Experiential Design – Rethinking relations between people, objects and environments

• Paper / Proposal Title:
Changing Spatial Claims and Everyday Negotiations: A Study of Street Vendors in Kolkata

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• Abstract (300 words):
Henri Lefebvre’s call for a ‘Right to the City’ has received a new lease of life in the cities of the Global South according to urban scholars (Parnell and Pieterse 2010, Zerah 2011) who argue that the call is being used to demand the institutionalization and codification of bona fide rights. Thus the ‘Right to the City’, far from being a critique or larger political resistance to ongoing neoliberal socio-economic and political transformations is acting instead as a framework to press for quantifiable social rights in the regulatory sense. However, very little work has been done to understand how the everyday spatial practices, ordinary routines of people located within the rubric of the state-market axis (sometimes in the interstices) lead to the production of the built and lived environment of cities. In this paper, I examine the political dimension of the everyday practices, claims, constant negotiations, adjustments, infractions and norm compliance that the street
vendors of Kolkata engage in given the public interventions by the state in trying to restructure the city and regulate informal activities.

The paper looks at two main types of negotiations by the street vendors, in 3 selected markets in Kolkata, in terms of the struggle to establish the street as the space to practice their livelihoods without the threat of evictions and how these practices have evolved in the city of Kolkata with the passage of the Street Vendors Act (Protection of Livelihoods and Regulation of Street Vending) 2014. Macro level negotiations- between the state and the organisations of street vendors in the political or judicial arena, whereas micro level negotiations- individual or in smaller groups which is territorial or locally arranged. My key argument here is that the profusion of modalities through which increasingly tenuous local arrangements and negotiations are being crafted on almost a daily basis across multiple actors, including informal intermediaries- is both structured by and in turn disrupts the strategic alliances, macro level negotiations and collective bargaining processes by hawkers.

• **Author(s) Biography (200 words each):**

I am Dr. Anushyama Mukherjee, currently doing Post Doctorate at the Centre for Urban Policy and Governance. I have completed her Ph.D in Sociology in 2015 at the Department of Sociology, University of Hyderabad. I have worked as a Research Assistant with the “Right to the City as the basis for Housing Advocacy in Contemporary India” at the Centre for Urban Policy and Governance. The responsibilities included writing research proposal, collecting indepth interviews, supervising interns who were hired as a part of the project, data analysis and report writing. Along with these, I have also co-organised workshops at the city, state and national level. My areas of research interest broadly revolve around questions of urban spaces, migration, ethnicity and Indian diaspora. I have been engaged in research on these themes throughout my academic career.