HERITAGISING URBAN CRAFT ECONOMY: THINKING WITH CHITPUR ROAD, KOLKATA

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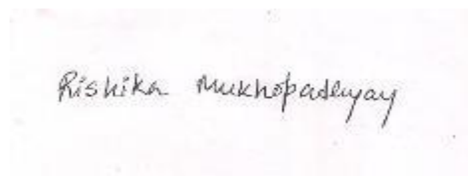

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Abstract

The PhD research asks how heritage as a construct emerges in Chitpur Road Kolkata, specifically concerning four languishing and thriving craft practices that are based on the Road. It addresses three specific issues: first, it unpacks the material conditions of the crafts' existence analysing their peripheral urban practices, heritage-led spatial politics, and diverse economic organisation in a postcolonial city like Kolkata. Second, it analyses how crafts are acting as a potential locus of heritage production through interventions from artists and civil society organisations. Third, it decolonises heritage ontologies by offering a critique of modernist universal paradigms of colonial and neoliberal heritage frameworks and proposing a counterheritage sensibility grounded in pluriversality. Thus, the thesis contributes to four domains of critical scholarship: postcolonial urban heritage, postcolonial craft economy, critical heritage studies, and decolonial thinking/practice. Ethnographic research with the craftspeople (idol makers, goldsmiths, musical instrument makers and wooden sweetmeat mould makers) and collaborative research with an artist collective conducted between 2018-2019 shape the findings of the research.

The thesis argues that crafts in the old urban centres of postcolonial cities inhabit a peripheral space of compliance and defiance that constantly flows in and out of capitalist production regimes. Locally and internationally networked civil society institutions selectively convert these precarious craft geographies into 'heritage capital' that signifies a process of living heritage production through which diffused values are assigned to, and derived from, everyday craft practices. Heritage production is doubly bound in this case, as the artists' vision promises a radical futurity of democratic and affective heritage making that dislocates the authoritative heritage discourse. However, they risk presenting the crafts as mundane spectacles, and at times inadvertently align with capitalist institutional goals, such that the economic justice of the craftspeople is compromised. Through this process, local crafts are brought into global regimes of universal heritage frameworks. The craftspeople on the other hand use the language of heritage strategically and, through micro-political tactics, mobilise heritage to assert rights over land and livelihood. Consequently, the thesis participates in 'ontological politics', to propose a new heritage language by learning from the ever-evolving, fluid and impermanent craft practices, arguing for recognition of a dematerialised heritage

consciousness which leads to the upward mobility of the craftspeople. The ontological shift proposed by the thesis provides a lens for consideration of socio-spatial justice, whereby elitist architectural heritage and the traditional status quo of caste-based and gendered craft heritage are unsettled and displaced, giving validity instead to the ordinary lived heritage of change and continuity. Finally, the thesis refuses to frame these epistemologies from the South as alternatives in the field of knowledge production, positioning the findings within pluriversal thinking and practice that values diverse ethical and cosmological worlding practices.

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Abbreviations

ASI	Archaeological Survey of India
CCC	Chitpur Craft Collective
CIMA	Centre for International Modern Art
CSSSC	Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta
EIC	East India Company
HUL	Historic Urban Landscape
ICH	Intangible Cultural Heritage
IFA	India Foundation for Arts
INGO	International Nongovernmental Organisation
KMC	Kolkata Municipal Corporation
MSME	Micro Small and Medium Enterprises
PKG	Purono Kolkatar Golpo
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WB	West Bengal
WHL	World Heritage List

Note on Translation

Translation of all Bengali words is given in the first occurrence. In some cases, if the word is important, a few successive occurrences also have the translation. Meaning of select words are offered in a glossary in the next pages (xvii-xix). Apart from proper names (of persons and places), Bengali words are italicised. Diacritical marks have not been used in translating Bengali words. Phonetic spelling and usage of the word is used.

Glossary

Akhdai	a kind of Bengali song-tournament (Samsad p. 1054)
Babu	a title affixed to the name of a gentleman (Samsad p. 744); in other use, a class of respectable wealthy upper caste Hindu Bengali men who emerged during colonial times. Also, in pre-British and early British era a title of honour or respect; for a servant- the master.
Baiji	courtesan singer/dancer (Guha Thakurta 2015, p. 365)
Baroari	an event organized by a voluntary association of twelve friends; this literal meaning has expanded to connote a general community event, more specifically a community-organised puja (Guha Thakurta 2015, p. 365)
Bhadralok	a gentleman; in other use, a class of courteous western educated urbanised middle-class men who were a product of the Bengali Renaissance
Bhai-fota	Hindu ceremony of marking brother's foreheads by their sisters with sandalwood-paste (Samsad p. 827)
Bharatia	tenant, renter
Bijoya	the day on which the image of Durga is immersed; s755 also known as Bijoya Dashami, tenth day of the *Debi-paksha* and final day of victory of Ramchandra over Ravana in the *Ramayana (*Guha Thakurta 2015, p. 366*)*
Chana	curdled milk (Samsad p. 378)
Daaker saaj	ornamentation for the goddess crafted in golden and silver tinsel foil; the name derives from the history of this imported material initially arriving by post (*dak*) in colonial India. (Guha Thakurta 2015, p. 366)
Dada	an elder brother or cousin brother; (in affectionate address) a younger or junior man (Samsad p. 494)

Didi an elder sister or cousin (sister); (in courteous or affectionate address) a lady, a woman, a girl (Samsad p.499)

Dol a religious ceremony, a Hindu festival of Krishna's swinging in a rocking cradle; in other parts of India known as festival of colour or Holi (Samsad p. 521 and 892)

Jatra an open-air (usu. rural) opera or dramatic performance (Samsad p. 892)

Karigar a workman; a worker; an artisan; a handicraftsman; a mechanic; an artist (Samsad p. 229)

Kirtanwali a female devotional singer, mainly who sings songs about Radha and Krishna (Samsad p. 237)

Kobi-gaan a kind of song-tournament or duel (Samsad p. 202)

Mali gardener

Mritshilpi specialist in clay modelling, usually part of a hereditary clan; with claims to the status of artist in this field of work (Guha Thakurta 2015, p. 367)

Patchitra a painted earthen pot of convex shape, or painting in a cloth or canvas (Samsad p. 604)

Pratima Shilpi clay-modeller specialising in the art making images of deities (Guha Thakurta 2015, p. 368)

Puja/ Pujo worship, adoration, devotion, reverence, cordial reception, glorification (Samsad p. 600)

Rath Jatra the Hindu festival of Jagannatha going in a chariot for a sea-bath (Samsad p. 904)

Rokar an account of cash, a cash account; ready money, cash; jewellery; gold and silver ornaments. (Samsad p. 918)

Rokarer dokan a jeweller's shop (Samsad p. 918)

Rowak a raised terrace in the front part of a building. (Samsad p. 920)

Saaj	an ornament, a decorative article to be put on (Samsad p. 1002)
Sandesh	sweetmeat
Sarbojonin puja	belonging to all; used here to indicate a community and neighbourhood puja, where all are welcome (Guha Thakurta 2015, p. 368)
Shola	sponge wood (Samsad p. 955) white stem pith of a water plant, used as a medium for ornamentation of deities and crafting decorative objects (Guha Thakurta 2015, p. 369)
Sutradhar	a carpenter, the Hindu community of carpenters (Samsad p. 1023)
Tappa	a light classical variety of amorous songs sung in a particular or special typical mode. (Samsad p. 420)
Thakur dalan	colonnaded courtyard altar situated within the courts of large traditional mansions (Guha Thakurta 2015, p. 369)
Thakur	a god, a deity, an idol, (in other use an overlord, a lord, a master, a man deserving respect or reverence, a spiritual guide) (Samsad p. 428)
Thana	police Station
Thika	a sub-contract; lease (in relation to land), in other use; *thika praja,* holding possession temporarily for a fixed period, or temporary tenant (Samsad p. 429)
Zamindar	a landowner, landlord, hereditary tax collector
Zamindari	the jurisdiction or property of a zamindar

(The glossary is mainly compiled from two sources. (1) Samsad Bengali to English dictionary. Available here https://dsal.uchicago.edu/dictionaries/biswas-bengali/ (last accessed 26 August 2021). It is referred to in the list as Samsad. (2) Glossary of Guha Thakurta, Tapati. 2015. *In the Name of the Goddess: The Durga Pujas of Contemporary Kolkata*. Delhi: Primus Books. 365-369. It is referred to as Guha Thakurta, 2015. A list containing names of participants is in appendix 1)

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Through them, my ordinary lifeworld folded into academic enquiry. They kept me informed of the recently published Bengali books on Kolkata's crafts, street directories, and local history that I needed to consult, accompanied and introduced me to people in the field; at times becoming almost my research assistants. Moreover, they endured my fluctuating mood, patiently lent an ear to hear out my PhD frustrations, and sustained me throughout the project. No amount of words can express my gratitude to them. I shall be forever grateful to you all!

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1. Situating the research

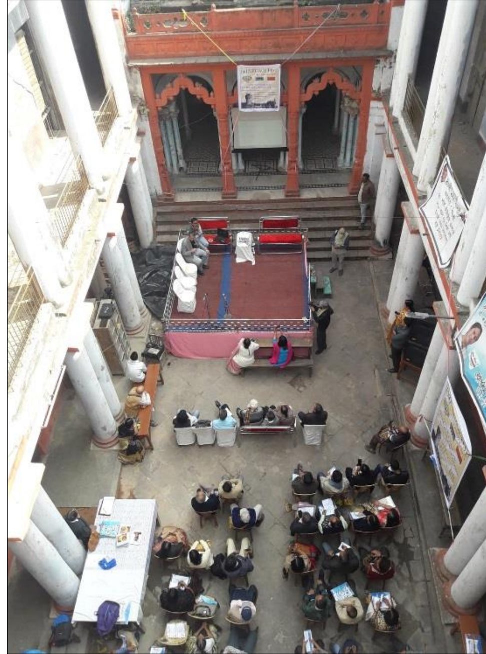


Figure 1.1: Inside a heritage festival: Metropolitan Institution of Pathuriaghata, a neighbourhood along Chitpur Road (source: Sumon Dutta)

It was a crisp January morning of 2019 in Kolkata when I was going to a 'Heritage Fest' (festival) organised by a citizen's group. My destination was a 200-year-old school Metropolitan Institution, established by a revered social reformer of the 19th century in Pathuriaghata neighbourhood of Chitpur Road (figure 1.1). Pathuriaghata was the seat of the erstwhile colonial Bengali aristocracy. In the winding alleys, now choked with people and daily vegetable and fish markets, one can see palatial mansions, such as decrepit Tagore castle and relatively maintained Mullick family house standing still.[1] Metropolitan institution building is one of them, part of

[1] Tagore castle was built by the nephew of Prasanna Kumar Tagore (lawyer of the British government), Jatindramohan Tagore in 1895 replacing the existing house of the influential Pathuriaghata Tagore family. Macintosh Burn was commissioned to construct this house following the design of English castles (Bandopadhyay and Mitra 2002). Present condition of the interior and exterior of the house and the Mullick house in the same lane can be found here https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/kolkata/streetwise-kolkata-prasanna-kumar-tagore-street-castle-road-6302372/ In 2006, a German photographer Peter Bialobrzeski and his 21 students did a pictorial documentary of these building and in 2008 published a book called 'Calcutta: Chitpur Road Neighbourhoods. Kolkata Heritage Photo Project'. Later the collection of photographs was donated to Alkazi Foundation for the Art's photography collection. https://alkazifoundation.org/chitpur-road-neighbourhoods/. Some of the photographs of the project which give an insight into the architectural legacy of the elites can be seen here https://www.indiatoday.in/lifestyle/culture/story/kolkata-heritage-

the city's glorious days, which needs to be preserved as a heritage building, the group says. The motto of the fest was, 'preservation and restoration'. The school building was on the verge of being demolished as its roof had collapsed. Rumours of ghostly presence on the haunted first floor also abounded. The citizen group which got together in the digital platform intervened, lobbied the government, and made the restoration possible. As I was entering Prasanna Kumar Tagore Street from Chitpur Road, the bell-metal and brass utensil shops (one of them established in 1871) on the left and the wooden *sandesh* [sweetmeat] mould (figure 1.2) and utensil shops on the right were nonchalant about this heritage fest. The locality had a festive ambience as the loudspeaker was playing music. For the first few seconds, I had mistaken that with the heritage fest and asked one of the street vendors where it was taking place. He blankly looked at me and confessed he had no idea what festival I was talking about. (Field note, 13 January 2019)

Figure 1.2: Outside the heritage festival: *sandesh* moulds of various designs (source: Prama Mukhopadhyay)

chitpur-road-19th-century-bengali-mansions-influenced-by-european-architecture-exhibition-308016-2016-02-10. See a report on the citizen group's heritage activism to save the school https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kolkata/citizens-take-inititaive-to-restore-heritage-school/articleshow/64619545.cms (links last accessed 9 August 2021).

The thesis presents an ethnography of geographies and materialities of urban craft practices in a historic road of Kolkata, India: the Chitpur Road (map 1.1).[2] Chitpur Road is a place of palaces and prostitution, slums and shrines, trades and trams, crowds and cacophony, *jatra* and *jorasanko*, crafts and creativity, ruins and royals, dynamism and dystopia.[3] The 4km long road is the oldest arterial road running parallel to river Hugli (alternatively spelt Hooghly).[4] It predates the history of the city and witnessed the city growing from the village of *Kalikata* to the city of 'Calcutta' under the East India Company (EIC hereafter).[5] Since the late seventeenth century it has been home to diverse religious and linguistic communities and, at present, their life continues to be shaped by the conditions produced by the colonial history of the Road. Anchored around a vast trading network, it grew to be the commercial artery of the 'native' quarter of the thriving colonial metropolis, Kolkata (figure 1.3).[6] Presently, the Road's landscape

[2] I will be using the nomenclature Kolkata in the thesis unless an institution's name or direct quote reflects Calcutta. The city's name was changed from Calcutta to Kolkata in 2001. Change of colonial names is a political move to decolonise identity of places as noticed in Africa (Uluocha 2015). In India's case one needs to be careful about the intentions of such moves. It has been noticed that decolonisation has been used as a rhetoric to change place names from the Mughal era and in order to claim a pure Hindu past. One such example would be Allahabad's new name Prayagraj in Uttar Pradesh under the Hindu nationalist government.

[3] *Jatra* is folk theatre (a glossary is attached with the thesis for meaning of Bengali terms) and *jorasanko* refers to one of the eminent family homes who have considerably shaped the cultural history of Bengal. Chitpur Road was renamed as Rabindra Sarani in 1963, after its Nobel laureate resident Rabindranath Tagore. Rabindranath Tagore belongs to the *jorasanko thakur* (Tagore) family and his ancestral home is now a museum dedicated to his life and work.

[4] B. Gupta and Chaliha (1990) suggests that the name of the neighbourhood Chitpur is derived from a colony of artists *(Chitrakar)* and it was first mentioned in Bipradas Pipalai's poem Manasamangal in 1495. Another explanation, that the area has derived its name from the temple of goddess Chitteshwari founded in 1610 has gained more consensus. It used to be known as pilgrim road which connected two temples, Chitteswari Temple in the North and Kalighat in the South. Clearing some of the jungle in this stretch, shops and resting places (dharmashala) emerged.

[5] When East India Company's (EIC hereafter) Job Charnok landed on the left bank of Hugli river, they came across a thriving cotton trading village along Chitpur Road, known as Sutanuti (Nair 1990). *Zamindari* (landholding) rights of these three villages *Sutanuti*, Dhee (or Dihi) Calcutta (or *Kalikata*) and *Gobindapur* were bought by Job Charnock's successor and son-in-law, Charles Eyere on 10 November 1698 from the local *zamindar* Sabarna Roychoudhuri for ₹1,300. The company paid regular rent to the Mughal empire for these villages till 1757 (Nair 1990, 10) and helped to build a colonial trading port named 'Calcutta'. It served as the imperial capital from 1773-1911 (Losty 1990). At present, the original neighbourhood of Chitpur lies in the north of the Road. The road runs between Bagbazaar in the north to Lalbazaar in the south and several neighbourhoods (under nine police stations) fall on either side of the Road.

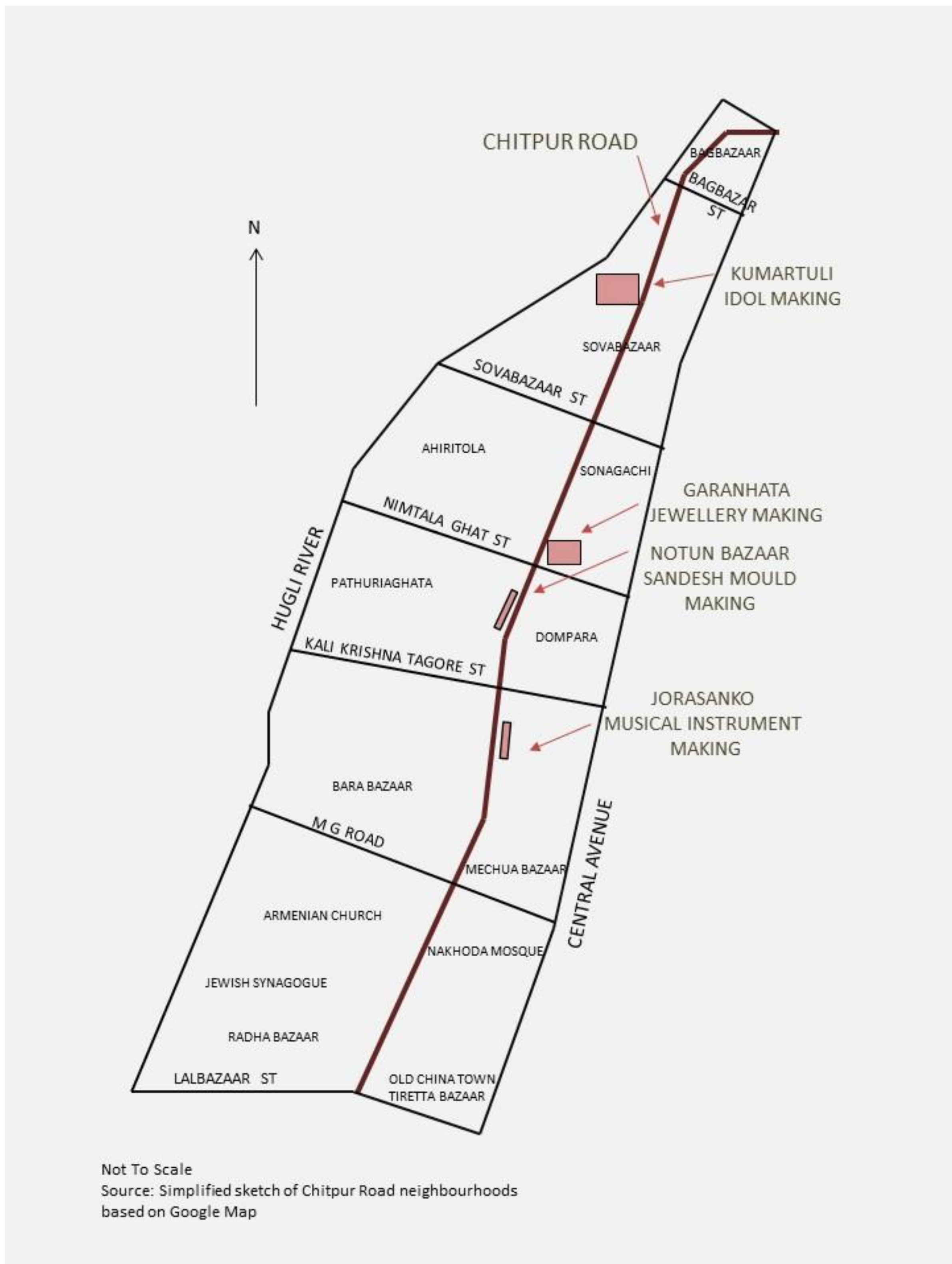
[6] In the British Library a two volume 'India: ancient and modern' has William Simpson's illustrations (figure 1.3). It accompanies descriptive literature by John William Kaye (1867). In volume one, Chitpur Road is described as 'one great continuous bazaar, or long line of native shops'. It has been hailed as the microcosm of India where not only Indians but men and women from various races and nationalities can be seen in the single stretch (notable are Chinese, Armenians, Jews, Afghans). It goes on describing the nature of vehicles, clothing, houses and shops in the ground floor of houses skirting the road. From grain sellers to idol-sellers, from sweetmeat sellers to gold and silversmiths and money changer find its way in Chitpur Road.

continues to be dotted with numerous *bazaars* established by the colonial elites, shops and workshops where craft producers make and sell objects for retail, decaying edifices of grand bungalows and cramped houses of residents.[7] The thesis looks at four craft practices centred in neighbourhoods running on either side of the Road.

Figure 1.3: 'The Chitpore Road, Calcutta'. 1867

(Source: British Library, Plate 3 from Simpson's 'India: ancient and modern, chromolithographs by, and published by, Day & Son, London, 1867. Artist(s): Day & Son, after Simpson, William (1823-1899) BL ref no. X108(3): 1867)

[7] The Road's commercial activity and population can be distinctly differentiated into three parts. The northern part (from Bagbazaar to Garanhata) has a concentration of Hindu Bengali community with some Bihari and Oria community. From Natun bazaar to Bara bazaar, the business districts are primarily dominated by Hindi speaking Rajasthani and Gujarati communities. The southern tip of the road is the space where Muslim community from northern Indian provinces live side by side with some communities with foreign origin such as Chinese (Dasgupta 2009). They are known as the Indo-Chinese community because of their long association with Kolkata. In the southern end of the road, Chinese temples, mosques, synagogues, Armenian and Portuguese churches tell the story of bygone days of cosmopolitan Kolkata. This tail end section meets the colonial 'white town' or the present official administrative hub of Kolkata.



Map 1.1: Location of four craft clusters under review for PhD along Chitpur Road (source: author)

This thesis investigates how these livelihood practices are reframed by the craftspeople, the civil society, and the state to construct different forms of heritage capital for the crafts and the Road itself. I describe my work with an artist collective and analyse how different motivations, forces and mechanisms operationalise craft and heritage

narratives through this work. Through my engaged research process, I witness how a sense of living heritage is produced which can be both beneficial as well as exploitative for the craftspeople. The thesis examines how variegated and dispersed heritage meanings are created (and instrumentalised as a trope) by a network of local, national, and international agencies, in order to garner historic, spatial, economic, cultural, and aesthetic value for the crafts. To address each of these analytical moorings, the thesis manoeuvres through the complex terrain of colonial historicity, postcolonial spatial politics, and the diverse political-economic organisations of the craft practices. To expand each of the themes, the thesis examines the historic underpinnings of persistent hierarchies and the selective valuation of the crafts under review, placing them within the social and urban history of Kolkata. This leads to enquiry into how the survival of the struggling and thriving crafts is embedded in contemporary spatial and economic practices. Further, I consider how these spatial politics are intersecting with heritage claims. Finally, the thesis presents a critique of dominant heritage production of the Road, which follows a colonial and universal framework whereby the local is morphed and transmuted under global heritage frameworks and their modernist regime. It does this by dislocating the ontological singularity of this heritage construct, which is propelled by ideas of stasis, material conservation and permanence. One of the key contributions of the research is to unpack ways to decolonise heritage discourse by learning from the ever-evolving forms, textures and materialities of the craft practices and the craft practitioner's justice-driven heritage politics.

1.2. Background of the study: response to existing heritage framework in Chitpur Road, Kolkata

This research is a response to my experiences and observations of the field as both a doctoral student and as a long-time resident of one of the Chitpur Road neighbourhoods of Kolkata. From the offset, it is important to note that these ruminations are first and foremost directly linked to how heritage is practiced and perceived in the popular and professional discussions on the ground, in my case Kolkata. The thesis is positioned as a response to legacies of the colonial past and contemporary neo-liberal appropriations of heritage discourse, rather than as a direct engagement with scholarly work in critical heritage studies and its treatment of the concept of heritage in the last twenty years (D. C. Harvey 2001; L. Smith 2006; Harrison 2013a; Byrne 2014; DeSilvey 2017; Rico 2016).

The dialogues and discourses I noticed in Kolkata prior to my doctoral work included the following:

Figure 1.4: A Mullick family house turned into a maternity hospital (source: Prama Mukhopadhyay)

1. ‘Heritage’ and ‘conservation’ are two words that have been sutured together in such a way that they have become indistinguishable;
2. Monumental structures such as forts, aristocratic mansions, colonial bungalows, palaces – in short, architectural grandeurs built by the wealthy elites – have come to capture the very first image of heritage, an idea which is actively supported by the Kolkata Municipal Corporation’s Heritage Conservation Committee;[8]
3. There is a steady narrative of demolition, destruction, ruin, and loss of heritage, mostly expounded by the elites and conservation architects of the city;[9]

[8] https://www.kmcgov.in/KMCPortal/jsp/HeritageBuildingHome.jsp notice the language of heritage construction in the website. They focus on heritage homes, buildings, precincts, property. In 2009 it published a graded list for heritage buildings including 923 buildings which cannot be demolished (last accessed 30 May 2021).

[9] The concern ranges from demolition of an iconic colonial era hotel to build a high-rise (Niyogi, 2018), to closure of a folk and tribal arts and craft museum of undivided Bengal (Bhattacharya, 2018), from iconic city buildings getting notice to construct metro line (Bandyopadhyay and Ray, 2018), to City’s Parsi community fearing city’s first fire temple (1839) will fall victim of land sharks (Roy, 2018). It has become a common phenomenon to find news reports related to demolition and loss of heritage in Kolkata

4. A constant lament is heard about the lack of heritage awareness among the general public of the city and lack of government initiatives, again voiced primarily by a group of heritage-aware citizens.[10]

On Chitpur Road, also known as 'Calcutta's museum' (B. Gupta and Chalia 1995, 30) for the series of stately aristocratic homes which showcase the unique architectural style of 'Bengal Baroque' (S. Bose 2012, 68), all these assumptions, associations and concerns are repeatedly heard.[11] As a body of opinion, they display a troubling absence of critical enquiry about why conservation is intrinsically linked to heritage, why monumentalisation of the past is the only legitimate way of valuing and remembering past, why loss and destruction mark the demise of heritage and, most importantly, why the general public is not concerned about heritage which the advocates want to preserve. There is little interest displayed in what is heritage for the 'public', and how they perceive heritage, practice heritage, and claim heritage. The research, initially, emerged from agitation about how to counter the narratives of conservation, monumentality, and loss, and the perceived lack of public understanding of these issues.

newspapers. On World Heritage Day eminent citizens of Kolkata gathered and marched on the streets to build pressure on the government to take the heritage question seriously (Dutt, 2018).

