well documented through research concerning the street children's psychological condition (Veale and Taylor 1991), street children and AIDS (Bond 1992), street children and drugs (Veale and Tyler 1991) to mention some. The hardship of street life should not be underestimated; neither should it be of paramount interest in all coverage of street children. It is important not to neglect the abilities and resources street children possess.

The focus of this thesis is how street children manage their daily life. The title, 'children of the city' refers to two different aspects of the life of street children. Firstly, street children are mostly an urban phenomenon. Secondly, street children do not have a family who is fully capable of caring for them. Hence the social and material structures of the city have fully or partly replaced the family's functions.

Street child is a concept referring to a child living out daily life on the street. It is reasonable to presume that there is a special relationship between street children and their place. Through applying geographical concepts and theoretical frameworks this thesis wishes to give a deeper understanding of the relationship between the street children and the city. Hereby the thesis presents a new perspective and hopefully contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon 'street child'. Writing the thesis from a geographical viewpoint has a sense of novelty, because, within geography, research concerning street children is to my knowledge limited.

This study has been carried out in Kathmandu the capital of Nepal (Fig. 2.1). Kathmandu was chosen due to the city's size and the number of street children. Kathmandu is a growing city but the small size of the city core makes it possible to gain a fair overview of the street children's situation. The number of street children in Kathmandu is increasing parallel to the city growth, but Nepal has not reached Indian or Brazilian proportions.

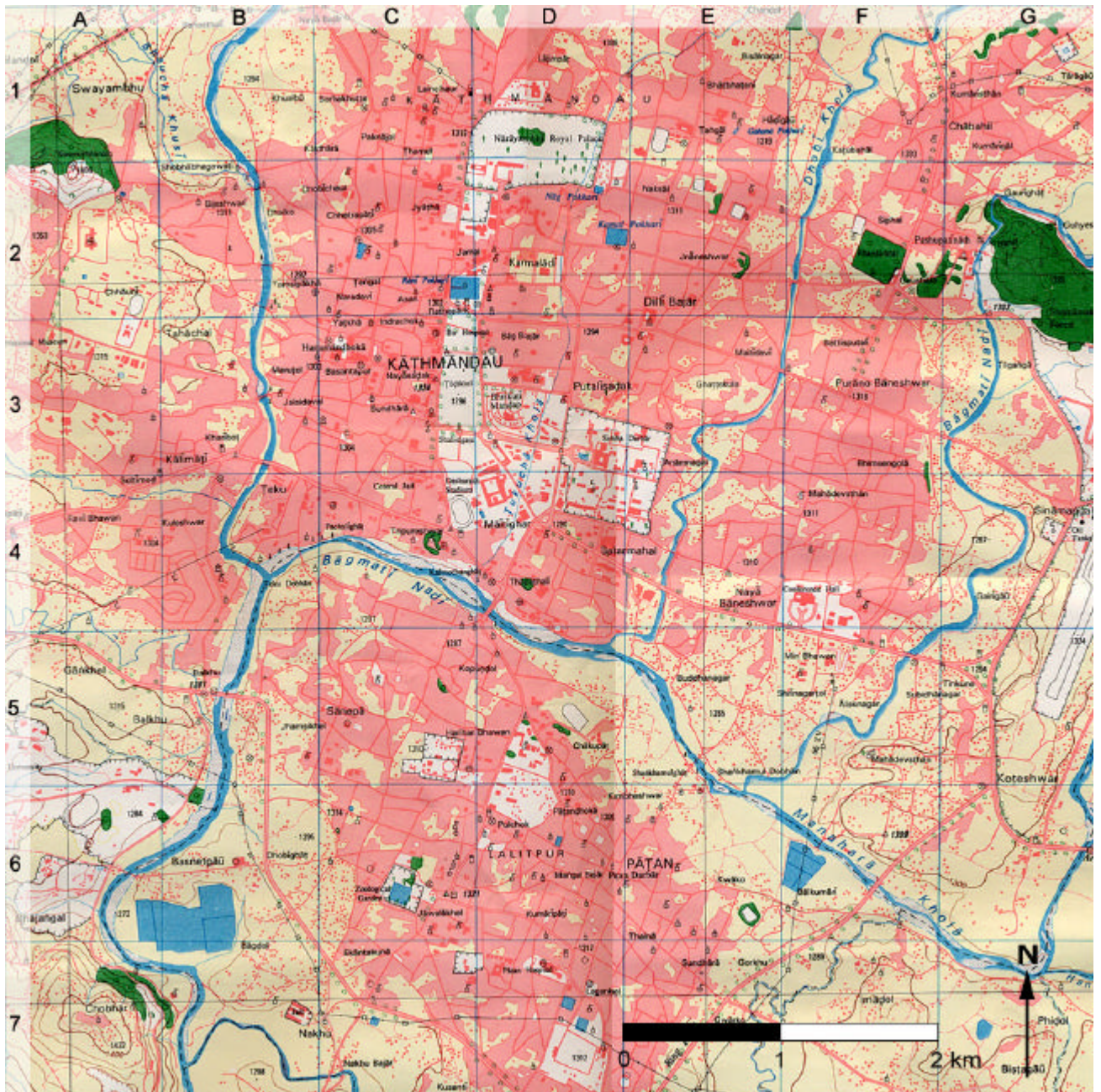
These conditions made Kathmandu suitable for the empirical studies necessary to approach the research questions of this thesis.

## 1.2 Kathmandu

Kathmandu (Fig. 1.1) is the capital of the mountain country Nepal (Fig. 2.1). Kathmandu valley is a densely populated area. The fertile land of the valley covers more than two hundred square miles of the area right within the *Mahabharat* range, the lesser Himalayas of Nepal. The valley has a favorable environment for agriculture and commerce has been a central occupation for centuries. The valley has three royal cities, Kathmandu, Patan and Bakhtapur (Fig. 2.1). The population has increased considerably during the last decades and Kathmandu and Patan now form a single conurbation (Regmi 1993).

Kathmandu city was founded by King Gunakamadev in the year 724 AD. Protective walls once defined the limits of old Kathmandu. After the conquest by Prithvi Narayan Shah, the walls were allowed to decay, and by the 19<sup>th</sup> century they were completely destroyed. The communities of *asuddah*, untouchables (see 2.4), *Podey* and *Chyame* (sweepers) and low caste *Kassain* (butchers) were formerly strictly forbidden to live within the city walls, and they clustered on the outside as closely as possible. At present Greater Kathmandu extends beyond the old administrative limits. In 1991, Kathmandu municipality had a population of 668 605 people (Regmi 1993).

Kathmandu stands out as a typical prime city, government offices, education and health services are all centralized in Kathmandu valley. The contrast is great between Kathmandu and the backwardness and the poverty of the surrounding Middle hills.



**Figure 1.1** Kathmandu city

There are estimated to be between 400 and 600 children living on the streets in Kathmandu Valley (CWIN home page). The children come from different castes and ethnic groups. Their means of livelihood are numerous; ragpicking, portering, tourist guide, street vending, begging, working in hotels represent some of their activities.

Street children live in different locations within Kathmandu. Due to restrictions in time it was necessary to focus on a limited number of locations. Field studies were carried out in three different areas in Kathmandu, Indra Chowk (Fig. 1.1 C3), Anamnagar (Fig. 1.1 E3)

and Thamel (Fig. 1.1 C1). The reason for choosing these areas is also discussed in chapter 5.

### 1.3 The Three field areas

In all the three field areas I cooperated with a particular organization. These three organizations are presented below.

#### Indra Chowk

Indra Chowk and Basantapur are some of the busiest areas in downtown Kathmandu. It is one of the major shopping areas with shopping centers, restaurants and all kinds of stores and stalls. Indra Chowk also houses Kathmandu's greatest tourist attraction, *Hanumandhokha*. *Hanumandhokha* is an open space surrounded by a number of temples and the old palace. Facing *Hanumandhokha* is the home of the living goddess, *Kumari*.

An organization called "Children's Food Program Nepal" is located in Indra Chowk. Dr. Suddha Rauniyar started the food program, in July 1999. It began accidentally one night after he had ended the work in his clinic. On his way home he was stopped by some children asking for food. The doctor asked them where it was possible to have something to eat at this time of night, the children took him to a small restaurant and he bought them a cheap supper. After this first night he started feeding the children. Every night a number of street children in Indra Chowk would wait for the doctor outside his clinic. Before he took them to dinner the doctor would have a small ceremony with the children. In these ceremonies the doctor told the children about *Dasein*, a national festival celebrated in September/October (see 2.4) and about the Hindu gods Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. If the children had been fighting the Doctor would make them apologize to each other. Everyday the Doctor told the children how to behave, not to speak 'dirty', not hear 'dirty', not to do 'dirty' work and so on. After this ceremony the children walked to a little restaurant where they ate a meal consisting of *dahl* (lentils), *baht* (rice), curry vegetables and occasionally meat and chutney.

The doctor's intention with the program was that every day there would be a new sponsor to pay for the children's meal. "Every day is someone's birthday and that is a nice occasion

to share with the children", he said. He hopes that mainly Nepalese will come, for as he says; "we don't need dollars".

### **Anamnagar**

Anamnagar is located north east in Kathmandu. The area is mainly a housing area but there are some small workshops and other shops. Not far from Anamnagar there is a five star international hotel, Hotel Everest. In the vicinity of this hotel there are other restaurants and shops.

*Jagaran Samuha* is located at Anamnagar. *Jagaran Samuha* means 'awareness' in Nepali. The Jagaran group is a team of former street children. In early 1997 the Jagaran group was formed with a loose structure, mainly presenting the hardship of street life in the form of drama in schools and in the offices of development organizations (*Jagaran* information leaflet). The group decided to start a scrap collection center in order to create a contact point for the street children who collect recyclable goods. After some time the scrap collection center was closed down due to lack of financial resources.

With support from *Child Workers In Asia* and *Save the Children South Asia*, Jagaran started the activities and programs for the street children. Jagaran's goal is to prevent new children from turning to the streets. They also aim at rehabilitation and assisting street children in adjusting to society. Performing the street drama is now a source of Jagaran's financing. The street dramas deal with the sorrow of the street. Jagaran offers basic education in Nepalese, mathematics and English. In addition they arrange sport events, entertainment and recreation. Jagaran also provide medical facilities and shelter for the street children. Jagaran's facilities consists of some shacks with a courtyard in the middle where the children can come to sleep, spend their days, wash and cook.

### **Thamel**

Tourism is one of the main sources of income in Nepal. During the last twenty years Thamel has experienced a great expansion of the tourist industry, and Thamel has become the major tourist area in Kathmandu. Thamel is the place the backpackers head for. The guesthouses lay side by side, interrupted by international restaurants, bars, supermarkets,

souvenir shops and shops selling all kinds of curious garments. Thamel offers everything the tourists from the West need to feel like home. Along with the increase of tourists there has been an increase in the number of street children in Thamel.

In Thamel there is a daycare center for street children, Mr. Parajulie's daycare center. He has been working with street children in Kathmandu since 1980. When he started he slept with the children on the street for three months in order to understand them better. The intention behind the daycare center is to build a relationship with the street children. Here the street children can learn how to read and write, mathematics and get general education. The center also offers medical help, distribution of clothes, police protection, and information about children's rights. The boys in Thamel refer to the daycare center as school and as hospital as there is equipment for medical assistance.

#### **1.4 Research definitions**

The aim of this thesis is to analyze how street children make use of their areas and how different groups of street children use the city in their day-to-day survival. The research questions do not aim to compare the three field areas. The focus is the relationship between the street children's practices and the area they live in.

**On this basis the two main research questions are:**

- 1. Do the social practices of street children vary between different places within the city, and if so why?**
- 2. In which way do different groups of street children territorialize Kathmandu?**

This approach is put into concrete terms by splitting it into four secondary questions:

##### **1. Who are the street children and why are they street children?**

Through this question it will be possible to describe the street children in Kathmandu and give a closer presentation of some of the children.

## **2. How do the street children use the street?**

This question is meant to illuminate what the street children's social practices and daily actions are and why they have chosen these social practices.

## **3. How are street children's social practices and identities influenced by the place they stay in?**

This question aims elaborate the relationship between the street children's places and their social practice and identity.

## **4. How are territorial practices produced and reproduced?**

This fourth question focuses on how territorial practices are produced and reproduced.

### **1.5 Structure of this thesis**

In order to answer these questions a certain amount of background information is needed. *Chapter 2* presents the context and aims at giving the reader information about Nepal and the life of children in Nepal. *Chapter 3* elaborates the categories child, childhood, street child and the Nepalese category *khate*. *Chapter 4* focuses on the theoretical framework, and the main concepts in this thesis; social practice and territoriality. *Chapter 5* concerns the methods applied to produce the empirical material.

The following four chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9 represent the analytical section. *Chapter 6* describes the life of three street children in Kathmandu. *Chapter 7* elaborates the street children's social practices in Indra Chok, Jagaran and Thamel. *Chapter 8* investigates the relationship between place and identity. *Chapter 9* aims at understanding the production and reproduction of territoriality. *Chapter 10* sums up the previous chapters and repeats the main findings from the analytical section.





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## Chapter 2 The context of a Nepalese childhood

### 2.1 Introduction

*Childhood can not be studied in isolation from society as a whole.*

(Cunningham 1995:3)

Cunningham expresses how important it is to study the context in order to understand childhood. The aim of this chapter is to provide the reader with a basic knowledge of Nepalese society, the context for a Nepalese childhood.

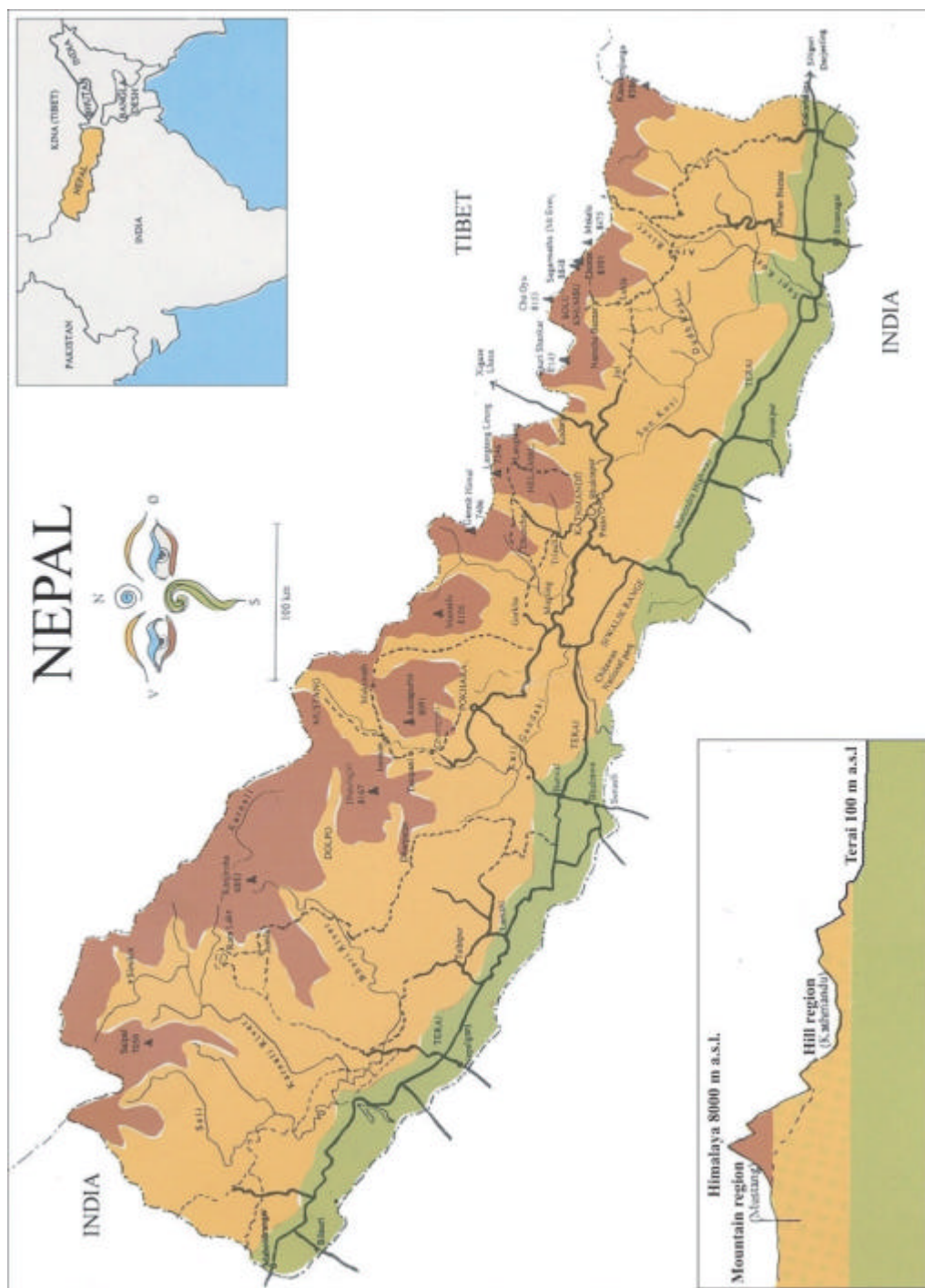
### 2.2 General information about Nepal.

Nepal is ethnically diverse and complex with more than 75 ethnic groups speaking some 50 languages (Skar 1997). Nepalese is mother tongue to slightly over one-half of the population but functions as a 'link language' for a large majority (HDR 1998). The Nepalese population can be classified into three major ethnic groupings based on origin: Indo-Nepalese, Tibeto-Mongols and indigenous Nepalese, who consist of a number of tribal communities such as *Tharus* and *Dhimals*. Each of the three ethnic groupings populate different regions in Nepal.

Nepal is roughly divided into three regions the mountain region, the hill region and the Terai region (Fig. 2.1). *Terai*, are the plains on the boarder to India. The region is Nepal's granary and has 1096, 80 ha paddy (hill region 335,2 ha) (statistical pocket book 2000). The Indo-Nepalese inhabit the Terai (Fig. 2.1), the river valleys and the fertile lower hills.

*Parbat*, the hill region lies between 600 and 4850 meter in altitude. In the central hill region (Fig. 2.1) different groups of people of various origin coexist. Parbat contains several fertile valleys including the Kathmandu valley, the most fertile and urban area in the country. The lower hills and valleys are densely settled. Higher elevation areas (above 2500 meters) in the region are however sparsely populated due to physiographic difficulties. The region has always been the political as well as the cultural heart of Nepal.

*Himal* the mountain region is situated above 4850 meter above sea level and lies to the north of the hill region. The region is the home of the tribes of Tibeto-Mongol origin. The landscape includes some of the world's most famous peaks including *Sagarmatha* (Mt. Everest). Mountains cover 80% of Nepal (Burbank 1994). The region is sparsely populated due to the rough climatic and topographic conditions (Shrestha 1990).



**Figure 2.1** Map over Nepal ( Source Norge-Nepal foreninga 1996)

Nepal is a constitutional monarchy with King Gyanendra<sup>1</sup> as head of state and Hinduism as state religion. According to the constitution of 1990 there are no significant restrictions on political parties except for ethnic based parties since these: “*may jeopardize the harmonious relationship subsisting among the peoples of various castes, tribes, and communities*” (Skar 1997). In 1991, 205 representatives from 20 parties were elected to parliament, with *Nepali Congress* and the communist party UML as the dominating parties.

Ten years with ineffective democracy and extensive corruption in the government has caused dissatisfaction among the people. In the last years a Maoist guerrilla has launched several attacks directed against police forces and governmental representatives. The first attacks took place in western Nepal but during the past 2-3 years the Maoist’s attacks has moved eastwards and reached the Kathmandu valley. Since 1994 more than 4000 people have been killed in the fights between Maoists and police forces (Bistandsaktuelt nr.5, 2002). The political situation in Nepal at present is critical.

The political situation restrains economical development. Around 80% of the economically active population live in rural areas and depend on subsistence farming (EIU Country Profile 1999-2000). Low GDP and high population growth rates have resulted in only marginal improvements in income per head. Almost half the population lives below the poverty line and is affected by nutritional deficiency (Skar 1997). The level of dependence on foreign assistance is high.

Nepal’s population has been growing quite rapidly, the growth rate from 1981 till 1991 was 2.08 (Shrestha, Conway, Bhattarai 1999). The population growth and economical situation has lead to an increasing migration. People from the hill region migrate to Terai with the hope of being able to buy a piece of land. Due to the Hill-to-Terai migration Terai had 46.6 percent of the national population in 1991 (ibid.). In addition to the migration from Hill to Terai, the migration from rural to urban areas has more than tripled over the past two decades and given rise to urban squatter settlements (Sattaur 1993).

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<sup>1</sup> The former King, King Birendra was killed in the royal massacre in June 2001 along with 13 other members of the royal family.

In addition to permanent migration a circular migration takes place. The migrants move back and forth between their residence and their place of work. A number of Nepalese work in India and return to their residence in Nepal when the season is ended. Circular migration provides an infusion of capital, which can sustain households in the hills without a permanent relocation. The children are left at home with one of the parents, mostly the mother. In some cases both parents migrate, and the grandparents or other relatives take care of the children.

### **2.3 Religion**

*The inhabitants of Kathmandu valley, whether they are Newar or Parbatia, Sivamargi or Buddhamargi, rural or urban, high or low caste, rich or poor, sophisticated or illiterate, or whatever other way they may differ, find a common meeting ground not only in their gods but in their social behavior, attitudes and custom. Like the religions to which these aspects are intimately bound-for none is wholly secular-they are rooted in ancient tradition. (Regmi 1993)*

In order to understand Nepalese society and childhood we need to understand the importance of religion. Religion is a part of everyday life in the form of daily rituals and offerings.

The most fascinating aspect about religion in Nepal in my opinion is the coexistens of two of the world religions, Hinduism and Buddhism. In the Kathmandu valley these religions have existed side by side for hundreds of years and have slowly been tangled together. There is little difference in the beliefs or in the divinities they worship. On great occasions some families invite both a Buddhist priest and a Hindu priest, jointly or separately to supervise the domestic rituals. In Kathmandu valley some temples include both Buddhist Stupa (a buddist monument) and Hinduism god images, for example Swayumbunath (Fig. 2.2).



**Figure 2.2 Swayumbunath**

In Nepal everyday life is affected by the caste system. There are several castes or *jats*<sup>2</sup>. In the caste system the categories *suddha* (pure) and *asuddha* (impure) are essential. You are by caste either born *suddha* or *asuddha*. The high castes (*suddha*) become polluted if they are in contact with the low caste (*asuddha*) or anything the low caste has touched. The pollution transmitted from low caste to high caste is called *chau*. Through the idioms of relative purity and impurity, low caste children are taught that their touch is polluting to individuals of high caste.

The Nepalese year is full of colorful festivals. The two most important are *Dasain* and *Tihar*. *Dasein* is a national festival which takes place in September/October and celebrates the victory

over evil. *Tihar*, the festival of lights is celebrated in October/November to honor the goddess of wealth, Laxmi. The children go from door to door and sing and dance, in return they are given sweets and money. All over the country swings and merry go-rounds are made and families gather to celebrate.

## 2.4 Child labor and children's rights in Nepal

On paper the rights of the children in Nepal are well taken care of (Fig. 2.3), but when it comes to executing these laws and regulations the situation is different. For instance child marriage still exists as a part of the social tradition in Nepalese society in spite of legal prohibition. It is clear from observation and surveys that law and acts signed to prevent child

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<sup>2</sup> *Jats* are divided by profession. There is one *jat* for the butcher, one *jat* for the tailors and one *jat* for the priest and so on. Each *jat* performs different services and has their place in the hierarchy of ritual pollution and respect from the society. There is a hierarchy of purity between the *jats*.

labor also are widely ignored. The population census in 1981 showed that 4.5 million or 60 percent of the child population in the 10-14 age group was economically active (UNICEF 1996).

**-UN Convention on the Rights of the child.**

Nepal is one of the twenty countries, which signed the UN Convention on the rights of the child. Nepal also ratified the Convention the same year.

**-Children's Act 1992.**

The children act that was adopted in 1992 by the parliament has stood out as the first comprehensive child rights law of Nepal. This act covers the very basic rights of the child including child labor prohibition, juvenile delinquency and child rehabilitation for the children at risk. This law also guarantees the child's right to education and survival.

**-Nepal Factory and Factory workers act. Section 27(a) of the Nepal**

Factory and Factory workers act, 2016 (1959) prohibits the employment of children below the age of 14 in a factory and in night work.

**-ILO Minimum age employment Convention.**

Nepal has ratified the convention on the rights of the child and the ILO minimum age employment convention.

**Figure 2.3 Conventions, acts and laws concerning children rights in Nepal (after Sattaur 1993).**

Child labor has been seen as a way of life in Nepal for years. In the rural economy, children have played a significant role in family subsistence, fetching water, collecting firewood, grazing cattle, caring for younger children and supporting parents in the fields. In addition to farm labor, children can be seen performing different kind of work; breaking rocks, weaving carpets, domestic service, begging, catering in hotels and teashops, portering, guiding, bus conductor, ragpicking and prostitution. The issue of child labor can not be viewed in isolation, because this is a consequence of the country's exploitive sosio- economic and political reality.

In Nepal child labor is mostly directly linked to poverty. The simple necessity of having food and shelter, and factors such as unemployment or underemployment among adult family members or death of the breadwinner, compel children to work from an early age.