[10] Organisations such as the Calcutta Architectural Legacies (CAL), Calcutta Heritage Collective, Kolkata Port Heritage Initiative were founded in the last couple of years to generate awareness in people and create pressure on the government. Many have observed that despite Kolkata being a city with uncanny pride in its cultural legacy and intellectual history, it has also been 'insensibly passive' in protecting it (Mukherjee, 2015, N.P).

[11] According to architects the buildings built by the indigenous elites who rose to prominence through trades with East India company and administrative positions in the company (British after 1857) governance exemplify a mixture of European and vernacular motif and design. S. Bose (2012) comments European Neo-Classical style, 'facades with porticos having Tuscan, Doric, Ionic or Corinthian columns, pediments or pilasters, articulated and ornamental parapets with figures and statues (like the buildings of Andrea Palladio), courtyards with colonnaded verandahs' (2012, 70) were mixed with Rajasthani, Bengali, Egyptian, Islamic styles. Bose's article charts out the reasons for the decay and provides recommendations.

Figure 1.5: Musical Instrument making, repairing and trading on Chitpur Road
(source: Prama Mukhopadhyay)

My research gives centrality to the vast landscape of people's everyday work, which can be called the 'making and trading' activity of Chitpur Road. The Road hosts a plethora of skilled practitioners, such as religious idol-makers (*mritshilpi*) and clay potters, *jatra* (folk theatre) offices, trunk and iron safe makers, block makers, litho-press printers, goldsmiths, wooden and copper utensil makers and sellers, *sandesh* (sweetmeat) mould makers, scent makers, master tailors and zardozi-workers (a type of metal coil embroidery), classical musical instrument makers, handmade shoe-makers, to name a few.[12] Though officially the city only recognises monuments, buildings and sites as heritage, it should be noticed Chitpur Road has captured heritage experts' imagination as a site of 'unofficial heritage' (Harrison 2013a, 15) which has seemingly retained its historic character without institutional heritage legislation or management schemes. Popular media also nurtures an imagination that the Road stands for 'immutability, stasis and timelessness' (S. Das 2008a, N.P). It is where 'history of old Calcutta [comes]

[12] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hd6A0W8lTO4 This video made by Chitpur Craft Collective introduces the visual landscape of the area (accessed 10 August 2021).

to life' (B. Gupta and Chalia 1995, 27) and it is 'firmly present in the past' (S. Das 2003, N.P; 2007a).

Detailed documentation of these livelihood practices was published in 2015 by a conservation architect in INTACH's (Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage) report on sustainable urban creative economies (K. Bose 2015). This document identifies the livelihoods of Chitpur Road as 'urban crafts' and explores their potential in developing a 'heritage-based cultural economy' (2015, 63-66). It flags out a series of propositions for an all-encompassing conservation plan which will take into account the architecturally valuable buildings as well as traditional crafts and trades and the cosmopolitan social fabric of the Road. Though the document shows sensitivity to the survival of the 'cultural practices' (2015, 63), it essentially proposes to fit the supposedly timeless and frozen landscape under UNESCO's Historic Urban Landscape model. It doesn't address what we can learn from the landscape which may challenge how heritage is perceived as a 'thing' to be preserved and included in a UNESCO list. Further, it functions as a survey document that makes assumptions about traditionality and creates categories without reflecting on the specific nature of the livelihoods or what gets excluded from the 'traditional' category. Furthermore, the document does not include voices of the craft practitioners or attempt to understand how heritage value is articulated by them. My research questions take these issues into account and indicate quite different epistemic concerns.

1.3. Research questions

There are two main aims of the research; to understand the materialities of these practices and to unpack how these practices are reconfigured as heritage. These aims are reflected in the following questions which the thesis addresses in detail.

1. How have the crafts under review evolved in Chitpur road?
   This question establishes the genealogy of the crafts, complicates the notion of traditionality, and traces the encounters the colonial city offered which made these crafts to flourish. The crafts' historic connection and spatial embeddedness with Chitpur Road have been established through this enquiry. The question enables a dialogue with makers on the Road to address the development of their personal practice and business.

2. How does the crafts' survival get intertwined with urban spatial politics and heritage rhetoric?

   This question explicates the meanings and implications of the urban-ness of the crafts. It offers the possibility to delve deeper into the peripheral urban placemaking practices by the craftspeople. How can these practices make their way into the heritage dialogue which can dislocate the power of aristocratic buildings in the heritage conservation paradigm of the city? The question also helps to flesh out the urban redevelopment related conflicts that make heritage one of the key factors for the survival and eviction of the urban crafts.

3. What is the economic logic of the survival of the craft?

   I enter the debate around the capitalist/ non-capitalist nature of craft economy through this question. Investigation of the economic ecosystem of the crafts maps out two processes. First, the craftspeople's subjectivities and agencies in creating a socially just craft future which also addresses the concern of an alternative, ethical production process. Secondly, this question lets me analyse the manifestation of development discourse through the postcolonial state's intervention in the craft sector.

4. How do different groups intervene in the craft sector to create meanings of heritage?

   From civil society groups in the city to the state to transnational networks and international bodies, various actors participate in the craft sector who produce heritage capital for the crafts. This question is self-reflexive and explores the role of these agents (including me) in the heritagisation process of the crafts. Moreover, in the course of the thesis, the creation of the category of craft by these actors is also probed.

5. How do the craftspeople practice and articulate heritage?

   Finally, this question opens two scopes. First, it unravels how the craftspeople mobilise, strategise, negotiate and claim heritage constructs. Second, I explore a

more interpretive scope which lets me construct new language and decolonise heritage discourse by observing the craft practices.

1.4. Locating the study within the broader scholarship

The thesis centrally contributes to the field of urban geography, craft geography and critical heritage studies. Further, it attempts to circumvent the boundaries between these fields of knowledge and presents the research at an intersection between them. It follows the trajectory of southern urbanism, a field advanced by prominent geographers, by engaging with the concepts of peripheral urbanism and autoconstruction (Caldeira 2017; Simone 2018b). Further, it develops new vocabularies and grammars of urbanism through which craft communities maintain their livelihood at the conceptual peripheries of the postcolonial metropolis. It delves into the precarity of urban crafts as it gets intertwined with urban spatial politics. Thus, it unpacks the craft geography of Chitpur road by historicising and emplacing the craft communities within the road. The role of place association of the crafts in crystallising these crafts' identity in the contemporary heritage market extends the debate around territorialisation and networks within the literature of craft geography. The major subsidiary argument around the economic organisation of these craft geographies is developed by feminist geographer Gibson-Graham work on diverse economies. The thesis responds and examines their proposition with postcolonial school's intervention. Thus, the research makes significant arguments within the niche field of postcolonial urban heritage and postcolonial craft economy. Additionally, it also adds to the field of microhistory and collaborative research in terms of its empirical and methodological contribution.

The thesis has twofold contributions in the domain of Critical Heritage Studies. It develops the concept of heritage capital, through five analytical registers (temporal, strategic, aesthetic, political and commercial) unsettling the economic determinism prevalent in valuing heritage. Consequently, it offers a critique of the modernist universal heritage paradigm with empirical examples of heritage governance and heritage activism in the city. It strengths the critique by offering a decolonial reading of the craft practices identifying, change, repair, continuity and impermanence as part of heritage understanding and valuing the past. Thus the postcolonial geography of the field dislocates some normative constructs mentioned in the background of the study but does not become a locus for different or exotic empirics by engaging with

pluriversality (Escobar 2020; Ramon Grosfoguel 2008).[13] The empirics open up the scope to have larger conversations with sites and practices from across the world aided by the conceptual apparatus of postcapitalist school, postcolonial and decolonial thinking.

1.4.1. Microhistory and urban subalternity

This thesis traces the previously less enquired historicity of the crafts found within the Chitpur Road by reading against the grain of the archive and introduces oral narratives to reconstruct their socio-spatial history. Building upon this historicity I consider why heritage making of the present is a politicised and selective domain. My work follows the footsteps of subaltern geography where the crafts in the street become the loci through which urban subalternity and peripheral placemaking practices are manifested (Jazeel and Legg 2019; A. Roy 2011; Caldeira 2017). Chitpur Road's history primarily revolves around the historicity of the Road itself which predates Kolkata (B. Gupta and Chalia 1995; A. K. Basu 2014; Nair 1987). Few components stand out prominently; the 'native' bazaars, the street life, the unsanitary conditions, the diverse ethnic and religious communities, and the palatial mansions of the elites (details in footnote 1, 3, 5, and 6). In the colonial paintings from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (figure 1.3), people of various professions are at the forefront to show the crowded street life, but the works or the livelihoods themselves don't hold value to emerge as a central subject of inquiry. The predominant focus of literary sources is various historical-cultural associations of the Road, from print culture (A. Ghosh 2006; Bhadra 2011; Sukumar Sen 1984) to *babu* culture (Nag [1991]1996; S. Banerjee 1989).[14] There is also work on the etymological meaning of the neighbourhood names which corresponds to caste-based

[13] The concept of pluriversality has been developed by the decolonial school of thinking which is based on the principle of onto-epistemic diversity in the field of knowledge production. Through a pluriversal politics knowledge production is decentred from the enclosure of hegemonic euro-north American structures, systems, and institutions. From colonial and racialised hierarchy of values which ranked economies, cultures, politics and knowledges, this is a call for ethical construction of the future world. Pluriversality is centrally concerned about 'multiplicity of worlds and ways of worlding life'(Escobar 2020, 131). It imagines 'a world in which many worlds could co-exist' (Mignolo 2007, 499). This worldview argues for a world making process where diverse value systems, cosmologies, experiences and rationalities, ways of knowing, and being in the world can have a dialogue. Mignolo (2007) says, making pluriversal world itself is a universal project but with a political imperative that one ethnic group or more specifically 'coloniality' cannot shape the fate of humanity.

[14] Babu culture refers to the opulent and hedonistic display of lifestyle by nouveau wealthy Bengali merchant class in nineteenth century Kolkata. They have been intense subject of scholarly and popular discussion and ridicule (Sutapa Dutta 2021; Nag 1996).

professions (Sukumar Sen 1990) and the architectural typologies, style of the aristocratic houses (S. Bose 2012; K. Bose 2008; J. L. Taylor 2008).

The thesis fills a conspicuous gap by tracing the microhistories of the crafts.[15] I refer to microhistory to unearth the geo-histories of the neighbourhood based crafts whereby particular craft's histories are considered in relation to 'broader societal and historiographical themes' (Short and Godfrey, 2007, 46). In Chitpur Road's context, I explore patronage of the gentry, the nineteenth-century print culture and the role of the women in the performative industry and later in sex work concerning the crafts' emergence. Historical research methods, in the form of archival work and documenting oral historical narrative, have been followed as evidence to offer possible explanations behind the emergence of the four crafts in the road. However, it leaves room for a plurality of viewpoints addressing a-chronological craft history of the road while presenting the complexity of multiple narratives.

Locating the microhistory of the crafts within the road's historiography is an important line of enquiry. It demonstrates only certain historical aspects of the road, such as the elite history, has been elevated in the status of heritage. Scholars have argued that in the era of late capitalism heritage production is often an act of spectacle and commodification of the past shaped by people in power (Harrison 2013). Hence, heritage production, the thesis argues, is a result of selective value attachment to certain fragments of the past rooted in the present and future concerns and interpretation of the past. Thus, the microhistorical account of the crafts informs socio-cultural contingency of the meaning and concept of heritage.

The thesis not only shifts the focus from the elite history and the architectural style of their mansions but also teases out how historically and in the present craftspeople make their home in the city. I align myself with the epistemological position of Southern Urban Theory to understand how a peripheral urbanity is produced through ground-up practices which contradicts normative urban infrastructural and legal grammars (Caldeira 2017; S. Benjamin 2007; Bhan 2019; Simone 2018b; Holston 2009). This discussion not only contributes to the scholarly canon of postcolonial urbanism but also

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[15] Some of the crafts of Chitpur have been mentioned in the popular text (Bara Panda, Dipak Kumar. 2018. *Kolkatar Kutirshilpo [Cottage industries of Kolkata].* Kolkata: Ananda Publisher). Soumitra Das (2007) *A Jaywalker's Guide to Calcutta,* also attempts to capture some of the livelihoods of Chitpur.

adds the dimension of heritage into the nexus of spatial politics, legalities, negotiations, and resistances.

1.4.2. Postcolonial craft economy

The research contributes towards building a theory of postcolonial craft economy because the critical enquiry of how craft economies are performed and operationalised from the inside and outside is rather scant in India.[16] Globally there is a debate whether crafts perform in an economic space guided by ethics of sustainable local production or has been commodified to be absorbed into the cultural industry paradigm. This debate comes under further scrutiny in India because after the demise of traditional patrons, external actors, such as the state, NGOs, and corporate have started to show interest in the craft sector (Venkatesan 2009; DeNicola and Wilkinson-Weber 2016). To address these issues the thesis brings out a nuanced reading of the diverse economic organisation (Gibson-Graham 2006) of the crafts where postcapitalist theory is reconfigured within a postcolonial context (K. Sanyal 2007). I engage with both these theories to understand how to theorise the 'outside' of capitalism (Gidwani and Wainwright 2014), while unsettling the binaries between the inside and outside. These theories help the line of inquiry, especially in terms of identifying multiple class processes in a diverse economy and the developmental agenda of the state.

I distance myself from these theorisations on four accounts. 1) Without romanticising the non-capitalist formations, I highlight the exploitative dimensions of such practices. 2) A significant proposition of the thesis is that the intentionality and performativity of enacting ethical economies can be complicated because there are examples of unintentional existing practices. 3) Intentions can be unspoken without radical agendas yet can initiate change in the system (Chatterton and Pickerill 2010; Tironi 2018;

[16] I haven't come across a field which specifically engages with postcolonial craft economy. Within the field of geography, a book on *Postcolonial Economies* (Pollard, McEwan, and Hughes 2011) has been extremely helpful in countering the narrative of inadequacy in the economic world of postcolony. It also uses postcolonial approaches to undertake a reading of the economy such as materiality, everyday institutions, and lived experiences. I am particularly interested in understanding how the postcolonial state interacts with the craft sector which can bring development policies under critical lens, similar to postcolonial state's concern regarding indigenous art (Varma 2013). A recommended reading on craft economy would be *Artisans and Cooperatives: Developing Alternative Trade for the Global Economy* (Grimes and Milgram 2000) which strikes a balance between subsistence, fair trade and the global market of artisans from South America and Asia. For India's craft sector *Embroidering Lives: Women's Work and Skill in the Lucknow Embroidery Industry* (Wilkinson-Weber 1999) and *The Gift of Solidarity: Women Navigating Jewellery Work and Patriarchal Norms in Rural West Bengal, India* (S. Majumder 2021) addresses how women interact with practices of craft economy.

Halvorsen 2015; Bayat 1997). 4) Finally, I also depart from Sanyal's theorisation of 'postcolonial capitalist formation' as my analysis suggests that craft geographies in India are not a product of primitive accumulation; or to elaborate, not all non-capitalist spaces in a developing economy are a by-product of capitalism. There is much scope to develop this theorisation in future research.

1.4.3. Heritagisation and heritage capital

Along the lines of many scholars in Critical Heritage Studies for the last twenty years, my work shows a heritagisation process of the crafts is unfolding in Chitpur (D.C. Harvey 2001; Xia 2020; Ugwuanyi 2021). Here, the analysis of the socially engaged art project of the artist collective, the state heritage commission, the state emporium, and the state tourism department come into play. Each of these agents participates in creating a version of heritage capital that is driven by their values. I delve into discussing how a dispersed idea of heritage is made when these actors assign affective, aesthetic, historic and economic value to the crafts. However, the thesis does not limit the scope of heritage making as an externally driven process. Instead, I nuance this account with a re-consideration of craftspeople's agency, subjectivity, and strategies in crafting their version of heritage. As a result, heritage is constructed as a diffused and discursive entity emerging from intersubjective exchanges.

1.4.4. Decolonising heritage studies

Finally, I weave in pluriversal thinking with heritage studies to observe how crafts are evolving with time, and ask how we can shift the ontological basis of treating heritage as synonymous with conservation. There are two notable contributions of the research in this regard. First, the thesis observes the craft's inherent agility, to argue that the craftspeople work against the oppressive nexus of traditional craft and lower caste. It demonstrates how they have evolved, grown, experimented and changed their material, form, and economic practice to usurp the structural conditions of crafting in search of creativity, respect, dignity, recognition, and social mobility. Consequently, my argument is not limited to the conservation of craft practice but is based on the principle of democratisation of craft knowledge. Second, I advance some of the emerging debates in critical heritage studies around decay, loss, and destruction with the example of cyclical creation and destruction of crafted objects (DeSilvey 2017; Rico 2016; Holtorf 2015). This discussion addresses the issue of perceived lack of heritage awareness

among people. I find the existing framework inadequate to engage seriously engage with people's heritage sensibility as it emulates a model of 'scientistic materialism' (Winter 2013, 536). Against the colonial and neo-colonial heritage models of the experts, which are often touted as the foremost way to save, manage and govern heritage, I offer an alternative explanation. Building upon this critique, the thesis foregrounds immateriality and impermanence as a praxis of connecting with the past, a way of being and perceiving the world. Further, it advocates that rather than terming it as an alternative, heritage studies should consider them as part of a larger 'ecology of knowledge' (de Sousa Santos 2009, 103) and give them equal value within heritage ontologies.

1.5. Thesis outline

The thesis unfolds into nine chapters including this introductory one. The introduction sets the background of the research problem, outlines the research questions, and situates these questions within broader scholarship, particularly focusing on gaps and contributions.

The second chapter expands discussion surrounding the broader scholarship of Critical Heritage Studies, Critical Craft Studies and Postcapitalist Politics. First, the chapter lays out the theoretical domains it is speaking to. It explains why the thesis engages with postcolonial and decolonial thinking in order to work towards 'ontological plurality' (Harrison 2015, 24) and epistemologically decentre knowledge production from 'Euro-North American-centric modernity' (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2015, 485). Importantly, the concept of the pluriversal knowledge system is elaborated, to be developed in Chapter 8 in relation to heritage ontologies. Analytical tropes of the postcolonial school such as identity, subjectivity, subalternity and difference, which are used throughout the thesis, are focused on here. A brief section on how geographers have approached postcolonial analysis leads towards the discussion of the postcolonial urbanism literature. The second section summarises the contribution of Critical Heritage Studies and segues into the critique of Authorised Heritage Discourse (Smith 2006). The thematic areas that are discussed here include; affective, democratised, and living heritage discourses beyond the binaries of tangible and intangible, Asian or western heritage. The review critically engages with the emerging literature on decolonising heritage and in doing so, addresses loss, impermanence, and immateriality. The third section reviews critical craft

literature from across the globe where craft emerges as a category against industrialisation, modernity, capitalism, and art. It dedicates one section to Indian craft literature and showcases colonial encounters, nationalist discourse, and postcolonial designer-led craft revival initiatives. A review of artist-led cultural production is nested in this section for its contribution to understand dimensions of socially engaged art projects. Finally, I discuss in depth how craft economies have been theorised focusing on two strands of literature, postcapitalist and postcolonial capitalist development.

The third chapter focuses upon methodological perspectives, identifying three commitments central to doing research on the ground; (i) the theory, (ii) the politics and (iii) the practice. Recognising this, the chapter starts by aligning with feminist and decolonial epistemologies, which shape the research design and stimulate discussions surrounding methodological imperatives such as 'knowledge-as-intervention' (Santos 2016, 314). Next, the ethical considerations of the research are considered with a critique of the universalist ethical approval process of northern academic institutions. Two phases of the field are explained where immersive ethnography was used as a research method. A detailed sketch of research participants, craftspeople, and civil society; as well as, modes of engagement such as participant observations, journeys, semi-structured interviews, and walking are given. A reflexive section considers the importance of my positionality and subjectivity in the domain of knowledge production. A key methodological intervention is collaborative research with the artists, which is discussed critically. Engagement with archival and oral historical methods are also reflected upon. Finally, a detailed analysis of post field methods, such as politics of language, translation, coding, analysis and writing style of the thesis is presented.

Chapter four, *The Emergence of Urban Crafts and Making of Selective Heritage,* is the first of the five empirical chapters. It serves three purposes: (1) It reconstructs the microhistory of four crafts (clay idol-making, gold jewellery making, wooden mould making, Indian classical musical instrument making) with the help of archival and oral historical methods. (2) It considers the reasons for their emergence in the burgeoning colonial metropolis, establishing why they are 'urban crafts'. (3) It centrally considers the issue of power in terms of craft patronage and caste association. The argument further elaborates how historic associations of faith-based crafts and crafts in

association with dark history determine the selective and politicised construction of heritage capital.

Chapter five, *Placing Craft Heritage within Urban Spatial Politics,* builds the relationship between craft, heritage discourse and peripheral urbanity (Caldeira 2017). This chapter is oriented around three themes. First, the colonially produced peripherality of crafts in the 'native or black town' is traced which makes the old town a space outside colonial urban planning, infrastructural grammar, and moral governance.[17] Second, I identify three tropes through which peripherality is produced by the craftspeople in relation to neo-liberal urban imaginary: (1) the mutability of infrastructure; (2) ownership claims; (3) diverse land tenure regimes. Third, I consider how heritage narratives get entangled into the spatial politics and land-related conflicts in the old town which leads to the survival and eviction of the crafts.

Chapter six, *Postcolonial Reading of Diverse Craft Economy,* gives an in-depth analysis of the economic operation of idol making craft. First, it unsettles the capitalocentric narrative directly pertaining to the idol-making craft sector and unpacks labour relations, nature of craft enterprise and modes of transaction in the craft market from a diverse economic perspective (Gibson-Graham 2006). Second, it approaches the possible reasons for state intervention and corporate funding in this sector using Sanyal's (2007) analysis on developmental governmentality. Third, it argues the reverse flow of capital as only one of the conditions for this sector's survival and presents an alternative narrative of people's everyday and intimate activism which shows a strong commitment towards social justice (Tironi 2018; Chatterton and Pickerill 2010).

Chapter seven, *Creating Cultural Value: Artists in Chitpur* unfolds a socially engaged art project of artist collective Hamdasti and explores the tensions inherent within the artists' intentions and approaches towards crafts of Chitpur. Three aspects of the project are discussed and critically analysed to understand how variegated meanings of heritage are engendered by this intervention. The chapter looks at (1) a street art festival which was co-curated by me along with artists, designers, performers, and craftspeople to launch Chitpur Craft Collective (CCC); (2) a project by Hamdasti with local school children

[17] I use the term 'native town' in the thesis, mainly in Chapter 5 with scrutiny to remind the reader the racial division of the town in the colonial era and its socio-spatial ramification in the contemporary urban forms of Chitpur Road.

that co-created meanings of living heritage through everyday objects, stories, performances, and games; and (3) a new product line that is being developed by the artists and designers. I consider the transformative aspects of a ground-up heritage making where the artists created long-term collaborations, valued the sensory experience of Chitpur through walking and aestheticised the nondescript urban furniture of the Road. However, I also problematise the issue of participation, display, spectatorship, authorship, and commodification of craft as I argue that the initiative was predicated on and reified by the distance between vernacular craftspeople and contemporary artists.

Chapter eight, *Pluriversalising Heritage Discourse,* follows three lines of argument. First, it analyses the nature of heritage production through coloniality, through strategies by the craftspeople and network of heritage-aware civil society members. The second analysis is around the governance of this heritage by state, transnational, and international agencies, which promote a neoliberal agenda of extraction, albeit with a pinch of local participation. Finally, I leap from technocratic and managerial aspects of heritage to the living and evolving nature of heritage that is observed by tracing the craft practices. There are four observations: (1) fluidity in form; (2) changing materials; (3) repair, and (4) impermanence through which I argue for an ontological shift in the epistemic world of heritage studies. Universal conservationist discourse becomes replaced with pluriversal understanding of constant renewal and dematerialised value of the past.

Finally, chapter nine, concludes the thesis with its original contribution to three domains of knowledge; (1) Postcolonial urban craft heritage; (2) craft economy and (3) critical heritage studies. The thesis makes formative contributions in the intellectual exercise of knowledge creation by connecting decolonial thinking with critical heritage studies and postcapitalist school with postcolonial studies. Empirically, the chapter reconstructed microhistories of crafts in Chitpur Road, advanced postcolonial subject formation in the domain of craft economy, reconfigured urban spatial politics within heritage studies, conceptually developed the notion of heritage capital and theoretically developed a new language of heritage.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

The study is broadly based within the conceptual domain of Critical Heritage Studies, Postcapitalist Politics and Critical Craft studies. Within the discipline of geography, it pursues the course of cultural, urban and at times forays into economic geography. This chapter, therefore, will cover a broad range of literature starting with the theoretical mooring of the thesis within the field of postcolonial and decolonial thinking and practice. I start my review with arguments within the tradition of ontological plurality and epistemologically decentred knowledge production linked to decolonial critical thinking. I apply this thinking to the broad areas of knowledge that I engage with throughout this thesis. I then summarise the contribution of critical heritage studies while paying attention to the question of heritagisation, the processual nature of heritage and the affective, democratised, turn after the critique of Authorised Heritage Discourse. Beyond the dualistic nature of tangible and intangible heritage, I lay out the meaning of living heritage and highlight some of the literature which attributes towards an Asian heritage value of immateriality. Questioning the centrality of difference in these formulations, I engage with the literature on loss and transience in heritage and lead the discussion towards an emerging scholarship on decolonising heritage studies. Thereafter, predominantly west centric craft scholarship is addressed where craft has emerged as a politically ethical alternative to modernity, industrialisation, capitalism and sometimes, modernist individuality of art. I trace how the category of craft is inscribed in India after the colonial encounter which could have simply remained as work. This involves craft literature which discusses colonial display/exhibitions, nationalist valorisation of craft as tradition, the role of place, elite patronage in creating craft identity, designer lead craft revivals and the resultant hierarchies. I then move on to the role of artists in socially engaged cultural production and how geographers have contributed to this genre. I outline craft's economic significance and contribution as the second-largest livelihood generation in India, and foreground the gap in the political-economic analysis of crafts in India. To support my arguments, I pay a specific focus on the literature of postcapitalist politics and offer a postcolonial critique of that literature. In doing so, I highlight contested areas in both these literatures and propose how the thesis attempts to address these through my argument.

2.2. Towards ontological plurality and epistemological decentring

I situate the thesis theoretically within the tradition of postcolonial and decolonial thinking and practice and apply this thinking to the bodies of knowledge that enable critical interrogation of heritage and craft discourse. The key difference between these two schools (postcolonial and decolonial) in terms of their origin, subject of enquiry, methodology and intellectual lineage has been discussed widely (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2015; Asher 2013). Nevertheless, the thesis picks up some overlapping yet distinct issues raised by these two schools and works with them as it acknowledges that these theoretical debates serve an interconnected ethical-political project. Scholars have suggested both 'postcolonialism and decoloniality are developments within the broader politics of knowledge production' (Bhambra 2014, 119). Though the situatedness of knowledge has been addressed by feminist scholars (Haraway 1988) the foundational figures of the aforementioned schools positioned knowledge production in relation to modernity and coloniality (Mignolo 2002; Quijano 2007) and by refuting the claims of universal (Chakrabarty 2000; Bhabha [1994] 2012; Said 1994). That universal ideas are immanent in Europe's particular socio-political history is eloquently expressed in Dipesh Chakraborty's *Provincialising Europe* (2000). He says,

> 'in what sense European ideas that were universal were also, at one and the same time drawn from very particular intellectual and historical traditions that cannot claim any universal validity…universalistic thought was always and already modified by particular histories' (Chakrabarty 2000, xii-xiv).

Chakraborty also indicates two issues: firstly, Europe needs to be decentred from the position of universal knowledge production; and secondly, knowledge production is partial, subjective, particular, and embedded in local history and spatiality. To further develop this stream of argument we need to engage with decolonial thinking. Mignolo (2002) does not limit his argument in identifying the colonial, racialised, hierarchised nature of knowledge production through the discourse of modernity/coloniality. They also instantiate that several modes of being, living and more-than-human, cosmological, worlding practices have been denied the right to be considered as knowledge, which he called 'subalternization of knowledge' due to colonial difference (2002, 72). The call to dislocate and decolonise the continental philosophy and renaissance rationality as universal knowledge by bringing in ontological plurality, or pluriversal knowledge, in

thinking and practising from the global South is the key intervention of the decolonial school of thought (Escobar 2020; Ramón Grosfoguel 2007). Similarly, Grosfoguel (2007) suggests that epistemology is not ahistorical or aspatial as the myth of universal knowledge suggests. It 'conceals who is speaking as well as the geo-political and body-political epistemic location in the structures of colonial power/knowledge from which the subject speaks' (Ramón Grosfoguel 2007, 21). The subject's voice is further concealed as they speak from the periphery of knowledge production where their knowledge becomes data and case studies, whereas the metropole imposes an existing universal theoretical framework on them (Connell 2014). To break away from this erasure, for an 'intellectual activist', Boaventura de Sousa Santos's (2014) magnum opus *Epistemologies of the South: Justice against Epistemicide* is an essential read. Writing from the core of political struggle, resistance and solidarity, his anti-colonial, anti-capitalist, anti-patriarchal, proposition envisages knowledge as 'social emancipation' and charts out how 'intercultural translation' can create an 'ecology of knowledge' (de Sousa Santos 2009, 103). Some postcolonial scholars would argue (Jazeel 2014, 99) that uncertainty and inability of translation also establish the project of conceptual and geographical difference.

As a discipline, Geography's role in colonial expansion and its ontological legitimacy through colonial production of knowledge has come under severe scrutiny (Jazeel 2017; Noxolo 2017). A call to decolonise the discipline, therefore, cannot avoid a discussion around the imperial history of the subject which was and continued to be nurtured by operationalising colonial modes of powers within academia. As a result, the chair's plenary of the 2017 Royal Geographical Society conference, 'Decolonising geographical knowledges: opening geography out to the world' sparked a series of discussions and debates within geography. Critical race scholars and indigenous scholars not only called attention to the whiteness of the discipline's past but claimed that 'colonial matrix of power'(Mignolo 2010) is actively perpetuating inequalities in the present by controlling religious subjectivities, political narrative, economic extraction and institutionalised knowledge (Noxolo 2017). Along with other black and indigenous scholars, Noxolo (2017), therefore, proposed that the decolonisation debate within geography should be led by critical race and indigenous scholarship. More often than not 'theories coming out of indigenous scholarship are often deployed without being fully acknowledged'

(Noxolo 2017, 318). Similarly, Esson *et al.* (2017) strengthen the argument proposing Geography must recognise 'that the terms on which the discipline starts debates about decolonisation and decoloniality are determined by those racialised as Indigenous and non-white by coloniality' (*Esson et al*., 384). Without the foregrounding of black and indigenous scholarship, we run the risk of using decolonisation as rhetoric rather than as a political imperative emerging from people's everyday struggle against colonial and racial discrimination.

Jazeel (2017) further expands on this issue as he critiques the 'creeping consolidation of the subfield' of postcolonial geography (Jazeel 2017, 335) and shares his reservation against the populist turn of postcolonial theory. I share his concern and argue against superficial use of the decolonisation debate which has the risk of being harnessed as the 'correct theoretical practice' (Spivak 1985, 346 mentioned in Jazeel 2017, 335) in the euro-North American academy. In my research the argument on heritage of change, impermamnence and immaterial ways of valuing past would have emerged even without my knowledge of decolonial thinking. Decoloniality, however, offered me the academic language to critique the modernist heritage ontology imposed by colonial rule in India.

Within Geography, scholars have been conscious of the co-optation of the critical apparatus of decolonial thinking and practice by the neoliberal academic institutions. In response to the RGS-IBG chair's theme Esson *et al*. (2017) poses a robust critique of the structures, institutions and praxis of the discipline. A call to decolonise knowledge production would remain incomplete without 'decolonisation…of the university as an institution' (Mbembe 2016, 11 mentioned in Esson *et al*., 2017, 385). An institution of white patriarchal privilege and architecture of maintenance of status quo. Hence, they argue to expand the meaning of decolonisation from purely an academic enquiry to a radical commitment for transformative change within and beyond the academy through activism.

This call has been rightly taken up by geographers who moved beyond the rhetoric of decolonisation and challenged imperial institutions with historic legacies of representing cultures within a grammar of hierarchy and non-modernity (Tolia-Kelly and Raymond 2020). Tolia-Kelly collaborates, curates and co-writes with artist Rosanna Raymond who is of Pacifika descent. Together they reframed the cultural artefact's in British Museum's

imperial collection and introduced a 'post-imperial exhibitionary praxis' from their respective postcolonial migrant positionalities (Tolia-Kelly and Raymond, 2020, 4). The authors suggest that decolonisation of the museum space starts with the process of collaborative dialogue and self-determination by the source community. By embracing the indigenous community's voice, narrative, value and knowledge about their own heritage within the museum space the authors demonstrate how a racialised representation of Maori culture can be challenged. Geographers have evoked the concept of 'doing' – an embodied and emplaced practice through bodies and objects as a mode of decolonisation (Barker and Pickerill 2020). They call to decentre knowledge production from professional academic structure, such as institutional ethics, impact statement to a realm of action, building relationship and coproduce research through support and solidarity. Through a series of examples where geographers worked with the indigenous community honouring their cosmologies and ontology of being, they argued for a political commitment towards doing decolonial research. I find both Tolia-Kelly and Raymond (2020) and Barker and Pickerill's (2020) provocation inspiring for my work. They showcase how a place-based decolonial engaged research in geography can be shaped while offering a critique of not only colonial relations of power but capitalist violence as well. Finally, geographical research foregrounds the place-based, relational nature of knowledge production questioning the universality of knowledge and championed the critical imperative of pluriversality; a significant proposition advanced in my research (Noxolo 2017).

For postcolonial thinkers, issues of identity, subjectivity and difference in colonial texts and discourses have been primary fields of enquiry, which explains its prominence in the disciplines of cultural studies and literary criticism (Zachariah 2013). The Subaltern Studies Collective's contribution in undoing elite historiography and reading the colonial archive against its grain to write history from below is an important milestone (Guha 1997; also see Stoler 2009). The representation of the figure of subaltern itself has been further complicated by Gayatri Spivak, in her critique of the subject formation of subaltern by elite intellectuals and obfuscation of subaltern agency (Spivak [1988] 2010). Here, she calls into question the erasure of women from the subaltern imagination in the early work of subaltern studies collective who inevitably essentialised the subaltern category by falling into the trap of colonial othering (Birla 2010). One needs to

acknowledge Edward Said's (2001[1978]) powerful critique of Orientalism in this context as he argued that the orient was a necessary construct, a backward, passive, and feminine 'other', created by the occident to represent the lacking colonial subject and to establish the coloniser's superior selfhood. It is, therefore, imperative to be aware that while bringing out the politics of identity and recognition this identity is also being produced by the work of the theory or the theorist who claims to speak for the subaltern.

Questioning the homogenous categorisation of subaltern and elite, Dalit critique of postcolonialism is a crucial consideration in this regard. Subramanian Shankar (2012) captures the issue succinctly, as he says, 'in startling way it [postcolonial theory] is not postcolonial at all. Considering for example, caste and how little postcolonial theory has to say about it' (Cited in Jangam 2015, 69). Following this Chinnaiah Jangam (2015) offers a critique of subaltern studies lacking engagement with Dalit identity and caste-based oppression while writing postcolonial historiography as a project of reconfiguring colonial-elitist-nationalist history. Postcolonial theories provocations of alternative modernity through the registers of hybridity and mobility has been critiqued as well from the Dalit perspective (Krishnaswamy 2005). My argument on the democratisation of craft knowledge transfer concerning caste mobility has been influenced by this line of thinking which I would like to develop further in future.[18] The work of a postcolonial scholarship is, therefore, delicate as 'the promise of utterly transparent representations of radical alterity is in fact an impossible promise' (Jazeel 2014, 93). Jazeel's engagement with Spivak's work illustrates the dual nature of the word representation; in a constitutive and substitutive manner which reverberates in my work as well in terms of constituting the category of craft or how it was 'made present' and then spoken for (Jazeel 2014, 94). Hence, subalternity is not limited to being a position without identity, a symbol of the oppressed who is separated from the structures of social redress but while representing such identities one needs to 'not speak 'for them' (or simply 'about them') but first and foremost *to them'* (Souza 2019, 21, emphasis in the original)*;*

[18] For deeper engagement with the caste question I would like to consult Balmurli Natrajan's (2012) book *The Culturalization of Caste in India: Identity and Inequality in a Multicultural Age*. Based on ethnographic fieldwork on artisan caste *Kumhar* (referred to as Kumbhakar or potters in Chapter 4) of Chhattisgarh, India he argues how caste is revitalised as cultural difference after its encounter with capitalism and democracy.

thereby considering subaltern agency which can also be framed as unlearning of our own privilege (Spivak [1993] 2009). This critique leads us to some of the contradictions of postcolonial theory.

In contrast to decolonial thought, postcolonial theory has predominantly used western thinkers 'to critique, expose, deconstruct, counter and (in some claims) to transcend, the cultural and broader ideological legacies and presences of imperialism' (Sidaway 2000, 594).[19] In order to do so, it has often strategically essentialised the cultural and aesthetic difference between east and west but some scholars [for example see (Mbembe 2021; 2001)] have quite explicitly and exceptionally distanced themselves from the 'cultification of indigenous' (Appadurai 2021, n.d.). In a brilliantly eloquent book, *On the Postcolony,* Achille Mbembe (2001), presents no yearning for a pre-colonial African past, he presents himself firmly in the contemporary political experience of Africa. 'Third world fundamentalisms' and nationalism has been incontrovertibly rejected by decolonial scholars as well (Ramón Grosfoguel 2007, 212).[20] They have argued for a relational approach which will consider western philosophical tradition 'as one among the many sources of our thinking' by opening a rich tapestry of thinking across various theoretical/intellectual traditions (Nigam 2020, 3). It is this non-dogmatic understanding against a pure and idyllic indigenous past that informed my reading of pluriversality in the thesis.

Within geography, *the* question of representation and experience of subaltern has been posed as a central concern in the book *Subaltern Geographies* (Jazeel and Legg 2019). The geographical engagement with subaltern spatiality and geopolitics is further advanced in recent works (Gidwani 2009; Sharp 2011). Postcolonial theory has opened the enquiry about the discipline's colonial historiography (Driver 2000; Jazeel 2012; Driver 1992), the interconnectedness of global colonial power with diffused local spatial

[19] Though post-structuralist schools, especially some of the French thinkers' failure in 'discussions of power and epistemic violence' (Bhambra 2014, 117) has been critiqued by Spivak (Spivak [1988] 2010).

[20] Grosfoguel has used the term 'third world fundamentalism'. Hence, I have quoted it but otherwise I have used the term global South in my thesis, though I am aware of the use of 'majority world'. Third world originally meant a group of recently independent countries who did not align themselves either with US and western allies (capitalist bloc) or Russia and its communist bloc during the cold war. Eventually it became a derogatory term to indicate countries who are battling with poverty and impoverishment. The thesis considers the term global South as a position from where counterhegemonic knowledge is being produced. I have been inspired to use this term because of the political imperative of this position which has been discussed in the scholarship of southern urban theory (Bhan 2019) as well as decolonial thinking (Santos 2014).

realities (Nash 2002; Jacobs 1996) and issues around diaspora memory and citizenship (Tolia-Kelly 2010). It has also responded to the critiques of overtly textual and discourse oriented postcolonialism by reasserting geography's political commitment towards lived inequalities of postcolony while blending 'art, discourse and materiality' (McEwan 2003, 346; Cook and Harrison 2003; Cook 2000), and the developmental impasse (Sharp and Briggs 2006).

My work has been strongly influenced by the field of postcolonial urbanism. This body of work has radically shifted the course of planning and urban theory by reconfiguring the Eurocentric explanations which denigrated urbanisms of the global South by dissecting them with the tools of euro-American epistemology (A. Roy 2011; 2016; Robinson 2016; 2006). From Abdou Maliq Simone's people as infrastructure to Colin McFarlane's work on infrastructure, density and informality, there has been an epistemological shift in understanding the global South from the point of assemblage and topology rather than from inadequacy and failure (McFarlane 2016; 2011; Simone 2018a). Further, scholars have advanced the project of social justice by illustrating how subaltern classes assert rights, appropriate spaces, and create their own cities outside the orbit of formal planning mechanisms (Bhan *et al.*, 2017; Perera 2015). I have engaged with Teressa Caldeira's work on peripheral urbanism and autoconstruction where subaltern classes exercise their agency and negotiate with structures of governance by innovatively using discursive terrains of power and politics. They engage transversally with official logics 'of legal property, formal labour, state regulation and market capitalism' (Caldeira 2017, 15). This growing body of scholarship is emerging through intellectual solidarity between and across people working in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. I identify my research within this literary canon known as southern urbanism. It helps to formulate a language through which craftspeople's everyday places of dwelling, their politics, their placemaking practices, and how negotiation and friction with the institutional order can be articulated. Though tangential in relation to the current discussion, I would mention a few works in architecture and urban design. These works have advanced spatial and scaler relationship of buildings with its local environment, their interaction and transformation with the surrounding, their influence on creating people's identity, space making and social use of space – themes which come across strongly in Chapter 5 (Abel 2000; Gupte, Mehrotra, and Shetty 2004; Lorne 2017;

Chase, Crawford, and Kaliski 2018). In the Indian context, the emergence of colonial and indigenous modernity through architectural and spatial intervention needs mentioning (S. Chattopadhyay 2005; Glover 2008; Hosagrahar 2005; Scriver and Prakash 2007). This literature has informed my thinking on buildings as a product of an embedded social process that also penetrates craftspeople's domestic and street life. They have framed my critique on built heritage bias, and I propose to consider heritage as a relational process in the following section.

2.3. Heritage and heritagisation

Heritage studies have become a thriving interdisciplinary field for over forty years. Historians, archaeologists, sociologists, geographers, architects, amongst others, have contributed here in diverse ways. In parallel, and sometimes contradicting or adapting with this trend, international institutions, heritage professionals, and practitioners have developed categories and agendas, and implemented them on the ground. Among this vast arena of literature, I will particularly focus on that genre that constitutes 'critical heritage studies' that unsettles a scientific materialist approach which reduces heritage to immutable things (DeSilvey 2017; Harrison 2013; D.C. Harvey 2001; Smith 2006; Robertson 2016; Winter 2013). Theoretically I align my research with this scholarship and will be focusing on two issues. How heritage is constructed and produced strategically and politically and how to decolonise the field while thinking about transience and loss. I also give a brief overview of the India specific heritage literature to chart out my contribution in the field.

2.3.1. Construction of heritage

To establish the theoretical contribution of Critical Heritage Studies, first I will present two crises yet opportunities within conventional heritage studies which are frequently referred to in the thesis: firstly, a critique of heritage, and secondly, the technocratic understanding of heritage. In the Euro-American context, the boom in heritage conservation gained momentum after the two world wars. In this late modern period, as Harrison (2013b) puts it, institutional enthusiasm for actively keeping, identifying, listing, and conserving past material objects and places was rooted in this period's 'memory crisis' (Harrison 2013a, 166–69; also see Terdiman 1993). The incessant memorialisation of the past prompted some scholars to generate a critique of heritage

which was viewed as a commercialised good and sellable commodity.[21] This critique started in the 1980s with David Lowenthal's landmark argument (Lowenthal 1998; 1985) where he says, 'the landscape of the 1980s seems saturated with creeping Heritage' (Lowenthal 1985, XV). He chastised the pervasive nature of heritage and mutable nature of the past in today's time. His take was further developed by scholars from the UK who argued how heritage has achieved the status of a cult to manufacture and sell past (Hewison 1987; Wright 2009). The term 'heritage industry' gained popularity during this time resonating with Adorno's famous critique on culture as an industry (Adorno [1991] 2005). Even recently, heritage has been targeted for creating an experience economy to be consumed by a certain class of tourists whereas the community, to whom this heritage belongs, remains excluded from that experience (Hayes and MacLeod 2007; see also Caust and Vecco 2017 for Asia; Baud and Ypeij 2009 for Latin America). In January 2021 UK Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport initiated a call for evaluating cultural and heritage assets.[22] They have formally claimed the term heritage capital which indicates assigning monetary value to heritage objects to measure their economic worth (Clark 2021). My use of the term heritage capital in the thesis strictly departs from this economic valuation model. Following Bourdieu's (1986) cultural capital I use the term heritage capital in the thesis to understand the symbolic value of crafts within the larger social order and try to develop this concept further as a discursive field of multifarious meaning of past as embodied and produced by the craftspeople and the civil society.

The technocratic understanding of heritage (and associated critique of this), emerged when the intangible cultural heritage (ICH) was introduced by UNESCO. In terms of construction and implementation of heritage policy, internationally UNESCO assumed the role of the official agency. It defines, classifies, and lists what constitutes heritage around the world from the 1970s with the introduction of the World Heritage Convention. Scholars have argued for an 'ontological plurality' in future heritage making

[21] Some of these critiques came from the discipline of history as heritage was accused of distorting history. Raphael Samuel posed a counter critique and brought up the shortcoming within the discipline of history itself which has confined itself within the academic ivory tower rather than creating a scope for public history (Samuel 1996). Therefore, the scope of heritage research expanded.

[22] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/valuing-culture-and-heritage-capital-a-framework-towards-decision-making/valuing-culture-and-heritage-capital-a-framework-towards-informing-decision-making (last accessed 9 July 2021).

to critique the division of heritage in two neat boxes, natural and cultural (Harrison 2015). When cultural heritage only included material sites, international pressure built up mainly from non-western countries who insisted on the inclusion of other elements including traditional practices, knowledge, and skills. Therefore, in 2003 UNESCO included ICH in the World Heritage List (WHL) to acknowledge different aspects of heritage (UNESCO 2005). The 'list' of heritage objects expanded and now it can be from a national park to a mythical story, from a fort to a recipe (see Frey and Steiner 2011, for a technical review of the list). From conserving buildings and monuments, inventorying ICH became a new normative instrument for 'metacultural production' (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004), discursive manipulation (Melis and Chambers 2021) and 'appropriating culture' (Salemink 2012). Others have also raised concern over the listing process of ICH which can fix immaterial and fluid values (Byrne 2009; Anita. Smith 2015). The efficacy of universalist ideals of authenticity and outstanding values of ICH has been further questioned (Labadi 2012).

Critical Heritage Studies took a different path in theorising heritage (L. Smith 2012). Harvey (2001) introduced heritage as a verb rather than a noun to underline how heritage is produced rather than given as a thing. It is crafted, made, and curated according to contemporary priorities and concerns to reflect the current values concerning the past. Hence this heritagisation process is a socially, culturally, and politically determined one which the scholars have called processual nature of heritage (D.C. Harvey 2001; L. Smith 2006; Harrison 2013). They echo what Jones (2006, 120) suggests that 'we need to shift our approach to conserving cultural heritage away from the current emphasis on the material fossilisation of heritage as 'product', towards a focus on heritage as 'process'. Thus, heritage is not arbitrarily constructed with a novel intention of preservation, but it is a selective process of interpretation and representation (Wight and Lennon 2007). As Goh (2014) shows in three globalising Asian metropolises, heritage is produced as an entanglement between their postcolonial identity and the political economy of urban development. Objects, sites, places, practices, and people act as an anchor to create meaning of the past, forge a connection with it and recast it to remember in a certain way. The meaning-making is associated with anything related to inheritance, from material objects to intangible practices but they are not necessarily separate in their entirety. These sets of relations operate in

three scales as mentioned by Harrison (2013a): in spatial, temporal, and institutional levels. Heritage is produced through the constellation of these three terrains. This is a central theme in the thesis where I try to bring the spatial and institutional components as well as the role of the community together.

Laurajane Smith (2006)'s work on Authorised Heritage Discourse (AHD) has been another key influence in approaching the heritage question from people's perspective, departing from expert-driven heritage formation. Though critique of AHD was not framed under decolonising heritage discourse, this might be the precursor of a key ontological shift in heritage studies. People's voices, concerns, attachments, values emerged as central concerns to be addressed in heritage literature after this turn which has fundamentally framed my research (L. Smith, and Waterton 2009; Waterton 2005). Heritage literature explored new areas of affective and performative heritage. It asked how heritage is made and mediated through affective, embodied, and experiential performances of individual and communal acts of remembering, feeling, reminiscing, recalling, engaging, re-visioning, even refuting and erasing the past (L. Smith and Campbell 2015; Tolia-Kelly, Waterton, and Watson 2016). Embodied and affective memory, critique of visitor driven, audience response based, and commercial consumption-oriented heritage is eloquently expressed in Robertson's (2016) work in *Heritage from below* and in the edited volume of *Heritage, Labour and the Working Classes* (L. Smith et al. 2012). Apart from critiquing the construction of heritage, by heritage professionals and institutional ideologies, it also gives a lens to question aesthetically pleasing grandeurs of a particular social class as heritage and advance the cause of democratising it. The inherently Eurocentric understanding of materially fixed, authentic, monumental and national heritage is challenged by new sets of concerns, such as identity (Graham and Howard 2012), power (Graham et al. 2016; Macleod 2009), intersectionality (Grahn 2011), place, landscape and scale (Ashworth et al. 2007; Dicks 2000; D.C. Harvey 2005; 2015), urban gentrification (Meskell 2019), affect (Crang and Tolia-Kelly 2010; L. Smith 2014; Waterton 2014), memory (Apaydin 2020; D. C. Harvey 2017; Hoskins 2007), loss and ruin (DeSilvey and Harrison 2020; DeSilvey and Edensor 2013; B. Morris 2014). Some of the fundamental strands of the thesis; such as selective heritage framing concerning power and identity in Chapter 4; mobilisation of heritage for urban renewal initiatives in Chapter 5; advancing the idea of affective heritage

through walking in Chapter 7; and especially the idea of loss discussed in Chapter 8 have emerged from this canon.

I shall also mention a few pieces of literature from India, which have been informative for my work. A recently edited volume *Heritage Conservation in Postcolonial India: Approaches and Challenges* (Chalana and Krishna 2020) compiles essays and projects from leading architects, conservationists, NGO practitioners and academics. From institutional frameworks to policy structures to sustainable ways of conservation, the book has been helpful to understand recent trends of heritage conservation practices in India. Hancock's (2008) book on Chennai's 'making of the past and the knowledges and sentiments glossed as past-consciousness-in the present conjuncture of neoliberal globalisation' (2008, 2) is a crucial addition in the scholarship. It has informed my knowledge of how heritage is framed through spatial expressions, such as living museums, statues, and architecture in a move to commemorate memory under neoliberal conditions. The literature on the colonial construct of heritage and power (A. G. K. Menon 2015; Pandey Sharma 2018; I. Sengupta 2018), its contestation as well as negotiation with development paradigm (Rajangam 2021; J. Banerjee 2015), the multiplicity of heritage meaning in different historical regimes (Kaushal 2018) and reframing of folk and traditional crafts as heritage (Maskiell 1999) has been beneficial. Among these issues, I have primarily engaged with colonial construction of technocratic heritage formation in Chapter 8.