Even if children both in urban and rural areas have a heavy workload they still find time to play. The children are creative in their use of the material around them. They make toys of

what ever they can find. Rolling hoops is a favorite everywhere. They play *chungi*. *Chungi* is a ball made of elastics tied together. The participators stand in a ring and with the help of ones feet or other body parts the ball should be prevented from touching the ground.. *Bag- chal* a board game with tigers and deer is another favorite. Kite flying after the monsoon around *Dasein* is a national pastime.

## 2.5 Family life

Nepal is one of the poorest countries in the world and has limited resources to spend on medical care. A number of Nepalese children are undernourished and suffer from vitamin and mineral deficiencies. The infant mortality rate in Nepal is high, but it is slowly improving (Table 2.1). The single greatest cause of death among infants and children under the age of five is dehydration from chronic dysentery and malnutrition (Cammeron 1998). In the Kathmandu valley diarrhea caused by polluted drinking water (Skar 1997). Most of the sewage pipes in the Kathmandu valley are located next to drinking water supply pipes in which water only runs 2 to 4 hours per day, causing vacuums in the drinking water pipes and sucking the sewage in.

	1971	1974	1976	1978	1981	186	1987	1989	1994
<b>IMR/1000</b>									
Male	176	175	156	148	120	110	108	104	100
Female	168	167	148		114	104	102	100	96
Both sex	172	171	152	144	117	107	105	102	98
<b>Percent reduction per annum</b>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>5.6</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>0.8</b>	

(Nepal Human development report, 1998)

**Table 2.1 Infant mortality rate by sex 1978-1994**

In the child's life rituals are of great importance. Nepal is a multiethnic society and it is therefore difficult to generalize. Despite this drawback I have included the ceremonies which are performed by a majority of the Nepalese people (Fig. 2.4.).The first ritual in the child's life is after birth. The child is given a name by the family priest based on the astrological calendar and is from this point included as a member of the caste and the patriline (Bennett 1983: 55-56).



The next ritual is *pasni*, the rice ceremony where the child is served its first rice meal. This ceremony takes place when the girl is five months old and when the boy is six months old.

The third ritual, *bartemande* is only for boys. Through this ritual the boy becomes responsible for his own purity, *karma caleko* and he is ordained in the caste and in the patriline (Østigård 2000). A girl can not attain the status *karma caleko* before she is married. Without parents the boy will not be ordained in the patriline through the *bartemande* ritual. Without the *bartemande* ritual the boy can not be responsible for his own purity, *karma caleko* and he will stay *asuddah*. An orphan does not have the possibility to change his status to *suddah*.

- Naming the child. It is marked as the day the birth pollution ceases and takes place on the 11<sup>th</sup> day. The name is chosen by an astrologer based on the position of the planets and stars at the exact moment of birth.
- Pasni*** is the ceremony for the first solid food, mostly rice. A particular month and day is chosen to give the first spoonful of solid food to the child. A Brahmin or Lama presides over the feeding of rice to the infant. In many communities this observed as the most important day for the child.
- Bartemande ritual***, the boy is ordained as a member of the caste and the patriline. He is now ritually responsible for himself, *karma caleko*.
- Chudakarma*** or *kshyaur* in some communities the boys undergo a haircutting ceremony.
- The sacred thread ceremony for Brahmin and Chetri boys to mark the beginning of adulthood.
- For girls most rituals are in connection when they first start menstruating and when they marry.

**Figure 2.4 The most important ceremonies in the Nepali child's life**

The mothers who have the possibility nurse infants on demand. Over 90 percent of the Nepalese children are exclusively breastfed up to 6 months determined by the rice feeding ceremony (Cameron 1998). The majority of mothers continue to breastfeed their children until they are two years old. Walking anywhere in Nepal you will see mothers sitting outside in the sun massaging their babies from head to toe with mustard oil. The child's first months are spent with the mother and the grand parents. These months are normally a time for close physical contact, breastfeeding and care.

Wrapped around the waist of most women in Nepal is a long piece of cloth called *patuka*. Mothers use it to strap their baby on piggyback. Perched on its mother's back the baby is introduced to every facet of its new world.

Physical punishment is often threatened, with small children in a joking manner, but not always followed through. In general a child is treated with indulgence and permissiveness. Discipline around the house is loose. By the time the infant is crawling, his or her care will most likely be given over to older siblings or grandparents (UNICEF 1996). The socialization of young children often comes from other children, with parents being more responsible for hygiene and cleanliness. Older children who are at school help their younger siblings to read and write. Education represents a dilemma for Nepalese parents. Some parents do not see the relevance of the children's education compared to the values of daily work and social life. Fortunately the school participation in Nepal is slowly increasing, but the dropout rates are high and so is the number of repeaters (Burbank 1994).

Children are considered the property of the husband's patriline. Nepal is a patriarchal society; property is passed on only to the sons<sup>3</sup>. Sons provide economic security to aged parents. When the daughter marries she moves to the house of her husband. If a woman wishes to leave her husband, she also has to leave her children. In Nepal it is said that it is impossible to raise children without mothers. The father may be absent but the loss of the child's mother through death or abandonment is a crisis that must be overcome quickly through father's remarriage (Cameron 1998). The love and nourishment of the mother is idealized in poetry, literature, film, folklore, and mythology, where mothers love is a special kind of love with which no other love compares (*ibid.*). Mothers are also responsible for the moral upbringing of their children. A child with bad behavior is considered the result of a bad mother. Remarriage of women or men who have been deserted by their spouse can save the household, but it is often at the expense of the happiness and security of the existing children. Family break-ups are common and the casualties are to be seen in the growing number of runaway children on the streets of Kathmandu and the major towns of Terai.

The gradual Western influence is leading to a change in the family system. To have a big family was a prestige in society, hence many generations lived together. The agro-economy

was one of the main reasons for keeping the joint family system intact. Now the nuclear family is the tendency in Nepal. In absence of any security for old age, except for government employees, the elderly need to be looked after by their sons and daughter-in-law. It is quite common to find old people living with married sons. The standard patterns for families tend to be husband, wife and their unmarried children (Bista 1991).

## **2.6 Summing up**

This chapter has aimed to describe the guidelines for a Nepalese childhood and the great diversity in the Nepalese society. Nepal is a country at a crossroad between the traditional and the modern society. Kathmandu represents the meeting point between the traditional and the modern. Street children arriving in Kathmandu mostly have experience from a traditional rural society and Kathmandu is their first meeting with the modern and urban life. This chapter has provided the reader with background knowledge of a Nepalese childhood and thereby increased the readers ability to understand the street children's 'stock of knowledge', a concept we will return to in chapter 4 and in the analysis chapters.

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<sup>3</sup> King Gyanendra has now proposed the right to inherit land for unmarried daughters.

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## Chapter 3 The category street child

### 3.1 Introduction

The object of study in this thesis is 'street children' and in order to understand this category there are three other categories which need elaboration; *child*, *childhood* and the Nepalese category *khate*. The first part of this chapter will elaborate the categories *child* and *childhood* in order to encourage the reader to reflect on their associations with these categories. The associations we have connected to the categories *childhood* and *child* influence our understanding of street children and their life.

Secondary research question 1 (see 1.4) concerns who the street children are and why they are street children. The second part of this chapter focuses on the definition of street children applied in this thesis. In order find a suitable definition it is first necessary to investigate how other researchers have defined street children. The last part of the chapter is dedicated to the Nepalese category *khate*. Before proceeding we should investigate *category*.

### 3.2 Categories and Prototypes

Our knowledge about the human life world can not be considered as objective truth. Our perception of reality is not a reflection of the real world but a product of our way of categorizing the world, hence reality is only accessible to us through our categories (Aase 1997). Aase argues that a category might be compared to a container, in which we place our observations. Our cognitive mind can be seen as a matrix consisting of an uncountable number of these containers. Things, places and people are categorized after their similarities, their common properties. Most of our categorization occurs automatically and unconsciously, we only become aware of our categorization when problematic incidents take place.

Being able to categorize all our impressions and systematize them, helps us give meaning to the world. When we see a car on the street we recognize it as a car even if it is a Mercedes convertible, Ford Transit or a Mini Morris. Every category holds expectations of certain qualities based on earlier experiences. A car should hold a certain physical appearance such as steering wheel, body and tires.

Eleanor Rosch (Lackoff 1990) demonstrated that categories in general have best examples-called prototypes. A prototype is the observation that goes best with the ruling idea in a category. An observation can be closer to or far away from the center of the category.



**Figure 3.1** *khate* on the front page of CWIN's magazine "Voice of child workers".

### 3.3 Children and childhood

Our categories do not only vary between cultures, but also between regions, occupational groups, gender and generations within the same culture.

In the West we assume that children only are real children when their life experiences accord with a particular set of ideas known as *childhood* (Cunningham 1995). The prototype *child* as well as the lexical meaning of child is a young individual that has not reached puberty. But the category *child* holds other expectations than just age. *Child* is a good example of how

In Kathmandu the prototype of a street child can be associated with the following observations: "... *street children refer to the terms like homeless, helpless, khate, uncared-for, and under-privileged.*" (Subedi 2000). Fig. 3.1 represents a prototype of *street child* for a number of people round the world. A child on the streets in Western Europe does not represent a best example in the same way as the street boy in Fig. 3.1.

When we focus on prototypes the categories are no longer clearly separated containers; they now represent diffuse regions round the prototypes. The prototypes and categories we have depend on the culture we live in.

categorization is both culturally and historically determinate. In contemporary Scandinavia the children are seen as innocent, pure, vulnerable, willing to learn, unfinished. This is reflected in the language, we say ‘don’t be childish’ or ‘he is such a child’ to describe adult behavior characterized as immature, unrational and emotional. Children are perceived as incomplete adults. Through their education and socialization they slowly become complete individuals.

The category *childhood* can be understood as a set of ideas concerning what should characterize the life of an individual from birth until it reaches a certain age. In Scandinavia a child should be cared for, they should not hold any serious responsibility, their life should consist of playing and education. The Scandinavian *childhood* category can be summarized through the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child which we see in Figure 3.2.

- Children have the right to enough food, clean water and health care.
- Children have the right to an adequate standard of living.
- Children have the right to be with their family or those who will care for them best.
- Children have the right to protection from all exploitation, physical, mental and sexual abuse.
- Children have the right to special protection when exposed to armed conflict.
- Children have the right to be protected from all forms of discrimination.
- Children have the right to be protected from work that threatens their education, health or development.
- Disabled children have the right to special care and training.
- Children have the right to play.
- Children have the right to education.
- Children have the right to have their opinion taken into account in decisions affecting their own lives.
- Children have a right to know what their rights are.

**Figure 3.2 Summary of United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Sattaur 1993)**

In Bangladesh the categories *child* and *childhood* are joint in the category *Shishu*. The Bengal category *Shishu* refers both to age and to life circumstances. *Shishu* represents the innocent, protected and dependent (Blanchet 1996). A child who is well cared for and does not have responsibilities can remain *Shishu* until they are twelve years old. However a child who is forced to work and gain life experience is not referred to as *Shishu*. Under similar circumstances in Scandinavia the child would still be considered a child because of its age, but the child's negative life experiences would be referred to as a loss of childhood.

Why do I include these examples from Scandinavia and Bangladesh? The goal is to illustrate how *childhood* as a category is conditioned by culture. When departing from the Scandinavian category we might run the risk of only focusing on the negative practices in street life and be prevented from seeing the possibilities the children have on the street. The Scandinavian *childhood* category could prevent us from acknowledging that street life provide the children with a possibility of a better life.

Research carried out among the street children in Kathmandu have shown that street children here physically live healthier lives than the children who stay at home. The study aimed to compare the health, lifestyles and environment of homeless children in Kathmandu with three control populations: poor children living with their families in Kathmandu's squatter settlements; middle-class children attending a fee-paying school in Kathmandu; and poor rural children living in a remote village in central Nepal (Panter-Brick, Todd and Baker 1996). The study investigated stunting. Stunting can be considered as a consequence of a child's diet. The middle class schoolboys had lower percentage of stunting than the other control groups as expected. The surprising find was that the homeless boys scored higher than both the squatter boys and the boys from the village. The result is yet reasonable because the homeless boys do not have to share their income with their family. A number of the children on the street are children who have taken control over their life situation. Thereby they might be considered as more resourceful than their siblings at home. The study did not consider the long term effects of street life.

The findings from the research performed by Panter-Brick, Todd and Baker may seem surprising to a person whose childhood category corresponds with the Scandinavian childhood category discussed above. Bar-On (1998) does not recognize the life of street children as problematic. He claims that it is the North who makes the phenomenon into a problem. According to Bar-On (ibid.) 'street child' is a category generally reserved to identify children in the South who engage themselves regularly in economic activity in geographic areas that are formally designated for the use of the public. He writes that children in the North with similar characteristics as the street children in the South are placed in different categories, such as 'homeless', 'runaway', or 'delinquents', which carry quite different connotations.

### 3.4 Street children

Within the category *street child* there are a number of discourses. Discussions concerning what causes *street child* as a phenomena, focusing on why and how do children become street children. Another important discussion is which definition of 'street child' provides the most fertile point of departure for both scientific and aid related work directed towards street children

Most researchers recognize street children as a symptom of something wrong either globally, nationally (poverty, political conflicts etc.) or in the family. According to Aptekar (1994) it is difficult to ascertain what accounts for street children as a phenomenon in particular cultures. He proposes that street children are a modern phenomenon connected to significant urban centers and not likely to be found in places with strong indigenous cultures. Other researchers such as Cunningham (1995) maintain that street children are a centuries-old problem. In support of his claim is the report from the Chief of police in New York in 1849: "*the constantly increasing numbers of vagrant, idle and vicious children*", whose numbers were, he claimed, almost incredible" (ibid.).

There have been several discussions and contributions to how street children should be defined. The various definitions concentrate on the amount of time the children spend on the street, how frequently the street children have contact with their parents and the street children's behavior.

Cosgrove (1990) has applied two dimensions to define street children: the degree of family involvement and the amount of deviant behavior. According to Cosgrove a street child is "*any individual under the age of majority whose behavior is predominantly at variance with community norms, and whose primary support for his/her development needs is not a family or family substitute*". Cosgrove's definition does not include that deviant behavior and family substitutes are culturally particulars. What is to be considered deviant depends on the norms within society. We would then need to focus on who has the power to define others as deviant.



UNICEF (1996) operates with the categories 'children of the street' and 'children on the street'. 'Children on the street' implies that the children work on the street and return home in the evenings. They live together with parents or guardians and contribute economically to the household. 'Children of the street' refer to the children who live their life on the street. They sleep, eat and work on the street. The street has become the place of survival serving both as home and workplace (Panter-Brick, Todd and Baker 1996).

A number of researchers see this dichotomy as misleading (Aptekar 1997). 'Children on/off the street' are categories, which gives the impression of two distinct groups. Aptekar claims that in most societies only a small percent of the children working on the street live on the street completely. The majority of the children fluctuate between home, the street and the variety of programs that exist to help them (ibid.). This is also the case with the street children in Kathmandu as we will see from three street stories in chapter 6. Only a small percentage of the children do not have any contact with their parents or other members of their family. Some of the children have daily contact with their parents, some once a week, some monthly and some only go home during the festivals or if they have money to contribute to the household.

One of the purposes of a definition of the category 'street child' was to provide a foundation for selecting informants. Aptekar operates with an informative definition of street child, which was helpful during the field studies.

*Street children are both genders although they are far more likely to be male in the developing world. Street children are more than 5 years of age but not old enough to be perceived as adults. They work in urban streets without adult supervision. They live without their parents although they keep some contact with them. They are not the children of the working poor. (Aptekar 1994:199).*

The definition does not concern why and how the children have become street children. These are questions to be answered through interviews, answers which will be presented in chapter 6. One category of street children who can be included in the definition above are the street children in the Nepalese street child category, *khate*.

### 3.5 *Khate*

*Khate* represents a category which originates from the street children themselves. The children who worked as ragpickers described themselves as *khate*. Ragpickers collect plastic and other recyclable goods and sell it. The ragpickers created the word *khate* because they do not have the possibility to save their earnings and spend it all immediately. The *khate* identity hinges upon doing ragpicking and spending all the earnings on food and fun (Onta-Bhatta 1996).

The ragpickers called themselves *khate* so it would be easier to explain to others what kind of work they do. Upon request they would answer that they do '*khate kam*' (*khate* work). It would sound strange but no one would look at the children negatively, and they felt like they did some good work (ibid.). The *khate* category has been transformed from being a positive self-produced identity category to a depreciatory category used by the general public to mock the street children. Everybody now knows that '*khate* work' means collecting plastic and the children dislike the *khate* identity because it is socially degrading. The street children look down upon ragpicking because it is a job that involves dirt.

Why did the associations to the *khate* category change and how has the *khate* identity come to include all the street children in Kathmandu and how has it become so well known? Onta-Bhatta writes that in August 1992 in Kathmandu, a play was staged about the lives of the *khate* children, played by the *khate* children themselves. This play was watched by a small number of people, but it was covered in both Nepalese and English local papers. The media has since, together with the NGOs played a significant role in shaping the public identity of the street children in Kathmandu. The generic use of the category *khate* has made it easier for the NGOs, the police and the media to justify their programs as the population of children can be significantly increased under the broad and fluid category of *khate* (ibid.). *Khate* was a category created by the street children so they could in a neutral way explain their work. The *khate* category has been transformed to a prototype for all street children in Nepal.

### 3.6 Summing up

The discussion of the various categories *child*, *childhood* and *street child* intend to make the reader reflect on their associations to these categories so these associations will not prevent the reader from acknowledging the resources and cleverness the street children hold.

The definition of *street child* was introduced in this chapter. Aptekar's definition functioned as a guide in the selection of informants as we shall see in chapter concerning the production of empirical material, chapter 5.

Chapter 6 presents three categories of street children in order to elaborate why the street children are street children and how their life is on the street. The construction of the categories is based on two variables. The first concerns the circumstances that triggered the street life and the second the street children's degree of family involvement.

This chapter has also elaborated the *emic* (see 5.3) category *khate*, a category that will reoccur through out the thesis. From being a neutral category the street children applied to explain themselves and their work, the category *khate* has evolved into a synonym for street children, referring to all street children notwithstanding their work, family ties, or where they live (Onta-Bhatta 1996).

In addition to the knowledge of categories and prototypes I need a theoretical framework in order analyze the empirical material. The theoretical framework will be approached in the next chapter.

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## Chapter 4 The theoretical framework

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter aims at clarifying the theoretical framework of the thesis. Chapter 1 introduced two main research questions raised to increase understanding of the relationship between the street children and the places they live in. The thesis aims at investigating in what way the street children use the city and the streets as a resource in their day-to-day survival. Hence a theoretical framework which can be of assistance in categorizing the street children's actions and provide understanding for the underlying intentions of the street children's daily actions is needed. In order to answer these questions the theoretical framework is orientated towards understanding the human forms of practices. Therefore the main concepts in this theoretical approach are; *social practice* and *territoriality*.

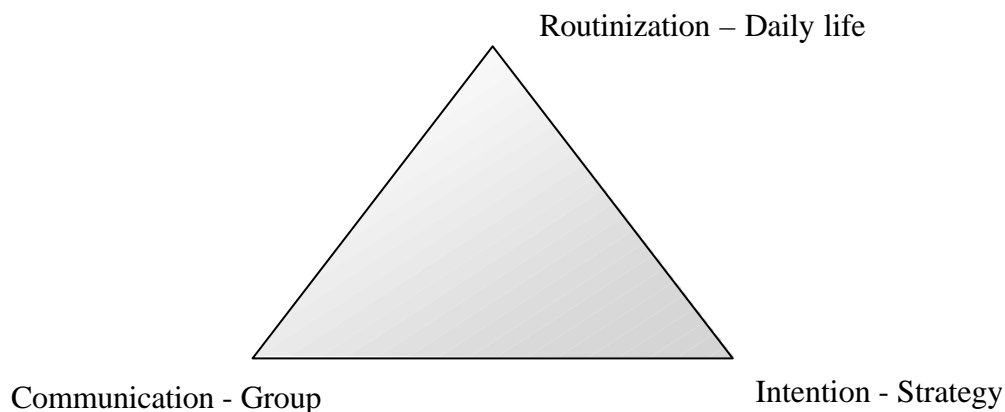
Territoriality is a concept which focuses on the power aspect of social practice. The power expressed through territoriality is connected to the materiality and the resources existing in a place/territory. The concept of territoriality can provide a deeper understanding of the relationship between street children and place. The relationship between street children's social practices and place will also be in focus when we investigate the production and reproduction of territoriality.

In the analytical section (chap 6, 7, 8 and 9) the theory is applied on three levels; 1) the individual level, 2) the group level including both the dynamic within a group of street children and the relationship between different groups of street children and 3) the relationship between the street children and the mainstream society.

### 4.2 Social Practice

The first main research questions is: 'Does the social practice of the street children vary between different places within the city and if so why?'. The meaning of the question is not to conduct a comparison between the three field areas, but to investigate the relationship between the street children's social practice and their place. In order to focus on such a relationship it is necessary to find out what the street children's social practice consists of.

According to my understanding of social practice, social practice includes all what we say and all our actions, conscious and subconscious, discursive and non-discursive. Social practice is a comprehensive concept. It is therefore necessary to restrict the investigation by focusing on some aspects of social practice. The aspects of social practice emphasized have been chosen in terms of relevance for the research questions and in relation to the empirical material. Simonsen (1993) claims that *intention*, *intersubjectivity*, *rules* and *meaning* are qualities in human action which should be included in a theory on social practice. She has incorporated these qualities into her triangle model with three mutually connected, but analytically separated dimensions *routinization - daily life*, *intention - strategy*, and *communication - groups*.



**Figure 4.1 'a practical theoretical triangle' (after Simonsen 1993)**

The three first secondary research questions approaches different aspects of the street children's daily life. Through applying the dimensions in Simonsen's triangle the different aspects of their daily life can be elaborated. In the coming paragraphs I will demonstrate how the dimensions in the triangle makes it possible to focus on the street children's daily actions, how they organize their daily life and what the street children's motivation for their daily actions are.

## Routinization- Daily life

Secondary question 2 is (see 1.4); 'how do the street children use the city?' and focuses on what the street children's daily actions are and why they choose these actions. The first dimension in the triangle *routinization- daily life* will be of assistance in addressing this question. Routinization is understood as the ordinary, taken for granted character of most of our daily activities.

The concept of routinization, as Giddens (1984) applies it, is grounded in practical consciousness. Giddens claims that our knowledge can be divided in two. The first is the part of our knowledge that we are able to express and discuss verbally, *discursive consciousness*. The second is the knowledge we hold and employ in our daily life without being capable of expressing it verbally, *practical consciousness*. This knowledge has become a matter of course to us. The street children master our mother tongue without discursively giving an account of the grammatical rules for the language. There is no bar between the two forms of consciousness, there are only differences between what can be said and what is simply done (Giddens 1984).

Practical consciousness together with *routinization* are helpful concepts in the process of understanding how street children appropriate places in Kathmandu. In chapter 9 we will see that street children's territorial practice have elements of both *discursive consciousness* and *practical consciousness*.

Practical consciousness and the daily routines give us a feeling of *ontological security* (ibid.). Ontological security is based on trust, interpersonal trust, and trust that the world will behave as we expect (Simonsen 1993). Ontological security represents a basic psychological security system, which makes us capable of functioning within the different contexts in daily life.

Another aspect of daily life and routines is the power enclosed in the dimension. One aspect of power concerns *rules*. Simonsen (ibid.) claims that rules are the methodological procedures for social action. In street children's gangs rules are of great importance; the rules represent a pointer of what kind of social action is expected in that area. Rules can be connected to a regulating role with sanctions embedded, or they can play a part in constituting meaning. Sharing is one example of the rules and expectations which constitutes meaning to the group

and makes the group a part of a survival strategy (see chapter 7). If a child refuses to share with any of the other children in the group the child may experience exclusion from the group as a sanction.

Routines are occasionally interrupted by 'critical situations'. Giddens defines 'critical as "*circumstances of radical disjuncture of an unpredictable kind, which affect substantial numbers of individuals, situations that threaten or destroy the certitudes of institutionalized routines*" (Giddens 1984:61). All feelings of autonomy of action that individuals have in ordinary routines of day-to-day life in normal social settings are almost completely dissolved in a 'critical situation'.

The concept 'critical situation' is an important part of the process of entering life on the street (see chapter 6). In chapter 7 we will see how 'critical situations' force the street children to negotiate their survival strategies. Several incidents during the life on the street may be seen as a 'critical situation'. Children may experience that the place they occupy is taken over by others, be it other street children or representatives from mainstream society. Their livelihood and daily routines attached to this place are then destroyed, making them feel ontological insecure. Routines represent the basic safety that lies in the control of the different situations in daily life. Street children capable of finding new routines are the ones who are able to cope with and survive in the new situation.

### Intention Strategy

*Routinization* and *daily life* are concepts which will assist us in understanding what the street children's daily actions are. In order to understand why the street children choose exactly the actions they choose additional concepts are needed. The dimension *Intention - Strategy* and the concepts connected to this dimension will provide a deeper understanding of the street children's actions. This concerns not only what their actions consist of, but also why these actions are a part of their survival strategy.

Sharing is of importance to the street child's life in the group and daily life (see chapter 7), but daily actions may also have other intentions besides daily survival. When a child shares food with another child it may not only be an act of kindness. The giver assumes that he or

she will be repaid in the future either in the form of food or in the form of support. Hence the street children's present actions also have a future perspective, which thus also informs the rules of daily life.