2.3.2. Transience and decolonial perspectives in heritage

The introduction of ICH in opposition to tangible heritage demonstrates a dualistic nature of worldview that can be traced back to Europe's disposition towards rationality and order which emerged through modernist discourses. Post-enlightenment Europe adopted dualism as the only structure to order the world (Harrison 2013a, 205–7). In the work of Bruno Latour and John Law, this ontological divide between mind-matter, nature-culture and human-nonhuman has been referred to as a classic modernist project (Latour 1993; Law 1994). Therefore, the campaign to include other kinds of heritage beyond monumental heritage could not pursue a structural change within UNESCO's classification, categorisation and listing scheme, instead produced another category, intangible heritage. Harrison (2013a) proposes a dialogic approach towards heritage while refuting these binaries. Nevertheless, the language of intangible heritage

in his scholarship raises some concerns. Intangible here is associated with 'small-scale and indigenous societies' which was 'indigenous, non-western or minority critique of the concept of universal heritage' (Harrison 2013a, 206). The critique of cartesian duality in heritage studies should try to dispute this as well. It is problematic to think intangible heritage manifests in a small-scale indigenous society thereby creating a small niche within a global heritage that predominantly hails monumental heritage. This sectarian and atomised version of heritage puts intangible heritage within traditional societies and tangible heritage within modern society (for which read Asian and Euro-American society consecutively).

They also create a separate domain for 'Asian heritage' which primarily responds to the question of difference (Winter 2014a). A substantial body of literature critique the Eurocentric heritage discourse and bring to the forefront the plurality of conservation concerns in Asia (Byrne 1991; Winter 2014b; K. D. Silva and Chapagain 2013). Among these plural concerns, popular religious practices, one of the blind spots, has been dealt with much critical enquiry in *Counterheritage: Critical Perspectives on Heritage Conservation in Asia* (Byrne 2014). I work with a concept of 'living heritage' which includes both tangible and intangible elements of a landscape to question the static, fabric-based and 'value-based approach' (Poulios 2010; Miura 2005; Giaccardi and Palen 2008).[23] A living heritage concept is based on the principle of continuation as well as change (and sometimes impermanence) which is at the core of craft practices I am engaging with. This approach follows Wijesuriya who notes: 'Change is embraced as a part of continuity, or living nature, of the heritage place, rather than something which is to be mitigated or kept to a minimum' (Wijesuriya 2018, 43). This concept also involves active community participation, and a recent trend has emerged to consider artisanal knowledge/practices as living heritage in India (Mubayi 2020; Meskell 2018). The concept is increasingly used as a category to lobby for selected craft traditions to be included in the UNESCO list with little scrutiny. I explore this in my research, asking what does a living, yet transient, heritage constitute? The concept can be viewed as an experience of being within a world which rejects 'distinction between inner and outer worlds- respectively mind and matter, meaning and substance- upon which such

[23] https://ich.unesco.org/en/living-heritage-and-the-covid-19-pandemic-01179 on living heritage recovery during the pandemic (last accessed 2 August 2021).

distinction rests' (Ingold 1993, 154). Two issues have been identified which marks the arguably distinct Asian approach towards past, heritage, conservation, and materiality. Scholars have argued that Asian heritage values emanate from Hindu and Buddhist religious philosophies of material impermanence (Peleggi 2012; Tom 2013; Fong et al. 2012). Secondly, the idea of non-linearity of time where multiple and contesting temporalities that cohabit in Asian countries has also been discussed (Fabian 1983; Nandy 1995; Ugwuanyi 2021).

Let me come back to the question of difference in constituting a separate field called Asian heritage discourse and why I distance myself from such framing, echoing Winter (2014b; 2014a). As I mentioned above, the concept of impermanence is a key point of departure from Eurocentric heritage discourse, for the scholars who are invested in the Asian heritage project. However, such a proposition is not unique to the Asian context. A field of inspiring and exciting scholarly work has emerged in the past decade addressing the issue of loss, ruin, decay, change and immateriality in the face of burdening accumulation of past materials in the present (Holtorf 2015; DeSilvey 2012; Rico 2016; DeSilvey and Harrison 2020; B. Morris 2014). Holtorf (2015) argues, following Ingold (2010) to avoid loss, we ignore heritage is 'continuously being transformed in ongoing processes of growth and creation' (2015, 418). He further suggests the absence, 'destruction and loss are not the opposite of heritage but constitutive of it (Holtorf 2006, mentioned in Holtorf 2015, 405). This scholarship provokes us to imagine artefacts as an entity in the process of ruination in the natural course of history. For example, in DeSilvey's (2017) *Curated Decay: Heritage Beyond Saving*, a derelict homestead, a harbour along a coastline, a lighthouse, an isolated weapon testing site from the cold war era tells a story of the need for letting go rather than preserving. She proposes an approach that is unburdened from the past material stasis. In this ontology of material, they do not have any singular identity, they are constantly becoming something else. Rico's (2016) book *Constructing Destruction: Heritage Narratives in the Tsunami City* asks, 'whether heritage may exist without the need to be preserved at all' (2016, 19). Issues such as the meaningful nature of destruction, regenerative heritage processes which might vernacularise heritage has been raised by Rico (2016). Here absence rather than presence, circulation rather than ownership can open a new dialogue where materials are always in the state of becoming. Building on this genre of heritage

scholarship, I propose a pluriversal heritage discourse instead of an Asian or universal one which is developed in Chapter 8.

Some recent journal issues, books and conferences on decolonising heritage studies have been fruitful in thinking through a similar vein. Nigerian scholar J. Kelechi Ugwuanyi's (2021) article, *Time-space politics and heritagisation in Africa: understanding where to begin decolonisation* presents an excellent analysis of Igbo heritage as relational ontology (Harrison 2018). This is a stimulating work that connects Ingold's (1993) dwelling perspectives with Mignolo's (2000) decolonial project of 'locus of enunciation'. I address the ritual of idol immersion in Chapter 8 through similar ideas expressed in this article; such as the mythical connection with the deep past through legends and stories and continuity of time which keeps the past alive in present. Ugwuanyi writes the interview excerpts in various dialects of the Igbo language. My thesis also joins this cause and within academic writing presents narratives in the Bengali language. Speaking for the marginalised population of Egypt's Gurna, Bialostocka (2020) argues that in the search of Pharaonic antiquities the lived realities of the community's cultural heritage has been violently erased. The author foregrounds the thesis of coloniality (Quijano 2007) to imagine a decolonial future of archaeology where pluriversal world view would value people's connection with the past. Similarly, Ndoro and Wijesuriya's (2014) article is an excellent entry point to the decolonisation debate as it gives a rigorous account of dynamic conservation approaches in Asia and Africa from pre-colonial times and presents the contrast of such management system against a standardised colonial and postcolonial world heritage framework. It gave me new insights and language of expression on the practices of repair and continuous reconstruction seen in the field. A journal special issue titled *Decolonizing European Colonial Heritage in Urban Spaces* (Kølvraa and Knudsen 2021) has approached the issue from an affective perspective. This network, which I joined through a PhD workshop, approaches the topic from 'four main modalities: Repression, Removal, Reframing and Re-emergence' (Kølvraa and Knudsen 2021, 6). A recently edited book *Decolonising Heritage in South Asia* (H. P. Ray 2018) collates an exciting rich body of scholarly work that questions monumentality and the divide between natural and cultural heritage, imposed separation of monuments from their cultural meaning to community life to name a few. It highlights some inadequacies of the existing framework and process of

inscription in UNESCO's world heritage list. It raises some important concerns such as cross-cultural and transnational linkages across and between the political boundary of South Asia and south-east Asia. The issue missing from the book is its engagement with the concept of decolonisation itself and the ontological shift in heritage making and worlding practices which my work addresses.

2.4. Crafting alterity

In the west particularly, craft discourse has seen a renaissance in the last decade. It has gained unprecedented status in government policy and public imagination through DIY projects facilitated by the digital domain (Jakob and Thomas 2017; Luckman 2015). Craft has been regarded as an expression of creativity and it has been articulated as the backbone of the creative economy (Banks 2010; Jakob 2013; Luckman and Thomas 2018). It is distinguished as a value that can reconnect people, material, nature, and space (Adamson 2007; Crawford 2009; Gauntlett 2011). The meaning and the use of the word 'craft', as used today, as something non-industrialised, local, and handmade has emerged in eighteenth-century Britain (Venkatesan 2009). It travelled to India and the rest of the world, much like other concepts, such as heritage, discussed in Chapter 8. First, I am going to address how craft has emerged as a category in opposition to mechanisation, modernity as well as art (Greenhalgh 1997; Sennett 2008) to identify the ethical possibility it ushers.

2.4.1. Craft: expanding scope, questioning binaries

The contrast between craft and mechanically produced goods is a recurring topic in craft literature. Nineteenth-century proponents of the Arts and Crafts Movement in England, such as John Ruskin, William Morris have furthered the idea of an engaged craft worker as a reaction to the work ethics of industrial capitalism. It is viewed as distinct from the industrialised production regime of the machine age as the maker forges an engaged and creative connection with the produced object. Hence, craft objects are unique from mass-produced goods and craft labour is an antithesis to alienated workers emerged during the industrial revolution (Adamson 2010). Consequently, craft stands for everything 'traditional, beautiful, rural, vernacular, and cultural; [whereas] mechanised products are modern, mediocre, urban, machine-produced, standardised' (Yarrow and Jones 2014, 261). Such binaries and oppositions repeatedly appear in craft literature as

it extends to the divide between modern arts and crafts, followed by a work ethic where the mind is separated from the body.

The distinction between arts and crafts is one discussion that has dominated much of the craft historiography (Greenhalgh, 1997). Craft has been referred to as inferior to art because it is more feminine or ethnic in opposition to the enlightenment category of modern art or fine arts. As a result, craftwork has been relegated to a category of pre-modern activity. According to Adamson, modernity has an underlying notion of universal singularity through the medium of capitalism, mechanisation, international architecture, rationality, science and even secularity. Craft on the other hand 'entails irregularity, tacit knowledge, inefficiency, handwork, vernacular building, functional objects and mysticism' (Adamson, 2010: 5). The quote suggests craft objects can be vernacular, imperfect yet in contrast to universal singularity they offer place-based particularity and a plurality of making traditions. Accordingly, one can see a variation of crafting techniques and craft objects which are embedded in local culture and reflect their connection with the soil.

Following the discussion above, Benjamin, as pointed out by Leslie (1998), in his famous work, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* considers craft as redemption in the face of modern disenchantment. He proposes that a craftsman's engagement with touch and hand is an experiential category. Both Ingold (2002) and Sennett (2008) take a phenomenological approach towards engagement and, 'the craftsman represents the special human condition of being engaged' (Sennett 2008, 20).[24] Hand and touch, as a symbol of intimacy with the body, are central to the discussion of craftwork. They are used as an experiential category (Leslie 1998) to recover the lost experience or experience which is under threat from mechanisation and more recently neoliberal capitalism (Sennett 2008; Ingold 2002).

On the contrary, conventionally craft has been portrayed as a body-centric discourse where the mind is absent. It is suggested that in craft production practice and exercise take over ideas and words (Moxon, 1677, cited in Adamson, 2010). I was reminded of this division quite frequently while curating the street art festival. It involved artists and

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[24] A more nuanced understanding of the detachment /attachment debate has been explored in anthropology literature (Candea 2010) and literary criticism (A. Anderson 2001)

craftspeople working together to create installations and, on several occasions, artists became the creative minds whereas craftspeople executed the ideas with their skill of making.

To challenge this hostility between categories, Adamson (2010) introduces 'modern craft' to support a critical focus and expansive engagement. It opens and allows for cybernetics, and digital technology to be imagined as a craft while not limiting the scope for further experimentation with the category. Though pottery and weaving remain integral as craft, storytelling, DADA photomontage and practice of writing itself has been proposed as different forms and expressions of craft. In the same way, Sennett (2009) extends the term craft to making music, cooking, and bringing up children. He plays with a broad range of themes and includes Homeric hymns to Linux the open software and a scientist in a laboratory, to a doctor in the NHS, as a craft. In the edited volume, *Critical Craft: Technology, Globalization, and Capitalism* (Wilkinson-Weber and DeNicola 2016) two chapters have been dedicated to computer programming as crafting. These reformulations expand the boundary of craft knowledge and unsettle what constitutes craft, something that confronted me as well while identifying the urban crafts. Yet neither the idyllic 'traditional' categories nor the new 'modern' craft expressions constitute the crafts I engage with. Hence, I wish to see how the category of traditional craft is produced as a result of an encounter with colonialism, nationalism, development, and heritage discourse (McGowan 2009; Maskiell 1999). The following discussion will be around craft literature from India which captures the grey area of craft as a reinvented category from work.

2.4.2. The 'Craft World' of India

The focus of this section is on the critical craft literature which traces the discursive process, relational encounters and place-based narratives through which craft has emerged as a category of analysis in India.[25] In India, from the mid-nineteenth century,

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[25] Some prominent survey and documentation-oriented craft literatures are collated here which haven't been addressed in this review. Jasleen Dhamija, *Indian Folk Arts and Crafts*.1970. New Delhi: National Book Trust. Pupul Jayakar, *The Earthen Drum: An Introduction to the Ritual Arts of rural India*. 1980. New Delhi: National Museum. Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya, *Indian Handicrafts*. 1963. New Delhi: Allied Publishing. S. Vijayagopalan, *Economic Status of Handicraft Artisans*. 1993. New Delhi: National Council of Applied Economic Research. Jaya Jaitly, *The Craft Traditions of India.* 1990. New Delhi: Lustre Press.

craft became an emblem of living tradition through colonial exhibitions (Mathur 2007). The hand dependent physical labour of the colony was a contrast to the machine-dependent labour of the metropole (Sethi 2013). In extension, craft labour was also displayed as an antithesis to European modernity; a contrast between 'Indian subjects from British rulers' (Wilkinson-Weber 2004, 300). Consequently, the utopian vision around Indian craft locates it in the village society (Birdwood 1880) and among a community of craftspeople who are against individualisation and mechanisation of work. Inspired by the anti-industrial, Arts and Crafts Movement in England, craft easily became an important trope for India's nationalist discourse with Gandhi as a proponent of a self-sufficient village society (Brantlinger 1996; K. Chattopadhyay 2010). In the twentieth-century craft thinker's writing, Indian craft has emerged as a sacred scriptural act performed by a male workforce (Coomaraswamy 1909) and has been equated with 'pure' Indian identity and selfhood (Havell 1912). As a result, 'valorisation of the vernacular: village life, the work of the country craftsmen and the 'authentic' tradition' took place (Venkatesan 2009, 79).

Though a village society aids the utopia of living craft tradition, from the nineteenth century onwards craftspeople have been extremely mobile and seasonally started to migrate to urban centres (T. Roy 1999). Following this thread, I unsettle the nostalgia of village craft and enchanting craftsman in my work which is rarely questioned (Sethi 2013). Understanding the role of 'urban' in the rise of these crafts is imperative as the craft I have studied has been identified as 'urban handicraft' or 'industrialised craft' within the city's commercial and cultural economy (INTACH 2015, 63). Chris Gibson (2016) pays attention to the significance of place in his formulation of path dependency where the place is embedded in the history of craft. Susan Luckman has also raised the issue of historicity in craft production which often remains obscure (Luckman 2012). C. Gibson (2016) takes the example of a cowboy boot making workshop in Texas to resonate how labour process, material history, skills and techniques entangle with space and place association in a new phase of cultural capitalism where symbolic meaning and value of the place matter. Advancing this idea of place-based craft identity, geographical indicator (GI) was introduced in 1999 as a measure to protect and valorise the place-

based, local nature of the crafts in India. Chandan Bose (2016) assesses artisanal response to this indicator status and argues that territorial fixity of the crafts hinders the networked relationality between the craft communities, places, and practices. Similarly, territorial fixity and sedimentation of craft practices have been unsettled by exploring the networked relationality of regions (Thomas, Harvey, and Hawkins 2013). Bose's (2019; 2018) work on 'critical making' stages a dialogue between home as a place of craft production and the larger hierarchical kinship relation within which a craft community of Telangana performs.

It is important to notice that the colonial exhibitions and displays, which sometimes included not only the craft objects but living craftspeople and their skills, accompanied by the romantic evocation of the craft thinkers, elevated 'work' to the 'traditional craft' of India. Venkatesan (2009) asserts that craft as a category was created from a plethora of work that suits the elite taste. The category is broad as it includes decorative arts and selected handmade everyday utility objects specific to each region of India. Yet what links this motley of practices is the 'economic and political concern' (Venkatesan 2009, 80) of the craft worker. Quite convincingly, she argues that the construction of traditional craft is, therefore, a heterotopia, which connects quite diverse political interests and social spaces. Starting from anti-industrialist discourse to nationalist identity to post-independent development concern, craft has been identified in relation to wider socio-economic matters. In the thesis, I take forward this proposition of creation of a category of craft from work which 'originates from a disparate grouping of influential people, including politicians, thinkers, members of development organisations and other urban elites' (Venkatesan 2009, 79) whom she has referred to as the 'craft world' (2009, 79).[26]

The craft world not only redefines work as craft production but also intends to educate, promote, conserve and market their work. At first colonial industrial art education produced the idea of 'native craftsman' who were deemed to be traditional, backward and in need of colonial guidance (Dewan 2004; McGowan 2009; A. Dutta 2006). Then

[26] In the thesis, I use the term civil society instead of 'craft world' because the people who are coming together in Chitpur are primarily drawn towards heritage, rather than craft. Partha Chatterjee (2001) associates modern citizen formation in a postcolonial democracy with civil society that believes in freedom, autonomy and holds the state accountable to do its duty and where the corporate capital operates. It can also be said, Civil society by its own definition is a section who is governed by the norm of civility and believes they are civilised (J. Sen 2007).

postcolonial women mostly from the wealthy upper-caste background took it upon themselves to revive crafts that will conform to the elite taste and consumption pattern (Sharma 2020). As a result, craft objects gain access to elite spaces, the consumers become 'knowledgeable directors' whereas the producers remain 'merely skilled' makers (Venkatesan 2009, 89). Venkatesan (2009) further argues, these efforts sometimes fail to consider where the craftspeople voluntarily want to leave their professions for social mobility exercising their agency rather than showing victimhood. I take these argumentative threads forward in Chapter 7 in discussing the artist collective's intervention in rebranding Chitpur's livelihood as craft and the government institution's selective recognition of chitpur crafts.[27] In a series of articles, Alicia Ory DeNicola (2005; 2003; 2004; DeNicola and Wilkinson-Weber 2016) explores the craft revival initiatives in India where designers from elite design schools attempt to rescue dying crafts by bringing innovation, cosmopolitan design aesthetics and class distinction which are perceived to be lacking among 'parochial', 'rural' craftspeople. Drawing from *The Body Impolitic's* (Herzfeld 2004) concept of 'global hierarchy of value' (2004, 4) DeNicola argues that the 'designers [act] as agents of a global hierarchy according to which artisans' bodies and labour are assigned a specific value'(DeNicola and DeNicola 2012, 787). At this point, it is worth mentioning what Herzfeld meant by the global hierarchy of value. His use of the word global and local denotes not bounded empirical locations but a discursive construct, much like the construct of traditional craft. In this schema, 'certain places, ideas and cultural groups appear as marginal to the grand design… [and their] marginality itself is actively produced and reproduced, in the lives and bodies of those who must bear its stigma' (Herzfeld 2004, 4). He then goes on to probe who produces this hierarchy and this is where the question of power, agency and patronage come into play.

Though the literature discussed above suggests that the craft world is actively shaping the discourse, identity, and aesthetics of the craft producers, I do not wish to render the

[27] Though it was not always done in a patronising manner and Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay, a feminist and activist from the independence movement needs special movement here. Her unrelenting efforts of encouraging craftspeople to organise and form handicraft cooperative unions and Craft Council of India gave some of the disappearing crafts and the craftspeople a desired visibility (Sethi 2013). To know more about her contribution, see Dhamija, Jasleen. 2007. *Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay*. New Delhi: National Book Trust and her memoir Chattopadhyay, Kamaladevi. 1986. *Inner Recesses, Outer Space*: *Memoirs*. New Delhi: Navrang.

craftspeople voiceless, negate their subjectivity and enter a structural discussion of domination and subordination. While not denying that the state and the craft world, whom I refer to as the civil society, are dictating some terms of the relation, I also tease out moments of negotiations, resistance, and subversions throughout the thesis.

2.4.3. The role of art: rupturing the status quo

Within my research I joined and co-worked with an artist collective, which developed an agenda to transcend and amend the hierarchy between the influential entrepreneurs of the craft world and the craftspeople I mentioned above. This collective needs to be situated within a longer history of engagement. Art historian and critic Clair Bishop (2012) in her book *Artificial Hell: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* sets out that since the 1960's there has been a shift in artistic practices in the western world where artists ventured outside the studio and gallery spaces and engaged the audience in the production of art. This genre of politically meaningful creative practice with an implicit activist agenda emerged primarily as a response to French critic Guy Debord's critique of a mediated world alienated from real experiences as a result of the production of appearances and images during post-war capitalism in his book The Society of Spectacle (1967). Two scholarly works need to be acknowledged in this context. Adorno and Horkheimer's ([1944]2005) critique of the commodification of art in *The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception*. Secondly, Walter Benjamin's ([1936]1968) *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,* deciphered the emergence of utilitarian, mass-produced art mediated through technological reproduction such as photography or even film which made the art lose its aura. The issue of market, value, capital, and purpose of art reverberates in these works. Bishop (2012) suggests Debord's work and engagement with Situationist International is a key moment for artists to understand the banality of passive participation of the audience. She traces the trajectory of audience involvement in artistic practice from 'a crowd (the 1910s), to the masses (1920s), to the people (late 1960s/1970s), to the excluded (1980s), to the community (1990s) to today's volunteers…' (Bishop 2012, 277). In the art world, these critical engagements with the audience have been described in numerous ways, as ' the social turn of art', 'relational aesthetics' (Bourriaud 1998), 'community-based art', 'new public art', 'site-specific art', 'dialogic art', 'social practice', 'useful art' (Arte Util) and 'participatory art'. In short, the primary focus has been 'collaborative,

participatory and community-based artistic practices that fall under the umbrella term of socially engaged art' (Olsen 2019, 986; see also Simoniti 2018; N. Thompson 2012; Helguera 2011; Rasmussen 2017).[28] In this genre, the process of art-making takes a central place rather than the finished object of art and in that process, it unsettles the distinction between 'individual/collective, author/spectator, active/passive, real-life/art' (Bishop 2012, 278). There is an undercurrent of rupturing the definition, categories and hierarchies of institutional art and artmaking with communities in socially engaged art. The aspect of giving visibility to marginalised urban communities in Turkey (Güngör 2019) and bottom-up placemaking initiatives in rural China through socially engaged art practice (Wang 2018) has been rightly addressed. Art has also assumed a critical role in the scholarship of reimagining the urban space through the political, aesthetic, and affective intervention of art (Guinard and Molina 2018; Miles 2005; Olsen 2019; Pinder 2008; Sharp, Pollock, and Paddison 2005, Hawkins 2011). Yet the public engagement aspect of this art practice also has a history of being 'the key enabler of capitalist innovation' (Luckman 2015, 152; referring to McGuigan 2009; also see Mould 2018) which emerges in my work as well.

As artistic expressions have expanded their field by experimenting and bringing in different materialities, sites and relationalities into their practice, in geographical scholarship the scope of interacting with art, artists and creative methods have broadened (Hawkins 2013; Tolia-Kelly 2007; 2012). From the employment of visual methods to creative practice to collaborating with artists for research dissemination, geographers have ventured into avenues previously untraversed. They have been rightly cautioned about these creative voyages and reminded of their political commitments (Madge 2014). While keeping this critique in the foreground, Tolia-Kelly 's (2019) work is critically informative where she explores the role of a postcolonial artist in democratising and dismantling the aesthetics regimes of Eurocentric art history. Her collaboration with artist Rosanna Raymond engenders a 'potential for progressive politics [which] includes decolonizing and making space for 'other' voices within a European dominated art history, and an inclusive practice of display, narration and indeed self-determined accounts of culture and aesthetic values'(Tolia-Kelly 2019, 129).

[28] I will be using the term 'socially engaged art' because the artist collaborative I worked with identified their creative practices with this term.

Following this argument, in Chapter 7 I explore the radical potentiality of socially engaged art and further interrogate its fraught politics.

2.5. Craft economy

Dispelling the idealised notion about craft as an authentic tradition in India, let me now look at craft as a space of livelihood generation for the relatively lower caste population of both urban and rural India who do not subscribe to any romanticised idea of craft. First, I venture into a numeric exercise to establish the socio-economic dependency on craft for a vast amount of the population. The gaps in the existing literature will further act as a testimony to my interest in taking a non-structuralist micro-narrative of the political-economic organisation of a particular craft in the thesis.

2.5.1. Craft as livelihood: becoming capitalist?

Craft is the second-largest source of employment for millions of people just after agriculture. Some scholars have tried to enumerate the number of the workforce involved in craft-related economic activity in the last twenty years (Viswanathan 2013; Liebl and T. Roy 2003), in the absence of a single well-documented government database. The reason for this vacuum is because of the definitional ambiguity of craftwork in India as well as various government agencies at work; some trying to reach a number either through craft's status as an industry or by considering it as an occupational category. The study by Professor Brinda Viswanathan (2013) commissioned by the Craft Council of India during 2009/2010 reveals that 16.7 million people work in India's craft sector within the definitional purview of craft.[29] This includes the highest concentration in textile, fibre, and woodwork (12 million), metal (2.5million), earth (1.1 million), leather (0.5 million), the rest comprising stone, bamboo, and other materials. This study shows a detailed distribution of craft workers in terms of male-female, urban-rural, caste, religion in nation-wide and state-based categories. The monograph suggests that in terms of the primary household activity of the manufacturing sector, around 40% of rural households and 35% of urban households are craft households. Most recently a 2016 newsletter from the Council of Handicraft Development Corporation under the Government of India, Ministry of Textile, claims

[29] Viswanathan's (2013) work is based on census data 2001 and NSSO data on employment and unemployment for 2004-05.

seven million people are involved in producing handicraft, which is a much more conservative estimate in comparison to previous studies. It also states, 'total export of handicraft products has increased from 7127 crores (71.27 billion) in 2013-14 to 8318 crores (83.18 billion) in 2014-15, with a growth of 17% over the previous year'.[30] Nevertheless, these numbers help to understand the scale and magnitude of people's dependence on craftwork and the value they produce in terms of livelihood sustenance as well as the national economy.

Contemporary craft scholarship in India rarely presents a critical analysis of the meaning, nature, instruments, agencies, and conditions of everyday economic practices of this vast sector.[31] Few who engage with the economic aspect suggest the craft sector is formed by the double articulation of regulation and non-regulation. They are subjected to intensive bureaucratic planning and policy mechanisms (R. Sethi 2019) on one hand, yet this sector is perceived to be part of India's vast informal or unorganised sector (Harriss-White 2010; 2017).[32] The state is aware of their existence, and they are socially regulated (Harriss-White 2010) yet without any social protection. Laila Tyabji, a craft advocate from India writes, craft 'is an industry and profession often practised in sub-primitive conditions without the support of pensions, insurance, a fixed salary or medicare' (quoted in Wilkinson-Weber 2004, 301). Craftworkers are not a single coherent category in India. Informal working conditions often fit the description of the craft workers, who are generally self-employed, skilled master artisan, at times daily wage earners and casual labour at home or in small firms or running micro-enterprises under precarious working conditions or skilled master artisan (Sruthi and Ramesh 2015).

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[30] http://www.handicrafts.nic.in/pdf/e-newsletter.pdf?MID=TEyG5ROYxiYTPr5G+1ShPg== (last accessed 21 June 2020).

[31] Some exceptions are (Wilkinson-Weber 1999; S. Majumder 2021). Another recommended reading would be *Artisans and Cooperatives: Developing Alternative Trade for the Global Economy* (Grimes and Milgram 2000) which strikes a balance between subsistence, fair trade and global market.

[32] The informal economy represents such 'economic activity of firms and individuals that is not registered for the purpose of taxation and/or regulated by the state'(Harriss-White 2003, 4). According to Barbara Harris-White and Gilbert Rodrigo, nearly 2/3rd of India's GDP and 90% of employment (including the agricultural sector) is attributed to this economic sector (Harriss-White and Rodrigo 2013). Economic anthropologist Keith Hart's research in urban Ghana first documented a plethora of work, neither traditional nor modern, rather holding an indeterminate space, which was growing in numbers and was termed as informal (Hart 1973). Breman has given an indication of variety of petty traders which are seen in India's urban centres, 'hawkers, rag-and-bone men, shoe cleaners, tinkers, tailors, market vendors, bearers and porters, drink sellers, barbers, refuse collectors, beggars, whores and pimps, pick- pockets and other small time crooks' (Breman 1999, 451).

Artisanal work is extremely gendered where women's labour is utilised and appropriated as a part of family labour which sustains the patriarchal social structure (Krishnaraj 1992; C. Bose 2019; Maskiell 1999; Wilkinson-Weber 2004; 1999; Mies 1982; S. Majumder 2021). The dominant narrative suggests that crafts like handloom, textile, weaving in Asia are already absorbed into a capitalist mode of production and they are highly commodified industries (Mohlman 1999; Goody 1982). The non-capitalist modes, such as household production, reproductive work, cooperatives, payment in gift or barter are relegated to the domain of informal, the remnants of the past, and more importantly, becoming capitalist. The following review is centrally focused on two strands of literature, a feminist critique of Marxist political economy and a postcolonial neo-Marxist theory, both trying to address the space of the 'outside' within or beyond capitalism and how to explain its existence (Gidwani and Wainwright 2014).

2.5.2. Postcapitalist politics

To move away from the dominant frame of explanation as explained above, I have identified and read the everyday economic practices of one of the urban craft activities in Chitpur Road through a diverse economies framework as proposed by Gibson-Graham in their book *A Postcapitalist Politics* (Gibson-Graham 2006a). Feminist economic geographer Gibson-Graham's (2006) argument suggests that we need to 'queer' the capitalocentric theoretical standpoint which renders a variety of economic forms and transactions in any society invisible. Their call for a new political imagination attempts to decentre the hegemony of a singular economic framework that reduces complex sets of power related to one capitalist logic.[33] Their provocation centres on a thick description of diverse economic practices through a weak theory approach (Gibson-Graham 2014). The strong theory of capitalism may demonstrate a powerful discourse in explaining contemporary economic phenomena around the world, but it obfuscates how existing social relations reflect on economic activities not only in historically grounded contexts but on multiple scales. It ushers a politics of possibility by thinking and practising other ontologies which present alternatives to capitalism. These economic alternatives are already in practice but are obscured from academic discussions because of economic determinism. Gibson-Graham offers an anti-

[33] Their work has been influenced by Althusser's (1972) concept of overdetermination which has been later developed further by Resnick and Wolff (1987), along with Derridean deconstruction (1978).

essentialist thinking tool to open imaginations and bring in new languages and subjectivities which have often been conflated within the overarching structure of capitalism.

In their endeavour to construct a language of alternative economic framework, they have formulated five identifiers of any economic practice: enterprise, labour, property, transaction, and finance. They have drawn up a tabular representation with three fields for each of these practices. The first field identifies mainstream economic practices such as wage labour, capitalist firm, private property etc. The second field has alternative practices such as environmentally responsible enterprise, co-operative transactions etc. The third section addresses non-market value-laden qualities such as housework as labour, donations as finances etc. These three fields of practice operate on the same level where capitalism is one of the economies existing within a large array of economic practices.

Enterprise	Labour	Property	Transactions	Finance
CAPITALIST	WAGE	PRIVATE	MARKET	MAINSTREAM MARKET
Family Firm Private unincorporated firm Public company Multinational	Salaried Unionized Non-union Part-time Contingent	Individually owned Collectively owned	Free Naturally protected Artificially protected Monopolized Regulated Niche	Private banks Insurance firms Financial services Derivatives
ALTERNATIVE CAPITALIST	ALTERNATIVE PAID	ALTERNATIVE PRIVATE	ALTERNATIVE MARKET	ALTERNATIVE MARKET
State-owned Environmentally responsible Socially responsible	Self-employed Co-operative Indentured	State-owned Customary (clan) land	Fair and direct trade Alternative currencies Underground market Barter Co-operative exchange	State banks Cooperative banks Credit unions

Non-profit	Reciprocal Labour In-kind Work for welfare	Community land trusts Indigenous knowledge	Community-supported agriculture, fishing etc	Govt. sponsored lending Community-based financial institutions Micro-finance Loan sharks
NON-CAPITALIST	UNPAID	OPEN ACCESS	NON-MARKET	NON-MARKET
Worker cooperatives Sole proprietorships Community enterprise Feudal enterprise Slave enterprise	Housework Family care Volunteer Neighbourhood work Self-provisioning Slave labour	Atmosphere Water Open Ocean Ecosystem services Outer Space	Household sharing Gift giving State allocations/appropriations Hunting, fishing Gleaning, gathering Sacrifice Theft, piracy, poaching	Sweat equity Rotating credit funds Family lending Donations Interest-free loans Community-supported business

Table 2.1: Diverse economies framework (Adapted from Gibson-Graham 2014: S150)

I adopt this framework to show the complexity within a heterogeneous economic practice where the marginal and dominant forms cohabit. I also use Gibson-Graham's proposition of reading for 'difference' which is not limited to explaining the reality but looks for possibilities in making other worlds (Gibson-Graham 2020). Citing Boaventura de Santos (2004), Gibson-Graham (2020) describes this significant shift as a movement from 'sociology of absences' to documenting 'ecologies of difference' (2020, 483); also see (Santos 2016). It is a recognition that these seemingly subordinated activities can be

made visible and give them an individual agency with a purpose; a purpose to create a just and sustainable economy.

Finally, a provocation towards an ethical economic world for the wellbeing of the planet and people is achieved through this framework. They propose an active ethical intervention in the economy through community-led grass-root practices, collective action, hope and solidarity to bring about a distinct transformative politics of possibility. As part of creative economy, '[c]raft practice and items are being increasingly located as ethical alternatives in an age of low-cost mass-produced items frequently made under conditions of labour exploitation in industrialising nations' (Luckman 2015, 9). Keeping in mind the unequal geographies produced by capitalism and environmental exploitation, this theory intends to identify initiatives that consciously practice alternative or non-capitalist modes of production. It involves a 'conscious and combined effort to build a new kind of economic reality' (Gibson-Graham 2006a, xxxvi). The reason I emphasise the word consciously twice is that I present a slightly different analysis of intention and politics in my work.

I need to acknowledge that the major criticisms of this framework come from a structural ontological view where the alternative and non-market activities are argued to be a part of the dominant capitalist mode of the economy (McCarthy 2006) and created by capitalism, which I will discuss in detail below. They are devalued as having no real consequence over the mainstream economy (Glassman 2003) or developed and supported by the state (A. Amin, Cameron, and Hudson 2003). Others have raised concern over women's unpaid labour, indentured labour, remittances from overseas (Lawson 2005) and informal working conditions (Samers 2005). Moreover, the lack of engagement with structural power such as the State and scale of these diverse practices in an economy has been questioned (Jonas 2016).[34] I consider some of these critiques and engage with a critical commentary from a postcolonial context in the thesis, acknowledging vastly different logics of economic practice in the developing world.

[34] I should point out that this critique entails a realist epistemological endeavour where one documents, explains and captures what is simply out there rather than considering the performative agenda of a researcher. The performativity of a researcher takes cognizance of the fact that a researcher directly engages with that inhabited reality to create a certain kind of knowledge (Law and Urry 2004).

2.5.3. Postcolonial capitalist development

A year after Gibson-Graham published *The Postcapitalist Politics*, Kalyan Sanyal's (2007) book *Rethinking Capitalist Development: Primitive Accumulation, Governmentality and Post-colonial Capitalism* was published, however, did not quite receive the attention it deserves in the scholarship of global North. Writing from India, he engaged with Gibson-Graham's provocation but added two crucial markers, arguing for the importance of democratic governance and development discourse in understanding capitalist growth in developing countries like India. He contests the historicist narrative of complete transition and replacement, i.e., from feudalism to capitalism as proposed in a traditional Marxist political-economic framework.[35] This move is an important intervention in explaining developing economies, where capitalism is theorised as incomplete because of the simultaneous existence of pre-capitalist modes of production.[36] He proposes that instead of a smooth transition from traditional social systems to the modern capitalist system, capitalism lets other systems exist outside the capitalist frame.[37] He introduces this concept via his critique of Gibson-Graham and instead of questioning the hegemony of capitalism, he problematizes the concept of hegemony itself. Instead of the discernible capitalocentic framework of this theory, I engage with his work to a certain extent and differs from him on a few accounts as explained below.

His proposition is twofold, and, in my work, I draw in from the second aspect of his argument while distancing myself from the first one. Firstly, Sanyal argues the capitalist system is comprised of a 'capital non-capital complex' where both capitalist and non-

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[35] Similar argument has been drawn by subaltern school where the complete transition theory from precapitalist mode of production like feudalism to capitalist mode of production has been contested. According to Chakraborty (2000) globalisation of capital is not same as universalisation of capital. Which means whereas capitalism came out of west, it failed to transmit some of its properties in the non-western societies. Here some pre-capitalist modes of transaction simultaneously exist with modes of capitalist production. According to him, the East didn't conform to the logic of capital because in east certain cultural, religious and social customs are still existing and operating strongly. The proletariats have not been emancipated from religious affiliation or community obligations/attachments. Another foundational text of subaltern studies (Guha 1997a) argues that capital hasn't gained a consensual power to rule. Both Guha and Chakraborty talk about a distorted capitalism in east and therefore an argument has emerged that capitalism here is incomplete or flawed.

[36] Some scholars have used the term third world economies in this context and it critically interrogated the term in relation to development discourse, see (Dhar and Chakrabarti 2019; A. Chakrabarti, Dhar, and Cullenberg 2016).

[37] It not only coexists with other forms of production but also 'casts certain people, places and conducts as wasteful, superfluous or residual' (Gidwani 2013, 773). Also see Gidwani and Reddy (2011) for a detailed discussion on the production of waste as the outside.

capitalist elements cohabit (K. Sanyal 2007, 40). He asks, 'Isn't it possible to see capitalism as necessarily a complex of capitalist and non-capitalist production residing in the community space?' (2007, 6–7). He argues that the 'other' modes of economy, non-capital, and other alternatives, are not outside capitalism, but are very much a by-product of capitalist mode, created by capital, part of its functioning and endogenous to capital. Sanyal argues capitalism's hegemony thrives in the world of difference and plurality rather than shrinking.[38] What is categorised as a trace from 'pre-capitalist' mode of production in the Indian context, is actually a space of dispossessed generated through primitive accumulation which cannot be absorbed into the capitalist mode of production (2007, 58).

Sanyal charts out the ILO's Kenya missions report on the informal economic sector and notices they are only descriptive and empirical without defining the inner logic of this sector. There has been a considerable amount of scholarly work around the informal economy in the developing world, as I have mentioned above. Sanyal goes ahead in theorising this informal sector, not something as pre-capital but a 'non-capitalist economic space that is integral to the post-colonial capitalist formation' (2007, 209). This domain of economic activity is premised upon meeting needs rather than systemic accumulation. He theorises a signifying factor of this sector is that the producers are separated from means of production due to primitive accumulation, yet they are unable to join the workforce by selling their labour-power, which they are willing to do. Therefore, they are not exactly a petty producer or a capitalist working class helping in producing a surplus. They are the inhabitants of a capitalist 'wasteland', a space of excluded who wants to join the capitalist production but remains as 'redundant labour-power' (2007, 63). My argument in Chapter 6 significantly departs from the claim of primitive accumulation, but I find the notion of need economy useful for the context of craft producers.[39]

In his conceptualisation, a dualistic economy, with two different systems, need economy and accumulation economy simultaneously constitutes a postcolonial economy. In the political-economic lexicon, need is the use-value whereas accumulation signifies the

[38] See also Hardt and Negri (2000) for a critique of politics of difference.

[39] I use Nigam's (2014) work to refute the historic necessity of primitive accumulation and recognise that many non-agricultural activities such as artisanal and small commodity production with distinct historicity also follow non-capitalist practices governed by other logics.

exchange-value. He does not rule out the possibility of surplus generation in need economy (what made it distinct from subsistence economy) but this surplus is only for the present and future consumption. Need economy can be a domain of heterogeneity with 'informal arrangements and a network of oral contracts and relation of reciprocity' (2007, 212). It also includes various forms of labour such as 'pure self-employed, family labour, communal labour or even wage labour and their various combinations' (2007, 212). These functional categories easily overlap with Gibson-Graham's diverse economies framework. It is the theorisation of flow between these two circuits, from accumulation economy to the sub-economy of need which sets Sanyal's work apart from Gibson-Graham, and I find that quite important for theorising craft economy.

Now I present the second dimension of the work. In developing nations, there has been a reverse capital/resource flow from the domain of capital to non-capitals in the name of development.[40] The surplus accumulated in the domain of capital is often transferred back to the need economy in the form of micro-credit of self-help groups or the promotion of self-employment for women. The developmental agenda for the need/informal sector is often funded by specialised international funding agencies, research institutes, universities, and national/international corporate bodies (via Corporate Social Responsibility or CSR) which is now an essential part of global governmentality. NGOs are a major stakeholder in the story of development who is mediating between the realm of capital and need economy. Yet this mediation is selective as I show in my work (Chapter 7). Sanyal highlights a generous perspective on the state's development discourse. He says in an interview, 'development will, on the one hand, foster growth in the accumulation economy and, on the other, rehabilitate the excluded in the need economy' (Chatterjee 2016, 107). Post-development school's critique on the benevolent nature of the state's development initiatives is useful here (Escobar 1995; Gidwani and Wainwright 2014). I argue the development schemes towards particular craft groups, such as idol-makers (*mritshilpi*) in my case, is a form of governmentality, masquerading as the generosity of a state rather than political redress.

[40] He terms it as reversal of Primitive Accumulation. Though identifying all developmental projects as reversal of primitive accumulation can be challenged. Especially when there are plenty of examples from Asia and Latin America where development discourse (dam, road, railways construction, factory building) is used by the state to displace indigenous populations. (to read some of the critique of Sanyal's theory, see (Gidwani and Wainwright 2014)).

Sanyal's (2007) conceptual vectors are used in this paper to understand the matrices of diverse economies through the discursive field of power which dictates the financialisation of the crafts to some extent. Yet they cannot foreclose the possibility of a transformational change enacted by the community through 'messy, gritty and real everyday rhythms' (Chatterton and Pickerill 2010, 481) of the place. Asef Bayat's article *Un-civil society: the politics of the 'informal people'* has engaged with these forms of ordinary activisms and put forward the theory of 'quiet encroachment of the ordinary' (Bayat 1997, 57). These everyday practices and moments are understood as a form of activism that is performed in an intimate way (Tironi 2018; Halvorsen 2015). Beyond the enactment of revolutionary political intention, there are 'practices and values that will sometimes feel embedded or trapped in capitalist ways of doing things, and at other times will be more liberatory or antagonistic' (Chatterton and Pickerill 2010, 488). Without essentialising, the radical aspect of intentions in postcapitalist politics, ongoing practices, and challenges towards them are seen in the thesis as a moment in the formation of new political subjectivities.

Chapter Three
Returning Home and Doing Fieldwork: Methodological Perspectives

3.1. Introduction

I returned home for my PhD fieldwork. The 'field' was around the corner from the neighbourhood where I grew up and where my parents still live. Field was dimly lit shops, welcoming smiles, makeshift workshops, sweet tea in narrow glasses, broken windows, open doors, slippery courtyards, decaying grandeurs, tapering lanes, and overflowing bazaars. Field was a street pushed to the margin of the city which was once the main thoroughfare and cultural centre of Kolkata. Field were some people whose knowledge has been made invisible and irrelevant, whose work has been rendered inconsequential within the neoliberal capitalist model pushed by the postcolonial nation. Field was also a group of artists who wanted to make a difference and work with this landscape. Field was my multiple intersecting identities and their negotiations with all these actors. Field was not ontologically given, it was produced and constructed through intersubjective exchanges (Biswal 2021).

This chapter traces how I approached this field. It traces the research process and highlights significant methodologies that shaped the research journey. It grounds us in three registers of knowledge production: the theory, the politics, and the practice of adopting various methodologies in my fieldwork. I start by articulating my intellectual affiliations which supported and informed my research design. I describe my early engagement with the field by addressing connections built during the pilot field visit, which leads to the discussion of the second field visit. An immersive ethnographic approach is discussed which unpacks how I approached the field, who my research participants were and what the modes and forms of engagement were, namely, participant observations, journeys, and semi-structured interviews. The ethical practices of the research engagement are considered at this point. I then move on to discuss how walking became a register to reconnect with the city and reimagine the 'field'. Through a reflexive dialogue, I consider subjectivities and positionalities of knowledge production. Next, I introduce my collaboration with an artist collective as a critical methodological intervention. Further, I consider a temporal scale of engagement with my field site by discussing archival and oral historical methods. Lastly, a detailed analysis

of post field methods is presented, in which I focus on politics of language, translation, analysis and writing the thesis.

3.2. Theoretical grounding of the methodology

In this section, I am going to explain the theoretical imperatives which shaped the research methodology. Though my research questions and analysis were not shaped by one theorist, I took inspiration from mutually constitutive/constructive theoretical positions which guided my decisions from designing the research questions, doing fieldwork to its analysis and presentation. I approached this entire process with the conceptual lens of feminist (McDowell 1992; Nast 1994; Sharp 2005; Cope 2002) and decolonial epistemology (Sultana 2019; Santos 2016; Müller 2021; Ramón Grosfoguel 2007). The process began with my early engagement with the 'field' where I grew up and eventually did my MPhil research. Though the research questions that I developed did not emerge in dialogue with the research participants, it was also not shaped by 'discursive frameworks of northern academic institutions' (Raghuram and Madge 2006, 275). Research questions informed by my local knowledge went through a series of transformations from the PhD application stage to the upgrade process and even when I was in the field because I was open to a process of continuous iteration and was attuned to changing realities and encounters in the field. I defamiliarized myself from the theoretical mediations during my nine months of immersive field work. Nevertheless, the ethnography with the vernacular craftspeople and collaborative research with the contemporary artist collective was premised on a non-hierarchised, reflexive and embodied research method which comes from my alignment with feminist epistemology. One set of research participants, the artists, were my collaborators and the basis for this collaboration was an attempt to give something back to the craftspeople. As part of this feminist methodology, I valued listening to life histories, facilitated and supported a craft collective during the collaboration process and conducted engaged research.

I identify with a form of theory building which Cindy Katz's (1996, 2017) calls 'Minor Theory'. It engages with theory and does theory 'charged with political immediacy and possibility' (Katz 2017, 598). It suggests a production of knowledge that is 'interstitial with empirical research and social location, of scholarship that self-reflexively interpolates the theories and practices of everyday historical subjects, of work that

reworks marginality by decomposing the major' (Katz 1996, 487). As a political commitment to the decolonial research method, I locate myself and my research participants epistemologically in the global South from where we speak (Bhan 2019). Nevertheless, by situating us in the global South I do not claim subalternity for all research participants, nor do I claim that I give voice to the subaltern groups I worked with (Sharpe and Spivak 2003, 620). I was aware of my subject position and the kind of power relation that brings during my interactions with different research participants. Hence rather than giving voice to any subaltern groups in the research, I was committed to learning, which gets strongly reflected in Chapter 8 which addresses change, repair and impermanence embedded in craft practices. Learning also brings epistemic reorientation and shifts in the domain of knowledge production by opening the space for othered geographies where my fieldwork site ceases to be a case study but becomes a site of knowledge. Nevertheless, this task views 'knowledge-as-intervention-in-reality… not knowledge-as-a-representation-of reality' (Santos 2016, 314). Therefore, I do not make any claim of comprehensive theory-building during the analysis of the research. The process of abstraction that I discuss later (section 3.9) is strongly empirical in nature which is suggested as 'theory as practice' (Raghuram and Madge 2006, 278; Johnson et al. 2004). My contribution in crafting a new heritage language in the concluding chapter exemplifies this commitment.

3.3. Early engagement with the field

The pilot fieldwork was completed in December 2017. The main purpose of this visit was to establish contacts in the field, identify potential participants for the research and get myself acquainted with the area. Though I had previous experience of working in the area it was important to understand the area with new insights and from a new perspective. My previous research work in MPhil involved three diverse communities in this road, Hindu idol makers, Muslim *itar* sellers, and the Indo-Chinese population. I focused on their traditional livelihood activities from the perspective of politics of heritage conservation (Mukhopadhyay, 2016). During the December visit, firstly, I identified all labour-intensive handicraft based commercial economic activities along Chitpur Road (table 3.1), which I refer to as urban craft in this thesis. From the onset walking through this four-kilometre-long road was an integral part of my research process. I started recording some sound clips of the craftwork (printing) and

documented the everyday life of the street through videos. I identified the main clusters of specialised craftworks during these walks. I was able to have some informal conversations with people involved in these urban crafts while walking. The conversations were important to develop relationships and to learn more about the histories of making on the Road. Conversations explored the age of the shop or craft business, the inter-generational nature of the activity and what challenges the makers faced. These dialogues helped me to identify the craft clusters I would work with in my fieldwork. Secondly, in my pilot project phase, I visited government officials and conducted five interviews with artists, academics, conservationists, heritage walk organisations to understand the larger picture of heritage sensibility in the city. Field, in that sense, was never limited to the physical space of Chitpur road (A. Gupta and Ferguson 1997) and connected me to various spaces and people in the city, all having a similar interest in the issue of heritage or Chitpur Road. Attending talks, walks, exhibitions, and visiting showrooms, therefore, encompassed the larger domain of doing fieldwork. That field was not limited to physically doing fieldwork in Chitpur, but it is a topic of enquiry that engaged me with multiple sites and imaginations and remained with me even when I left the field.

Informal conversation	Govt official	Heritage enthusiasts	Events attended
A printing press owner	Mayor's office	Calcutta Walks [a walking tour company]	Silk river walk in Hooghly
A wooden Sandesh Mould Making	Craft Council of West Bengal, Secretary	A Heritage blogger and walk leader	A panel discussion on Kolkata's diasporic communities at Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies, Kolkata
A Milk can maker		A journalist who writes and specialises in local history and teaches historical geography at Calcutta University	Biswa Bangla Showroom visit
A Musical Instrument Maker		Founded member of Hamdasti, the artist collective	Chitpur Local's lab at Studio 21
A Stone carver			

Table 3.1: Engaging with potential research participants during pilot field survey

The main fieldwork was done over nine-months from September 2018 to May 2019. During this time, I divided my work into three stages; ethnography, collaborative research with an artist collective and archival research.

3.4. Immersive ethnography with the craftspeople

In my mixed-method approach ethnography constituted the primary mode of conducting research. Ethnography opened a possibility to learn and experience the unfamiliar world of the craft practitioners and a craft collective while being reflective about my own presence in those settings. It was indeed an 'attempt to understand another life-world using self - or as much of it as possible - as the instrument of knowing' (Ortner 2006 as quoted in Dourish 2014, 2). By conducting ethnography, I submitted myself to the process of uncertainty and unpredictability in the field. I was open and flexible to adapt and change my research questions and research participants according to the circumstances in the field (Billo and Hiemstra 2013). Consequently, within a month I expanded my 'field' from the craft clusters of Chitpur to a craft collective which emerged because of my presence in the city, among other factors. In this section, I am going to reflect on my engagement with the craftspeople as I approached them through participant observation.