The second dimension in Simonsen's triangle model is *Intention-Strategy*. Intention- Strategy is a dimension with the future perspective in center. It represents the human ability to develop reflective expectations towards the future and act according to these. The *Intention- Strategy* dimension contains the concepts *mobilization* (a) how specific goals can be achieved through mobilizing of resources among individuals and primary groups, *life strategy* (b) how individuals and primary group's life strategies finds it's form through connection with society and *reflectivity* (c) how reflectivity and life-planning is a central dimension in life in a modern society. The first two concepts develop an analytical category and the last one relates to a social tendency (Simonsen 1993).

As an analytical concept mobilization can be used to emphasize the active character of daily life. The concept mobilization indicates how street children through their own activities can affect their life. The concept is helpful in the process of understanding how the street children mobilize the resources in the city to maintain daily life. In addition mobilization can help us understand how the street children territorialize areas in the city and how some children in one area have more power than other children in that area.

*Mobilization* (a) is a theoretical empirical concept developed by Cuturello and Godard (Simonsen 1993) in their research on how families mobilize their resources to acquire a house. According to Simonsen, Cuturello and Godard identify three forms of mobilization. The first is *monitarian mobilization*, where economic resources are obtained. The second is *material mobilization*, where the family can increase its economical resources. The third form is *moral mobilization* and the basis for understanding the acting and initiating of the two others forms of mobilization. Moral mobilization grows out of the ethical space where the family's decisions are made, and describes the family's production of a moral ideological basis for the two other forms of mobilization. The street children have different strategies in their mobilization depending on the aim of the mobilization. Mobilization is a part of the power the street children possess. One individual street child might not be strong but through the ability to mobilize others the one is given strength.



Mobilization is clearly a practice where the street children focus on their future possibilities. Mobilization can be considered as a specification of those processes available in fulfillment of a strategy. When an experienced street child cares for a child who is new on the street, the experienced child might just be a caring person, or his intention may be that he wants others to be dependent on him in order to mobilize them on a future occasion. Considering these aspects there is a need for concepts which focus on the future aspect of the street children's practices. *Life strategy* is a concept which captures the future aspect.

*Life strategy* (b) is a complicated concept, because it is used in a number of different contexts. Simonsen (1993) explains life strategies as a set of specific priorities and action sequences that relates to their future life, but at the same time is a product of the history of society as well as their own individual life story. The action at present is like a Janus face, one face looking towards the future and one face looking towards the past.

Simonsen is most concerned with the individual level and the family and household level when she discusses life strategy. Chapter 7 compares the street children's gangs with families, in order to look closer at how the gangs function as a substitute for family. The strategy term will be significant in the understanding of the street children's gangs, both the interaction between the individuals in the gang, the interaction between the gangs and the interaction between the gangs and mainstream society.

In their daily life the street children have to make a number of decisions. They have to decide in what way they wish to organize their life strategy, how they should mobilize, what kind of people they choose to stay with in a gang. A choice is usually a result of consideration of pros and cons. *Reflectivity* is a concept which can assist us in discussing this process. The discussion connected to the concept *reflectivity* can illuminate the choices the children make in their daily life.

Giddens (Simonsen 1993) claims that *reflectivity* (c) has become a central element in the modern society. Modern society differs from traditional society by forcing the actor to choose a life style without producing too many guidelines for the actor on how to choose. The traditional society represents more established norms, which keeps daily life in relatively firm patterns. Lifestyles are routinized practices but according to Giddens the routines are open to change due to the changeable nature of self-identity. Cultural transmission and continuity

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between the generations have lost its meaning in the modern society, where practices only are repeated if they can be argued for reflectively. Practices are accepted by new generations of street children if they can gain from the practices.

The ontological safety accomplished through the daily routines rests on a suppressed fundamental question about existence. Therefore reflectivity and existence strategies are central dimension in modern life. Street children were in chapter 1 and 3 considered as an urban and modern phenomenon. Reflectivity and existence strategies are also central dimensions in the street children's life. Numbers of street children in Nepal not only travel from a rural life to an urban life but also from a traditional to a modern society. Leaving their village was a choice for some of the children, in the city they again have to reflect on who and what they want to be. This is both a part of their existence strategy and a part of their identity project.

The discussion around *reflectivity* may wrongly give the impression that street children stand free to choose among different ways of living. In reality the street children's options of survival are limited. They have a choice, but the choice might be between two evils, for instance steal or starve.

One of the choices the children have to make is the choice concerning where in Kathmandu they wish to stay. When the street children choose to stay in one area this choice is a part of their life strategy. Partly the choice of place is connected to mobilization as already mentioned. It is a necessity for the street children that the place they choose gives them possibility to mobilize food, money and friends. Another factor, which also affects their choice of place, is that they find a place where they feel at home and find other street children with the same references and experiences as themselves. In order to understand this part of the street children's social practice, concepts which focus on some of the factors that keep actors together in a place are needed. Here the third and last dimension in the triangle on social practice, *communication – group* (Fig 4.1) is helpful.

### Communication- Group

The street children will choose to stay in a place if the place provides means of livelihood and they feel that the other children here place accept them. The dimension *communication - group* refers to how the actors in a group have the same understanding and same meaning in their social practice and daily life. An example of a group in the Nepalese context is *khate*.

An actor's ability to define and understand the context and appropriate social practice is based on the actors 'stock of knowledge'. Schutz's 'stock of knowledge at hand', is the sediment of all previous experiences, which at the time of particular experience or action lie in the past (Werlen 1993:59). The subjects are able to recall these experiences as they belong to the 'stream of consciousness'. Individuals in the same culture have different experiences. Despite this the individuals in that community will attain an intersubjectively consistent structure. One of the factors that make street children stay together as a group in a place is their similar 'stock of knowledge'. Another factor is the street children's common language.

A common language is central in teaching the subject to interpret the world in an *intersubjective* way. A common language is based on how a given event or object gives the same *meaning* to everyone. Meaning is constituted in the knowing subject. Common language does not necessarily refer only to the nationality of the language but also to the social group it is spoken by. The street children in Kathmandu may speak Nepalese in the same way as a Brahmin but the meaning events or objects given them may be so different from the Brahmin that they don't speak a common language. Every street child is different from the other but at the same time they all have experiences which provides them with a common language. Common language and 'stock of knowledge' are a part of the street children's individual identity and gang identity. The gang identity is often connected to a place and thereby the street children in a place develop a common language.

So far we have focused on what social practices are and what it does. Another important aspect to include in the theoretical discussion is how social practices are produced and reproduced.

### 4.3 Context and production and reproduction of social practices

When considering production and reproduction of social practices we need to focus on context. In this thesis territoriality is considered as a social practice and chapter 9 will focus on how context effects the production and reproduction of territoriality. Context refers to time and the social and spatial surroundings for all social action (Simonsen 1993). Context is not only setting for social practices but a part of the social practices. *Context is not a given frame for action: action continually produces, reconstructs and reproduces the context* (Fosso 1997 (authors translation)). Figure 4.2 connects time and spatiality and is based on Simonsen (1993).

Time	Longue durée	Dasein (lifetime)	Daily life durée
Space			
Institutional spatial Practices	<b>Historical geography.</b> <b>Socio spatial Development</b>	Lifestrategy in geographical structure	Daily routines Geographical Determination
Place	Local history culture and traditions	<b>Identity. Biographies in time and space.</b>	Spatially based 'matter of course'
Individual spatial Practices	Spatial practices' Historical determination	Spatial practices' Connection with life-Strategy	<b>Dailytime-spatial routines.</b> .. <b>(time geography)</b>

**Figure 4.2 Interaction between the social dimensions of time. (After Simonsen 1993)**

Through the connection between time and space three analytical levels become distinct (bolded in fig 4.2). Choice of analytical level is determined by the research approach. The main focus of this thesis is daily life and therefore the relation between Daily life durée and individual spatial practices (marked with ♦ fig 4.2).

The first analytical level in fig 4.2 *historical geography, socio spatial development* refers to the social institutions and traditions as something durable in a society. Street children as phenomena can be an example of such an institution. The phenomenon 'street children'

survive the life circle of a single street child and represents an option for other children who live under difficult conditions.

The next analytical level is *identity, biographies in time and space*. Biographies focusing on time and space connect individuals, place and society. Dasein expresses the lifetime of a human being. Dasein maintains itself through everyday life. Simonsen claims that Dasein often contains two aspects; one how people live in Dasein and two how there is safety in everyday practice even if it forces us to do something cumbersome and repulsive (Simonsen 1993).

The last analytical level is *Dailytime-spatial routines,(time geography)*. This level expresses the daily routines and the daily repetitions. Both the institutions and the lifetime of a human being affect daily life. But the engine for both production and reproduction of institutions and life strategies is daily routines. It is the daily routines that contain the power to change both institutions and life strategies.

So far we have discussed the different dimensions of the street children's social practice and how context is a part of the production and the reproduction of practices. Now it is time to discuss the other main concept mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, *territoriality*.

#### **4.4 Territoriality as social practice.**

*.... the intention here is to interpret territoriality as a symptom of something social – be it of cultural or biological origin – sometimes it forms a problem (social, economically and politically –individually or collectively), but well as often there is a possible solution, that lies behind the conduct of territoriality.*  
(Tonboe 1994)

The second main research question is: 'In which way do different groups of street children territorialize Kathmandu?'. Therefore concepts, which can address the material aspect of the street children's social practices, are needed. The concept of territoriality includes a material aspect.

Several geographical concepts could have been applied to approach the material aspect of the street children's social practice, both *space* and *place* are concepts which could have fulfilled this task. I have chosen to apply territoriality as a point of departure because territoriality is a concept which expresses power in a more explicit way.

Before the discussion is lead over to the geographical aspect of the concept, territoriality's association to ecology and biology will be elaborate. Territoriality is a term that earlier has been associated with animals and biology, not humans (Tonboe 1994). The most conspicuous in the discussion of territoriality is the relationship between the biological and the socio-cultural. Biologists and zoologists have captured the conception of territory, and the word gives associations to biological determinism. Biology can contribute to understand why territoriality is important, but not how, where or when, which remains a socio-cultural and socio-material question. Human territoriality can not be explained with biology or instincts but should be understood as a social construction. In this paragraph we will look closer at what territoriality is and in chapter 8 and 9 we will look closer at how territorial practices are expressed and how they are produced and reproduced.

Territoriality represents a form of social practice that ties the actor, action and materiality together. One definition of territoriality is: "*the tendency to identify with, appropriate, individually or collectively, and if necessary defend a greater or smaller piece of land towards "intruders" individuals, groups or social functions*" (Tonboe 1994:9 (authors translation)). By applying the word 'defend' in his definition, Tonboe strongly emphasizes that aspect of power. Occasionally the street children's territoriality is expressed through defending their area towards intruders.

Sack defines territoriality as: "*the attempt by an individual or group to affect, influence, or control people, phenomena, and relationships, by delimiting and asserting control over a geographic area*" (Sack 1986:19). Sack includes social power without emphasizing it too strongly. This definition gives an understanding of what territoriality is but it has as Tonboe's definition some restrictions in order to understand the production of territoriality. Sack's understanding of territoriality can assist in understanding the power aspects of the concept. In chapter 9 this understanding of territoriality will illustrate how territorial practices are expressed.

Ellingsen understands territoriality as “.. *the process by which various groups appropriate place*” (Ellingsen 2002:13). By applying ‘appropriate’ Ellingsen indicates that territoriality is not a condition but a continuous process. The definition also focuses on the production and the reproduction of the social practice of territoriality. Territoriality is produced through daily routines and life repetitions. To appropriate means to make one’s own hence it can be closely related to ‘sense of place’ (see 4.5). In this thesis ‘sense of place’ refers to how the street children connect with places through their place based gangs.

According to Sack (1986) Territoriality does not exist unless there is an attempt by individuals or groups to affect the interactions of others. In order to be able to territorialize, the street children must have power in some form. It may seem difficult to imagine that street children have power. In what way can the boy in fig 3.1 have power? The street children’s power is expressed in different ways depending on whom they are interacting with. We must bear in mind that the street children’s territoriality is directed in several directions. In this thesis I will focus on how they express their territoriality towards each other and how they express their territorial practice directed towards mainstream society.

The territorial practice among the street children includes *inclusion- exclusion* (4.5). Their territorial practice connected to the mainstream society involves some other aspects of power. They have power through their possession on the margin of society and this power is partly connected to *abjection* (4.6). *Transgression* (4.7) is important in their territorial practice both in connection with other street children and the mainstream society.

### Territories and boundaries

Territoriality is a social practice related to the material world, in the form of territories. Any form of territory has boundaries. A boundary's function is to mark where a territory ends and starts. Boundaries are maintained in different ways, depending on what kind of territory existing within the boundaries. Transgressors of national territories are intimidated with punishment. Sanctions of crossing a boundary do not only depend on the boundary transgressed, but also who the transgressor is. We will later look at how the street children express their boundaries, and how they handle transgression

Territories also exist on a number of levels. The territories dealt with in this thesis are mostly represented in the form of places circumscribed by the practices of street children and the practices of the mainstream society. Places can have certain properties that imply boundaries and impose degrees of accessibility. A place can be used as a territory at one time and not another; in creating a territory we are also creating a kind of place. A place becomes a territory when boundaries are applied to affect behavior by controlling access (Sack 1986). It is important to distinguish between a territory as a place and other types of places, territories require constant effort to establish and maintain. The street children are not merely connected to place through their territoriality. Place also plays an important part in the street children's daily practices and their identity project. Place should not merely be considered as something material but also as something social.

#### 4.5 Place

*We exist in and are surrounded by places- centers of meaning. Places are neither totally material nor completely mental; they are combinations of the material and mental and cannot be reduced to either* (Cresswell 1996:13).

Place is a concept which is widely discussed within geography and the focus on place has changed through out the disciplines history. From Carl Sauer's focus on the 'uniqueness of place', to the humanistic geography's focus on how people relate to place in the late 1970's to the more recent focus on how place is produced (Crang 1998). Place must be understood as a carrier of social and cultural context, consisting of both practices, relations, symbols and meanings, which groups of people consciously or unconsciously incorporate in themselves or apply in daily life (Fosso 2000)

The thesis is particularly concerned with the relationship between the street children's social practices, identity and the place they stay in (see 1.4). It is therefore necessary to find concepts which can be of assist in understanding in what way the meaning the street children read into a place affect their daily life and social practices, including their territorial practices.

Place is not only an area for daily life but also an area for production of meaning. Cresswell (1996) claims that places have meaning through our actions in them. Place is produced by practices build on beliefs of what is the appropriate thing to do there. Our practice in a place is



informed by the meaning embedded in the place. The place reproduces this belief in a way that makes it seem natural to us. For instance when the street children are chased from the temples in *Hanumandhokha* because the caretakers are afraid the street children will urinate on the temple. They can freely urinate in a number of other places, but a temple is filled with meaning which turns urinating into an improper action there, following the concept of purity (*suddha*) and impurity (*asuddha*).

Places are filled with meaning. Shields (1991) refers to places' meaning as place images. "*These [place images] are the various discrete meanings associated with real places or regions regardless of their character in reality*" (ibid:60). He continues; place images are often exaggerated or understated and may be accurate or inaccurate. Place images often result from stereotyping, which over-simplifies groups or places. Place images are pre-representations of a place and may have an impact on the street children's life strategy, because place images may affect the street children's choice of place. For instance a number of street children chose travel to Kathmandu after they in some way have been presented to a glorifying image of the capital. In chapter 8 we will discuss other examples of how place can affect the street children's identity and life strategy.

The shaping of place is affected by people's sense of belonging. There is a difference between the identity of place and the identity with place. Identity with place is in this thesis understood as how the habitants let place influence the shaping of their identity. Many street children identify themselves with the place they stay in. Identity of place refers to how the place is understood by its inhabitants and others and how this affects the practices in a place.

### **Identity and place**

*Place is not only a fact to be explained in the broader frame of space, but it is also a reality to be clarified and understood from the perspectives of the people who have given it meaning. (Tuan in Entrikin 1991:10)*

Identity is an expression of who we are, our personality. According to Mead (1934) our identity is socially constructed. Our personality is not a private but a social experience. Our

personality is formed through social and communicative interaction with others. Mead explains our identity process as twosided the 'Me' and the 'I'. The 'Me' is the objective side which is developed in relation with others through their attitudes and responses. The 'I' is subjective reflective action of self. Our identity is a result of an inner conversation between these two sides.

Mead emphasizes other people's reactions in the identity process. He calls these others 'the generalized others', an expression which does not refer to other people but to the values, norms and question concerning moral. Our identity is an expression of who we are. Bocock (1993) understands identity as: active, connected behaviours, which shows others -and one self- what person one wishes to be understood as.

Their gang and the place they stay in affect the street children's identity. A number of street children apply place to build a new identity after they have become street children (see chap 8). It is not only the place the street children stay inn that affects their identity. They also define themselves against other street children staying in other places. When the children in Indra Chowk define the boys in Thamel as *Dada giri* (gangsters) they simultaneous indirectly define themselves as 'the good guys'. In order to say who we are we define us against someone else, the other.

Relph (1976) elaborates 'sense of place' and how the feeling of place divides a population in *insiders* and *outsider*. According to Crang (1998) people actively structure groups, and define each other through creating insiders and outsiders. Boundaries have the function of establishing insiders: those who belong in a place and establishing outsiders; those who do not belong in a place. The insider knows where she/he belongs, where home is. This knowledge constitutes the difference between security and insecurity, between 'here' and 'there' and 'us' and 'them' (Fosso 1997). To the outsider the place has a negative expression which prevents the feeling of home.

A place represents different meanings to different social groups and thereby the possibilities for conflicts and exercise of power are present (ibid.). The practices of creating insiders and outsiders is an expression of power. Hence we need to focus on place and power.

## 4.6 Place and power

Territoriality is a practice with connotations of power. Places or material conditions do not contain power in itself. Werlen (1993:7) applies Foucault's assertion that "*power exists only when it is put into action*". One exertion of power in connected to place is including and excluding people from a group or a place.

According to Sibley (1995) attachment to a place is seen as a fundamental human need and is an important part of building of self and identity. Sibley considers people's feelings about others of great importance because of the feelings effect on social interaction, particularly in instances of racism and related forms of oppression. Identity is not only understood through the communication with those one consider as same but also who we define as different. The 'other' functions as basis for inclusion and exclusion. We exclude the other and include the same. One of the ways territoriality work is through *inclusion* and *exclusion*.

Sibley (1995) claims that..."*power is expressed in the monopolization of space and the relegation's of weaker groups in society to less desirable environments*" (Sibley 1995). According to Foucault power in all situations depends on the context (Engelstad 1999). Who is considered as a weaker group and what is a less desirable environment also depends on the context.

Inclusion and exclusion are an important expression of power for the street children in the place-based gangs and between the different places. Street children travel from place to place, in some places they are welcomed in other places they are chased. If the newcomer is comparable with the identity of the gang he is included in the group if not, he is chased.

Inclusion and exclusion partly describes the dynamic inside a gang, but not how the street children can have power to appropriate places belonging to mainstream society. *Center-Margin* are concepts which illuminate how the street children have power to appropriate places belonging to mainstream society.

## Center-Margin

*Center* and *Margin* are important elements in the discussion of how a place can reinforce the identity of the social group that claims it (Shields 1991). This contribution to geographical discussions considers how place is a powerful tool for the manipulation of social actions. Low cultures are often thought of as the social 'other'. The mainstream society and central power define the social 'other', simultaneously as they apply the low culture to define themselves.

*The social definition of marginal places and spaces is intimately linked with the categorization of objects, practices, ideas and modes of social interaction as belonging to the 'Low culture', the culture of marginal places and spaces, the culture of the marginalized. (Shields 1991:4)*

Not all of the street children's places are on the margin of Nepalese society. The street children are numerous in places located in the center of Nepalese society and culture, for instance the street children in Indra Chok who hang around *Hanumandhoka*.

Despite the fact that street children use center places, street children are on the margin of society. The children represent the low culture in Nepalese society and place can not change their status, but the street children can change the status of a place. Because the street children are perceived as dirty they can with their appearance change a place from center to margin.

In a Nepalese context it is natural to include the categories *suddah* (pure) and *asuddah* (impure) in the center-margin discussion. Places can be understood as on the margin of Nepalese society if the place in question is associated with *asuddah* castes. Chapter 8 will discuss how Thamel is a place on the margin of society and in what way this affects the street children there.

## Transgression

*Crossing boundaries, from a familiar space to an alien one which is under the control of somebody else, can provide anxious moments; in some circumstances it could be fatal, or it might be an exhilarating experience – the thrill of transgression. (Sibley 1995)*

To *transgress* means to cross boundaries. *Transgression* is a key concept for social and cultural geographers who want to describe and explain the construction of 'normality' through the creation and maintenance of particular types of place (Cresswell 1996). By focusing on transgression it is possible to investigate the distribution of power.

A place is given meaning through of the interaction between the subjects and the place, but all subjects do not 'read' the same meaning into a place. According to Cresswell (1996) this leaves us with a hierarchy of readings -dominant readings and subordinate readings. Street children may often read another meaning into a place than mainstream society. Therefore street children's way of reading a place is occasionally understood as 'out-of-place'. The street children's practices in a place are by mainstream society considered a transgressive act.

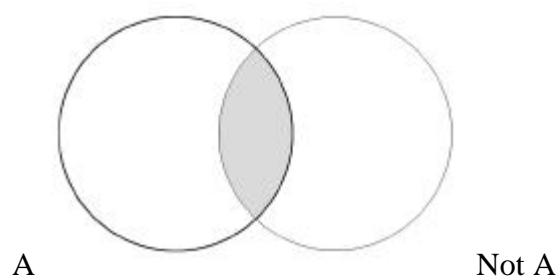
Whichever values are considered correct and appropriate are underlined by the reaction to transgression. Transgression are acts which are judged to be 'out of place' by the dominant institutions and actors. Transgression is a form of resistance that creates a response from the establishment (Cresswell 1996). The response draws the line on the battlefield and defends the boundaries of the territory. Transgressive acts upset common sense assumptions and annoy people. There are several types of transgression. Physical transgression, crossing a boundary to a place one is not supposed to. Social transgression where norms and mutual understandings are transgressed is another form of transgression.

The street children cross the boundaries to each other's territories and they transgress the boundaries to the places of mainstream society. Transgressive acts between the street children's different places are a part of the dynamic of the gangs.

## Abjection

Cresswell (1996) claims that there is a dominating ideology in every society. In Nepal this ideology is represented through the caste system (see chapter 2). The caste system defines the individual in a wider structure. An important factor in the caste system is ritual pollution. The lower castes have the ability to transfer ritual impurity higher up in the caste hierarchy. As mentioned in 2.4 there is a separation between the categories *suddah* and *asuddah*, pure and impure in Nepal. Given this fear of physical and ritual pollution *khate* can be intimidating to the high caste Nepalese.

Sibley is interested in the discussion of place and power. He argues that *abjection* is one of the keys to an understanding of exclusion. “...*the abject as some thing, always there, at the borders of the subject’s identity, threatening apparent unities and stabilities with disruption and possible dissolution*” (Sibley 1995:8). We exist and act in places. Because places are meaningful we are constantly engaged in acts of interpretation. The subject wishes to separate between clean and dirty, ordered and disordered, ‘us’ and ‘them’. The subject wants to expel the abject. The subject feels anxiety because such separation can never be achieved. Sibley mentions how focused people can be on cleanness and the fear for human dirt. People feel a need to categorize the world in crisp sets A, not A and so on. The problem occurs when it is no longer possible to sort things into different categories.



**Figure 4.3 Zones of ambiguity in social categorization. (After Sibley 1995)**

Between A and not A there is liminal zone. This zone causes anxiety for individuals or groups who are socialized into thinking that categorizing is desirable. The liminal zone represents a zone of abjection, a zone which should be reduced in order to reduce anxiety.

Some of the *Khate's* power lies in their position on the margin of society. The street children's power lies in this liminal zone. They are children with adult-like behavior, in the liminal zone between adult and child. They appropriate public places and change the given qualities of the place from public to private.

#### **4.7 Summing up**

The theoretical framework presented should make it possible to answer both the two main research questions and the four secondary research questions. By applying the dimensions of Simonsen's triangle an understanding of the different aspects of the street children daily actions can be attained. The dimension Intention –Strategy also provides the possibility to focus on the future perspective of the street children's practices. The three forms of mobilization are essential to both the future aspect of the street children practices and their gang practices.

Sack's understanding of territoriality as control over a geographical area and Ellingsen's understanding of territoriality as appropriation of place will assist in investigating how street children territorialize places in Kathmandu. Territoriality represents a practice with connotations to power. This thesis will elaborate the power aspect of territoriality through focusing on the concepts; center-margin, inclusion-exclusion, transgression and abjection. Territoriality is a practice connected to place. The relationship between the street children and place also affect their social practices and their identity.

In order to fully understand social practices and territoriality it is necessary to focus on context. Context does not only represent surroundings for social practices, the context is also a part of the social practices. By focusing on time and the spatial dimension of context it is possible to elaborate the production and reproduction of social practice and territoriality.

The theoretical framework is chosen according to the research questions. The theoretical framework is meant to be of assistance in providing a more comprehensive understanding of the social practices of street children. Before we apply this theoretical framework on the empirical material let us have a closer look at how the empirical material is produced.

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## Chapter 5 Production of the empirical material

### 5.1 Introduction

This thesis focuses on street children in Kathmandu, more specifically the relationship between the street children's practices and the place they stay in. The theme is rather complex and both preparing for and performing the field study was challenging. This chapter focuses on different aspects of the field study and the methods applied to produce the empirical material.

To render a field study possible it is necessary to make the theme studied operational. I have done so through the research questions which together with the theoretical framework functions as guides in the choice of methods.

The two main concepts in the main research questions are, *social practice* and *territoriality*. Chapter 4 demonstrated how daily life and daily routines functions as the engine for both production and reproduction of social practices and territoriality. Through applying methods focusing on the actions of day-to-day life it is possible to capture social practice through the three dimensions in Simonsen's practical theoretical triangle; *Daily life-Routines*, *Intention-Strategy* and *Communication-Group*.

Main research question 2 focuses on the street children's territoriality and how they express these forms of practices. The power of territoriality is expressed through the control of a place. In order to fully understand the street children's territoriality it is necessary to investigate their spatial routines; their movements within and between places.

In order to understand both the street children's social practice and their territoriality it was necessary to apply methods which could provide an understanding of the different elements in their daily life. I have developed research questions focusing on 'who', 'what', 'why', 'where' and 'how'. 'Who' and 'what' are descriptive, 'where' includes the spatial aspect, 'why' focuses on causality and 'how' attempts to capture the different dimensions of meaning in social phenomena (Fossåskaret 1997). All the methods chosen aim to understand the different aspects of the street children's daily life.



## 5.2 Methods used in the production of data

In social science there are mainly two types of methodological approach, qualitative and quantitative. Quantitative methods are employed when one wishes to count or measure the extension of a phenomenon (Bryman 1989).

The research approach in this thesis aims at understanding a social phenomenon. Repstad (1993) claims that if you want understanding of a certain environment and you are not concerned about how often or how usual something is you should apply observation and qualitative interviews. Qualitative research embraces contents, character, meaning and concentrates on placing the perspective of the subjects studied in center. An essential part of qualitative method is participant observation.

All the methods employed during the field studies demanded participant observation. Fossåskaret's understanding of participant observation is: "*The researcher is a participant observer when the researcher also is one of the actors he is observing*" (Fossåskaret 1997:26). In my opinion, becoming one of the actors one is observing is not fully necessary in order to conduct participant observation. The observer participates through the effect her presence has on her surroundings.

Qualitative research provides the researcher with alternatives and flexibility. The need for flexibility was an important factor in my consideration of methods. My main concern was to establish contact with the street children. If one method did not prove efficient, I needed the possibility to apply a substitute method.

The first main research question investigates the variation in social practice between the different areas in Kathmandu. I experienced that some methods were well functioning in one area but did not give results in another area. Therefore I applied several methodological approaches in each area and thereby attain a detailed picture of the practices (Fig. 5.1).

43 interviews with informants
3 interviews with key informants
26 mobility maps
1 workshop ( recorded and transcribed)
Field notes (from field conversations, excursions and daily observations)

**Figure 5.1 List of methodological approaches and empirical material**

The different methods applied inform each other, and make it possible to get a deeper understanding because the same question is answered in several ways. For instance most of the street children who were interviewed in Indra Chowk also drew a mobility maps.

The methodological approaches were; field conversations, interviews, mobility maps and workshop, all four demanding participant observation. In the following paragraphs I will discuss each of these methods.

#### 5.2.1 Field conversation

When applying field conversation to produce information the researcher can lead the conversation to a certain degree. It is easy for the researcher to follow up statements relevant for the research. The risk is that the researcher may unwillingly control the conversation more than desired or that the other party goes along with the researcher (Wadel 1991). Field conversation represents a more relaxed situation than the interview situation. In order to have a conversation it is essential that the parties in a conversation have a mutual language.

Due to language problems I could only used field conversations in Thamel and partly at Jagaran to acquire an understanding of the street children's movements and daily actions,. The interpreter applied field conversation in Jagaran and Indra Chowk to prepare the informants interviewing.

#### 5.2.2 Interviews

Interviewing can be applied for a number of purposes. In this thesis interviews are employed to produce data for an academic analysis. According to Fontana & Frey structured interviewing refers to a situation

in which the interviewer asks each informant a series of pre-established questions with a limited set of response categories (Fontana & Frey 1994). Subsequently Fontana & Frey describe the aim of structured interviews as capturing precise data of a codeable nature in order to explain behavior within pre-established categories whereas, unstructured interviews are used in an attempt to understand the complex behavior of members of society without imposing any a priori categorization that may limit the field of inquiry (ibid.).

The distinction between structured and unstructured interviews may not be particularly useful. I applied pre-established questions to understand the social practice of the street children. The interviews are therefore neither structured due to the lack of response categories nor unstructured since there were pre-established questions.

The bulk of the interviews performed was of a semi-structured character. Structured interviews were not desirable because I wanted answers based on the children's experiences and not how I thought these experiences to be.

In Thamel I performed the interviews personally and had the possibility to perform interviews which resembled unstructured interviews. A greater amount of unstructured interviews would have been desirable according to the research approach and the theory employed, but due to language problems this was not possible.

In Indra Chowk and Jagaran the interpreter conducted the interviews. He was given an interview guide with the questions I wanted to ask. Sometimes he added some of his own and sometimes he forgot some of mine. I was not informed during the interview because the child would lose interest and leave. The interpreter would use a tape recorder and translate the interviews afterwards. Mostly the children did not mind the tape recorder. I only experienced one boy who refused having his interview recorded and one boy who only accepted recording of half his interview.

The interviews were conducted with informants randomly chosen among the children who claimed that they rarely had contact with their parents (see street child definition 3.4). Some of the street children who had frequent contact with their parents were also interviewed, when I thought the informants had an

important position in their gang. I only interviewed one girl. The girls in Indra Chowk and Thamel mostly live with their parents. Jagaran was an organization for boys only.

I conducted 3 interviews with key informants. The 3 key informants were all leaders of an organization in one of the three field areas. They contribute with information concerning the organization and introduced me to the street children in their organization

The interviews have been used cumulatively in the thesis. The interviews have all contributed to different parts of the analysis, either by supporting tendencies for constructing the categories in chapter 6 or through illuminating different aspects of the research questions.

### 5.2.3 Mobility maps

The idea of mobility maps is taken from an UNICEF report (1996). Mobility map contain information about where the children move around in the city and what their activities in different places are.



The mobility maps was also an attempt to see how the street children appropriated places within the city and to provide an impression of how territoriality effected each child's mobility in their daily life. The mobility maps also had the potential to reveal boundaries between the different territories.

**Figure 5.2 Indra Chowk boy drawing mobility map**

I asked the children to draw maps containing information concerning their daily movements (see appendix). The interpreter would help those who could not write, or sometimes the boys would help each other. Drawing the maps was time consuming, because the boys needed coaching along the way. Some of the boys balked at making maps because the did not know how to draw.

Most of the street children who drew maps were also interviewed. Social practices are fragmented and mobility maps contribute as a part of the puzzle. The mobility maps are used in chapter 7, 8 and 9 to illustrate and support findings from the interviews.

#### 5.2.4 Workshop

The workshop was conducted in the following manner. I gave Biso, the coordinator at Jagaran some questions that I wanted them to discuss. Twenty-five boys were present at the workshop. We sat on the floor of one of the shacks on straw mats. All the participants were given *Dahlbaht* as a reward afterwards.

Workshop was only arranged in Jagaran. The reason for this is two-folded. The first is the tepid response some of the Jagaran boys gave to the other methods, interviews and mobility maps. Conducting interviews was occasionally difficult because the boys started joking instead of answering in a serious manner. They were interested in making mobility maps but I needed additional information.

The second reason is that I was interested in testing the fertility of this method. Jagaran was the only area where it would have been possible to arrange a workshop. Being part of an organization the boys were used to taking part in the decision-making and discussion. The coordinator at Jagaran was a good moderator as the boys respected him. In my view the workshop functioned better than interviews at Jagaran because the boys took the workshop seriously as opposed to the interviews.

### 5.3 Anonymity

The informants approved the use of their full name, but due to the street children's position in the Nepalese society I have chosen to let the informants be anonymous. All the quotations have fictitious names.

## 5.4 Interpretation

Language is an essential part of communication and social practice. Language does not only contain words but also observable aspect as; communication partners, body language and the context of the conversation. In order to communicate verbally with the street children I needed an interpreter.

My intentions for an interpreter was that he/she should help me conduct interviews, translate the interviews afterwards and assist me in establishing contact with the street children. I preferred to work in the evenings. Hence I needed a male interpreter as Nepalese girls do not go out after dark. I did not want the interpreter to come from a high caste, as I presumed the children would have too much respect for such a person.

Through other students I met, Mr. Krishna Maharajan. He was thirty years old, and from the Newari farmer cast (*Jyapu*). We worked together from the first day I started working in Indra Chowk and partly in Jagaran. The cooperation with Mr. Maharajan ended before I had completed my field studies. I had more material that needed translation at that point. Mr. Shamsheer Nuchen Pradhan, another friend and interpreter connected to Bergen house<sup>1</sup>, translated this material.

Languages are full of categories. In order to fully understand the social practice of the street children I needed to understand their categories (see chapter 3). Anthropology separates the researcher's understanding of society and the society's understanding of itself, by using the concepts *emic* and *ethic* (Hylland –Eriksen 1994). The *emic* level concerns how the people understand their society and themselves. The *ethic* level contains the researcher's analytical concepts, and the researcher understanding of society.

Another important issue to be addressed when we discuss interpretation and language is *hermeneutics*. This concept implicates two sets of interpretation. Firstly the researcher's universe of self-understanding, terms and theories, which are created through education and scientific work (Overaa 1995). This set of

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<sup>1</sup> Bergen House is a house located in Jawalakhel rented by the University in Bergen for the Human Ecology Program in cooperation with Tribuvan University in Kathmandu.

interpretation exists in all science and is a mutual problem for natural science and human science. In human science the research objects are not objects but acting subjects who are self-interpreting and negotiating in a world the researcher is a part of. Giddens (1976) refers to the different sets of interpretation as 'double hermeneutics' The 'double hermeneutic', involves both entering and grasping the frame of meaning adopted by the actors themselves in the production of social life, and reconstituting these within new frames of meaning according to the analysis' conceptual schemes (Jackson and Smith 1984:38).

Hermeneutics can in this thesis be referred to as 'triple hermeneutics'. There are three meaning frames involved namely the informant, the researcher and the interpreter.

### **5.5 Constructing and selecting data.**

Karin Knorr-Cetina sees research as a process of production where knowledge is constructed (Overaa 1995). Knowledge, data or facts are not something we can collect, find or register objectively. Researchers approach the world with ideas and theoretical tools.

*What we call our data are really our own constructions of other peoples constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to. (Geertz 1973:9)*

When employing qualitatively orientated methods the empirical material is produced in co-operation between the researcher and the informant. The information produced is influenced by the personality of the researcher and the level of trust between the researcher and the informant. The information produced also depends on the theoretical basis, the questions asked and the methods applied.

Whatever information was produced in co-operation between the children and me is a result of selection. Behind every observation lies series of decisions, negotiations and selections. The street children selected sequences from their life which they choose to tell me. Even in a detailed interview the informant will still filter and select the information he or she gives and the researcher will select what she chooses to present to the readers.

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The important question is: “*how can we find ways of making representations in which those we have studied can recognize themselves?*” (Overå 1995). This question has been essential through all of the thesis.

My impression is that the empirical material I have at hand represents a reality the street children in Kathmandu would have recognized. It is possible that some of the children have made mistakes when they have drawn their maps. It is also possible that the children during the interviews, field conversations and workshop have given information which is partly or completely untrue. It might seem naive, but the children had little to gain by making up answers during the interviews or in the mobility maps. The stories the children told me about their life is also similar to other stories told to other researcher as for example Onta –Bhatta (1996) and the maps that the children made agree with my own observations.

## **5.6 My experiences from the field study**

My preparations for a field study in Kathmandu consisted of writing a research approach, reading secondary literature and contacting ‘Save the Children’ (Redd Barna) in Kathmandu. My main concern was to establish contact with the street children. After arrival in Kathmandu I contacted ‘Save the Children’ (Redd Barna) in order to learn about their work and see if it was possible to establish contact with organizations working with street children through their network. I was hoping for a snowball effect; if I could find one street child who trusted me through this organization, he could introduce me to his friends and they could again introduce me to their friends.

Through ‘Save the Children’ (Redd Barna) I gained contact with Jagaran. The two other field areas were chosen by me. Indra Chowk was chosen by coincidence I read about the food program in Kathmandu Post and went to Indra Chowk to investigate. Thamel was chosen for two reasons. 1) I suspected that the street children here might have a different territorial practice since Thamel is a tourist area. 2) a number of the children interviewed in Indra Chok said that Thamel was the only place they were afraid to go.

I also found it desirable with more than one field area for two reasons. *Firstly*, because one of the main concepts in the thesis is territoriality. Territoriality and its boundaries are defined in relation to the other,



who feel they are either outside or on the inside. It was therefore interesting to investigate areas close each other, Indra Chowk and Thamel. *Secondly*, I needed to maintain my possibility for flexibility. The street children in each area responded differently to the methods and produced different kinds of empirical material and thereby broadened the picture of the street children's social practice.

### 5.6.1 Status and role-expectations

To enable the researcher to interact with others she must establish a relation to those she wants to study. Relations are established between statuses in status-sets, which makes it possible for the interactors to have mutual role expectations. The classical definition of status is a certain social position with rights and duties (Linton 1936 in Fossåskaret 1997).

In addition to the formalized rights and duties there are several informal norms one must consider. These informal rules are called role expectations. A role is how a person chooses to act out her status.

As mentioned a researcher is a participant observer when the researcher also is one of the actors he is observing (Fossåskaret 1997). I would never be able to be a full participant in the street children's actions. I would never be able to be my own informant (Wadel 1991:62). What I did was the next best thing, I found a status close to the statuses that I wanted to study.

Participant observation implies that the researcher finds a status that is relevant in the social system to be studied. Further the researcher and those who are studied must have approximately the same role expectations to the status, an example of status can be tourist. Tourists are not a homogeneous group. One thing they have in common is that they are traveling for pleasure to other places than where they live. The tourist's duties consist of applying for visa when required and obeying the laws and rules in the country visited. The tourist status is acted out in different roles, for instance the backpacker, the hippie, and the high-class traveler. All have different roles but the status is the same, thus with different expectations. A guide at a sight will expect that the tourist is interested in their sight. The street children expect the tourist, either they are *kuire* (Western) or Indian, to give them something, sweets, food, money or clothes.

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When a researcher is establishing status sets connected to children the researcher should be attentive to the possibility of exploiting the informants. In the research process children are critical and active, but it is still important not to take advantage of the structural superior situation one has as an adult and researcher. The children have a right to refuse to participate in the research.

Working in three different areas meant that every time I changed area I had to start all over again. In each area I had to gain the children's trust and negotiate my status.

In Indra Chowk and Thamel I started with a tourist status. The foreigners who passed through the street children's lives were tourists or NGO personnel. In Indra Chowk I was reluctant and didn't give them anything but tea. My stinginess and my frequent questions and constant presence made them renegotiate my status. I don't think I ever completely lost the tourist status, but the children's role-expectations changed. Our mutual expectations after a while were that they expected me to give them tea and entertainment by playing with them and trying to speak Nepalese and I expected them to help me produce information. Tea and the promise of a trip to the zoo motivated the street children during the interviewing which they found quite boring at times.

Today I took my mother to see the temples at Hanuman Dhoka. There we met Durga from the food program. Durga walked with us and held my hand. The other children there said: "Durga says that you are her friend (sati) is that true?" I answered yes and put my arm around her. She smiled proudly. (Field diary)

The street children in Indra Chowk appreciated the tea and the trip to the zoo but they also appreciated my friendship. The street children live a life on the margin of society. The example above illustrates how they were proud to show the mainstream society surrounding them that they have respectable friends.

In Thamel I also started with a tourist status. They had the same role-expectations as the street children in Indra Chowk. In Thamel my tourist status was even clearer. In order to access the setting and establish contact with the street children I paid one of the boys to be a guide. I offered my guide too high wages and thereby created a problem because I lived up to their expectations that a tourist has money.

After I had been staying with the boys for some days and we had been on some trips and in their eyes there was no reason for me to come anymore; a real tourist should now go trekking or do other tourist things. My tourist role was now jarring with their expectations to the tourist status.

When I first met the boys in Thamel I had told them all about the thesis and what I was doing in Kathmandu. I had done interviews and some of the boys had made mobility maps. After they renegotiated my status they started asking questions about what I was doing and how I was going to use the interviews and the maps. After a new explanation my status changed from just tourist to tourist-guest. They would buy me tea, sometimes every body would get tea and I was stuck with the bill. As their tourist-guest they took care of me so I did not get in trouble. One example is:

Today I think Shyam Morti saved me from getting in trouble. I asked 'Mickey Mouse', as the boys called him for an interview. He said ok but asked me to wait for half an hour. I didn't have anything to do so I waited. He came back after ten minutes and said he was leaving together with some other boys and asked if I wanted to come. As I was getting into the rickshaw Shyam Morti came running and told me to get out of the rickshaw. He was very determined, so I stepped back on the sidewalk and watched the rickshaw drive away. I was a little annoyed by him taking my dissections and asked him harshly why he was ordering me around." They were going to buy drugs", he said. "Ooh", I answered stupidly and walked crestfallen back to the temple. I realized that he had saved me from a great deal of trouble. (Field diary)

My association with 'Save the Children' (Redd Barna) affected my status at Jagaran, 'Save the Children' (Redd Barna) provided parts of their funding. I was therefore given a NGO personnel status. The NGO status together with my insufficient ability to speak Nepalese created a distance between the boys at Jagaran and myself. They seemed to think that I did not have anything to do with them, that I was Ashok's (the leader) and Basis's (the coordinator) guest.

After some visits the street children relaxed a little more. In the end of my field work there came a Danish volunteer to Jagaran. I was without an interpreter at the time and communicated directly with the

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boys. The Danish volunteer organized a baseball game. We played on the pitch outside Jagaran. During the game we were joking and some of the boys even stopped calling me ‘miss’ and used my name.

I realized then that there had been uncertainty around my status and that I had not spent enough time with the boys. I had not communicated my interest in them clearly enough. It was very sad that I had to leave just as our relationship was improving.

### 5.6.2 Problems during fieldwork

When preparing for a field study it is impossible to predict what problems one will meet. What is certain is that there will be problems in one way or the other.

Occasionally I experienced the interview process as problematic. Conducting interviews in Indra Chowk during the daytime was difficult because too many people were standing around and the children felt monitored. Interviewing in the evenings solved this problem. Interviewing in Jagaran was also difficult because interviewing ended up with the boys joking. Applying another method, workshop, made it possible to produce empirical material in Jagaran.

During my field studies I was conscious of the problem concerning money. I wished to avoid a situation where I paid the street children for information. I wanted the relationship between the street children and myself to be characterized through something else than money. In Thamel money represented a problem. I presumed that the street children in Thamel earned more money than other street children, therefore I offered the boy who was hired as a guide too high wages. Hence all the street children in Thamel expected me to be generous with my money. I tried to limit the gifts to trips, food and tea which we could enjoy together, but at the end of the day there was always a question of rupies.

Living away from the field areas resulted in that I missed out on different aspects of the children’s life. During my field studies we lived in Bergen House which is located at Jawalakhel, an area outside and above the city center (see fig 1.1). Being in a family situation did not give me unlimited time to spend on my fieldwork.

I did not only have a status connected to the street children I also had a status connected to my interpreter, the status as employer. The status represented a role problem, being both employer and friend. During the work in Indra Chowk and Jagaran I considered changing interpreter due to these problems, but I did not change because of the bonds between the interpreter and the children in Indra Chowk. When I started in Thamel the level of English among the children was higher and I decided to work on my own.

Translation was not without problems. It was impossible for me to control the accuracy of the translation. The problem became even clearer by applying two different translators. Mr. Maharajan translated the majority of my material. My impression of these translation is that the *emic* categories are not included. The translation performed by Mr. Shamsheer included several *emic* categories and provided a better comprehensive impression of the street children's language.

I would also like to speak briefly of my experience as a female researcher in Nepal. The norms and standards for tourist girls are different from the Nepalese girls. I hardly met any obstacles when I moved around the city at night, of course having a male interpreter helped enormously. Being a female researcher in Kathmandu has both positive and negative sides, depending on what arena you want to enter. I did not experience any gender related problems. I think this has to do with the fact that in addition to being a woman I am a Westerner, and the Westerner status compensates for the woman status. An advantage from being a female researcher was that the street boys would never pick a fight with me.

## 5.7 Summing up

To Wadel (1991) writing plays an essential part in the field study: writing field diary, working notes, typing out interviews, conversations and field notes. It is through constant rewriting we structure our thoughts and clarify our central ideas. Every writer has her own way of doing the work, but according to McCracken (1988) the analysis process mainly has three levels: *description*, *understanding* and *explanation*. On every level the researcher moves away from the original interview and what the informants expressed and closer to interpreting and discussing the implications on a theoretical level.

In this thesis I try to describe, understand and explain the street children's daily life, social practice and territoriality. In this sense chapter 6 is a description of three informant's experiences. Each story is actually based on several interviews. In order to write a more comprehensive presentation of street life I have included parts from different interviews. All the information in the stories is genuine and taken from interviews made with street boys in one of the three field areas. The stories emphasize parts of the boys' life; why did they end up in the street and what are their strategies to survive there.

Trying to understand the social practice of the informant is the next level. In chapter 7 and in chapter 8 I try to understand the social practice of the street children. The interpretation is now beyond the informant's knowledge but still in contact with the interview.

Explaining is emphasizing the ethic categories and the scientific understanding. In chapter 8 I try to explain the relationship between the street children's identity and the place they stay in. Chapter 9 aims at explaining the production and reproduction of territoriality. Having investigated the theoretical and methodical basis, the next chapters will present the empirical material produced and show how the theoretical framework assists the understanding and explaining of this material.



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## Chapter 6 Three street stories

### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on what McCracken (1988) refers to as the first level in the analysis process, namely describing. Aptekar's definition of *street child* did not provide any explanation of why and how children become street children. This chapter aims at approaching these issues through answering the first secondary research question; 'who are the street children and why are they street children?'.

The question will be answered through constructing three street child categories and through these categories describe the daily life of three street children. The three categories are: *abandoned children*, *children who have contact with their parents* and *runaway children*. The chapter aims to provide the reader with an understanding of the main reasons for why children in Nepal turn to the street.

### 6.2 Three categories of street children

The interviewed children have been divided into three *ethic* categories. The construction of these categories is based on the street children's degree of family involvement. Family involvement is applied in two senses; the parent's or stepparent's role in triggering street life for the child and how much contact the street child has with the parents after taking to the street. Family involvement was chosen as a basis for the categories because, as we saw in chapter 3, the children's reason for being on the street is often effected by their family. The three categories are presented through three street stories.

Dividing the interviews into categories implies generalizing. There are as many reasons for being on the street as there are street children. A number of the children interviewed fall in between the categories constructed. Categories are however necessary in order to systematize the empirical material and make it available for analysis.





**Figure 6.1** The street children from Indra Chowk on a picnic to the zoo.

The first category, *abandoned children*, do not have any contact with their parents. These children are victims of their parent's intentions and strategies. They have not chosen street life themselves and the new life represents a 'critical situation' to them (see 4.2). On the street they have to make their own routines in order to survive.

The second category includes the *children who have contact with their parents*. Despite their contact with the parents they live their daily life separate from their parents. They are not dependent on their parents for their day to day survival. These children have not experienced 'a critical situation' in the same way as the children in the previous category, because they are gradually socialized into the street culture. Life on the street is a part of their daily life strategy.

The third category *runaway child* includes the children who take to the street on their own initiative. These children may experience separation from their home as 'a critical situation'. Despite the fact that they leave home on their own initiative their action is often provoked by cruel domestic treatment. They find themselves in a new situation, a situation that demands new routines and new survival strategies.

### 6.3 Three street stories

In the following paragraphs we will meet ‘Amit’, ‘Shyam’ and ‘Ram’. In addition to presenting some of the most usual reasons children have for being on the street, the three stories function as an introduction to the social practices in the three field areas.

#### Abandoned

‘Amit Magar’ is 10 years old. ‘Amit’ is proud today, there is a big smile on his face. He points at his chest. One *kuire* (western tourist) has given him a new t-shirt with the inscription ‘London Hard Rock Café’. His pants on the other hand are tattered and too big. He has tied a thin rope round his waist to keep them from falling down. He is barefooted and his hair has not been washed for a while. ‘Amit’ and his friends have just finished *Dalbaht* (rice and lentil soup) provided by the Children’s Food Program’ Nepal.

‘Amit’ came to Kathmandu with his parents. His father worked as a tempo driver<sup>1</sup>. He gave the salary to ‘Amit’s’ mother. There was enough money for a small room and food for the family. There was even enough for ‘Amit’ to go to school. Here he has learnt to read Ka, Kha, Ga, Gha, Nya<sup>2</sup>, and A, B, C, D, E. His mother bought him a small blackboard to write on. ‘Amit’s’ father thought school was a waste of money. He wanted ‘Amit’ to get a job so he could contribute to the family income. According to his father’s wish ‘Amit’ quit school. He would like to continue his schooling sometime so he can grow up to be a *Thulo Manchhe* (respected man).

‘Amit’s’ father had a habit of drinking with his friends in the evenings. When he finally came home he often let his anger and frustration out on ‘Amit’ and ‘Amit’s’ mother. When this happened ‘Amit’ left the house and slept outside on the street. He thus had experience from the street before his parents left him.