I chose four craft clusters of the Road, idol makers, jewellery makers, wooden mould makers and musical instrument makers (initially five with stone idol maker/carver). The reason for choosing them was a practical consideration. My main concern was to find multiple gatekeepers who can give me access to the craft clusters of the street and I also kept the time frame of my research period in mind. Among four clusters, my father had sources to introduce me to two (detailed discussion in section 3.6.2) and I developed my own contacts for the other two. Another factor was the status of these crafts in terms of their languishing or flourishing nature. My pilot survey helped me to identify that the *sandesh* mould making, and musical instrument making is struggling to survive on the Road whereas idol-making and gold/silver jewellery making is thriving. So, these two issues guided my selection process.

Figure 3.1: The *karigar*s and the female owner-artisan in Kumartuli (Source: author)

Figure 3.2: Lending a hand in the making process (source: Aritra Biswas)

As part of the immersive and embodied ethnographic approach, I spent most of my time in one workshop from each of the four crafts and through **informal conversations and observations** tried to understand the spatial, material, social and economic worlds of the craft workshops. September to December was dedicated to observing how these workshops function. As a human geographer, I was drawn to the idea of spatial ethnography and placemaking (A. Sen 2014; A. Sen and Silverman 2014). The space of the workshop, the lived experience of people working and living in those spaces and the relationality of these craft workshops within the urbanity of Chitpur became my topic of enquiry. I was invested in the material lives of the objects that were being made (figure 3.3).

Figure 3.3: Craft tools for [left] *sandesh* mould making and [right] jewellery making (source: author)

Hence, I observed how a product is made and sold, from where they procure the raw materials and who are their customers. I got acquainted with the everyday life and politics of the main artisan and the artisanal labour in these workshops. Ethnography particularly helped to build a relationship with the artisanal labourers (figure 3.1) who are otherwise invisible in academic discussions and bring their voice into the discourse on heritage. For example, previous studies on Kumartuli have primarily focused on the lives of the main male artisan or *malik* (Goldblatt 1981; Heierstad 2017). I was able to have regular conversations with the artisanal labourers in the idol-making and gold jewellery making sector. I learnt about their training in the craft, heard stories of their family, home, dreams and aspirations. Narratives around everyday economic interactions, exchanges and overall structures of the craft industry also emerged through informal conversations in the workshop. During the long hours spent in the workshops, I also met some craft workers or *karigar*s who are not part of the core team

of *karigar*s but assist the making process in various ways. Often such acquaintances would lead to other connections (section 3.4.2 for more discussion on this). In the idol makers quarter, for example, spending time also involved participating in their work (figure 3.2) and eating with them. I took the initiative to digitise newspaper reports on the female artist from the year 1996 (figure 3.4) and help in developing a digital presence for the main artisan.[41]

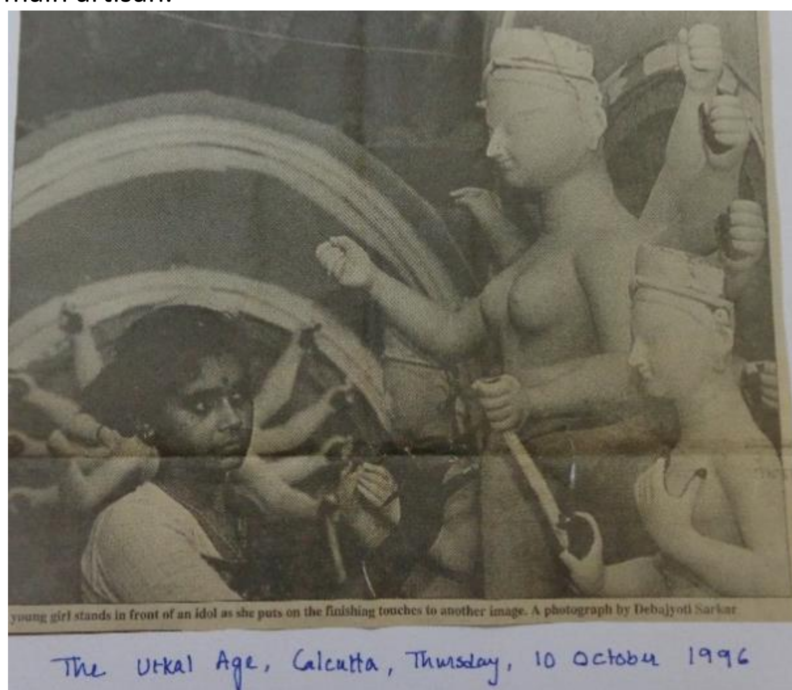

Figure 3.4: Documentation and digitisation of newspaper report for the female artisan (source: author)

I developed the practice of documenting these interactions and observations in detailed **field notes** every day. Often, I would hastily write down observations in my diary and later type them out. The notes reflected not only a documentary method of interpretation but also most striking, deviant cases or absences, and my feelings in particular field sites were noted down (Wolfinger 2002; Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 2011). Here I would also acknowledge my tacit knowledge of the area and for whom I was writing the notes. Without being prescriptive, Cook (2005, 167–68) has suggested keeping, 'field notes, tallies, drawings, photographs and other forms of material evidence'. Similarly, in my case, photographs, sound clips, videos, material traces such as stickers, pamphlets from the field became part of the participant observation process.

[41] http://chinapal.in/ Female artisan-owner's website (last accessed 11 August 2021).

My aim with the notes was to be able to re-enter the field at a distance, and to enable the reader to witness my experience.

I reached out to other artisans within each field of work and undertook **semi-structured interviews** with them (table 3.2). The selection process followed a theoretical sampling where I chose whom to talk to following my contacts in the field (Crang and Cook 1995). This was not a systematic or random sampling but a selective one where I looked for appropriate groups of people in each field who are knowledgeable to address the research problem. It was important for me to look for participants who can be a critical case study and who have particular expertise in the subject matter rather than the number of people in each field or their representativeness (Crang and Cook 1995). Interviews were fluid and conversational but had a purpose (Valentine 2005). I had a prepared interview schedule that had five major themes: basic information, involvement with the craft, object, capital and making, relationship with making and space and heritage and loss (see appendix 5). Interviews were facilitated for the craftspeople to talk about their intergenerational knowledge transfer as I recognise *sruti* (listening) and *smriti* (collective memory) are integral to South Asian tradition in recollecting lived experience (U. Dutta 2020, 6). The majority of the interviews were recorded but some were noted down if the participants were not comfortable with recording. Though my interaction with these crafts began from this road, in all four cases I followed the craft and often the craftsman (no women in these instances) to other places across the city and sometimes in the surrounding villages to understand the larger ecosystem of these craftworks. Here is a profile of the craftspeople I interacted with as part of my ethnographic practice.

Craft sector	**Ethnography**	**Interviews**	**Interviewee profile**	**Following the craft/ craftsman**
Idol makers (In Kumartuli total of 500 main artisans and 2000 artisanal labour during the main season)	In a female artisan's workshop, detailed field note documenting conversations with her and 7 artisanal labourers	9 interviews. 7 recorded and 2 noted down	8 male, 1 female artisan. 1 *Shola* artisan. Joint secretary of Kumartuli Mritshilpa Sanskritik Samiti (artisan union)	Visited two aristocratic houses with the artisanal labour where they were making the idols

	working in her workshop		2 specialises in sculpture 1 artisan who makes only small idols 1 rehabilitated artisan, ex-president of the union not based in Kumartuli	
Jewellery making (Total 2000 traders and manufacturers in Garanhata and nearby areas)	A workshop with a storefront, fieldnote documents interactions with three artisanal labourer making gold jewellery	6 recorded interviews and 1 noted down	All male. 2 Involved in various stages of Jewellery making 1 father-son duo owning a shop front President of Garanhata Swarnashilpo Samiti (Goldsmith Union)	Visited 2 specialised workshops (Jewellery mould making, gold chain making, stone setting, polishing) in the area with the artisanal labourer
Wooden Mould making (Total of 8 shops selling wooden products in the area near Notun Bazaar)	A small shop where 1 elderly artisan makes and sells only *Sandesh* mould, fieldnote documents interaction with him	6 recorded interviews and 1 noted down	All male 2 rural artisans, supplies in Chitpur 3 makes wooden moulds in Chitpur 1 trained as a mould maker but now a supplier 1 not a trained artisan, only	Visited 1 rural craftsman in his village home where he makes the moulds and supplies for one of the shops in Chitpur. Two visits, one by myself, second with parents.

			sells wooden products	
Musical instrument making (4 Shops in the Jorasanko area)	A storefront with some making and repairing activity, 2 shop owners and 1 artisanal labourer, fieldnote documents conversations with three of them	3 recorded interviews and 1 noted down	2 traders as well as manufacturers 1 trader 1 artisanal labourer	Visited a factory area in Kolkata where musical instruments are made in large scale production set up with an artisanal labourer.

Table 3.2: Details of ethnography in four craft sectors and list of interviews

3.4.1. Ethical consideration

The research method went through the scrutiny of the institutional ethical approval process before the start of the final phase of fieldwork. The process ensured to safeguard the research participants and inform them about the motivation of the research and the implication of their participation in the research. Notwithstanding the empowering nature of this ethical approval process, I found them rooted in the universalist approach of ethical approval which required participants' written consent. In this section, I will briefly address why written consent as the hallmark of ethical approval was problematic in my research.

I sought most of my participants' approval through oral consent. This issue was raised during the ethical approval process and I explained to the committee why oral approval would be ethical for my research. Some of the civil society members signed the consent form who were acquainted with this process in academic research. For others, a participant information sheet and consent document translated into Bengali were prepared. Rather than reading those documents, most participants asked me to verbally explain to them the questions for the research and the interaction unfolded in a storytelling manner. I did not find it conducive to ask them to first read the documents before talking to me. As observed by some feminist scholars in cases of ethnography where the researcher takes an immersive approach, 'consent' is given whenever a potential participant agrees to give an interview or lets the researcher 'hang out' with

him/her to observe the daily activity. In such cases, these institutional requirements/governmentalities hinder the process of relationship-building (Miller and Bell, 2011). In another ESRC funded project regarding 'research consent and research process' the researchers have made some pertinent points about how 'the whole notion of informed consent is based upon this middle-class western sort of stereotypical concept of autonomy' (Crow et al. 2006, 88). It is also important to note the historicity of consent giving procedure. In cases of invasive research of medics where research is done 'on subjects' rather than 'with participants', written consent became an inevitable step (Coomber 2002). In social science research where the research is based on informal personal contact, such formal procedure of signing forms, 'put people off quite severely' (Crow et al. 2006, 91). They might become very conscious about the process of the interview and start acting in a manner that can only yield right or wrong answers rather than an in-depth conversation. When ethnography encourages building a relationship with research participants, a written consent form makes it explicit that the participants are entering into a contractual relationship. They start performing a certain role that they think is expected out of them. Rather than opening up, therefore, they may fall into the trap of a fixed, legalistic consent giving procedure. The consent document also states that I would maintain the anonymity of my participants. I followed that procedure in the thesis though many of my participants seek recognition and were surprised to know I would use pseudonyms. Only where names are already published in the public domain, such as, in the case of artists and craftspeople who participated in the art festival, original names are used in that context. I am concerned that by taking a paternalistic attitude towards the participants the institutional panel took a bureaucratic attitude and missed the nuances of qualitative research (J. Connor et al., 2018).

3.4.2. Journeys with craftspeople

My initial plan was to take a journey with the objects and see how the stories of individual objects unfold. I was curious to follow where the materials come from to track through where the crafted objects found their home and how the Road works as a conduit through which the objects make their journeys possible. However, my research questions started changing due to various encounters in the field and I could not take part in this extensive journey with the objects. Instead of the 'follow the thing' method

(Cook 2004), I followed the craftspeople in all four craft clusters which led me to question the focus of my study. Here are a few glimpses of those journeys,

In the search for a *sandesh* mould maker who supplies moulds in Chitpur shops-

> From Kolkata to Birpur (name changed), trains take around two and a half hours. The day is Rash Purnima. It is a full moon day associated with a religious festival related to Lord Krishna. 'Bhakti movement' had a strong influence on the Nadia district (where Birpur is located). So, it is a festive day for many people who believe in this sect. The train was exceptionally crowded. The compartments were noisy with hawkers selling everything from fruits to jewellery. The journey made me tired already before I reached there. Bishnu Roy, the artist himself, came to receive me at the train station. It was a short walk, less than 1 km to his house. There is a stark distinction between people I talk to in the city and the village. He was very enthusiastic about talking to me. Very hospitable. He and his family, wife, married daughter, old mother, everyone came and talked to me. They requested that I have lunch with them because in his family they celebrate Rash Purnima. They are followers of Krishna. His deceased father himself made big idols by curving wood which is now being worshipped daily by his mother. So, I had to sit and have lunch with them. (Field note, 23 November 2018)

In Garanhata, the goldsmith quarter, the manufacturing units are distributed in various quarters of the neighbourhood and those quarters specialise in one set of work. I was in a workshop where they make the main jewellery (mostly earrings, bangles, and necklaces) but they connect with other specialised workshops and depend on them during various stages of the work. So, I followed two main artisans, Shovan *da* and Anup *da* to these workshops and small rented rooms on the ground floor of residential buildings which I couldn't have found myself. From dice cutting to chain making to casting and polishing Garanhata is a world in itself (figure 3.5)! Another artisan, Subrata Das, who works as part-time wage labour in Chitpur's musical instrument makers quarter used to come for occasional tea. He offered to show me around the factories in the Maniktala area of Kolkata where the majority of the instruments or parts of them are made and supplied to the rest of the city. The shops in Chitpur Road then assemble the parts, tune, polish and sell them to customers. Apart from visiting his house in a slum, where he has inherited a small musical instrument-making workshop from his father, I visited big factories. In most of the factories, huge logs of wood are churned into various shapes to make wooden drums.

> The last stop was a small workshop where harmoniums are made (figure 3.5). After crossing a huge bazaar and many alleys and lanes, I reached a dark small room. Three men were working. One was cooking and two others were hunched over pieces of wood. The workers need to have carpentry skills. The older gentleman told me he is relatively new in the work. The younger one, on the other hand, has spent 5 years in this workshop and he says he started working when he was only 8/9 years old. When asked why he chose to do this work, he said when one cannot get enough education this is what is left to do. His words reminded me of a goldsmith who once told me, 'what else could I have done'! As if they have resorted to doing these 'crafts' when there was no other option left. I didn't see any finished products there. All I could see were several parts of the harmonium being made. (Field note, 2 January 2019)

Figure 3.5: Harmonium parts are being made in Maniktala area [left], a stone setting workshop in Garanhata [right] (source: author)

These journeys made one significant shift in my research question, from the ethnography of the materiality of the objects, the field drew my attention to the political economy of these sectors where the question of labour, transaction, enterprise and overarching structural conditions of these craftworks became my topic of enquiry (see Chapter 6).

3.4.3. Interviews with civil society members

After the first four months of ethnography with craftspeople, an analytical frame emerged that 'heritage' is primarily being produced from the civil society groups rather than strongly emerging as a ground-up concept by the craftspeople. During the second half of the fieldwork, therefore, I made connections with some artists, academics, local elected representatives, heritage walk organisations, conservationists and other civil society groups who are interested in either craft or heritage (table 3.3). For each group,

the focus of the interview was different depending on their specialisation and involvement with craft and heritage. I always asked the participant to choose where they wanted to meet for the interview. As a result, I found myself moving around various places crisscrossing the city. Interviews were conducted in moving cars, in residential houses, in offices of politicians, in art studios, in fancy cafes, in local eateries, in upmarket boutiques, in university staff rooms and sitting on a wonky stool on the pavement. I also attended events and museums related to the craft and heritage of Kolkata (figure 3.6). Here is a profile of the interviewees comprising this group.

Figure 3.6: Attending World Heritage Day seminar organised by West Bengal Heritage Commission (source: author)

Civil Society interviews	**Events and Museums**
Artists (3)	Past in Present [A walk and lecture on Chitpur's craft heritage]
Heritage walk organisation (2)	Street Art Festival- Rong-Matir Panchali (A Chronicle of Colour and Clay) at Kumartuli
NGO in the craft sector (1)	World Heritage Day seminar by WB Heritage Commission
Civil Society Group (1)	Metcalfe Hall Museum opening on Kolkata
Local elected Representative (1)	Gurusaday Dutt Folk Art and Craft Museum
Govt Heritage Committee (1)	Heritage fest organised by PKG
Craft/heritage entrepreneur (3)	
Conservation architect (1)	
The landlord of a craft shop (1)	
Academics (3)	
Total (17)	

Table 3.3: Profile of Civil Society interview and events attended

3.5. Relearning about home through walking

In the book *Ceasefire City* (Kikon and McDuie-Ra 2020), an evocative urban ethnography of the North-Eastern Indian city of Dimapur is presented where the authors talk about learning to love Dimapur through walking. They walked through the difficult terrain of the city, rough neighbourhoods and posh housing complex, some time alone, and often with friends and acquaintances who know and love the city. Upon reflection, I realise walking in Chitpur was an integral part for me to reconnect with the city I once grew up in. Hence, I start this section with an excerpt from the field note to illustrate why walking became an essential mode to reimagine the field.

> Maybe like many 'Probasi Bangali', (non-resident Bengali) Kolkata remained stagnant in my mind like an idea. An idea cultivated by my upbringing, nurtured by books, portrayed by films, and now chronicled by Facebook pages on old Kolkata. Therefore, when I came back to the city intending to stay here for eight months, I wanted to find that city initially. But now I am realising my field, my immediate reality, my experience was never probably my own. It was mediated. I saw, I heard, and I experienced from someone else's eye not literally but at least figuratively. It is time to unlearn that city of idea and get to know it anew. (Field note, 31 August 2018)

Fieldwork often involves travel, a physical displacement and crossing the fraught and amorous edges of a border (Clifford 1997). For me, the border was my ambivalent relationship with the city which developed over the years through my journey away from the city to other parts of India and then to the UK. Displacement, therefore, involves distance from home to recognise the difference and find an object of enquiry (Katz 1994). As I wrote above, the movement and the act of leaving initiated a physical and discursive displacement from home. In my very first month in the 'field', I realised, albeit having linguistic familiarity I need to learn the rhythms of Chitpur Road by walking and unlearn the way I imagine Kolkata. I wanted to experience the urban space like a *flaneuse* (Wolff 1985), the invisible female *flaneur*, the wanderer who was never mentioned as the 'the archetypal occupant and observer of the public sphere in the rapidly changing and growing great cities of nineteenth-century Europe' (Wilson 1992, 93). In the critical literature on urban space and modernity, as popularised by Walter Benjamin and Charles Baudelaire, Paris is the archetypal cosmos of modern urbanity under capitalism where a male solitary figure is loitering (Lauster 2007; Milburn 2010;

W. Benjamin 1997). He is a detached observer who is skimming through the city with a voyeuristic curiosity and consuming the sights

Figure 3.7: Revelations during Walking: A 'haunted' house where residents have urged visitors not to enter to enquire about the matter (source: author).

Figure 3.8: Lost professions: Ayurvedic doctors of Kumartuli (source: author)

As a woman walking in Chitpur, it was impossible for me to feel like I am in a dream world of urban spectacle produced under capitalism. Chitpur is an urban labyrinth but in the twenty-first century Kolkata, it is located at the margin of capitalist modernity's aesthetic sensibility. As a woman, it was a far-fetched idea to loiter around the street, without any purpose, alone, for the pleasure of watching the street life while protecting myself from the male gaze. Therefore, I always had a purpose while walking. I walked

not to shut myself off from the surroundings but to engage with people. Sometimes, I was armed with a camera and it was the intention of digital mapping of various activities along the Road which made people talk to me. Other days, I would carry a clipboard like a surveyor to document how old the practices are and the shop keepers would start talking to me. On other days I would walk to meet someone at some junction of the Road who knows the place better than me. In Kumartuli often it was Bijoy *babu* or Souradeep, both with deep knowledge of the neighbourhood.[42] They will show me ancillary workshops hidden inside narrow alleyways, dilapidated houses marked as 'ghost affected' ones, temporary workshops seeped into muddy fields, obscure plaques of famous yesteryear Ayurvedic doctors (figure 3.7 and 3.8). I would walk with friends who are equally interested in 'old Kolkata' and behave as a subject expert. I would walk with new members of the craft collective repeatedly and introduce them to the dust, heat, and noise of the Road. I walked with heritage walk professionals to see the neighbourhood from someone else's eye. During such walks, I sometimes invited them to eat with me in an 88-year-old eatery, locally known as Cabins and try out their fish pakora or mutton cutlet. Sometimes they asked me to walk inside a stranger's house in my own neighbourhood and a seventeenth-century terracotta shiv temple would be revealed in front of me. I walked to buy my everyday essentials from Chitpur Road. From grocery to *itar* (a fragrance or perfume) to a wall clock, I walked from Bagbazaar via Barabazaar to Lalbazaar and found everything that I might need. Walking made houses, objects, stories, events appear accidentally. Walking showed me malls, shops, bazaars, factories, temples, clubs, courtyards, new flats, slums, aristocratic houses; the vibrancy and stark contrast of the street life of Chitpur. Walking was the start of reconnection and immersion with the city, my home, and my field.

3.6. The geopolitics and bodypolitics of knowledge production[43]

Positionality entails acknowledging aspects of identity such as race, class, caste, sexuality, linguistic grouping, and other markers of social positioning that situates, ranks, and categorises us in society. Following a long tradition of the feminist and emerging decolonial methodology, I will do a critical self-reflection on my positionality and its material consequences on knowledge production through this research (McDowell

[42] The suffix *babu* is added after the names of elderly gentlemen to show respect in Bengali language.
[43] See (Ramón Grosfoguel 2007) for a detailed discussion on this.

1992; Rose 1997; Sultana 2007; 2019). I do not claim 'disembodied and unlocated neutrality and objectivity of the ego-politics of knowledge' (Ramón Grosfoguel 2007, 214). By acknowledging the situated nature of this knowledge production, I consciously dispute the objective nature of positivist research (Haraway 1988). During the fieldwork, I was aware of my identity as an unmarried woman of high caste, who is originally from the area but left the city ten years ago and achieved social mobility via education. These identities are not intrinsic categories, they 'intersect with institutional, geopolitical and material aspects of their positionality' (Nagar 2002, 182). These intersecting, diverse identities make positionality a relative, contingent, and contested terrain in fieldwork. It demands negotiation between various research groups at certain points where a researcher's affiliation as self/other, insider/outsider, upper/lower class/caste overlaps, contradicts and diverges (Dwyer and Buckle 2009; Mohammad 2001; Mullings 1999; Giwa 2015). As a PhD researcher based in the UK who went back to do her fieldwork in her hometown Chennai, India, Shakthi's autoethnographic account identifies how our 'our research questions, our experience of fieldwork, and our analysis and writing, are all shaped by our subjective positions as researchers' (Shakthi 2020, 2). This self-reflexive analysis, divided into two sections, quoting field notes and observations is an 'explicit self-aware meta-analysis' (Finlay, 2002: 209 as quoted in (Shakthi 2020, 2).

3.6.1. Between Kolkata and Exeter: the postcolonial positionality

'We are still asking, with Spivak, what kind of anthropology subjects of the postcolony can produce, not as research informants but as scholars. What kind of world would it have to be for anthropologists not to have to travel across the world to get a degree, only to return home to find a field??' (A. Majumder 2018, N.P).

I started my fieldwork with this question in mind. As a researcher from postcolony who has travelled to the west to earn a research degree, so that the knowledge produced can be legitimised, 'native ethnographers' like me are in a complex position in the world of knowledge hierarchy.[44] Some researchers have termed this kind of positionality as

[44] While the term 'native' or 'indigenous' anthropologist has been used in literature (Narayan, 1993, further discussion in Clifford, 1997), I am conscious about the use of this term knowing the political implications of it. According to Shakthi (2020) the term 'native' ethnographer is an Eurocentric construct and through autobiographical account of skin colour in her research, she attempted to decolonise this term. I wonder whether scholars from the global north studying their own community would be subjected to such uncomfortable bracketing.

‘academic homecoming’ (Oriola and Haggerty 2012). There is a growing literature on researchers based in Northern academic institutions going back to home in the global South for fieldwork (Ite 1997; Mandiyanike 2009; Zhao 2017; McFarlane-Morris 2020). They are pointing out that, it is often forgotten that we, whose research brings them back to the field, have distanced ourselves from the field in terms of education, class, social upbringing, and migration (Narayan 1993; Srinivas 1966; Kumar 1992). Not only the location of research but also from where I am writing and speaking makes fieldwork a political and power-laden process (Abu-Lughod 2000). These categories of privilege were manifested in the field in diverse ways. As I have mentioned before Bijoy Dutta introduced me to many of the artisans in Kumartuli.

> He introduced me in a very curious way, with a lot of hand gestures, explaining the distance between India and UK and how far I live to do research on Kumartuli. He told her, ‘এ আমাদের পাড়ার মেয়ে, বাগবাজারে বাড়ি. কিন্তু থাকে ইংল্যান্ড এ. আবার রিসার্চ করছে কুমারটুলি র ওপর. ও একটু তোমাদের কাজ দেখতে চায়.’ (She is from our neighbourhood. Her house is in Bagbazaar (which is very close to Kumartuli). But she lives in England. On top of that, she is doing her research in Kumartuli. She wants to come and see how you work). (Field note, 1 September 2018)

While introducing me Bijoy *babu* made sure that my location, both in terms of my proximity to Kumartuli, yet my distance from Kolkata was presented in an illustrative manner in front of the artisans. My social embeddedness, as well as social mobility, is used here to gain access to the field. It opened some doors and made some people curious enough to talk to me. For example, Bijoy *babu* took me deep inside of some workshops where general visitors’ entry is prohibited to show fibreglass idols that were almost ready to be shipped to the UK. To my utter confusion, he told me in front of the artisans these idols are ready to take a journey across the sea to reach ‘my’ country! Was I a ‘native’ or ‘indigenous’ ethnographer in this context or someone who dwells ‘space of ‘in betweenness’ (Katz 1994, 67; Nast 1994; Zhao 2017; McFarlane-Morris 2020), in two worlds and therefore embodies a hybrid identity (Bhabha 2012). My position in the field, among the artisans, was, ’not quite the same, not quite the other’ (Minh-ha, 1997, 418).