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<sup>1</sup> Tempo is a motorcycle taxi with three wheels.

<sup>2</sup> They are the most important sounds in the Nepali alphabet.

The family lived together in Kathmandu for some years before 'Amit's' father left 'Amit's' mother and married another woman. His father moved in together with his new wife. His new wife did not like 'Amit' and would not let his father bring his children to her house. 'Amit' does not know where his father lives now.

One morning his mother was gone. 'Amit' believes that she did not want to stay in Kathmandu alone without her husband and returned to her village. She did not bring 'Amit' because she did not have money and could not provide for him. His mother had asked the neighbor lady to tell 'Amit' that she had gone and that she promised to come back for him later. 'Amit' is not sure where his mother's village is, but he is sure she will come back for him some day. After his mother left Kathmandu, 'Amit' started a full time life on the street.

During his street life he has stayed in several places in Kathmandu. In the beginning he stayed at CWIN<sup>3</sup>. After spending some time here he turned back to the street. He frequently returns to CWIN. During *Tihar* he went back to CWIN and celebrated the festival there. He has stayed in Kalimati (fig 1.1 B3) and in the area round Hotel de l'Annapurna located south of the Royal palace (fig1.1 D1); lately he has spent most of his time in Indra Chowk.

After he was abandoned, he started working. He had a job in a hotel in Jyatha (fig 1.1 C2). They made him wash heavy pots so he ran away from this hotel. Afterwards he worked in another restaurant. He was paid three hundred rupees for working there one month. 'Amit' enjoys work, but lately it has not been possible to find work. At present he is begging in Indra Chok and *Hanumandhoka* (See fig 1.1 C3). In a day he can earn between 10 and 15 rupees. The money is spent on food. He is happy for the meal provided by the food program, but it is not sufficient. 'Amit' avoids stealing. He only steals if fruit vendors refuse to give him.

Friends are very important to 'Amit'. He likes to hang around with his friends. His friends have become a substitute for his family. He cares about his friends and he says that they

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<sup>3</sup> CWIN is an abbreviation for Child Workers in Nepal. The largest organization in Nepal working with deprived children.

care about him. They share everything with each other. When he does not have any money his friends share their money and food with him. In the evening they go to the same food program and they have their *Dalbaht* together. In the night time they curl up together under a sack in Bhugol Park or on the sidewalk. Occasionally he earns more money than usual. Then he enjoys sightseeing, or to take his friends to the Zoo (fig 1.1 C6) or to *Bhrikuti Mandap*<sup>4</sup> (fig 1.1 D3). ‘Amit’ and his friends go to many places in Kathmandu, but rarely to Thamel. He thinks of ‘the Thamel boys’ as his enemies, because if he goes to Thamel ‘the Thamel boys’ won’t let him beg or guide there. If he ignores them the Thamel boys will rob his money. He calls the Thamel boys *Dada Giri* (gangster). ‘Amit’ says that if the Thamel boys come to Indra Chowk he will gather his friends and they will beat them.



**Figure 6.2 The ghost tunnel at Bhrikuti Mandap**

‘Amit’ is presently one of the best liked boys in Indra Chowk. Sometimes the other boys are jealous of his position and try to pick a fight with him. But ‘Amit’ knows how to fight and he easily mobilizes boys to fight on his side. A number of boys regard ‘Amit’ as a special friend, especially the new boys. ‘Amit’ takes care of the newcomers, shows them around Indra Chowk and brings them to the food program. ‘Amit’ is happy to include the new children in his gang.

‘Amit’ has not always had friends, he remembers in the beginning when he was new and excluded by the other children. Before his mother left him she gave him some money; it

<sup>4</sup> *Bhrikuti Mandap* is a pleasure ground.

was almost four hundred rupees. 'Amit' met some boys who pretended to be his friend. They encouraged him to spend his money on them. 'Amit' bought them food and he paid for a trip to the zoo. Because 'Amit' thought them to be friends he did not mind spending his money. He counted on that they would help him when his money was finished. When the money was finished they left him.

Once in Indra Chowk 'Amit' was attacked by one of the big boys, the big boy cut him with a knife thinking 'Amit' was hiding some money. After this incident he did not dare to keep whatever he earned and spend his money as quickly as possible. He was afraid the other boys would steal it or hurt him to get the money. It is still a problem that other boys steal from him, but now he is no longer alone and that makes him stronger.

'Amit' has not thought much about the future, he does not think he need future plans. He depends on that his mother will come and find him soon or that he will find his mother's village and go and stay with her. However, one future option is to become a Maoist. The reason for this wish is the treatment he has received by the police. He is tired of their constant bullying. The police call the boys *khate*, beat them and bring them to prison only because they are *khate* (see 3.5).

### Contact with parents

'Shyam' Chhetri' is thirteen years old. Today he has a busy look on his face. He quickly finishes his videogame and rushes off to meet his friends. His friends have met some English guys and they are taking them to *Swayambhunath* (Buddhist temple) (fig 1.1 A1). In addition to money they usually get food and sweets when they take the tourists somewhere. If they are really lucky the tourists will give them enough money to rent a room in a lodge, a video player and some videos. It costs 300 rupees to rent a TV, video player and six films. These evenings with watching Hindi, Nepali and foreign movies are great fun. Renting a room also provides the possibility to wash themselves and their clothes and they can sleep safely for a night.

'Shyam' comes from Narayanghat, a village near Chitwan in the Terai (fig 2.1). He came to Kathmandu together with his family; his father, mother and two younger brothers. In the

beginning the whole family stayed together. His father worked as a guide and he gave the money he made to 'Shyam's' mother. As long as 'Shyam' can remember he has been beaten by his father whenever his father was drunk. His father did not only beat 'Shyam' but also his mother and his younger brothers. On the nights his father drank, 'Shyam' would sleep on the street. After some time in Kathmandu his father left his mother and married another woman. 'Shyam' and his brothers moved in with his father and his new wife. The new wife did not like 'Shyam' or his brothers and occasionally she would beat them too. 'Shyam' tried to tell his father but it did not help. His younger brothers went back to stay with their biological mother and 'Shyam' started living on the street. After his father left, his mother had to take all kinds of jobs. Sometimes 'Shyam' goes home to eat, but there is not always food. He likes to celebrate the festivals with his family. He was home for *Dasain* and is also going home for *Tihar*.

Before he came to Thamel he stayed in the area round the road from the Royal Palace, Durbar marg and Kalimati (see fig 1.1 B3). He has also visited CWIN on some occasions. Now he spends most of his days walking around in Thamel with his friends. He likes staying in Thamel because there are many tourists there. He has different ways of making money. He sells hashish to the tourists. He can make good money by selling hashish because the *kuire* (Western tourist) seldom know the correct price. In a good day he can make 100 rupees; other days he does not earn anything. Sometimes he works as a guide alone or together with his friends. They take the tourists for trips to places in Kathmandu and the area around. They go to Patan (fig 1.1 E6), Bhaktapur (fig 2.1), *Swayambhunath*, *Nayarantan* a temple north of Kathmandu and other places. The money he earns he uses for food, tea, videogames and movies and he gives some to his mother. Sometimes 'Shyam' uses his money to take his friends to *Itchangu*, a mountain behind Swayambu. Here they buy food and *chang* (Nepalese beer).



**Figure 6.3 Two Thamel boys after a visit at the restaurant at Itchangu**

The friends he has in Thamel are of great importance to him. He can ask his friends for money and they can ask him for money. If he gets sick he has different strategies; his friends look after him, sometimes the tourists help him with money so he can see a doctor or he goes to *Sanhecos*.

The big boys in Thamel are now his friends. But when he first came to Thamel they stole his money several times. ‘Shyam’ knows a boy whose leg was burned while he was sleeping, because some boys thought he had money. ‘Shyam’ does also steal from the younger boys sometimes. When the hunger is really bad he does not care about anything. He just needs money and if he can he steals it. When the new boys come to Thamel he tries to tell them to go home. He does not want them to waste their life in the same way he has. But if they refuse he will teach them how to sell hashish or how to beg or guide. He says that anybody can come and stay in Thamel as long as they don’t beat him or his friends. If anybody does start a fight the Thamel boys will mobilize all their friends and fight back. There is power in the opportunity to mobilize friends.

‘Shyam’ is scared of the police. He has been to jail some times. The police come and gather all the street boys when something bad has happened in the streets of Thamel. Sometimes the police keep them for three days without giving them anything else than water. One winter night the police brought the boys to the station and ordered them to take

their clothes of outside the station. 'Shyam' refused and all his clothes became wet when the police threw buckets of cold water at them.

'Shyam' does not have any specific plans for the future. The street life is hard and 'Shyam' does not know what he wants to do. He will just wait and see what happens. He does not want to go back to school. 'Shyam' went to school in Narayanghat, but had to stop because his parents could not afford it anymore. When they came to Kathmandu, his mother wanted to send him to school again, but at that time he did not feel like it himself. He knows a little mathematics, he can read and write Nepali, and after he started his life in Thamel he has taught himself a little English. He feels he does not need more education. He knows former street boys who now work as rickshaw drivers. He thinks that could possibly be a prospective occupation. His dream is to earn enough money to take his mother and brothers home to Narayanghat and build a house there.

Runaway children.

'Ram' is not quite sure, but he thinks he is 11 years old. He seems exhausted, and worked up. His T-shirt is much too big, his pants are ragged and his plastic sandals are worn thin. Beside him in a big sack lies last night's catch. The sack is full of plastic. 'Ram' asks one of the other boys at Jagaran to look after his sack. 'Ram' has to go and get something. He is excited. While he was working last night he found a big aluminum pot. It was too difficult to carry the pot and the sack at the same time so he found a good place to hide the pot. If he sells the pot together with the plastic he might have enough money to buy a small radio. 'Ram' likes to listen to music and after drinking some *chang* (rice beer) he also enjoys dancing.

'Ram' comes from a small village near Pokhara (fig 2.1). 'Ram' has one younger sister and one younger brother. His real father died so his mother remarried and now 'Ram' has a stepfather. His mother and stepfather are presently living in Pokhara. They are laborers and assist house construction and road construction.

'Ram' has run away from home several times before. The first time was when his stepfather sent him shopping and he lost his money on the way to the store. 'Ram' did not



dare return home without food or money, so he ran away to Pokhara. Some days later he missed his family and returned home. His stepfather gave him a beating as punishment for losing the money. His stepfather did not treat him well after this incident. He forced 'Ram' to give up school and made him look after the goats instead. His stepfather gave him little to eat and 'Ram' had to work hard every day.

'Ram' ran away again because he was accused of being a thief. There were some pots and a water container missing from his home. His stepfather accused 'Ram' of stealing them. Now 'Ram' has not been home in a year.

'Ram' stayed in Pokhara for some months begging from the tourists to make a living. Here he met some other boys who told him about Kathmandu. They described how nice Kathmandu was and how easy it was to make money there. 'Ram' had heard villagers speaking of Kathmandu before and he had seen pictures from Kathmandu on television. He thought Kathmandu looked like a very beautiful place. 'Ram' got a ride on the back of the bus and travelled to Kathmandu.

He felt very happy when he finally arrived in Kathmandu. He was cheerful and after walking around in the city he ended up in *Boudanath*, a buddhist temple located north east of *Pashupathinath* (fig 1.1 G2). As the evening came closer he felt cold. He took the sack that was covering a tractor and covered him-self with it, but it did not help to reduce the cold. Then he felt sad and started to cry. The next morning he put the whole body into the sack and soon people started throwing money at the sack<sup>5</sup>. When he had earned some money he was happy again. In the morning, an organization at *Boudhanath* would distribute tea, Tibetan bread and sometimes even money.

After a while he went to Kalimati (fig 1.1 B3). He had heard that some people collected plastic and sold it, but he did not know how. He collected some flying plastics (thin plastic bags). He sold 200 grams of plastic and got 5 rupees. Then he bought *Murai* (beaten rice) for 3 rupees and found some bananas he ate with salt. The last 2 rupees he used to buy a ticket for a film in Ranjana Hall (cinema).

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<sup>5</sup> In Nepal the body of the dead is placed on a temple in a death cloth before they are cremated and people throw money at the sack.

Slowly he made friends with other street boys. They taught him how to collect *maal* (recyclable goods). In the beginning it was frightening to search for *maal* because 'Ram' didn't know where the roads lead, he was afraid to get lost. If he works hard he can earn around 50-60 rupees in a day. He often goes to *Bhrikuti Mandap* to find plastic. In addition to collecting plastic, he begs. He only begs when he is really hungry and none of his friends can help him. 'Ram' finds it is humiliating to beg.

When he is not working, he spends his time in Jagaran. Jagaran is a good place here he can sleep safely. In daytime a foreign volunteer teaches them English and a Nepalese volunteer teaches them Nepalese. With the money he earns he pays his credit in the food shop and he buys new food. He usually eats rice, meat and pickle. If he makes larger sums of money, he will save it and buy clothes. Jagaran will also help him save his money. 'Ram' spends his days and nights collecting plastic and other things he can sell to the *kawadi* (junkyard). Sometimes he relaxes in the sun in the courtyard at Jagaran; it is nice to lie in the sun especially in the winter when the night can get really cold. He is afraid of the bigger boys because they take his money. 'Ram' is also afraid of the dogs. In the beginning when he saw a dog he would run away quickly. Then a friend advised him to face the dog that followed him and then the dog would go away. Once this plan went wrong and the dog bit him. 'Ram' also milks the cows roaming the streets of Kathmandu when they are sleeping. Sometimes the cows wake up and kick, the scar on his forehead from a cow's foot proves this.

'Ram' has been home once since he came to Kathmandu. His mother came all the way to Kathmandu to find him. He went home with her. Again his stepfather started beating him. He started thinking about his friends and the free life on the street and again he ran away. 'Ram' says that street life has become an addiction. He says that if his mother comes to get him again he will run away. 'Ram' does not think that any one in his family meant for him to end up on the street; it is an unintended consequence of his father's cruel treatment.

'Ram' would like to have some education so he can be a *Thulo Mancche* (respected man) when he grows up. Apart from that, 'Ram' does not have any specific future planes; the future is known in the future, he says.

## 6.4 Summing up

Through these three stories we have seen some aspects of the life of three street children and elaborated the reasons why these children are on the street. The three categories are based on what triggered the street life. These three cases have a very important common denominator, namely the domestic situation. Only a minority of the children on the streets of Kathmandu come from harmonious and wealthy homes.

Whether street life is enforced or chosen due to lack of better options, the new life represents what Giddens (1984) refers to as ‘a critical situation’ for a majority of the children. The children in the category ‘children in contact with their parents’ do not experience their new life in this way because they are slowly socialized into the street culture and develop new routines and simultaneously preserve the routines they share with the rest of their family. The children in the two other categories experience a situation where all daily routines and hereby their basic security system is destroyed.

The three stories have showed us the different elements in the children’s survival strategies and how they apply the resources they are able to mobilize on the street to rebuild their ontological security. We have seen how ‘the critical situation’ has become a part of the child’s daily life. An important element in their strategy and daily routines is what Simonsen (1993) refers to as mobilization (see 4.2). Mobilization as a practice will be discussed further in chapter seven, when we look closer at the function this practice form has in the three field areas.

The story about ‘Amit’ shows us how he has built a new security system where his daily routines are based on the resources he is able to mobilize on the street. He has a new family represented by his friends and doctor Rauniyar. He has chosen to stay in a place where the means of livelihood are good. In Indra Chowk there is an organization which provides one warm meal every day and the prospects for begging are good.

All the three stories show the importance of the group (see 7.6 for the discussion concerning families and gangs). The story about ‘Amit’ and his position in Indra Chok show us that there is a hierarchy in the group. This hierarchy is based on age, seniority in

the area and the children's strength. The children's strength refers to both their physical strength and their wits. By including newcomers in his group 'Amit' manifests his own status. A child does not necessarily need to be physically strong if he/she can have other skills, which make them a valuable friend. They can for instance be entertaining, they can master English, have money making ideas and so on.

The presentation of the three street boys provided an insight into the dangers of street life. Creating a new life on the street is difficult, the 'stock of knowledge' the new street children have at hand is not sufficient to handle their new situation. In the process of extending their 'stock of knowledge' the children have many unpleasant experiences. It is dangerous and difficult to learn the skill of rag picking. They can easily hurt themselves on broken glass or other sharp items. The hundreds of stray dogs in Kathmandu are a constant danger to rag pickers and the other children. The new street children easily get lost before they learn their way around the city.

Newcomers do not know whom they can trust. When the children first come to the street they often have money; money which has been given to them by parents ('abandoned children') or money they have stolen ('runaway children'). A number of the experienced boys deceive newcomers as a part of their survival strategy, they either steal their money or they trick the new children to spend their money on them, as 'Amit' experienced. Such experiences teach the new street children that they have to use their money quickly. Their first priority is food and thereafter entertainment. The children treasure nice clothes and they share the clothes with each other, but nice clothes have negative factors. A well dressed child does not receive as much money when begging as a ragged child. A nice piece of clothing is also tempting for others to steal and the owner becomes a potential victim.

Through the story of Ram we see how Kathmandu as a place attracts the children. Kathmandu is a part of the Nepalese children's 'stock of knowledge', and even though they have never been there physically Kathmandu represents a positive image. The place image (Shields 1991) has been formed through hearsay about Kathmandu in the village or images from television. Kathmandu represents possibilities and potentially a better life. The children imagine that survival in Kathmandu is easy; thereby traveling to Kathmandu

is a part of their survival strategy. Children from the countryside rarely travel directly to Kathmandu. As Ram, they leave their village and travel to the nearest city. They continue travelling up the hierarchy of cities until they come to the largest city, Kathmandu.

'Ram' is the prototype of a *khate*. He has ragged clothes, dirty hair and walks around with a sack. He is *khate* through his appearance and through his work; he collects recyclable goods (*maal*). All the street children including those who have ragpicking as their livelihood, resent being called *khate*. The story about 'Amit' shows us how the boys feel about the category *khate*. Despite the fact that they call one another *khate*, they dislike it when representatives of the mainstream society call them *khate*.

The street children's thoughts concerning rag picking is influenced by their 'stock of knowledge'. Their 'stock of knowledge' includes the categories *suddah* and *asuddah*, the Nepalese categories for pure and impure (discussed in 2.3). Therefore also street children feel resentment to dirt and scrap. The street children use their position are on the margin of society to their advantage. Amongst other things they use it as a part of their territorial practice as we shall see later in chapter 9.

The street children's future expectations vary. 'Amit' wanted to join the Maoists and he shares future plans with a number of other street children. The reason they feel this way is that they have had enough of the dominant society's constant harassment. Some children are indifferent when considering their future and do not make any plans. A number of street children consider education as a step towards the category *Thulo Manchhe*, a category a number of the street children include in their future plans.

In the next chapter we will move from the individual and look closer at the social practices in the three different field areas.

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## Chapter 7 Social Practices in Indra Chowk, Jagaran and Thamel

### 7.1 Introduction

The previous chapter focused on the individual's life on the street and the reasons why children end up there. This chapter focuses on the social practices in the three field areas, Indra Chowk, Thamel and Jagaran.

The purpose of this chapter is to approach the first main research question: 'Does the social practices of street children vary between the different places within the city, and if so why?' In order to answer this question we need to elaborate what the social practices in the different areas actually consist of and locate possible variations in the social practice between the areas. Here secondary question 2 will be of assistance: 'How do the street children use the city?' The question aims at investigating what the street children's daily actions are, why they have chosen these practices, and thereby attain an understanding of the street children's social practice in the three places.

The paragraph above contains three interrogative words; *how*, *what* and *why*. These three interrogative words represent the two levels of approach in this chapter. The first level aims at describing *how* the street children use the city and *what* their social practices consist of. The second level concentrates on *why* the street children in each area have chosen these particular practices. When we focus on why, it is important to remember that the street children are not a homogeneous group with a joint strategy aiming at a common goal.

In order to elaborate the street children's daily actions two of the three dimensions in Simonsen's (1993) triangle (Fig. 4.1), *Routinization - Daily life* and *Intention- Strategy* and concepts appurtenant to these dimensions will be applied. A central part of the street children's mobilization and life strategy is their participation in gangs. This chapter will explicate the role of gangs' in the street children's lives. The gangs are mostly place-based, and the gang, together with place affect the street children's *identity* (see chap. 8) and *territorial practices* (see chap. 9).

Before we concentrate on *why* the street children in each area have chosen these particular practices, we will focus on *what* and *how* through describing the social practice of the street children in Indra Chowk, Jagaran and Thamel.

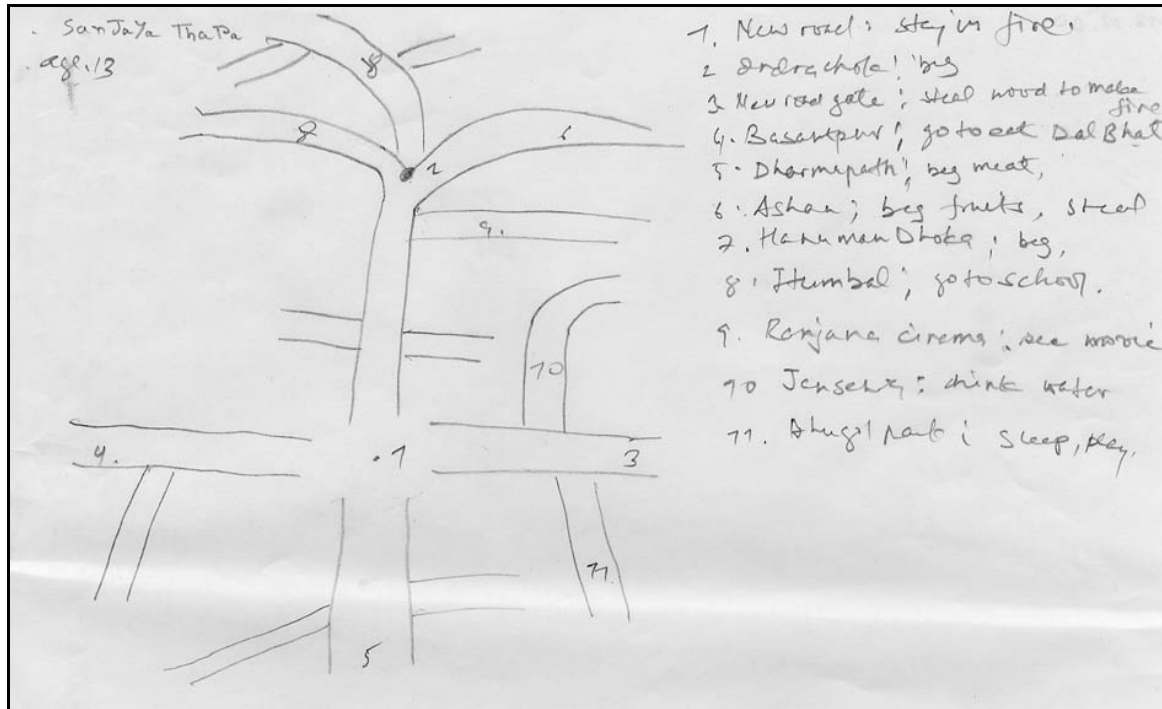
## 7.2 Indra Chowk

The street children in Indra Chowk are quite young, between 10 and 15 years old. The street scene in Indra Chowk changes dramatically according to the time of day. In addition to time of day, the street children's presence also varies according to the day of the week. On Saturdays the street children receive food, including meat, at *Pashupatinath* (the most important Hindu temple in Kathmandu) (Fig. 1.1 G2). On weekdays, however, the life of the street children in Indra Chowk can in very generalizing words be described like this:

*Long before the stores in Indra Chowk open and while the streets still are empty the street children wake up. They crawl out from their boxes and sacks on the sidewalk tearing away from the comfortable warmth of the other children. By 9 a.m. most of the stores are open and the streets starts to fill with people. The hawkers enter the streets and the children try to beg some breakfast, some children have money and can buy tea or an egg. Walking around Indra Chowk and Hanumandhoka they can be seen begging from Western, Indian and Nepalese tourists. They stop in the middle of their game and start to rub their tummies asking for a rupie in a sad voice. They can be seen outside Bisal bazaar sneaking past the guards and into the shopping center so they can play on the escalator. In the middle of the day they retire to Bugal Park to rest and play on the statues here. When the evening falls they head for the Food program and have their daily Dahl baht accompanied by their friends. By the time the children have finished their meal the streets are nearly empty, now the street children dominate the scene. (Field dairy)*

As we can see from the description above and the figure below the street children in Indra Chowk do not only use the city for their daily survival, but also to amuse themselves. They are mobile and move around the city. Some go to Thamel, *Pashnpathinath*, CWIN, Rani Pokhari (Fig. 1.1 C2) and Kalimati (Fig.1.1 B3). However, there are seven places that are recurrent in the maps from the Indra Chowk area: Ranjana cinema (in Indra Chowk), Basantapur (Fig. 1.1 C3), New

Road, New Road Statue, Bisal Bazar (shopping center), Hanumandhoka and Bhugol Park (Fig. 7.1).