The relative and contingent nature of positionality determined and framed my relationships differently with my two research cohorts, artisans, and civil society in the field. On one hand, among the artisans I spent a long time with, my upbringing,

schooling, and rootedness within the cultural contours of North Kolkata made my everyday interactions easy, created a common ground, and helped to bridge the class gap. Upon realising my insider status in a workshop, I noted an incident in the field diary,

> They have put a bench to block the entrance. So that no one can come in. The photographers often just come inside and their backpacks hit the fingers of the idols…I realised now I am somewhat an insider, who is not standing on the other side of the bench. (Field note, 30 September 2018)

Similarly, by virtue of the same identity as an insider, I became the trusted primary/field contact among the new members of the artist collective who are from the city yet had a limited understanding of the area. On the other hand, my higher education and affiliation to a university abroad garnered respect among the artisans and gave me a bearing among the members of civil society with cosmopolitan ties. The same education, gendered identity and middle-class background also made me distantly remote among the male-dominated urban craft workshops. Whereas, I struggled repeatedly while venturing into the privileged spaces of the artists, designers, performers, and entrepreneurs. Therefore, at various points, I became an insider and outsider for these two groups while drawing on the performative nature of my multiple subjectivities (Bondi et al. 2002). Though my conduct and demeanour remained the same irrespective of the research group, my dress and language of communication changed across these settings. Though my field was at home, I found myself in a similar position as written by Trinh Minh-ha (1997) within the scholarship of postcolonial feminism; 'she stands in that undetermined threshold place where she constantly drifts in and out. Undercutting the insider/outsider opposition, her intervention is necessarily that of both not quite an insider and not quite an outsider. She is, in other words, this appropriate 'other' or 'same'… (Minh-ha 1997, 418). In some places where I did not have someone to introduce me in such a manner, the participant information sheet did not help much. It was received but ignored and I had to introduce myself in a modest way to get an interview appointment and explain my project verbally. Many interviewees identified me as a young college girl who is doing some 'practical project' to get good marks. The majority decided to help me to get 'good marks' while a few could not give me time. A year later when I visited the field with my British supervisor some of the craftspeople realised for

the first time that I am based in the UK. I noted the consequent admiration and astonishment of the people I had spent so much time with.

Simply by the virtue of my nationality and ethnicity, I did not get unprecedented intimacy. My decentered subjectivity and geographical complexities rendered my character a complex intimacy that ‘no longer necessarily implies proximity’ (Law 2004, 3). Therefore, Mr Malakar, a *shola* artisan demanded ₹500 (£5) before giving an interview because of my affiliation with a foreign university. He candidly told me that because I am studying abroad, I have the means to pay this amount. I tried to negotiate and told him ethically I cannot arrange an interview in exchange for money. I can nevertheless buy something from his shop but he had an explanation. According to him, this is a meagre amount of money which might not even be the price of a cup of coffee in the UK! In another incident, a high school (higher secondary in Indian education) graduate and young artisan in Garanhata who makes gold threads from chunks of gold shared a concern with me. He was uncomfortable in sharing some of the knowledge of his craft with me because of my affiliation with a foreign university.

> ওখানেও সোনার কাজ হচ্ছে না তা নয়? ঠিক আছে? সবই হচ্ছে, টেকনোলজিতে হচ্ছে এবং যেটা টেকনোলজিতে হবে, যেটা হাতে হবে তার কাজ কিন্তু অন্যরকম হবে। আলাদাই হবে। হাতের কাজ আমি যেমনটি চাইবো, তেমনটি হবে। কিন্তু টেকনোলজির যেমনটা চাইবে, তেমনটা পাবেনা। আমার মনে হয়। এবারে এই যে এইসব এখান থেকে চলছে, চলে যাচ্ছে ওখানে এখানে মানে কাজটা ওখানে হয়ে গিয়ে আমাদের ইন্ডিয়ান অর্থনীতিতে কোনো প্রভাব পড়বে না কোনও। ঠিক আছে? আমি হয়তো আমাদের ভারতবর্ষের কোনও ক্ষতি করে দিচ্ছি এরকম নয় তো?
>
> It’s not that they [UK] don’t have a gold jewellery making industry. Right? There it is technology-driven whereas here the product is handmade. The quality and nature of work will be different. Okay? For handmade things, I can make it whatever way I want but the technology won’t allow that. At least I think so. Now that all this information is being shared from here to there, they might start producing more. Will it affect the Indian economy? Am I by any chance harming our Indian economy? (Jit Gayen, goldsmith interview, 20 November 2018)

I never anticipated my participants would insinuate the possibility of intellectual property theft because of my affiliation with a foreign university. Even after circulating an institutionally approved participant information sheet, these questions and insecurities emerged in few contexts. My location became epistemologically and politically important in these instances (A. Gupta and Ferguson 1997).

3.6.2. Between daughter and a single woman

I want to extend the lens of reflexivity to the gendered politics of the field. I will discuss two issues here, first how my parents' involvement in my fieldwork helped in shaping the research, second how I navigated the field as a single woman.

As Silva and Gandhi (2019) have pointed out, often as independent researchers who are used to living alone, we tend to not recognise and often are hesitant to acknowledge the assistance that our parents give during our fieldwork for the risk of being called unprofessional. Whereas there are examples of families accompanying the researcher in the field (Starrs et al. 2001; Cupples and Kindon 2003) but rarely parents are acknowledged as field assistants. Silva and Gandhi claim the position of being a 'daughter' in the field and illustrate how that identity helped them to dissuade gendered challenges in the field.

During my fieldwork, my parents played a significant role by introducing me to field contacts and accompanied me in places. I would also give them the sole credit for inspiring me to look at Chitpur in a way that prompted me to choose this area for my research work in MPhil and further on for PhD. My father is a retired school teacher whose school is located in Chitpur Road and due to that social capital, he has an extensive network of ex-students in the area. He is also an active social worker and therefore he has links with local businesses and clubs. I tapped into his professional and social network to build my contacts in the field. He introduced me to some male artisans in Kumartuli who were happy to give me interviews because they perceived me as 'Sir's daughter'. He also visited me in the female artisan's workshop sometime when I was working late to make sure that everyone knows that my family lives close by. In Garanhata, the goldsmith workshop I chose for my ethnography, is run by my father's ex-student. The student inherited the storefront and the workshop from his father (who is a goldsmith) and I found an easy entry into their private space. Both father and son know my family so well that they know me by my nickname. Therefore, I did not have to build a relationship of trust while approaching a goldsmith workshop, where each particle of gold has a monetary value. It would have been very difficult to get permission to sit for an extended period of time in a goldsmith workshop as an unknown person. The musical instrument making shop was introduced by my father's colleague. Her husband is the Dean of the music department at Rabindra Bharati University. The

university campus and the professor's quarter are located in close vicinity with the shop. The professor's family had a good relationship with the shop because their son, an aspiring classical musician, regularly fixes his musical instruments from the shop. The owner of the shop immediately started talking to me because she accompanied me and introduced me on the first day. So, my father worked as a facilitator and gatekeeper in the field in more than one way. Rather than a single unmarried young woman doing her research in the 'field', I was accepted as someone's daughter who has lived and worked in that area throughout their life.

My mother played a different role in facilitating greater ties with my interviewees. As a way of building a relationship with them and giving something back to the craftspeople, I requested her to buy artisanal products as gifts which she needed anyway. She visited the field site with me a couple of times for that purpose which made the boundary between my everyday life and the life of a researcher quite blurred (Cupples and Kindon 2003). During the Chitpur Craft Collective Art trail, I was trusted with some old musical instruments for display on the Road by the brothers of Star Harmonium. I requested my mother to come and sit there in the afternoon because I couldn't make myself available in that specific location the entire time as I was needed throughout the stretch. She started talking to a local woman and neighbouring shopkeeper while sitting there and heard some fascinating stories about the area, the aristocratic families, and the lives of the wooden mould makers living where this exhibition was taking place. By the end of the three-day art trail, the local shopkeepers became extremely helpful and friendly with me. My mother's presence played a significant role in establishing me as someone who has deep ties with her family, and not a single woman loitering in a public space (Phadke et al., 2011).

Silva and Gandhi (2019) mention, as women researching in our home countries, we are often expected to behave as 'authentic natives' (Lal 1996, 191) who follow gendered social norms and customs. Therefore, I let my participants believe that I am living with my parents as a dutiful daughter rather than letting them know I live in a separate residence which would have been deemed immoral. Though in Chitpur itself, barring some curiosity, my status as an unmarried single young woman was not probed much, however, during my visit to a rural artisan's house, I was made aware of the significance of this gendered identity of mine. My parents again played a significant role in that

situation. My field note documents,

> My parents accompanied me to Birpur at the request of Shankar *babu*…he told my parents he was very surprised to see a single woman in the train station last time. He also kind of complained to my parents that I didn't 'check' him properly to verify whether he is the right person to walk with. Therefore, to make sure I am 'safe' he maintained a proper distance with me while walking from the train station to his house. He immediately introduced me to his wife to make sure that I am in a safe situation or to raise that confidence in me that nothing will happen here. I realised bringing my parents here has gained confidence in him about my identity and whereabouts. (Field note, 3 December 2018)

The excerpt suggests that the rural artisan felt comfortable talking to me in front of my parents. I think more than his concern about my safety, it was my presence; a single young woman visiting his village seemed less conspicuous when I visited the same place with my parents. Parental accompaniment established me as a trustworthy researcher in front of his family, friends and even neighbours, who came to visit us during the interview. This ethnography made 'work and life … entangled in the embodied, situational, relational practice' of everyday life (Cerwonka and Malkki 2007, 6). At one-point, the involvement of my parents in the fieldwork made the boundary between professional and personal almost dissolved because even after I left the 'field' the rural artisan's family visited my family on occasions.

At this point, it is worth reflecting on what this blurring of the boundary between field and everyday life entails for research. In other words, how the immersive nature of ethnography extends the meaning of what counts as fieldwork. What implication does it have on research and to what extent the engagement with the research community is immersive? I grapple with the question of whether as a postcolonial scholar one is truly able to unlearn their privileges during the process of immersive fieldwork? The question of distance between the contemporary artists and the vernacular craftspeople that have been discussed in Chapter 7, might have prevailed in my own interaction with the craft community. Hence I do not claim that the immersion was reciprocal in nature. Section 3.6 acknowledges the interpersonal difference that my caste, education and mobility grants and immersive ethnography does not make it go away. The hierarchy of power between the researcher and the researched remained and made the ethnography a space for negotiating personal geographies. These differences run underneath and one

needs to accept a humble and grounded understanding of privilege through the relationship of care and nurture.

Moreover, as a result of nurturing intimacy with the field, the fieldwork never seemed to end and prolonged the research process. With digital mediums, I remained connected to the participants and organisations. Even when I left the physical location of the field, I carried my field relationships with me, which I value. Nevertheless, it was hard to draw a line to the so-called data collection process when one's life is intertwined with the field. In order to start analysing and writing, I realised a distance, both in terms of physical and metaphorical, from the field was essential and immersive ethnography limits that possibility.

3.6.2.1. Woman in the field: reflection on safety and access

Often gendered identity has a role in conducting fieldwork safely (Sampson and Thomas 2003) and gender does shape research methods and epistemology (Billo and Hiemstra 2013; Cope 2002). Authors have also commented that ethnographic knowledge is shaped by the 'interactions that bring sex, gender, and the body to the fore…[yet they] often become residual data or are ignored altogether'(Hanson and Richards 2017, 601). This section aims to document those moments so that they don't get written-off from the research journey. Sometimes parents' presence may make the environment safer when working in a male-dominated sector like the urban craft sector of Chitpur. I was, nevertheless, not willing to burden my parents with that responsibility and tried to ignore the gendered constraints of the fieldwork. I remained vigilant about my attires in the workshop but visiting hours started to defy a 9-5 work routine. My curiosity/enthusiasm to document every step of the making process would make me visit the workshop in odd hours. There was also the question of accessing some interviewees in spaces that sometimes felt unsafe and uncomfortable. The idol makers and the goldsmith workshops are two such spaces where the artisanal labourers live and work.

The workshop in Garanhata's goldsmith quarter had a toilet and bathroom facility inside their living and working quarters. When I would visit them in the late morning and afternoon, they had already finished those daily chores and started working. Sometimes they would cook in front of me, but I was never present when they needed the entire space for themselves. Moreover, I was introduced to this workshop in Garanhata by my

father. The workshop's shopfront was run by his former student; therefore, I was in a safe zone. Garanhata shares its boundary with the red-light area of Sonagachi. Keeping that in mind, I scheduled most of the interviews here during the daytime but sometimes I had to adjust according to someone's availability and visit at night. In that case, I would not walk back from here to my house, rather wait for the auto in a busy intersection nearby.

The Kumartuli workshops had a different spatial configuration and rhythm of work. The *karigar*s would take bath in the nearby river around midday and come back to the workshop which is their living space to change into dry clothes. In the beginning, when I was not aware of their work routine I would have been present in the workshop around midday when the *karigar*s came back from the river. I quickly left the workshop realising they would need the space and avoided visiting the workshop from 1-3 pm which was their time to take bath, eat lunch and take some rest. As the main festival approached, Kumartuli worked till midnight. I decided to spend some late nights observing some of the last-minute work. I was comfortable in the Kumartuli workshop because I was in a female artisan's workshop. She would always remind me not to walk back at night and take the auto, like a responsible guardian. I would stay at my parent's home because it was closer to Chitpur if I was out till late at night. Only once a rather difficult situation arose and I felt quite unsafe even when I was a few steps from my parents' house. The *karigar*s immediately decided to walk with me till I reached home and I realised not only the female artisan, but the *karigar*s also developed a role of guardianship for my safety at night. These interactions establish that rather than an impediment, in many cases my identity as a single young woman made it possible to build a trusting relationship with the craftspeople.

3.7. Collaborating with artists: crafting a collective

My fieldwork started with an unexpected proposition in a conference in Kolkata where I met Sucheta for the second time, an artist who has been doing a socially engaged art project in the Chitpur area for four years now. She is a founder member of an artist collective called Hamdasti which awards artists and creative practitioners a year-long artist residency in Chitpur known as Chitpur Local fellowship. This major encounter in the field prompted me to reshape my research question to understand how civil society groups intervene in Chitpur's craft sector and shape the heritage discourse of the city

(see Chapters 6 and 7). While designing my research method I was particularly aware of the extractivist nature of social science research and keen on 'giving back' to the craft community in some way (Wynne-Jones et al. 2015). I borrow the term 'extractivism' from indigenous poet, writer and academic Leanne Betasamosake Simpson who has used this in terms of colonial and capitalist exploitation of indigenous knowledge, women, land, and environment. How do we then decolonise our research practice? Simpson says, 'The alternative is deep reciprocity. It's respect, it's relationship, it's responsibility, and it's local' (in Klein, 2013. N.P). With that in mind and considering the economic and temporal constraints of a doctoral project, I thought of a public ethnography prospect for my research before the start of my fieldwork (Mosher 2013; Lassiter 2005). Hence, upon meeting Sucheta in early August 2018, I expressed my interest to create an interactive story map of Chitpur crafts as a method of research dissemination. She expressed her interest to create a forum for artists, researchers, designers, and entrepreneurs to come together for the benefit of crafts and craftspeople of Chitpur. This mutual interest in Chitpur crafts eventually led to the formation of Chitpur Craft Collective (hereafter CCC) and an art trail during my fieldwork period. Therefore, working with the artist collaborators transformed my research design, implementation, and dissemination platform. First, I am going to discuss how this research process unfolded during my fieldwork and then I will reflect on the nature of this collaborative research by engaging with the issue of power.

In the very first meeting in August 2018, three artists, a recently graduated landscape architect from Berkley, and I, planned a proposal for fundraising. From developing further products of Chitpur crafts, creating maps, culturally activating the area, promotion to physical interventions through signage and urban furniture, the group produced concrete and ambitious plans (detailed in field note from 10 August 2018). I unveiled the suggestion for a future collective in an art exhibition of Hamdasti's Chitpur Local project at Max Mueller Bhavan Kolkata on 22 September in front of a wider audience. Slowly through Sucheta's network, performers, designers, entrepreneurs started joining our meetings. In the first four months, I was co-writing and developing the proposal for the funding application to start the work of the collective. I was also joining the team for repeated walks in Chitpur to connect with the craftspeople of Chitpur and inviting them into this venture. These meetings and walks were also my sites

of ethnography and I was a researcher-observer as well as a member who was documenting these encounters. The initiative gained a sudden momentum when the Kolkata Festival selected Chitpur and asked the artists to organise a three-day community art project in February 2019. The West Bengal tourism department granted funds to Hamdasti for the same. For the three-day art trail in Chitpur, I took the responsibility of creating a digital story map, connected the team with a few local businesses/craftsmen with whom I was doing ethnography and helped in curating the trail. For my research, the trail was a means of public engagement and outreach. It was also an event to observe the dialogue between vernacular craftspeople and contemporary artists/designers (figure 3.9).

Figure 3.9: Observing the interaction between craftspeople and an artisanal boutique owner (source: author)

A website was created, and I contributed with my research material on the brief description of Chitpur crafts. Team CCC grew in number, expertise, agendas and finally, we had four major groups working on activating the area through art, craft (organising workshop and products), improving access (through walks, maps, signage) and research (with CSSSC as academic collaborator). I continue to help the team by connecting them with local interlocutors and writing briefs for the map, signage, and research team as part of an ongoing collaborative process. In the spirit of collaboration and to communicate the research beyond the academy, I have also shared my reflection of the collective's socially engaged art project with the main artist. Throughout the process, I

slipped into various roles, from researcher collaborator to observer as an ethnographer to a facilitator to activist. As Routledge (1996) says in the article, 'Third Space as Critical Engagement', in this method, 'I envision a Deleuzian enfolding of academic and activist interests and identities' and subjectivities (Routledge 1996, 414).

I view this research method as a collaboration between two equal partners in the field, myself, and the core artist group, unlike emerging collaborations in geographical research where a researcher collaborates with marginalised social groups with the intention of co-production of knowledge (Fudge et al 2019). Nevertheless, it is also important to look at the collaboration between the artists/designers and the craftsmen, via me, critically as they also constituted the research process and informed the knowledge production. Collaborative research denotes a wide range of applications and can unfold in several ways (Lassiter 2008; C. Gibson 2006) but risks a 'narcissistic pleasurability' of the researcher (Kesby 2007, 2827). The crucial motivation in these kinds of research should be to challenge existing hierarchies of power inherent in a research process. Following post-structuralist theorisation of power where power is not a 'thing' that can be given to a community; but is something that emerges in discursive and material forms via intersubjective exchanges, I am going to critically examine this 'extra-academic engagement' as a research process (Kesby 2007, 2827). A desire for emancipatory politics and the benefit of the community was the guiding principle of the collaborative research method. Still, I would point out that my field note from the CCC meetings consistently focuses on phrases such as 'involving the community', 'making contact with the community', 'building relation with the community'. These phases suggest 'we' wanted to 'give' power to the community as a valued and respected member of the collective rather than the community coming up with research ideas/agendas and shaping the research on their terms. Therefore, the initiation and terms of the partnership between the artists/academics/designers/craft entrepreneurs and the craft practitioners were driven by the former group where I played my role as 'academic-expert'. Though the craft community exercised their agency, negotiated, and presented their views, they did not influence the research question and analysis. The democratisation of knowledge production remained a far cry in these instances. I would argue this collaborative research process created a space for contact and encounter between people of diverse fields with a common interest to generate monetary benefits

and resources back to the local craftspeople (Askins and Pain 2011) but I remain cognizant about the limitations of using the term 'collaborative research' in my fieldwork.

3.8. Documenting historical sources

Part of my research question asks how the crafts evolved in the city and trace the historicity of these practices in relation to their present heritage claim. Therefore, I was interested in situating the craft practices within a historical trajectory establishing their genealogy on the Road. Chitpur Road and some of the neighbourhood's history are available widely in secondary materials (B. Gupta and Chalia 1995; Nair 1987; Basu 2014; Sukumar Sen 1990). I was more interested to find out the socio-spatial history of the crafts in these neighbourhoods. Geographies of craft practices have been approached from historical perspectives in Thomas's (2018) work on 20th-century craft guilds. Patchett (2017) has traced the journey of an apprentice to offer a historical geographic analysis to understand how knowledge, skill and learning achieve new meaning and create new communities of practice. My initial readings suggested apart from Kumartuli's idol-making sector, the three other crafts in Chitpur Road neighbourhoods have not received adequate attention among local historians. I decided to approach this question from two methodological perspectives. First, I conducted archival research to gather written information about these crafts. Secondly, my interviews consisted of a substantial amount of oral history of the neighbourhood and biographical history of the craftspeople in these neighbourhoods. So, my intention was to critically evaluate the nature of official institutional repositories and understand the gaps in those sources to complement them with oral history to reconstruct the microhistory of these crafts in four neighbourhoods.

In pursuit of tracing these crafts in Chitpur I visited the British Library in London (April 2018), the West Bengal State archive in Kolkata, West Bengal Secretariat library archive in Writers building Dalhousie, Kolkata Municipal Corporation archive in Town Hall Kolkata and National Library Kolkata (between March-May 2019). As a social scientist who is most used to working among people, I found it challenging at first to navigate the world of files and documents. Every repository has a vastly different organisation of their collection, the process of access, selection, procurement, condition of materials, documentation, and restriction. I had to learn 'how to approach archivists, how to find

materials of all types, how to handle the collection and maintenance of archival materials, how to organize and access archival material' (L'Eplattenier 2009, 70). In the British Library one can photograph documents, whereas in the West Bengal State Archive one is not allowed to take a phone inside. WB secretariat library had the facility to photocopy material and in the Town Hall archive taking photographs was authorised after permission. I learnt as I went along what constitutes the archival research process and the kinds of documents that are available as evidence. Because of my highly localised/spatialised nature of enquiry rather than a temporal one, it was difficult to find the information I was looking for. I was aware of the silences and erasures in colonial archives and who gets to be represented by the administration. Therefore, I looked beyond traditional archival files and reports and consulted photographs, paintings, advertisements in almanacs and street directories. There were moments of serendipity when I found what I was looking for but most of the time I was aware of what was missing from the documents (Gaillet 2012).[45] Table 3.4 is a list of the documents that I went through in the archives-

Archives	**Materials Consulted**
British Library	28 Photographs and painting collection focusing on the street scene and of Chitpur spanning between eighteen and twentieth century
	Indian Labour Gazette Vol 1, 1944
	List of Patents granted from 1872-1879
	India Industrial Commission 1916-18 Calcutta Industries, Industrial and Technical Education, Cottage Industries,
	Report on the survey of Cottage Industries in Bengal 1929
	Cottage Industries in Bengal, Development of Industries, Bengal 1924
	The Census of Calcutta 1866
	On the improvement of Bengal Pottery
	The Cottage Industries of Bengal and what government is doing to encourage them 1936
	The Journal of Industry and Trade
	Bengal Industries Bulletin

[45] I am aware of the following texts which enquire about the silences/absences/erasure in archives. Farge, Arlette. 2013. *The Allure of the Archive*. Translated by T. Scott-Railton. New Haven: Yale University Press. Kumar, Arun. 2020. Letters of the 'Labouring Poor: The Art of Letter Writing in Colonial India'*. Past and Present*, 246(1), 149-190. Finkelstein, Maura. 2019. *The Archive of Loss.* Durham; London: Duke University Press. Singh, Julietta. 2018. *No Archive will restore you.* Santa Barbara: Punctum Books. Bahadur, Gaiutra. 2013. *Coolie Woman: The Odyssey of Indenture.* London: C Hurst & Co Publishers Ltd. Stoler, Ann Laura. 2002. 'Colonial archives and the arts of Governance'. *Archival Science*, 2(1-2), 87-109. Hartman, Saidiya. 2019. *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Social Upheaval.* New York: W.W. Norton and Company.

State Archive of West Bengal	Commerce department
	Return showing the Trade of Calcutta 1930-31
	Gold thread Industry
	Supplementary Catalogue of additional samples of Indian manufactures
Bengal Secretariat Library	Cottage Industries in relation to Bengali industrial program 1941
	Economic survey of small industries 1954
	Handbook of Indian products (Art Manufacturers and Raw materials) 1883
	Industrial Arts of India 1880
	Lecture on the Arts and Manufacturers of India 1852
	Report on the existing Arts and Industries in Bengal 1890
	Report on Development of Cottage Industries in Bengal 1921
	Survey of Small Industries units in Urban areas of West Bengal 1969-1971
	Report on the pottery industry: a type study
	Classified list of Indian Produce contributed to the Amsterdam Exhibition of 1883
	Descriptive Catalogue of Indian Produce Contributed to the Amsterdam 1883
	London International Exhibition of 1873; Detailed list of Article contributed by Bengal
	Indo-colonial Exhibition, London 1886
	London Great Exhibition of 1851
National Library	P M Bakchi New Directory Almanack 1963, 1971
	Gupta Press Almanack 1917, 1941
	A History of Calcutta's Streets
	Kolkata Street Directory 1915
	Calcutta Metropolitan Development Authority Reports
	Annual Report of the Calcutta Improvement Trust 1912, 1957, 1958, 1959, 1960, 1964
KMC Archive	The Calcutta Municipal Gazette 1925, 1962,1963

Table 3.4: List of documents consulted in the Archives

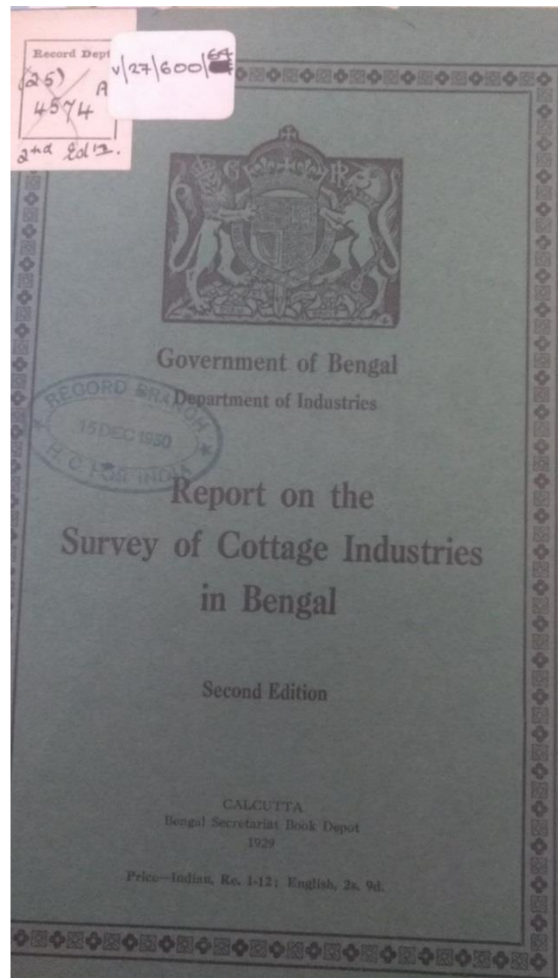

Figure 3.10: Crafts under the heading of cottage industry which emphasises the need for institutional education (source: British Library record)

During my data collection, I realised the colonial administration had registered the major crafts (including pottery which can be relatable to my study) under the category of cottage industries (figure 3.10). What caught my attention specifically is the overemphasis on the lack of institutional education among 'workers' in the newly created field of 'industrial art'. Nevertheless, the critiques which can be emerged from these documents could not be addressed for the purpose of my immediate research question, the reconstruction of neighbourhood specific craft history (addressed in section 7.2.2 concerning the distinction between contemporary artists and vernacular craftspeople). The street directory, along with some excerpts from the Calcutta Municipal Corporation gazette turned out to be extremely helpful in that context. The sources from the British Library also helped in understanding Chitpur's changing pattern of the spatial organisation from the eighteenth to the twentieth century. Considering archival research was a secondary focus on the field, I could not visit newspaper archives

and thoroughly review vernacular literature of the nineteenth and twentieth century to address my research question. Therefore, the further scope of work remains in this area.