**Figure. 7.1** Mobility map from Indra Chowk

**Explanation to figure 7.1**

- 1) New Road, stay in fire
- 2) Indra Chowk, beg
- 3) New Road gate, steal wood to make fire
- 4) Basantapur, go to eat Dal Bhat
- 5) Dharmapath, beg meat
- 6) Ashan, beg fruits and steal
- 7) Hanumandhoka, beg
- 8) Humbal, go to school
- 9) Ranjana cinema, see movie
- 10) Jenseng, drink water
- 11) Bhugol park, sleep and play

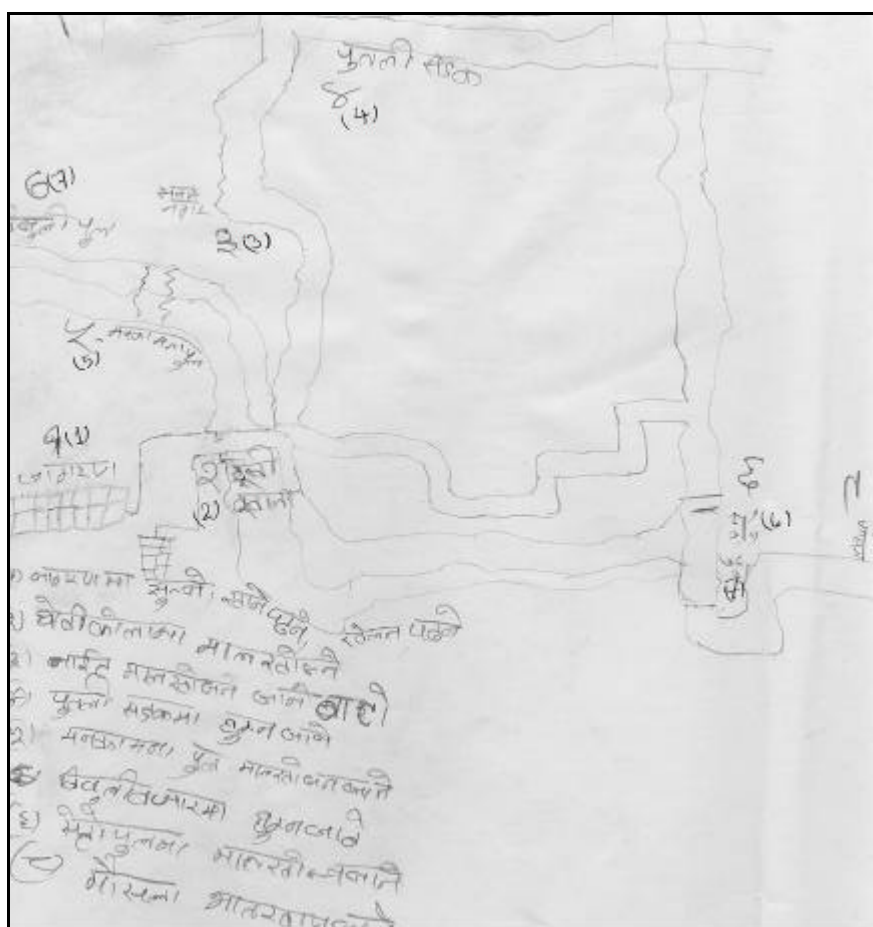


### 7.3 Jagaran

At Jagaran there is a greater difference in the age of the boys, spanning from 10 to 19 years old. The boys staying at Jagaran mostly work during the night and in the early morning. The majority of the boys here are ragpickers. They leave Jagaran around 2 a.m. in groups of two or three and move around the city looking for *maal* (recyclable goods). One morning at Jagaran could be described this way:

*This morning there are 12 boys staying at Jagaran. One boy wearing a much too big blazer is cooking potatoes and chili. He has made a fireplace from six bricks and placed his pot on top. Over at the well two boys are washing their clothes. They pump up water and scrub their clothes until both the boys and the clothes are white with soap foam. Four boys are sitting in the middle of the courtyard on straw mats and playing the Nepali version of kurong. Beside them one boy is enjoying the sun and listening to a radio he has found. Next to him there is a boy playing an old computer game. Three boys jump over the fence carrying the result of the night's work, they start to separate the metal from the plastic, and discuss prices. One small boy is watering the flowers in the flowerbed. Some boys enter the courtyard with happy faces. They have been waiting outside the staff kitchen at Mount Everest hotel. The staff was in a good mood today so they got the leftovers in their hands and didn't have to dig it out of the dustbins. (Field Dairy)*

The street children at Jagaran (Fig. 7.2 nr 1) have a safe place where they can conduct all their domestic practices; cooking, eating, drinking tea, relaxing, washing clothes, sleeping, storage and education. Due to this aspect of security the street children at Jagaran have less variation in the way they use the city. The street children staying at Jagaran have other means of livelihood than the children in Indra Chowk and Thamel. As we can see from the map below their main use of the city is to find *maal*, plastic and other recyclable goods they can sell.



**Figure 7.2** Mobility map from Jagaran

**Explaining text for figure 7.2**

- 1) Jagaran, I sleep, read (study) and play in Jagaran
- 2) Dhobikhola, I go there searching things like plastic
- 3) Anam Nagar, I use this road when I go to find things (plastic) in the night
- 4) Putalisadak, to go for walk
- 5) Manakamanapul, go to search for plastic
- 6) Bijulibazar, go for walk
- 7) Setopul, go there to search for plastic
- 8) Gaushala, go there to search for plastic

## 7.4 Thamel

The majority of the street boys in Thamel are older than 14 years old, thus being elder than the boys in the two other areas. Thamel is different from other places in Kathmandu as it is clearly a

place which exposes a distinct western influence. A winter day in Thamel can be described like this.

*The children who did not earn money to rent a room the day before are sleeping on the street. In the winter it is cold to sleep on the street, it is then better to sleep in the daytime when the sun has risen and it is nice and warm. In the night the street children gather around the small fires of burning garbage. If they have money they buy a cup of tea or share a joint. By 10 a.m. the tourists are awake, Thamel is filling with people and the street children mingle with the crowd. Some of the street children go to the temple yard of Tridevi temple (temple in Thamel). Here they relax, play games, play guitar and sing Nepali songs, drink tea and play chunggi (ball made of several rubber bands). The children have several areas where they can retire, away from the busy streets of Thamel. At regular intervals they leave these places and walk around Thamel trying to sell marihuana, looking for tourists who need guiding or are willing to pay for a meal. On their search for possibilities they continue their endless walk through the streets of Thamel. Occasionally some of the boys travel outside Thamel to buy drugs for their own use and to sell to tourists. When the night falls, the children who sell marihuana sneak into the streets to find tourists or other potential buyers. (Field dairy)*

Thamel fulfills a number of the street children's needs. Thamel is a place full of resources. Most of the street children's practices take place within the Thamel area. Here the street children find places to sleep, eat, entertainment and means of livelihood. Tridevi temple and the area round (Fig. 7.3 nr 1, 3) represents a place where the children relax, play *chunggi*, drink tea, sleep, play guitar. To earn money the street children go to Thamel Chowk (Fig. 7.3 nr 5). A number of their daily practices are directly connected to the tourists in Thamel, for instance selling hashish and guiding.



**Figure 7.3 Mobility map from Thamel**

**Explanation of text figure 7.3**

- 1) place to sleep
- 2) Kantipath
- 3) drinking tea
- 4) place for walk
- 5) place I go for making money
- 6) place I go to play video games
- 7) place to eat
- 8) walk with friends
- 9) place where I go to watch film
- 10) Ranipokhari

**7.5 Sleep during the day, work during the night**

The mobility maps and descriptions of the daily life have shown us examples of the street children's social practices in Indra Chowk, Jagaran and Thamel. We have seen how their different routines and social practices must be contextualized in order to be understood. The

social practices are dependent on the resources the place has to offer, the three different places offer different possibilities to maintain daily life.

Indra Chowk is a place which encourages practices connected to both tourists and the Nepalese society. Thamel is a tourist place and makes it possible for the children to evolve practices connected to tourism. Jagaran represents a place which is slightly different from the other two places. Jagaran is a place in which the street children can fulfill their domestic needs and use the city purely to make money.

The street children's practices do not only change according to place but also according to the time of day. The street children in Indra Chowk work in the daytime when there are tourists to beg from. They play in the streets in the evenings, when there is room for them to play. The boys in Jagaran work after dark because they wish to avoid disparaging looks and remarks from mainstream society. In Thamel the street children guide in the daytime and wait with the 'shady' hashish selling till after dusk. These examples show how time, place and context all are a part of the production of social practice.

I wish to emphasize that the street children's use of place is not contingent. There are some places which are preferred for certain activities, but this does not mean that other activities are totally excluded from the place. For instance, the street children in the Indra Chowk area prefer to rest and play in Bugol park (Fig. 7.1), but if western tourists come to the park the street children will not hesitate to ask the tourists for money (work). The street children's practices strongly depend on the context in which of course place is important, but not determining.

## **7.6 Routines and ontological security**

*The fundamental safety, which lies in the practical control of different situations in daily life, is a condition for creative action and for the ability to act or think innovative in connection with existing forms of activity. (Simonsen 1993: 122 (authors translation))*

The quotation above focuses on necessity of routines. A number of the street children's practices are motivated by a search for safety. The search for safety does not necessarily contradict the street children's expressed desire for excitement. In order to elaborate the street children's search for safety I will apply the dimension *routinization –daily life* from Simonsen's triangle (Fig. 4.1). This dimension focuses amongst other factors on different aspects of *ontological security* – confidence that the natural and social worlds are as they appear to be (Giddens 1984).

Simonsen (1993) claims that ontological security is a part of a basic psychological system which makes us capable of functioning in the different contexts of daily life. Through routines the street children gain control over their daily life. The routines provide a security that some things remain the same in an unpredictable world. Repetition and recognition in the daily activities can create a feeling of security that has an important psychological function in the life of each individual. Routines create a feeling of security even if the street children commit actions, which feels degrading and they meet negative reactions from society (Simonsen 1993). When the street children in Jagaran are ragpicking and the street children in Indra Chowk are begging they may experience these practices as security despite the fact that both practices are considered as degrading by main stream society. When the daily routines are set aside (for some reason) the street children experience 'a critical situation'.

The Food program in Indra Chowk not only provides the street children with one warm meal every day. This daily meal also represents a part of the street children's ontological safety. The meal is a part of their daily routine and thereby provides a feeling of security because it represents a predictable element in their day-to-day life. When they wake up in the morning they know that in the evening they will meet the doctor and the street children will have a meal together. Thereby the meal becomes a part of their ontological safety. With the present political situation in Nepal, a number of the street children in Indra Chowk may experience a 'critical situation'. Due to curfew and state of emergency the food program does not function as usual. Hopefully the street children are capable of finding alternative routines both what nourishment and ontological safety is concerned.

## 7.7 Mobility and strategy

A part of the street's children life strategy is to find safety. The paragraph above demonstrated how the daily routines provide ontological security and thereby a basic psychological safety (Simonsen 1993).

Psychological safety only represents one part of the street children's strategy. The dimension *intention- strategy* (Fig. 4.1) makes it possible to focus on the material and emotional safety the street children seek. Through this dimension three other concepts are activated; a) *mobilization*, how specific goals can be achieved through mobilizing of resources among individuals and primary groups, b) how primary groups and individual's *life strategy* finds it's form through connection with society and c) *reflectivity* the consideration of choice of lifestyle and social practices.

Mobilization can be considered as a specification of those processes applied to fulfill a strategy. Simonsen (1993) mentions three forms of mobilization. 1) *monetary mobilization*- gaining economical resources. 2) *material mobilization* - increasing the economical resources available. These two forms of mobilization represent a combining of mobilization of time and mobilization of money. 3) *moral mobilization*- represents the moral and ideological basis and the basis to implement monetary or material mobilization.

Simonsen (1993) describes mobilization as a concept which specifies the processes employed in fulfilling a strategy. Therefore street children reflect on the ability to mobilize according to their life strategy in their choice of place and social practices.

*N: When we have money we can go and see many, many places but we don't stay any other place. We just stay in Thamel. We can work in Thamel.*

*S: There are many tourists here. This is the most tourist place. That is why people like to stay in Thamel. (Narayan and Shyam, Thamel)*

Reflectivity refers to how practices only are continued if they can be argued for reflectively. The quotation above shows that Thamel is considered as a good place by the street children, because Thamel is a place with resources in the form of tourists. When the street children chose to stay in Thamel they do so because they reflectively can argue that Thamel represents a place where they can fulfill their strategy through mobilization. In both Thamel and Indra Chowk the tourists represents a resource which the street children mobilize in different ways.

*Q: Who takes care of you if you get sick?*

*S: Some people see and if they like they help. If they don't like they go away and our friend help. (Shyam, Thamel)*

If somebody (tourist) is willing they will pay for the treatment of the sick child; if not the street children place their confidence in their friends.

*We can ask our friend for money. If I have money and he doesn't have he can ask me and I have to give him and if he has money and I ask him he has to give me. (Kishor, Thamel)*

*Q: Does everybody share with you?*

*N: Sometimes they are like this, yesterday he don't give me, today I don't give. (Nayaran, Thamel)*

The quotations above show that the street children can mobilize money from each other and that they can be refused this money if they themselves do not share. All three forms of mobilization; *monetary mobilization*, *material mobilization* and *moral mobilization* are applied to fulfill their life strategy. Simonsen argues that moral mobilization is important in the production of the two other forms of mobilization. Sharing is a part of the moral basis for both monetary and material mobilization. Boys who are not willing to share their money, food and clothing with the others will not receive any form of assistance from the other boys. Simonsen (1993) writes further that mobilization is not a continuous process, but is initiated at specific moments that demand specific effort. A boy mobilizes others to assist him in a fight. The mobilization lasts until the fight is over, and represents a specific moment demanding a specific effort. A boy initially has to prove



that he is willing to contribute to the fellowship by sharing material goods and backing up others in fights.

Since Thamel is a place with resources, fighting is an important practice here. Through fights the street children protect their place of resources, work and their home from others. The boys in Thamel emphasize the possibility to mobilize their friends if they need someone to help them fight.

The moral mobilization basis does not only consist of sharing. Another important aspect is support among friends. They help each other and each other's families in difficult times. A sad example of mobilization is when Shyam lost his younger brother.

*It is late at night and a Nepalese woman with a baby on her back comes to Thamel. She is sobbing and asks for Shyam. One of the boys asks what has happened and he hurries off to find Shyam when he hears her answer. Shyam comes, his mother tells him that his younger brother has just died. They embrace each other and cry. The deceased is lying outside one of the temples in Indra Chowk. The other boys take control of the situation. They find a taxi and drive to Indra Chowk. The deceased was only ten years old. The mother thinks he died of meningitis. The young boy is lying on the stairs outside the temple covered by a death cloth. The boys guard the body, keeping the dogs away. They also initiate the process of locating the boy's father. The father is needed to light the cremation fire. The night passes with drinking tea and crying. At dawn the father has still not been found. The town people are now waking up and as they pass the boy they throw money on his death cloth. A police officer comes and wants the body removed. The boys say that an ambulance is under way and that the boy will be brought to Pashupatinat for cremation. The place is getting crowded and the police man's presence makes them uncomfortable so the boys from Thamel want to retreat. (Field diary)*

This incident shows an example of monetary and material mobilization based on the moral mobilization principles of sharing and support. Shyam has been in Thamel for some time and has assisted the other boys with money and helped them fight. He is a friend for many of the boys in Thamel. He shares his food and is a talented boy. He supports the other boys and they supported

him when he needed it. In order to make their mobilization easier the street children often belong to a gang.

### 7.8 Gangs as a substitute for families

*Q: Are there gangs in Kathmandu?*

*K: Yes, there is Thamel gang, Indra Chowk gang, Kalimati gang, Anapurna gang, Hanumandhoka gang and many others. (Kishor, Thamel)*

Mobilization is part of the process in fulfilling a strategy of maintaining daily life and attaining safety. The gang represents part of the basis from which the street children mobilize. In that way the gang is part of both their strategy and their mobilization. This paragraph focuses on how the street children use the gang to fulfill their strategy of material and emotional safety. I want to compare the street children's gangs with families in order to fully understand the importance of the gangs. Before we look at the similarities between gangs and family we will investigate how the gangs are constructed. The Jagaran boys were asked why the street children make gangs. The following quotation is from the workshop at Jagaran.

*Q: What is the purpose of making a gang?*

*Boy1: Don't you know the meaning of the gang? The friendship, don't you need the friends? When friends come to unite together then that form is known as the gang.*

*Q: How important do you consider the gang when you stay in the streets?*

*Boy2: There are many advantages in involving in the gang, if some one from the gang becomes sick then he gets help from the rest of the gang members and they arrange treatment for him and if someone is hungry then the rest of the friends feed him. (Workshop, Jagaran)*

In chapter 4 I demonstrated that strategy is a concept which relates to the future life. The street children's gangs represent an example of how they mobilize to cope with the future.

*As we work together and do the similar work then we think of the help in future when we will have to face the bad time so we start to be in the group. (Workshop, Jagaran)*

A gang is composed of different age groups. The older boys are from 13 to 16, 17 years, in Thamel some of the leaders are 20. Newcomers are let into the group after their skills have been evaluated. Through mobilizing their own working skills the newcomer can be included in the gang. The newcomers are introduced to the practices in the area by observing the experienced street children. In some areas there is a practice for teaching newcomers who are included in the gang.

*When I came to Kathmandu at that time I made street friends and I work with them. They teach me how to make money, how to sell hashish, marihuana and then after always my work was selling hashish and marihuana. (Shyam, Thamel)*

In Thamel the new children are taught how to sell marihuana. Other places the senior boys use the newcomers as ragpickers and pay them with food; one meal in the morning and one meal in the evening. The seniors have several ways of sanctioning the newcomers if they do not follow the rules and norms of the group. The newcomers can be scolded, denied food, receive a beating or worst of all be excluded from the group.

In my opinion the street children units or gangs can to a certain degree be compared with a family. Families are not homogenous units, and the interests and actions of the family's members are not always coinciding. A family is more than the sum of the individuals. In this context the power relations within the family are important. The family's strategy must be understood as the result of a process, a process that takes place within the family, either in the form of consensus, negotiation or conflicts.

The street children's strategy is to maintain daily life and be safe, to provide food and clothes and entertainment. The boys who accept the moral mobilization basis of sharing and mutual support are included in the gang (family). The friendship between the street children and the care they show each other is important. They protect each other. They find safety in knowing that they can gather friends who will help them fight. In the case of sickness, their friends will help them to the

hospital. They help each other with food. If they do wrong the older children in the gang will punish them.

In the gang the street children do the work that suits their age and they help each other with money. As we have seen, the big boys often have control because they are stronger. But even the street children whose lives are characterized by freedom have rules. Rules represent the power aspect of routines and daily life. Mostly it is the eldest boys who are on top of the hierarchy because they have the highest status. One of the rules for the younger children is restriction of information. Whatever the big boys have done either to them or to others, they should keep it to themselves. As mentioned the older boys have ways of sanctioning if the behavior of younger or weaker boys does not please them. These ways of sanctioning provides the older boys with a moral imperative to control the younger boys.

*If the children are in a crisis and people are blaming something we must go and listen, we must listen to the public and the street children. Who has done wrong and then we must advocate. The children can't tell the right things because of the big boys, they say ok you are telling these things wait one day. That's why they can't speak. (Mr. Parajuli, Daycare center in Thamel)*

In addition to their own rules the street children have to respect the *rules* of the mainstream society represented by the law. Occasionally the street children adopt a survival strategy which transgress these rules, for instance if they are forced to steal.

There are several ways of being a family and not all families include tender love and care. In order to be a part of a gang's mobilization, the street child must be included in a gang. A number of street children do not have friends to take care of them, some wander around without being accepted anywhere.

## **7.9 Summing up**

In this chapter we have seen that the street children's practices vary between the places within Kathmandu. In all three areas there are children who make a living by begging and pinching.

They all enjoy watching films at the cinema. Despite these similarities it is evident that the social practice in each place has a distinctive stamp. The social practices of the boys in Jagaran are connected to ragpicking. The street children in Thamel performed practices connected to tourists, guiding, selling marihuana. The street children in Indra Chowk in addition to practices connected to tourists are connected to the local society through the food program.

The street children in Thamel and Indra Chowk have different social practices in order to use the resources the places offer to maintain their daily life. The street children in Jagaran have a social practice which implies looking for one resource in a number of places all over the city.

The street children do not only have different practices because they stay in different places. The different practices are also a result of the street children strategies and the dynamic in the gangs. It is their strategies which motivate them when they reflect upon the choice of place and practices. The chapter has discussed the human need for psychological, emotional and material safety. Safety can be described in many ways and does not need to be static. I believe that the street children have chosen their different practices from a wish to find ontological security, a feeling which makes them able to cope in daily life. Mobilization in all the three forms also represents a form of safety. Through mobilization excitement is given a safe basis. The gang functions as safety in many ways for the street children both in connection with mobilization and as a feeling of emotional safety. The gangs constitute an important part of the street children's identity.

Gangs are place-based and there is a connection between place and the street children's identity. This relationship will be the focus of the next chapter.

## Chapter 8 Social practices and identity in Thamel

### 8.1 Introduction

*The continued repetition of particular sorts of behavior comes to be associated with particular places, and newcomers are socialized into the sorts of behavior found at those places. (Valentine 2001:103)*

According to Valentine, *identity, social practice* and *place* are three processes that strongly influence each other. Place relates individuals to certain practices, as we saw in chapter 7. This chapter focuses on the identity of place, individual identity and group identity. The previous chapter illustrated the importance of gangs in the street children's lives. This chapter will focus on how the gang affects the identity process. As gangs are mostly place-based, this chapter focuses on secondary question 3; 'How is the street children's social practices and identities influenced by the place they stay in?'

*Kathmandu consists of a number of neighborhoods (tol) where residents live, work and worship, where they are enmeshed in and their identities are shaped by those sets of relation that characterize Nepali society- household, kinship, Jat and production. (Gray 1994)*

Through the quotation from Gray we acquire a simplified understanding of the different elements essential to the Nepalese identity process. The quotation illustrates how the street children lack two relations important to the shaping of their identity; household and kinship.

*Khate are considered as asuddah no matter what caste they come from. When they first are called khate the caste they had does not matter any more. (Manandhar 2003 Personal communication)*

Manandhar claims that street children lose their caste when they become *khate*. Then how do the street children build their identity in this caste-oriented society?

According to Mead (1934) our identity is formed through social and communicative interaction with others. Our identity is expressed to others and our selves through our behavior and social practices. Our identity is based on social experiences. In Thamel the street children's identity is mainly produced through interaction with other street children, the representatives from mainstream society and tourists.

The children are not *carte blanche* when they enter the streets. The street children's 'stock of knowledge' and identity is a product of all their previous experiences and interaction with others. The identity project, however, is a continuous process. The gang represents as mentioned a substitute for the family, forming a representation of 'us'. 'Us' becomes a part of the street children's group identity. This chapter will investigate how the street children form 'us' and how 'us' is expressed.

## 8.2 Becoming 'us'

The relationship with place becomes a group phenomenon- a social product grown out of a group's common values and hopes. Belonging to a group depends on which of all the possible characteristics are chosen to 'define' membership. Some characteristics might be described as *elective* (you may choose) (Crang 1998). Others characteristics are *ascriptive* (you may not choose). Parents are an *ascriptive* characteristic. One of the boys in Thamel had a father from India. The other boys called him 'Indian dog' on different occasions. Personally he tried to under-communicate his Indian origin which excluded him from the other boys and to over-communicate his Thamel identity which included him with the other boys.

One example of a group defined by *elective* characteristics in Thamel is 'the milk boys'.

*Q: How do you make money?*

*B: I started the milk business.*

*Q: Milk business?*

*B: I teach the boys the capitals of all the countries. They talk to the tourists. The tourists buy milk powder for the boys. After the tourist go and the boy sell the milk powder back.*

*Q: Clever, do you make good money from this?*

*B: Sometimes. Not this time, now all the tourists know. Now we need to have new business.*  
(Bipin, Thamel)

The boys who are included in the milk boys group need certain qualities; geographical knowledge, language skills and charming manners.

The *elective* characteristics are chosen on the basis of moral mobilization. The moral mobilization in each place decides the qualities considered to be particular status-giving. In chapter 7 we discussed the hierarchy of the street children. The eldest street boys are usually on the top of this hierarchy. But age alone does not give sufficient status to hold a top position. An urchin can earn status in several ways, by being strong, clever, good hearted or entertaining. ‘Amit’ who we meet in chapter 6 had high status in Indra Chowk because he was caring and inclusive. This form of behavior is considered as part of the moral mobilizations basis in Indra Chowk. Whatever the qualities the boy holds it is essential that his qualities are valued in order to convert these qualities into status and a feeling of belonging.

People want to belong somewhere. They want to feel solidarity with others, someone who shares the same values and thoughts as themselves. When a new child holds qualities which can be converted to status based on moral mobilization, the new child has started the process of moving from the category ‘them’ to the category ‘us’. The category ‘us’ is associated with ‘included’, ‘insider’ and ‘here’. The feeling of ‘us’ is amplified through defining against ‘them’, ‘excluded’, ‘there’ and ‘outsider’.

### **8.3 The ‘outside guys’ start the fights**

*S: It is outside guys, yeah. He comes maybe for another guy. He comes and he hit me. When he hit me and I told my friends, yeah. We have like maybe thirty, forty friends in Thamel. We talk to everybody. After we find the other guys and we all go and hit him.* (Shyam, Thamel)

The quotation above indicates that it is the ‘outside guys’, ‘them’, and not boys in Thamel who start the fights. Through fighting the feeling of ‘us’ is strengthened, because the feeling of ‘them’



becomes clearer; 'them' represents the enemy. In a fighting situation the boys in Thamel define themselves against the children in other areas.

The discourse in Thamel is to a certain degree characterized by violence. Very often some of the boys were wounded from the nights fighting. When I asked about their wounds they did not hesitate to explain. The explanation was often followed by a demonstration and a big smile.

*Q: How did you get the scar on your cheek?*

*A: Fighting.*

*Q: What has happened to your hand?*

*A: Yesterday I was fighting.*

*Q: Why did you fight?*

*A: He say bad thing to me.*

*Q: Do you fight often?*

*A: Yes. One time Deepak was talking to a tourist outside Tunnel club. The tourist was angry, you know so I help Deepak. We fight and broke the glasses of that guy. He was bleeding from the eye, ha ha. (Ashok, Thamel)*

The boys occasionally robbed drunken people, often giving a helping hand so the person would 'fall over', as the boys called it. They had a fiery way of communicating, if a boy did not understand quickly enough he would receive a slap on head.

The practices in Thamel are clearly more violent than the practices in Indra Chowk and Jagaran. To the question why they need the gang the boys in Thamel emphasized backup during fighting while the children in the two other areas emphasized friendship, help to get food and medical assistance.

Through their violent practices the boys in Thamel find a foundation for mobilization. Their practice confirms their identity as a group, because they all find the violent practices amusing and effective. They also communicate their identity to others through their fighting.

*Q: Where do you go for walking?*

*R: I go to bus park, tempo park, Thamel, king's road. Sometimes it's terrible in Thamel because the boys there rob all the money and they burn clothes while you're sleeping. Last time they burned my pants and my leg. (Raj, Indra Chowk)*

Fighting is an effective practice because it keeps others away from Thamel creating less competition for the resources available in Thamel. Violent practices do not only keep away those who come to Thamel, but also those who think about coming to Thamel, as there is a rumor about violent boys in Thamel. Thamel boys are by a number of other children experienced as the enemy.

*Q: Do you go to Thamel and what do they do if you're there?*

*D: No, good idea. They're our enemy. I get angry when I think of them. When we go to their area they beat us and if they come to our area we will beat them. They are gangsters (Dada Giri). They don't let us beg, and if we beg they rob our money and if they come to our place we will rob their money. (Deepak, Indra Chowk)*

New children are included in Thamel if they have any of the qualifications already valued through moral mobilization. Thereby the qualities existing in Thamel are reproduced. We have seen how the feeling of 'us' is amplified through fighting 'them'. The next two paragraphs will investigate in what way Thamel as a place influences the street children's identity and if Thamel amplifies the feeling of 'us'.

#### **8.4 Thamel a place on the margin**

According to Sibley (1995) attachment to place is an important part of the building of self and identity. The feeling for place effects social interaction. Shields (1991) proposes that place can reinforce the identity of the social group that claims a place. Places are filled with meaning, which Shields refers to as place images. Place images are a result of meanings associated with real places regardless of their character in reality.

Thamel is a tourist area. In Thamel the Western culture is materialized through the serving of Western food, celebration of Western holidays, pubs and discos. Thamel as a place invites to a certain kind of lifestyle. Compared to the rest of Nepalese society Western culture is dominating in Thamel.

Nepalese people, except those who work here, avoid Thamel if they can. Not only because of the Western practices taking place here, but also because Thamel in a Nepalese context can be



**Figure 8.1 Street scene from Thamel**

associated with the category *asuddah* (impure). Thamel is located outside the old city walls. *Suddah* (pure) castes lived inside the walls and *asuddah* (impure) castes lived outside the walls (see 1.2). Today, the city wall is no longer present physically, but for the people in Kathmandu the city walls still exists as a cognitive image. The place image of Thamel will therefore be associated with the category *asuddah*, in addition to the

Western tourists and the practices connected to them. Western practices may make some Nepalese people feel out of place, because they do not know how to read a place dominated by practices unfamiliar to them.

In a Nepalese context Thamel is what Shields' (1991) describes as a place on the margin, a marginal zone for reckless enjoyment for Westerners and some Nepalese. The practices performed in a place changes the image of that place. Marginal places are associated with the practices Shields (1991) refers to as the low culture (see 4.6). For instance some of the Western practices expressed in Thamel may be perceived as immoral and low culture, especially the sexual moral which is looser in Thamel than elsewhere in Nepalese society.

Even though the street children stay in a marginal place they are not marginalized because of their place. The categories *suddah/asuddah* can also be investigated through Sibley's focus on abjection (see 4.6). Sibley claims that the subject's fear of dirt leads to exclusion. In Kathmandu the street children are excluded by the mainstream society due to the fear of physical and ritual

pollution. Manandhar's quotation in the introduction of this chapter shows how the street child's caste is insignificant. Their *khate* status is already representing them as 'the other' to mainstream society. According to my understanding the children staying in Thamel are not more marginalized in Nepalese society than other street children. On the contrary, the street children staying in Thamel obtain an advantage the children in other areas lack. The Western tourists in Thamel do not have the caste system and *suddah/asuddha* as a part of their 'stock of knowledge'. Therefore tourists approach the street children in another way than the Nepalese. The boys in Thamel had several stories about Western friends emphasizing how much these friends enjoyed spending time with them.

*Mike is our very good friend. He gave me this T-shirt. He likes us best. He only came with us to go places.* (Kishor, Thamel)

The street children were proud of their Western friends. Not only because these friends imply economical benefits, but also because their Western friends give street children a feeling of being special, wanted, included. A number of Nepalese pity the street children and help them if they can, but the *asuddah* category remains a part of the Nepalese 'stock of knowledge'.

The identity of the street children in Thamel is influenced by their Western friends and the Western practices in Thamel. They have adopted a Western influenced language and body language. Their Western influenced identity is also expressed through their clothes. When some of the boys in Thamel wear the jeans on their hips it is not due to their lack of money, but because they prefer Western street (skate) fashion. Inspired by the tourists the boys in Thamel have adopted a laid back 'cool' ('yo') image.

Despite the Western influence, and the street children marginalized position in society they have not forgotten their Nepalese heritage. The street children's are deeply engaged the festivals and other religious activities. They treasure Nepalese music, both traditional and modern pop songs. On one occasion we went to *Changunarayan* (Vishnu temple) the boys used this opportunity to get their *tika*, holy water and flowers to sprinkle over their head. In addition they wrapped some flowers in plastic to bring back to Thamel to the other boys who did not participate on the trip.

The street children's feelings about some of their economical practices are affected by the mainstream values, for instance they do not consider ragpicking as an acceptable way to make a living because it involves dirt. The street children's 'stock of knowledge' includes the categories, *suddah* and *asuddah*. Therefore also street children feel resentment to dirt and scrap. During an interview a boy told me that before he came to Thamel he was a ragpicker. Thereafter he and the other boy present strongly emphasized that he stopped ragpicking after he came to Thamel. The street children resent when they are called by the police and other representatives from mainstream society, they are referred to as *khate*.

*Q: What do you want to do when you grow up?*

*R: I don't want to do anything I just want to be Maoist.*

*Q: Why do you want to be Maoist?*

*R: I want to have revenge with the police.*

*Q: Why don't you like them?*

*They always call us khate and beat us and bring us to prison because we are khate.*

(Ram, Thamel)

The street children are on the margin of society and considered deviant and abject, they use this position to their advantage (see chapter 9).

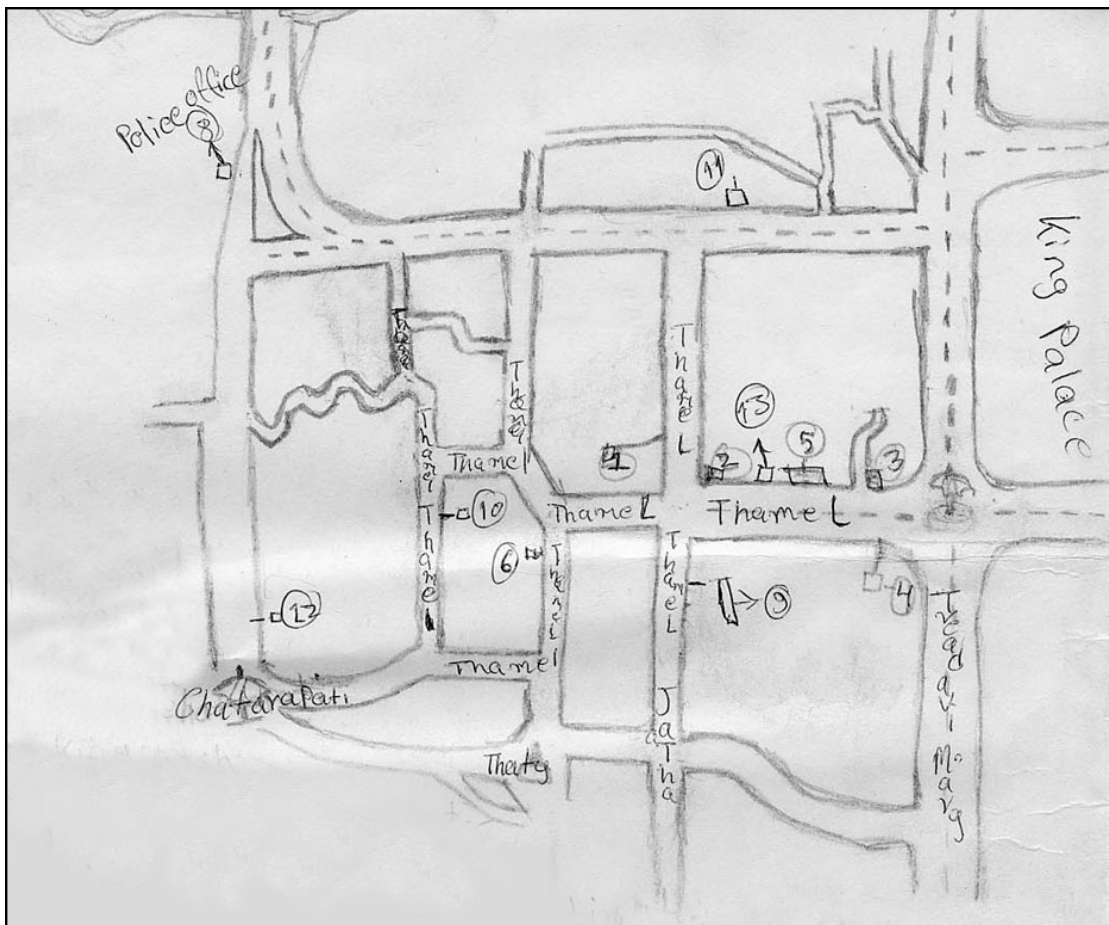
Despite that Thamel is a place associated with *assuddah* and marginal practices, the place still is an important part of the street children's identity project. The feeling the street children have for their place is expressed through the name they have given themselves; 'the Thamel boys'.

## **8.5 The Thamel boys**

The name 'Thamel boys' gives an indication of how important place is for the identity of the street children who stay in here. The Thamel boys are an extended concept. This concept gives the impression that there is one gang in Thamel and that they call themselves 'the Thamel boys'. 'The Thamel boys' is not so much a concept as a category. In this category the common property is Thamel as a place and the boy's connection to Thamel. In Thamel there are several street children who stay together in a number of different groups. Nevertheless they all feel a sense of belonging to

Thamel. One example of Thamel as their common denominator is their fighting practices. If there is a fight, gang fight or if somebody needs help to defend themselves, all the boys in Thamel fight together.

In addition 'the Thamel boys' have a quite clear understanding of Thamel's boundaries. The mobility map in figure 8.2 illustrates what is Thamel and what is not Thamel.



**Figure 8.2** Mobility map showing the core area of Thamel and boundaries.

**Explanation for figure 8.2**

- 1) My house
- 2) my mother's cigarette shop
- 3) this is where I drink tea
- 4) Tridevi temple
- 5) here is a small jungle
- 6) the restaurant we got to if we have money
- 7) In Thamel we sell hashish (number not on the map)
- 8) police office
- 9) here there is a small jungle where it grows hashish,
- 10) play video game
- 11) before I went to school here
- 12) this is Chetrapati here there is a small restaurant with rice and curry
- 13) during the night we stay in this street we drink tea and enjoy

Boundaries mark where a territory starts and ends (Sack 1986). Boundaries are essential in defining 'us' and 'them'. To the street children in Thamel the boundaries of Thamel define 'us'. The boys staying within these boundaries represent 'us', 'the Thamel boys'. The street children in Thamel fight to keep other children out of Thamel in order to defend the resources available here. The fighting to defend their place makes the division between 'us' and 'them' more distinct. Shyams quotation in the beginning of 8.3 illustrates how they gather all the friends who stay in Thamel to fight. Those who are 'inside' are a part of the fighting and are thereby included in the Thamel boys.

## 8.6 Summing up

This chapter started with the question; 'how is the street children's social practice and identity influenced by the place they stay in?' Throughout the chapter we have seen how place influences the street children's identity in several ways. In the beginning of the chapter we saw how the street children lose essential elements in the Nepalese identity process when they start their lives on the street. The *khate* identity given to them by mainstream society is associated with *asuddha* and is perceived negatively by the street children themselves. Through applying place to build their identity, the street children provide themselves with the possibility to create a positive self-

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image. In my opinion Thamel as a place can have a positive effect on the identity of the street children here. The street children seem to keep the most important factors from Nepalese culture and thereby they do not loose the Nepalese part of their identity.

Place strengthens the street children's feeling of being 'us'. Who the street children choose to include in 'us' is chosen according to moral mobilization in this place. In Thamel 'us' is defined through fighting, I don't want to leave the impression that the street children in Thamel only are violent and aggressive. Thamel is a place with a number of resources. The children here need a more violent practice in order to appropriate the place. Their violent practices are also an example of how the street children build their identity.

In the next chapter we will see how their violent practice and the reputation they have as a result of these actions may be a part of their appropriation of place.





## **Chapter 9            The production and reproduction of territoriality**

### **9.1    Introduction**

The three previous chapters have focused on different aspects of the street children lives and social practices. In chapter 6 we were introduced to ‘Amit’, ‘Shyam’ and ‘Ram’ and learnt about their reasons for being on the street. In chapter 7 we saw how social practices vary between different places in Kathmandu. Chapter 7 also focused on the importance of gangs and mobilization in the street children’s survival strategy. Chapter 8 investigated the relationship between the street children’s identity, their social practice and the place they stay in. We saw how the street children use place to amplify their feeling of ‘us’ and this way established a gang held together by the relationship to place.

The focus of this chapter is territoriality. Two expressions of territorial practices are elaborated. The first is connected to Sack’s (1986) definition of territoriality in which he emphasizes control. Sack claims that territoriality is a strategy used to control a geographic area. The second expression of territoriality is connected to ‘appropriation of place’ (Ellingsen 2002). Appropriation means to ‘make one’s own’, to internalize and is as such closely related to sense of place (Ellingsen 2003). In this thesis ‘sense of place’ focuses on the street children’s attachment to place. In reality there is no rigorous distinction between different territorial practices. Territoriality is expressed in a number of ways. In this thesis different perspectives on territorial practices are applied for analytical reasons, hence hoping to acquire a better understanding of territoriality.

The aim of this chapter is to investigate the research question; ‘In which way do different groups of street children territorialize Kathmandu?’. All the previous chapters have presented factors, which can be considered a part of the street children’s territorial practices. Territoriality is a social practice produced through daily routines, intention and strategy. Territoriality focuses on control of a certain area within certain boundaries. It is therefore a practice often connected to place. Chapter 8 illustrated how place is strongly incorporated in the street children’s identity through the place-based gangs.

This chapter also focuses on the production and reproduction of territoriality (see secondary question 4). Fig 4.2 demonstrated how time and space is a part of the production and reproduction of social practice. In order to discuss the reproduction of territoriality some of the analytical levels from fig 4.2 will be re-considered.

## 9.2 Territories

Territories are social constructions related to the material aspect of place through the social practice of territoriality. Chapter 8 demonstrated how the street children in Thamel control the boundaries of Thamel through fighting practices. Fighting is essential in communicating the boundaries and controlling their area. Boundaries however need constant maintenance. The lack of visible signs such as fences, 'no trespassing' signs and the like make the need for controlling the area more acute. The street children's territories are all of a form, which needs frequent maintenance.

Territories in this thesis have mostly been presented in the form of place. The street children at Jagaran experience different forms of territories.

*Q: Does this mean that you can go everywhere?*

*Boy1: Yes. We don't have any particular areas for searching the goods. But now we find some boys who say that the whole container is reserved for him and his group. Some boys used to say that this and that is my container so no one should collect any goods from that container, and they have started to chase others who come later.*

*Boy2: Yes, I have also seen so.*

*Boy3: Yes, if somebody takes the garbage they shout that the garbage is theirs and should not be touched by anybody else. (Workshop Jagaran)*

The Jagaran boys can experience territories in the shape of a container; when they experience other street boys who control an area to protect a resource they consider as theirs because they came to the area first.

Context is important in order to understand when a place or an area becomes a territory. Place can be defined as a territory at one time and not at another. According to Sack (1986) a place

becomes a territory when someone has power and desire to activate boundaries and thereby prevent entrance of someone else. Various people may perceive a place differently depending on whether they consider themselves as insiders or outsiders to the place. There may also be various meanings about when and if the place is a territory among those who consider themselves as insiders, as we can see from the quotation below.

*We are like tigers and this is our place. Like the tigers have a place Thamel is our place.*

(Krishna, Thamel)

*If some other children come I don't chase them. I don't care about them. Thamel is not my place.*

(Kishor, Thamel)

The quotations represent examples of how a place can be considered as a territory by some insiders and not by others. Krishna compares the boys in Thamel with tigers. Tigers defend their territories through fighting off intruders. An insider with such an attitude will strongly emphasize control over and defense off the place. Not only in order to defend the resources the place may have, he will also see a point in defending a place, only because it is his.

In my opinion one of several situations which may amplify the street children's territorial practices is a decline of resources in a place. When resources are abundant and the street children in a place have all they need their territorial practice will not have a distinct expression.

*If you don't give me I beat. When you are same like us you can also do. Hungry is heavy. When I'm hungry I see money I take I don't care I run away.*

(Narayan, Thamel)

This quotation shows how hunger represents a context when a street boy is willing to use force to obtain money. When there is struggle for the resources the boundaries of the place are activated. Another reason 'the Thamel boys' try to keep other street away from Thamel is their relationship with the police.

*Thamel is for everybody, but I don't want problem with the police. I don't want to go to police station. Other children they come and they steal and they make problem for us. When something is stolen the police give the blame to Thamel boys, they know us and take us to police station. When I see other children I tell to them 'jau' (go away).* (Kishor, Thamel)

According to Kishor other children steal in Thamel and therefore they must be kept out. The boundaries are activated in order to protect the insiders from the outsiders. In paragraph 9.3 we will see other examples of how the context affects the different ways of appropriating place.

### The street

Before we discuss how places are appropriated we will discuss the street children's territories, in order to illuminate the nature of the places they appropriate, namely streets and public places.

Is the street life in the centre or on the margin of society? This depends on the culture in question. In the West the street culture is considered to be on the margin of society. In developing countries the street has a central position in daily life. According to Gray (1994) Kathmandu has a variety of stages, market, household, ceremony, work, government office public building. Each stage is a distinct context linked together by the street.

Streets are formally designated for public usage and transport of people and goods. But streets can be so much more than just a mean of transport. In Kathmandu much of the daily life is lived on the street as we can see in Figure 9.1. Street children use the street for a number of purposes; they are their living rooms, recreational facilities, and places of business.



**Figure 9.1 Street scene from Indra Chowk**

Photo Tyra Hesselberg

Street children mostly spend their time in the street and other public places and so they are visible to the public. 7.7 illustrated how the street children's social practices in a place change according to context. They use the same places as main stream society but at different times. A place which may seem natural for representatives of the mainstream society to use in the day may be appropriated by street children during night and therefore the same place is marginalized during night. A place can represent center in the day and the marginal during night. The practices at night are practices belonging to the low culture, the other. Valentine (2001) claims that at different times and in different places particular groups are demonized as a threat to other citizens and to the moral order of the street. Street children represent a group which often experiences to be demonized and comprehended as a marginalized group (*khate* and *assudha*) by the public.

### 9.3 How are places appropriated

According to Sack (1986) territoriality is a strategy which implies social power. A territory is produced because a place contains something that someone does not want to share with others. This form of territoriality can be connected to what Giddens (1984) refers to as

*discursive consciousness*, practices subjects can account for verbally. When a place is territorialized in this way the insiders may feel their resources and place threatened. The rhetoric in such a situation may be focused on ‘us’ and ‘them’ in order to reinforce the identity of ‘us’. Territoriality in this form may be expressed violently.

*Q: Are there areas where you are not allowed to go?*

*R: Yes.*

*Q: Where?*

*R: In the Thamel area because if I go there the boys come to beat me.*

*Q: When did you go to Thamel?*

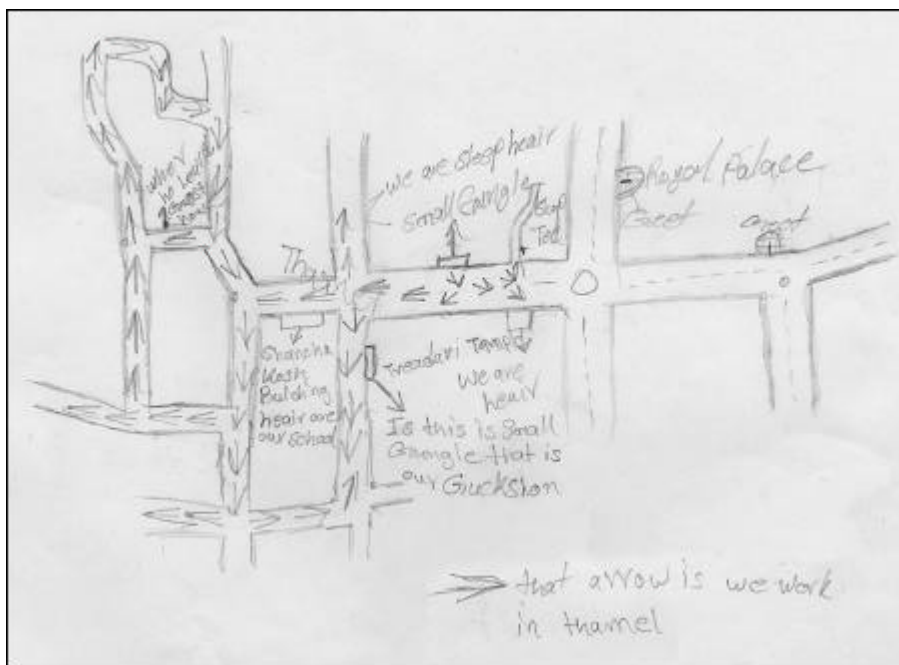
*R: I went there few days ago and 4 or 5 came and asked us if we had any money but we did not have any money at that time so they started to beat us and chased us from there. (Ravi, Indra Chowk)*

Physical violence and verbal abuse are ways of confirming the boundaries of a territory. The violent practices of ‘the Thamel boys’ have given them a feared reputation amongst street children outside Thamel. ‘Non Thamel’ street children express their fear of being exposed to violence in Thamel. Violence has become a part of the image other street children have of the area. The street children in Thamel experience both advantages and disadvantages connected to the image of Thamel as a violent place. The advantage is that some street children fear coming here and that makes it easier for ‘the Thamel boys’ to defend the boundaries of their place. The disadvantage is gangs from other places who wish to challenge the prejudice and to prove their own strength.

Territoriality can also have a less explicit and violent form. When the street children appropriate place they make the place their own, internalize it in a way that develops a strong sense of place within the street children. I wish to linger over the concept ‘internalize’. According to Webster dictionary (2001) internalize means; *‘to incorporate within oneself through learning, socialization, or identification.’* In the previous chapter we saw how the street children identify themselves with their place. We have also seen how the street children are socialized into the social practices and moral values of the place through gangs and moral mobilization (see 7.8). Through these processes the place is internalized within the street children. The strong sense of place they develop can be understood as a form of territoriality.

Territoriality in the form of 'sense of place' and internalization of place can be seen as part of what Giddens (1984) refers to as *practical consciousness*, practices we are unable to express verbally. Our appropriation of place occurs through our daily actions and boundaries are expressed through daily routines. Hence we are not always able to express this form of territoriality verbally.

Through their routines the street children can appropriate places. By internalizing the city street children give the impression of naturally belonging to the place in question. Several times a day the boys in Thamel walk the same route (Fig. 9.2). The motivation for this daily walking is not directly territorially motivated it is a search for livelihood. When the Thamel boys constantly stay in one place they give others the impression of belonging there. Outsiders may find it unnatural to come to the place in question, because they might experience that they lack the 'stock of knowledge' and therefore do not understand the common language in this place. As we have seen in chapter 7 and 8 the street children who have appropriated a place become the 'same' because they find the same meaning and understanding in their social practices and daily life. The outsider will lack the feeling of belonging and experience himself as 'out-of-place'.



**Figure 9.2 working route in Thamel**



When we discuss the territoriality of street children we need to remember that street children represent a marginal group in Nepalese society. The power they have to appropriate place vary. In the daytime the street children's ability to appropriate places dominated by mainstream society is limited. We have seen examples of how the street children make use of the same places as mainstream society (chap 7), but at different times and for different purposes. When I claim that the street children's internalization of place keeps others away we again need to consider context. For instance in Thamel during the day street children from the outside may feel 'out of place' or threatened and leave. Other adult Nepalese (at least those who work there) or tourists would not feel 'out-of-place' during the daytime, unless they accidentally walk into one of the street children's jungles (Fig 9.2). When the evening comes the context is different and slowly the street children dominate the scene and make for instance tourists feel 'out-of-place' if they wander of the main streets. In this sense the power the street children have to appropriate places depends on the context.

#### **9.4 Social control**

In order to investigate the production of territoriality we should look at the main characteristics of a territory and how the boundaries are expressed. If a subject or group wishes to maintain boundaries, they need to have some sort of power. The power in territorial practices can be expressed in different ways. Power connected to territoriality based on Sack's definition is expressed discursively, in a physical or verbal form. Appropriation of place is as mentioned earlier, is a practice that contains power through routines and daily life.

The street children's power is expressed differently depending on who they are interacting with. When they appropriate places belonging to mainstream society their practices are characterized *transgression* (Cresswell 1996) and *abjection* (Sibley 1995). Directed towards other street children they apply *including and excluding* (Sibley 1995) to control their boundaries.

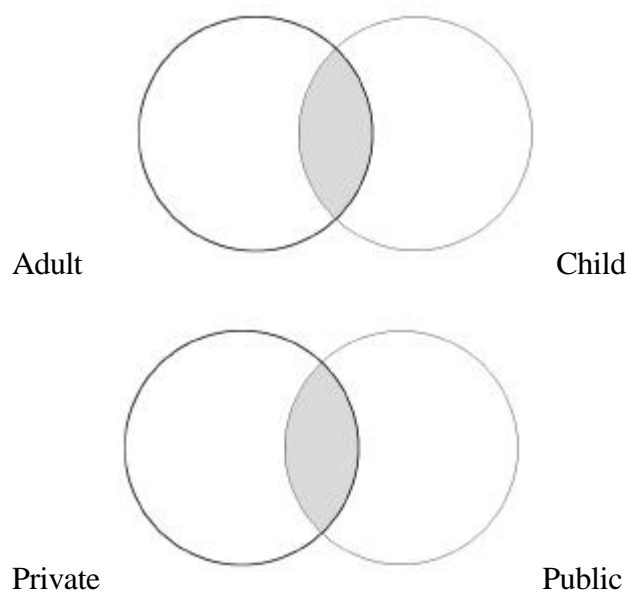
##### **Inclusion and exclusion**

We organize our lives round routines and territorial divisions. Sibley (1995) focuses on exclusion as a part of social control. He emphasizes control exercised by groups in dominant

positions to regulate behavior of other groups/individuals' use of space. This idea can also be applied in the study of street children's territorial practices. Some street children see themselves as dominant compared to other street children and hence apply exclusion as a part of their social power. The story about 'Amit' showed how he was excluded from Thamel. The Thamel boys would not let him beg in Thamel and if he did they would rob him.

The street children are also excluded by the dominant society. To Sibley (1995) the key understanding of exclusion seems to be abjection. The street children are considered abject because it is difficult to categorize them into dichotomies. Paragraph 4.6 discussed how people feel a need to categorize the world in crisp sets A, not A and so on (Fig. 4.3). Between A and not A there is a liminal zone, which represents the zone of abjection. According to Sibley (ibid.) the liminal zone is a source of anxiety for individuals socialized into believing that the separation of categories is necessary.

The street children are in the liminal zone between several categories (Fig. 9.3). They represent the children the adults can't control. Children should obey the adults, but the street children are not dependent on adults and do not always respect adults. When addressed they might respond in a direct and perhaps impolite manner. Children are supposed to be governable and obey the hierarchical relationship between adults and children. Adult's authority is not only sustained by law and religion but also by everyday 'norms' concerning appropriate behavior of adults and children. By age they are children but they often behave like adults. They make their own decisions and are responsible for themselves. The street children also represent a liminal zone through their use of the street. As we have seen in the previous chapters street children use the street for both public and private tasks.



**Figure 9.3 Zones of ambiguity in spatial and social categorization (after Sibley 1995)**

In a Nepalese context the anxiety associated with the abjection of street children has three aspects. Firstly the street children can not be categorized according to the dichotomies mentioned above. Secondly they are categorized as *khate* a category associated with human degradation, dirt, and ritual impurity. Thirdly the street children are categorized as *asuddha* in the dichotomy *suddha/asuddha*.

The street children's power in relation to the mainstream society is associated with fear of abjection. When failing to categorize the street children, people do not know what kind of behavior to expect. This can be frightening to some, they are afraid of verbal abuse or that the children may touch them, rob them or steal something. Through other people's fear the children can appropriate place. Representatives from mainstream society do not wish to come to places where the street children are. The power to appropriate places belonging to mainstream society lies in the anxiety connected to the liminal zones and peoples fear of abjection.

This perspective is supported by Sibley's (1995) description of the situation of the ragpickers in Paris in the beginning of the twentieth century and their relationship to the rest of the society.

*Horror was not the only reaction, however. There was also a fascination with the culture of the rag pickers. Although they were excluded and restricted in their activities by city ordinances, they also created their own spaces in the shantytowns and asserted their independence from the rest of the urban population through their appropriation of space although they were totally dependent on the larger society for their livelihood. This independence and the apparent disorder of their environment were, by comparison with the regulated existence of the majority, a sign of freedom and a source of envy. (Sibley 1995).*

This description might as well been applied on the street children in Kathmandu and their situation today.

The street children are excluded by society but at the same time they are a source of envy. They value the street as an autonomous space where they are free from surveillance. The street children experience freedom in a way that makes them addicted to street life.

*When they walk in the street they are not bound. They can smoke and go to the cinema whenever they like to. Because of these reasons they accept to bear the trouble in the street. I mean they try to look for the free and relaxed life. (workshop, Jagaran)*

### Transgression

Another expression of power is transgression. According to Cresswell (1996) meaning is invoked in place through the practices people act out there. Every place has a hierarchy of readings depending on the social practice and identity of the reader. For instance *Hanumandhokha* is a place which will be read as a tourist site by tourists; their practice will be taking pictures, they want information and they want to buy souvenirs. The street children answer to the tourist practices by providing guiding and souvenirs. The street children use the possibilities a place has to offer and are thereby dependent on the dominant majority's reading of a place for their social practices connected to ensuring their livelihood.

Cresswell (1996) claims that place have active forces in the reproduction of norms. The meaning people read in places make them act according to their reading. The street children's appropriation of the mainstream society's places may be understood as 'out of place' by the representatives of the mainstream society. The street children read places differently and use public places for activities which most people associate with the domestic atmosphere. According to Cresswell (1996) transgressive acts are judged to be 'out of place'. Transgression is a concept which does not only refer to crossing boundaries between places; it also reflects what kind of behavior is considered appropriate in a place.

Established street children constantly experience transgression by street children from other places and children who have never been on the street before. Transgressive actions are responded to in various ways. As we have seen from the previous chapters there are practices which include and socialize new children, if these children respond to the moral mobilization in the place. The quotation below illustrates the practice of sending the children back where they came from. Encouraging new street children to return to their villages might prevent some children from living their life on the street.

*Q: What do you do when the new children come here?*

*B: We hit and send back same place.*

*Q: But if the child has never been in Kathmandu before?*

*B: We send in village, because we have already missed our life. They don't want to miss their life the same way. (Bipen, Thamel)*

The places the street children appropriate are places already appropriated by others, therefore street children appropriate places through transgressive actions. Daily routines and routinization are essential in the appropriation of places, as mentioned earlier. Routines refer to actions repeated over time. For instance when the Food program first started in Indra Chowk the people in the neighborhood were negative towards the street children gathering outside the doctor's clinic. Slowly the street children presence have become a routine and through this routine the street children have appropriated the area outside the doctors clinic, for some hours every evening.

The point is that street children through their routines and daily action can change the public's perception of their presence in a place. The focus on daily repetitions illustrates that time is important in the production of territoriality. The next paragraph will focus on the reproduction of territoriality and how reproduction of territoriality is connected to place and time.

### **9.5 The reproduction of territoriality**

Cresswell (1996) argues that place functions as a bearer of meaning. The practices performed in a place give meaning to the place. By adopting the practices existing in the place we reinforce the meaning of the place. Place reproduces practices in a way that makes them seem common sense. Thus places are active forces in the reproduction of norms.

Chapter 7 illustrated how the street children in Thamel, Jagaran and Indra Chowk have preferred places for their different practices. We saw that the experienced street boys socialize the newcomers into the dominant practices in the place. When new children are included among 'the Thamel boys' they are socialized into the social practices in Thamel, and instructed to where and when the different practices are performed. Fig 9.2 demonstrates the working route of the street children in Thamel. The new street children learn that in this working route they can guide in the day and sell hashish in the evenings; outside the working route they can relax and play. It is not only practices connected to means of livelihood which are reproduced. Practices connected to behavior are reproduced through the place-based gangs and their moral mobilization.

The result of the socialization of newcomers is that places provide an anchor of shared experience between people and continuity over time (Valentine 2001). Continuity over time is the cue for reproduction of any form of practice. Here we reconsider figure 4.2, in which Simonsen (1993) combines time and spatiality in order to investigate the production and reproduction of social practices and territoriality. The reproduction of territoriality operates along the axes of space and time. Daily routines and repetitions function as an engine for the production and reproduction of territoriality.

In the discussion of how place reproduces norms and practices we must not forget the subject and the subject's reflective ability. The reproduction of practices does not only depend on place and time, but also the subjects' wish to continue these practices.

## 9.6 Summing up

The aim of this chapter has been to investigate how street children territorialize places and to illuminate the production and reproduction of territoriality. Territoriality refers to a practice, which creates a form of territory. A place becomes a territory when the boundaries of the place are applied to affect behavior by controlling access. The places the street children appropriate are public places and therefore mostly appropriated by others.

In order to explain the street children's territorial practices two understandings of territoriality have been presented; Sack's understanding focused on the control over a geographic area and Ellingsen's understanding focused on appropriation of place.

Both understandings of territoriality represent practices with strong connotations to power. Therefore, in order to be able to territorialize, the street children hold some sort of power. We have seen how the street children's expression of power depends on whom they are interacting with. In interaction with other street children inclusion –exclusion represents a form of power often applied. When interacting with mainstream society the street children's power is expressed through transgression and abjection. Because the street children already are on the margin of society they can choose to ignore the mainstream society's reading of places. By ignoring the dominant reading of a place the street children gain freedom to cross boundaries through transgressive acts.

In a Nepalese context street children are associated with impurity (*asuddah*). The street children also represent the abject because they are in the liminal zone between the categories adult/child and public/private. In this sense the street children are difficult to categorize and thus people do not know what kind of behaviour to expect. Hence the mainstream society's fear of the abject represents a part of the street children's power.

## Chapter 10 Conclusion

In social science different concepts and approaches focus on different fragments of human life. Human life is diverse, and through our concepts and theories we present features of human life. For me as a researcher it was challenging to decide which concept to depart from, because all phenomena and concepts are tangled together. Territoriality, for instance, is a form for social practice, and thereby the expression of territoriality is affected by place and identity, simultaneously as place and identity are affected by territoriality. When writing a thesis within social science it is necessary to untangle all the concepts in order to apply them in the analysis one by one. In this thesis I have chosen to depart from social practice. My choice of theory has provided a direction for the analysis of the empirical material. Through choosing another theoretical approach the reading of the empirical material would probably have been different.

The main concepts in this thesis were related to social practice and territoriality. The overriding aim of the thesis was to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between the street children and the city. In order to reach such an understanding two main research questions and four secondary research questions were presented (see 1.4). Based on these research questions a field study was carried out in Kathmandu in order to produce empirical material.

I have chosen different categories to sort the empirical material. The question ‘who are the street children and why they are street children?’ was answered through chapter 6. We were introduced to three urchins representing the three categories; *abandoned*, *contact with parents* and *runaway*. The three categories focused on what triggered the children's street life and how much contact they have with their parents after starting their lives on the street. In order to construct the categories the interviews were applied cumulatively and correspondently.

This thesis has focused on the children's perspective of the street life. However, to a number of parents and other members of the family, losing a child to the street represents a great sorrow.



*S: I sometimes see my mother on the way and she tells me to go home and stay with my grand mother, but she scolds me.*

*Q: Why does she scold you?*

*S: I don't know probably because I'm here in the street. (Sanjay, Indra Chowk)*

The quotation illustrates two perspectives; how the street child avoids going home because he is scold and the grand mother's frustration over losing her grand child to the street. Such a vicious circle was mentioned by several children. For some families a part of their despair when they lose children to the street is caused by the fact that when a child is categorized as *khate* he becomes *asuddha*. *Khate* originally referred to the street children who had ragpicking as a mean of livelihood. Now *khate* has become the prototype of street child. *Khate* is the category applied in the media and by the general public when discussing street children. The street children experience it negatively when they are referred to as *khate*, since *khate* is a category associated with dirt and impurity.

The three stories together with the analysis in chapter 7 introduced us to the different practices in Thamel, Jagaran and Indra Chowk. In Thamel the street children perform economical practices connected to tourists, guiding and selling marijuana. They use different places within Thamel to perform other practices such as sleeping, eating, medical care and washing. In Indra Chowk the street children also have economical practices related to tourists and the local society mostly through begging and petty theft. In the evenings they go to the food program and to eat *dahlbhat*. The street children in Thamel and in Indra Chowk have a greater diversity in their use of the city than the boys in Jagaran. The boys in Jagaran perform all their domestic practices, sleeping, cooking and washing in Jagaran. Their economical practices, ragpicking is performed in several places within Kathmandu. During the nights and the early morning they wander around the city searching for recyclable goods.

In order to focus on the street children's daily practices and to understand why the street children have chosen their different practices, I focused on two of the three dimensions in Simonsen's practical theoretical triangle, *routinization- daily life* and *intention- strategy*. Giddens' (1984) concept *ontological security* is included the dimension *routinization-daily life*. According to Simonsen ontological security is partly acquired through routines. The daily routines contribute to the street children's ontological security and provide them with a foundation in an unpredictable world. Ragpicking provide the street children in Jagaran with a

feeling of security even if the children commit actions they find degrading. If the daily routines for some reason are set aside, the street children experience a 'critical situation'. The street children in the categories *abandoned* and *runaway* experience it as a 'critical situation' when they first enter the street.

Based on the concepts mentioned above I have considered the motivation of the street children's choice of social practices to be safety; psychological, emotional and material safety. I do not believe that the street children's search for excitement contradict with their need for safety. The street children are free and they do not have any obligations. There is no actual reason for the street children to have any form for routine or stay in an area for longer time. Despite their freedom they often choose to stay in a place for a longer period of time. We have seen that they have daily routines and they use places regularly.

In chapter 7 we saw how mobilization is an important strategy to attain emotional and material safety. Through the monetary, material and moral mobilization the street children can provide money, food and support, for instance back up during fighting. By mobilizing own working capacity, they can mobilize their friends if there is something they are unable to obtain personally. In order to make their mobilization easier the street children form gangs. These gangs can be seen as a substitute for families. Through the gang the street children have friends who help them if they become sick, who give them food if they do not make any money and help them fight if they are threatened.

On the basis of moral mobilization new children are included in the gang. Moral mobilization functions as a basis for the two other forms of mobilization and decides which abilities give status in a place. The status a child is given establishes his position in the gang hierarchy.

*Q: What is necessary to make a person a friend?*

*Boy1: We judge his character, strength, energy and talents, everything should be evaluated.*  
(Workshop, Jagaran)

We have seen that the practices chosen by the street children vary from place to place, even if their reasons for choosing their practices are somewhat similar. The first main research focused on, why practices vary. The entries for focusing on why the social practices vary are context and place. The street children's social practices change according to context and place.

Through focusing on Cresswell's (1996) interpretation of place, we saw how place holds the necessary qualities to reproduce the meaning which already exists in a place, in a way that makes it feel natural to us. People read a place differently, but still there will be readings which are dominant. Place provides a foundation of shared experience between people and continuity over time. Continuity over time are the key words for reproduction of any form of practice, including territorial practices.

The readings of a place depend on context. For instance, different times of day provide different readings of place, thus the street children's practices in a place vary according to the time of day. The street children are socialized into the practices in a place through their gang. The reading of place decides if the place can be considered as center or on the margin of society. Thamel is read as a place on the margin of society because it is associated with the category *asuddah*.

Based on the quotations from Gray (1994) and Manandhar (personal comment) chapter 8 opened with elaborating how the street children lose central elements in the Nepalese identity process when they start their lives on the street. Since place and context affect the street children's social practice, it was natural to presume that place also affects the street children's identity. Therefore chapter 8 opened with the question; 'how is the street children's social practice and identity influenced by the place they stay in?'. Through applying place to build their identity, the street children provide themselves with the possibility to create a positive self-image. The place strengthens the street children's group feeling, the feeling of being 'us'. Who the street children choose to include in 'us' is based on the moral mobilization in the gang. Through the gang place constitutes an important part of the street children's identity.

The last main research question was; 'in which way do different groups of street children territorialize Kathmandu?'. Territoriality can have several expressions. This thesis has focused on two understandings of territoriality; Sack's (1986) understanding of territoriality as control over a geographical area, and Ellingsen's (2002) understanding of territoriality as appropriation of place. How the street children express their territoriality depends on who they interact with. We have seen that the street children territorialize places belonging to mainstream society through transgression and abjection. Transgression is an important part of

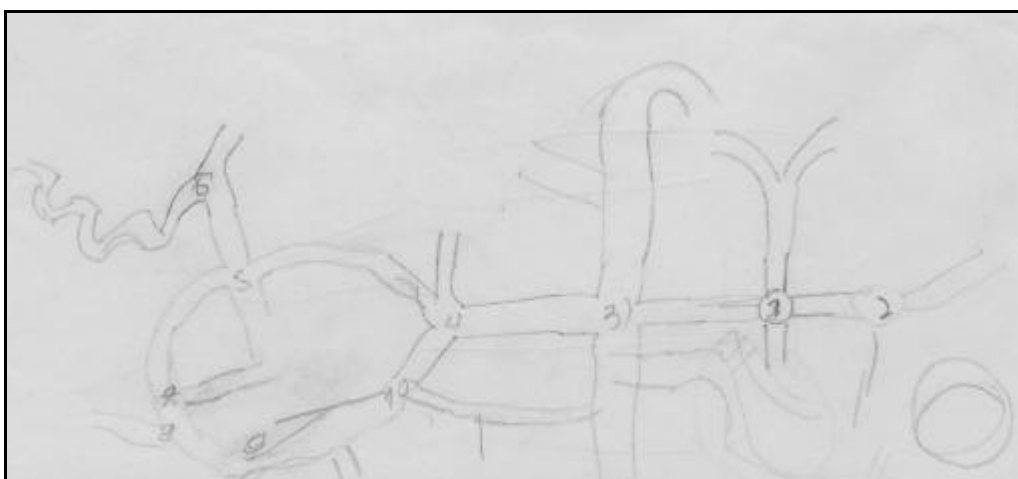
the street children's territoriality both in their interaction with the mainstream society and in the interaction with other street children. In a Nepalese context abjection is given an additional dimension due to the higher caste's fear of physical and ritual pollution. Through the concepts inclusion-exclusion we were introduced to the territorial practices characterizing the interaction between street children.

I have argued that Sack's understanding of territoriality can be associated with *discursive consciousness* and therefore has an explicit, often violent expression. The territorial practices in Thamel are experienced by street children outside Thamel as violent.

*Q: Do you go to Thamel?*

*D: No, the big boys they beat us and they rob my money that I earn in King's way. (Dinesh, Indra Chowk)*

Appropriation of place has in this thesis been associated with *practical consciousness* and claimed to be a consequence of the street children's daily life. Through their daily actions and routines the place they stay in is internalized within the street children. The map in figure 10.1 is drawn by a boy who could neither read nor write. He has lived in Thamel for about 3 years. The map presents all the places in Thamel he goes to daily. Thamel as a place is strongly represented within him. So despite his illiteracy he was capable of drawing a map which highly represented Thamel.



**Figure 10.1** Kumar's mobility map

Internalization is gained by spending a lot of time in a place. Other who comes to this place may feel 'out of place' because they lack the 'stock of knowledge' needed to understand the common language in the place.

I have in this thesis emphasized the street children's violent practices when considering how they express their territoriality directed towards to other street children. The street children's fighting is explicit and easy to detect. Most likely the street children's territorial practices have several other forms of expression, for instance verbal. I was due to language problems prevented from recognizing the street children's verbal expressions of territoriality.

Through applying geographical concepts this thesis has disclosed how important place is in all the facets of street children's daily life. By focusing on their territorial practices a hierarchy of power between gangs in different places was revealed. In my opinion this knowledge can useful to the organizations in their work for street children.

There are still numerous questions to investigate in order to increase our understanding of the street child's relationship with the city. In order to confine the thesis the focus has been on urchins. One aspect obviously missing in this thesis is the social practices of street girls, *khateni*. It would also be interesting to extend the research area and investigate the social practice of the street children in other places in Kathmandu and in other cities in Nepal, but my work ends here.

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**Appendix 1****Terms in Nepalese used in text**

<i>Asuddah</i>	Impure by caste
<i>Bartemande</i>	Ritual were boys are ordained in the caste and patriline
<i>Boudhanath</i>	Buddhist temple
<i>Bhrikuti Mandap</i>	Pleasure ground
<i>Chang</i>	Rice beer
<i>Changunarayan</i>	Vishnu temple
<i>Chau</i>	Pollution transmitted from a lower to a higher caste
<i>Chungi</i>	Ball made of several rubber bands
<i>Dada giri</i>	Gangster
<i>Dalbaht</i>	Nepali basic meal rice, lentil soup and curry
<i>Dasien</i>	Festival celebrated in September/October to honor Durga, an incarnation of Kali the revenger
<i>Hanumandhoka</i>	An open place surrounded by a number of temples and the old palace
<i>Itchangu</i>	Mountain behind Swayunbhunath
<i>Jat</i>	Caste
<i>Jau</i>	Imperative of the verb to go used in the sense 'go away'.
<i>Karma caleko</i>	Person ritually responsible for him /herself
<i>Kawad</i>	Junkyard
<i>Khate</i>	Child collecting recyclable goods
<i>Kuire</i>	Western tourist
<i>Maal</i>	Recyclable goods
<i>Murai</i>	Beaten rice
<i>Narayantan</i>	Vishnu temple
<i>Pashhupatinat</i>	The most important Hindu temple in Nepal
<i>Pasni</i>	Rice feeding ceremony, a child's first solid food
<i>Rickshaw</i>	Three wheeled bicycle taxi

<i>Saathi</i>	Friend
<i>Sanchecos</i>	Building in Thamel
<i>Stupa</i>	Buddhist temple form
<i>Suddah</i>	Pure by caste
<i>Swayumbhunat</i>	Buddhist temple
<i>Tempo</i>	Motorcycle taxi with three wheels.
<i>Terai</i>	The plains by the boarder to India
<i>Thulo mannche</i>	Respected man (lit. big man)
<i>Tihar</i>	Festival celebrated in October/November to honor Laxmi, goddess of wealth
<i>Tika-</i>	Mark on forehead of worshipper

### **Abbreviations**

CWIN	Child Workers in Nepal
GNP	Gross Domestic Product
HDR	Human development report
ILO	International Labor organization
NGO	Non governmental organization
UML	United Marxist-Leninist Party
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

## **Appendix 2**

### **Interview guide**

#### **Biographical data:**

Name (nickname)

Age (roughly)

Caste

Ethnic group

#### **Family**

How many people are there in your family?

What is your parent's occupation?

Are you living with your mother and father?

How often do you see them?

Who lived in your house?

#### **Hometown**

Where are you from?

Why did you leave?

#### **Kathmandu**

Where do you stay?

Why did you come to KTM?

#### **Daily life**

What do you normally eat?

What kind of work do you do?

Where do you work?

Where do you usually work?

What is an ordinary day like?

Do you go to the same places every day or do you also go other places?

What have you done today?

Where did you go today?

### **Territoriality**

Why do you stay here?

Are there some people you like to hang out/work with?

When new children that hasn't been on the street before come, what do you do?

If you see kids you don't know hang around, what do you do?

If you see kids that you know normally hang out other places here, what do you do?

### **Places**

Are there areas that are dangerous? Where? Why?

Are there places where you are not aloud to go?

### **Money**

How much money can you earn in one day?

Who is most willing to give you money?

Do you save money or do you use them at once?

What do you like to spend your money on?

If you had a lot of money what would you do with it?

### **Night**

Where do you sleep?

Who do you sleep with?

How long have you been sleeping on the street?

### **Caring**

What are you most afraid of?

Where do you go when you are scared?

If you are sad who do you talk to?

If you are sick who looks after you?

Is there any place you can get medicine?

Who do you like best to be with?

If somebody is hungry do you share if you have food?

Does anybody share with you? Who?

What is the nicest anybody has done for you?

What is the nicest you have done for anybody? (worst?)

**Future**

Do you think it is important to go to school why/why not?

What do you want to do when you get older?

Do you think about the future?





## **Appendix 3**

### **Workshop questions**

How do you make a gang?

What is the purpose of making a gang?

Who makes the gangs?

Do you let newcomers into your gang?

How is the newcomer treated?

How do you make friends on the street?

How did you feel when you came to the street for the first time?

Are there any special areas where the gangs stay?

Can you go anywhere and search for goods?

How do you learn how to collect recyclable goods?

Where are street boys staying in Kathmandu?

What could be the solution for the street child problem?

How are you treated by other people who are not street people?



## **Appendix 4**

Questions asked to help the street children draw mobility maps.

Where do you normally go?

Where do you sleep?

Where do you work?

Where do you go for entertainment?

What other places are important to you?