Here, I would like to point out the limitations of colonial archives which traditionally exclude subaltern voices as astutely demonstrated by the work of Subaltern studies collective in their critique of elitist historiography of Indian nationalism (Guha 1982). The works that emerged from this genre of intellectual history draws our attention to the complex narrative nature of historical storytelling through 'historical fieldwork' (S. Amin 1996). Another important mention would be the pluralised and deconstructed nature of a historian's archival journey in India (Dirks 2015). Therefore, I approached history outside the domain of written and documented records and included craftspeople's oral accounts of these neighbourhoods to claim legitimacy for people's history (P. Thompson 2000). Geographers have used oral history to ask questions about land development (Lewis 1992), environmental change (Stevens 1996), heritage management and landscape archaeology (Riley and D.C. Harvey 2005) and over all the issue of place, scale, memory, remembrance, identity and lived experience in geographical research (Riley and D.C. Harvey 2007; Ward 2012). Issues around partial truths, contradictory evidence, and messiness of oral history method in reconstructing past geographies have also been addressed (Perramond 2001). Thomas's (2018) work locates the silences in the official record of craft guild archives and explores sources from other organisations such as Dartington Hall Trust. Patchett (2016) employs ethnographic skill and practice-based methodology in a taxidermy workshop and stitches it with instructions from historic craft manuals. While reconstructing the micro-history of the neighbourhood specific crafts, I considered reminiscence, stories, eyewitness accounts and memories of a place as oral history and juxtaposed them with the written evidence. The narrative which I then constructed is my attempt to connect stories, sequences, and written materials to explain my interpretation of the craft's emergence in these neighbourhoods. The historical research was not an attempt to create a master narrative of Chitpur's craft history but present multiple possibilities behind its emergence.

3.9. After field yet remaining with the field

I will now move on to the next stage of the research process which starts with the return from fieldwork with the written field notes, voices, interviews, objects, and ongoing encounters with the field mediated through virtual connections. I worked through how

to process the 'data' and made the journey back to my office desk at Exeter University from Chitpur Road. This section divided into two parts, translation and analysis will address the process of making sense of my field work.

3.9.1. A note on language and translation

In *Hungry Translations: Relearning the World Through Radical Vulnerability,* Richa Nagar says translation is 'a dynamic, multidirectional process of ethical and politically aware mediation among otherwise impermeable local diversities—a process that always hungers for new political possibilities that we may never have imagined before' (Nagar 2019, 27).[46] Considering what Nagar said, the PhD research has been a task of translation in a rhetorical and literal sense, through each step of the process: from choosing the field and the institution, the research questions and fieldwork, to the identification of an analytical language. In other words, I was conscious that the PhD research needs to be aware of two kinds of translation. First, a translation from every day to the academy; while keeping in mind not to translate a specific life-world and their conceptual categories into the rubric of universal categories produced by European enlightenment thought (Chakrabarty 2000). Yet what translation did in between such incommensurable context is that it brought out the 'partly opaque relationship we call ''difference''' (Chakrabarty 2000, 17). The second task was the translation between two languages, my mother tongue Bengali or *Bangla* and English, the de facto lingua franca in the international academic scholarship (Garcia-Ramon 2003; Müller 2021). I have intimate knowledge about the first language and of the culture which is produced by the language. Therefore, translation from Bengali to English was 'the most intimate act of reading' (Spivak 2009, 201) the phases/words used in interviews, texts I consulted, practices I observed and the landscape I dwelled in. Issues of working in a cross-cultural context and with multiple languages have been discussed in geography and I will draw in from this literature to explain how I navigated the politicised domain of multiple meaning-making through translation in my research (Müller 2007; Sidaway et al. 2004; F. M. Smith 1996). In this section, I will reflect on the choices and essential considerations I made as a researcher and translator and explain the translation process.

[46] Page number obtained from individually downloaded e-chapter 'staging story'.

Being a multilingual researcher, I took interviews in both Bengali and English during the fieldwork. The craftspeople spoke solely in Bengali and as a vernacular speaker, it was important for me to connect with them through the same language. Some of the members of civil society groups, on the other hand, choose to speak in English and I continued the conversation in English, knowing conversing in English is a marker of class, education, and distinction in India. By choosing two different languages with two groups of research participants, I used my proficiency in both languages as a 'currency' to gain access to the worlds of the interviewees (Srivastava 2006). However, there were moments when I was unable to translate the ideas into a comprehensive understanding. A section from my field note will help to understand this.

> I realised it is most difficult to find a common language to communicate about what we are doing. Both spoke in Bengali but he interpreted what we were saying in his own way which is not what we were saying. I tried to simplify things as much as possible but I also didn't have much idea what we are going to do at the festival. I didn't know how to explain 'Art trail' to him. He wasn't sure who is going to come, why we are doing this, what is public art and things like that. (Field note, 13 January 2019)

In the above case, a meeting with the craftsperson before the art trail shows my exasperation in translating concepts like Art trail and public art, which I became recently aware of through the artists and for which I had no Bengali vocabulary. I started transcribing the recorded interviews by the end of the fieldwork. The translation is offered for the readers only in the last stage of the write-up. It was a deliberate decision, jointly taken with my supervisory team that the transcribed interviews in Bengali will not be translated simultaneously into English to remain with the idioms, phrases, meanings and experiences of the participants while thinking about analytical frameworks. This decision also 'minimise(s) the application of an external theoretical linguistic perspective (that of English) on a set of data and keep them in their authentic form' (Srivastava 2006, 217). By not doing the translation at this stage I avoided adding another layer of interpretation and kept the nuances of the language alive which became essential later. For example, the word 'craft' itself can have multiple meanings and can be translated into more than one word. Most colloquially it is known as 'হাতের কাজ' or 'হস্ত শিল্প'. A participant used the word 'কারু শিল্প' which indicates a rather pure version of the language. If I translate them verbatim in English the first one would say 'hand

work'; the second one 'hand art/industry' (শিল্প *pronounced as shilpo* can be art or industry) or I can use handicraft in both cases if I move away from literal translation. The third one can be translated as artwork or craft but during a colloquial conversation I cannot use the word 'কারু শিল্প'! Therefore, I let the participants come up with their own words for the work they are involved in and worked with those categories of linguistic expressions. During the process of analysis, I thought through/worked with the Bengali quotes and presented them verbatim in the thesis to understand what cultural meaning those words might entail (for details see Chapter 8). I placed the quotes in Bengali script along with the English writing as a political and pedagogical act to decolonise the language hierarchy that often exists between European and non-European languages in academic publication. The obliteration of linguistic script 'privileges communication and knowledge/theoretical production in the former and subalternize the latter as sole producers of folklore or culture but not of knowledge/theory'(Mignolo 2000 cited in Grosfoguel 2007, 217). Though my conceptual blocks emerged from the field and throughout the thesis I made a conscious decision/effort to remain and connect with the scholarship coming from the global south, I could not use vernacular phases as conceptual categories. Anglophone hegemony in higher education meant that I could never engage with vernacular conceptual categories. Yet I remained conscientious about the debates I was engaging with and it is reflected in my citation practice (Mott and Cockayne 2017).

Srivastava (2006) pointed out that as multilingual researchers we often struggle between 'the language of the data' and the 'language one thinks in' (216). These two domains intersected in a complex way during my research. I am well versed in speaking, listening, reading, and writing in Bengali but over the last ten years, I conditioned myself in thinking and writing in English to move into anglophone academia. So, while noting down the field notes in the workshops I seamlessly moved between languages, between Bengali and English (figure 3.11). Bengali came to me naturally when writing down processes of making or description of objects as quoted by the craftspeople. In the case of my observations or reflections, I mostly used English because I have lost some vocabulary in Bengali and gained some in English. This is a moment when English became 'the language I think in'.

Figure 3.11: A page from my field diary showing notes in both languages (source: author)

While typing up notes from diary to laptop again English became the chosen lingua franca because I was sending those notes to my supervisors in the UK regularly. This was a challenging time when I started to translate the processes of making, life histories and everyday life worlds of craftspeople in English when some of them were described to me solely in Bengali. Often, I could not find English words or phrases to describe what an object (for example *taat* in the idol maker's workshop or *buli* in the mould maker's shop) or a process (*tar dola* or *chela* in the goldsmith's workshop) means in English. I decided to use the Bengali word in the fieldnote in such cases. Many of the documents that I consulted such as the street directory or the almanacs or the organisation newsletters collected from the goldsmith's quarter and many books were in Bengali. It is also important to flag out that before the start of the fieldwork I translated the institutionally approved English participant information sheet and the consent sheet into Bengali (appendices 3 and 4).

In both cases rather than a literal translation, conceptual equivalence was followed while translating long quotes or excerpts. Conceptual equivalence is described as a method adapted when the researcher knows the language, culture, and the context of the data collection intimately and shows a deep commitment to the cultural politics of translation (Birbili 2000; Temple 1997; Temple and Young 2004). This makes the knowledge produced through translation a subjective and situated practice (Rose 1997) and reveals the otherwise invisible translator. According Müller (2007) achieving equivalence both in terms of meaning and concept is an impossible task for a translator-researcher because translation is a space 'where meaning hops into the spacy emptiness between two named historical languages' (Spivak 1993, 180 as quoted in Müller 2007). Equivalence here refers to the most challenging task of translation where the complexity of meaning and cultural expression of the source language needs to be transmitted to the target language. For example, in this quote, used in Chapter 5, there are idioms in the local language for which I couldn't do a word-by-word literal translation into English.

'আমি যেমন টপটপ কাজ জানি, মেঝের থেকে ওপর অবধি, ও পারবে না'

I know how to make an idol from scratch. He doesn't.

Here, I attempted to translate from idiom to semiotic expression and from singularity of a cultural expression to a more generalized meaning (Spivak 2000). I realize that some of the nuances of the meaning have been lost in this case. Hence, I acknowledge that aiming for equivalence was hard to achieve during this process. Nevertheless, this also entails that there is 'no objective equivalence (in translation) but rather a contingent interpretation' (Müller 2007, 211). This brings us to the last section of this chapter, coding, analyzing, and writing.

3.9.2. When people become data: coding and analysing

Qualitative data analysis process has been often described as 'the black hole' (in St. Pierre and Jackson 2014, 715 quoting Lather 1991) where little work has been done (Bryman and Burgess 1994; Silverman 2006). This is the point when often participants' words, interview transcripts, field notes are used as 'brute data waiting to be coded, labelled…perhaps entered into statistical programs to be manipulated by computers' (St. Pierre and Jackson 2014, 715). They have critiqued the process of mechanised coding from two perspectives. First it is premised on a Cartesian principle that data

needs to be ‘broken down’ to find a solution (from (Derrida 1978). Second, the interviews are often fragmented into decontextualized ‘codable elements’ (from (Nespor and Barylske 1991). Keeping these discomforts in mind I submitted my fieldnotes and transcribed interviews to the software, NVivo. I used NVivo to code the field notes and the interviews but instead of automated coding opted for a manual coding format which allows the researcher to be iterative, reflexive and engage in continuous meaning-making from materials to concepts/ideas and the other way around (Srivastava and Hopwood 2009). I would describe the process of coding in two ways. It was an inductive coding or etic coding where I went through the texts meticulously, abstracted meanings and categorised them under a theme/code that emerges from the word or sentence or a long section. Strauss (1987) has termed this process ‘open coding’ where one would go through all transcribed data line by line and annotate them to organise texts with similar meaning under one theme. Hence my process followed an inclusive and open coding format. In other words, the meaning is derived from the interview or the field note under investigation keeping in mind the research questions. Two issues were in mind during this process: (1). what the interview/field note is telling me (through my theoretical, subjective, ontological, and epistemological lens); and (2) what I want to know from them (connect the subjective lenses with research objective) (Srivastava and Hopwood 2009, 78).

With the risk of reducing the words into numbers, I had three categories of ‘data’, artisanal interview, civil society interview and field diary. I proceeded with coding under these three nodes and later merged them when connections or contradictions emerged during my writing. First individual codes, which Attride-Stirling (2001) termed as ‘basic codes’ were ascribed. Second, they constituted major themes or ‘organising themes’. For example, in the artisanal interview, some of the organising themes (twelve in total) were craft economy, urban landscape, sense of heritage, the network of places, memory, family history, everyday work, silences, words people used (instead of ‘craft’). If I take up one theme from these overarching themes (organising themes) and look at the sub-themes (basic code) that will give an idea about the detailed nature of this coding process. Under the craft economy theme, I had diversification, hierarchy, migration, technologies, process, repair, seasonal nature, commercial aspect, organisation. Similarly, some of the organising codes for civil society interviews (sixteen

in total) were capitalising on heritage and skill, craft value, the nostalgia of the city, knowledge of local history, governance, and popular politics. The field diary section (a total of twenty themes) had sections from archival notes to methodological reflections to heritage management to the life of labour. As mentioned in the artisanal interview coding process, under the categories of the majority of the organising themes detailed subthemes were created to give a nuanced reading of the statements. The codes indicated events, stories, actions, sentiments, and even non-relevant issues. This coding process where sections with common and salient themes were grouped together helped to condense a substantial number of spoken/written words into a manageable format which helped me to initiate an analysis. Though Attride-Stirling (2001) has recommended a global theme should emerge from the network of organising themes, my analysis did not follow this straightforward process. Between coding and analysis, I followed an intuitive and non-linear process where interpretations were derived from 'empirical data' in relation to my epistemological commitment for each chapter. I would also mention that patterns and analysis started emerging by the end of fieldwork even before the formal coding process started following a grounded theory approach (Charmaz 2013). A Charmaz school of grounded theory focuses on developing an argument about the world of research where instead of looking at theory as a noun she proposes theorising as practice/verb (Apramian et al. 2017). During the coding, I started writing memos as and when ideas emerged due to close reading and some time listening to the material. The codes helped to organise the materials thematically but they were not 'rigidly reproduced' as an explanatory framework in the next stage (Crang 2005, 224).

I started the drafting process at this stage and printed out the coded materials to make further comprehensive analysis while developing an argument for each chapter. This process has been 'maddeningly recursive' (Agar 1986, 28) as well as 'messy, ambiguous, time-consuming, creative, fascinating process' (Marshall and Rossman 2014, 112). It has a close resonance with narrative analysis from a dialogic and constructivist approach (Charmaz 2013; Riessman 2008; Esin et al., 2013). This analysis pays attention to the diversity and contradiction of meaning-making. As well as a power relation in a research context which co-constitute narratives and situate them within a wider context. As an ethnographer, writing style became important at this point (Clifford and Marcus 1986).

I made a balance between what my respondents were saying, keeping in mind the issue of representation and voice and how as a researcher I connect those narratives or interpret those narratives within the broader conceptual framework to bring new knowledge within academic scholarship. In other words, the narratives justified the argument that I was making while also addressing the question of why someone would narrate that story or behave in a certain way with the help of existing conceptual apparatus situated within an epistemological standpoint. For example, Chapter 4 explains craftspeople's relationship with the urban land and various forms of urbanity through concepts, modalities and patterns coming from the scholarship of Southern Urbanism. Craft economy (Chapter 5) is intentionally explained through diverse economies (following Gibson-Graham's work) perspective to read it from an anti-essentialist standpoint which questions the capitalist framework. Later issues of structural power, governance, and politics of intentionality in economic practice are discussed as conditions of such economic practices through a postcolonial lens (following Sanyal/Gidwani and Nigam's work). This is a subjective and selective process of creating and crafting arguments from vast data where I as an author made some epistemological assertions. Through my writing style, I also reveal my presence in the field and the thesis as a character. In some places, I present multiple interpretations of the same narrative or an observed event. For example, in Chapter 7 this is most apparent where I critically illustrate the relationship between two fractions of research participants; the craftspeople and the artist collective to bring out the complexity of artist intervention in the Road. Chapter 8 presents a series of observations and narratives to represent how different stakeholders articulate their concept of heritage. This is a reflexive chapter as well, where I look at my role in producing the heritage narrative of the Road. In the end, as an ethnographer, I used abstraction from the empirical findings which might be contestable but it emerged from a particular theoretical commitment to decolonise the heritage scholarship in India. By abstraction, I mean as a process where 'details are simplified and links and relationships made more apparent, a kind of empirical disembedding, a move away from the complexity of the concrete, a shift from the particular to the general' (Raghuram and Madge 2006, 279). Some sections of the thesis also draw connections with other studies, add, relate, and

speak to each other within the corpus of postcolonial urban studies, postcapitalist politics and critical heritage studies to find its place within a 'community of practice'.[47]

3.10. Conclusion

This chapter follows three intersecting argumentative threads addressing the methodological, political, and theoretical imperatives of a research design. It focuses on ethnography, collaborative research, and archival research as three main modes of immersion in the field. Nine-months of ethnographic research with the four craft clusters in Chitpur Road facilitated observations of their spatial, material, social and economic worlds. Spatial ethnography of the workshops and the Roads, material lives of the objects and the craftspeople and everyday economic interactions in the workshops gave an insight into their worlds. Interviews opened a window into the biographical history of their life and how they envisage their work as heritage. The journey with craftspeople, is an extension of ethnography which brings out the nuanced and networked nature of the field. Collaborative research with the artist collective indicates how power relations reorient research questions. Participant observation in the collective's meetings, walks and interviews with the members and curation of the art trail eventually led me to enquire how civil society intervenes, brings recognition, creates cosmopolitan sensitivity into heritage discourse and produces craft heritage for Chitpur (Chapter 7). Archival research and recording oral history methods were crucial to establishing the genealogies of neighbourhood-based craft history in Chitpur. This chapter attempts to give an interpretive analysis of the methods used and as a researcher how I interacted with the field. I identified how walking helped a displaced self to reconnect with the city and find the joys of experiencing the field through sensory and tactile engagements. The section on reflexivity follows a feminist and decolonial practice of asking how a researcher's multiple identities, privileges and intersubjective positions shape the research. I discuss the 'in betweenness' of a gendered postcolonial positionally in constituting and producing knowledge. My concern with translation and vernacular language and script use is explained as intervention and political possibility in the domain of knowledge. The concluding section of the chapter critiques the way post field 'data analysis' reduces people, with whom we developed a relation to data. I

[47] I thank Gautam Bhan from IIHS, Bangalore, India who inspired us to think in this way during a PhD workshop in January 2018.

claim that by remaining with the field, the analytical process was tied to an epistemological commitment of listening and learning rather than representing subaltern voices. A constructive process was followed where meanings and interpretations were derived from narratives to situate them in conversation with theories from the global south. Therefore, through these methodologies, each chapter of the thesis builds a theoretical argument that is strongly based on empirics. This is an exercise to develop 'theory as practice' which is based on constructive abstraction rather than generalisation.

Chapter Four
The Emergence of Urban Crafts and Making of Selective Heritage

4.1. Introduction

This chapter seeks to understand how the four crafts discussed in the thesis emerged in Chitpur Road and why they receive differential recognition in terms of their heritage making claims. As mentioned in the introduction, the city's heritage conservation framework hasn't considered crafts under its purview. Hence, they are outside the institutionalised heritage management framework of the local government (detailed in footnote 8). Nevertheless, there is an explicit hierarchy among the four crafts I have studied, in terms of their present value and recognition.[48] Kolkata's Durga *puja* is India's 2019 nomination for UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.[49] The idol-makers of Kumartuli are one of the consenting communities in the dossier.[50] A distinction needs to be made here; the craft itself is not nominated but the main festival for which the craftspeople have gained their fame is India's nomination. It is important to unpack the basis of the hierarchy among the four crafts to give a nuanced understanding of the field of study and to understand why some of these crafts have not entered the heritage consciousness of the local authorities. It will also help to address why the Chitpur Craft Collective worked with only a selection of crafts in the street (Chapter 7). This chapter serves two purposes: first, it reconstructs the history of these four neighbourhood-based craft practices in Chitpur Road, with the help of archival material and oral history. Through geographical and socio-political connections, it establishes why these crafts emerged in the burgeoning colonial metropolis of Kolkata.

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[48] https://ich.unesco.org/en/state/india-IN (last accessed 6 August 2021). Durga puja is an ongoing nomination from India in the UNESCO website. At present India has 13 ICH inscribed in the UNESCO list from 2008-2017. The focus is mainly on performances: ritual theatre, chanting, dance, singing, and religious festivals. Traditional brass and copper craft of utensil making among the Thatheras of Jandiala Guru, Punjab is the only craft which has been inscribed in the list in 2014. https://ich.unesco.org/en/lists?text=&country[]=00103&multinational=3&display1=inscriptionID#tabs (last accessed 13 August 2021).

[49] Durga Puja is 5 days (September or October) of the annual Hindu festival where the goddess Durga is worshipped in homes and public places in the entire country but with different names and duration of days (economic aspect of the festival is detailed in Chapter 6).

[50] https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/47557.pdf (last accessed 13 August 2021) A 227-page document presents the consent of the community. There are six categories as several groups are involved in the puja: (1) Government (tourism department); (2)Organisers (Traditional families, neighbourhood clubs, apartment complexes); (3) Image makers, artists, designers and priests; (4) Media persons and corporate sponsors; (5) scholars; (6) other supporting institutions. Two 'female image-makers' (as addressed in the letter) of Kumartuli are in this document. Full documentation including a video can be seen here: https://ich.unesco.org/en/files-2021-under-process-01119 (last accessed 13 August 2021).

Hence, their position as 'urban craft' will be explained. Second, this constructivist narrative pays attention to the question of power, exercised through their socio-political associations, which further delineates the reason for their varied historical recognition. I argue that being a faith-based craft, the idol-makers secured most heritage value historically. Whereas jewellery making, *sandesh* mould making and musical Instrument making were 'othered' in the domain of cultural production and never really achieved a reputation to claim the status of craft heritage. I unpack the caste association of these crafts as well as their patronage to understand the dominant and peripheral nature of these crafts. These factors are pertinent to the present context where some crafts thrive, and others face a vulnerable future.

The chapter is divided into four main sections which revolve around four crafts. First Kumartuli's (literally means *kumbhakar*/*kumor*/potter's neighbourhood) history is presented because the clay artisans are associated with this neighbourhood since they came to the city in the eighteenth century. Through this neighbourhood, they claim three hundred years of an unbroken tradition of this craft in the city (figure 5.12). I give an outline of the shift of the nature of their livelihood from potters to idol-makers (*mritshilpi*) which is associated with the initiation of Durga *puja* in the city. The discussion reveals even though in the early twentieth century they could not achieve material power but by moulding 'images of power' (M. Sen 2016, 219) they gained symbolic power as a community. This leads to my argument that even though they remain 'unofficial heritage'(Harrison 2013a, 15), historically the site of Kumartuli and the profession of idol-making has gained 'heritage capital' in the cultural landscape of the city.

The second section takes us to the goldsmithing quarter in the Garanhata neighbourhood. First, the goldsmiths' emergence is traced back to a culture of engraving in a neighbourhood famous for the popular print industry and industrial art education. Second, the proximity of the prostitution quarter and influx of a refugee population is attributed as major factors for this jewellery making craft's growth in this location. In this case, despite being economically pertinent, the disrepute place association of the craft devalued their position and they couldn't claim heritage value.

The third section on the wood engravers first explains what *sandesh* mould making is and the cultural association of the craft with the culinary world. The emergence of the

mould makers can be associated with the wood-cut prints of the popular print industry, yet the declining nature of the craft suggests their ingenuity to reinvent themselves with changing times has not been recognised as a craft skill itself. Consequently, they could not garner heritage capital which can give them recognition in a culturally elitist domain of heritage making in the city.

The last section takes us to the musical instrument making scene of Chitpur. First, it illustrates the musical traditions in the city to address the nature of patronage in musical instrument making. Secondly, it gives a brief overview of the courtesan culture of Chitpur Road to explain its association with the instrument making craft. Finally, it draws a connection with the dark histories of the Road and how that might have marginalised some craft practices which makes the heritage making process selective and politicised in the Road.

4.2. Potters' quarter: Kumartuli

Among the four crafts addressed in the thesis, the genealogy of Kumartuli's idol makers is most well researched (Heierstad 2017; Goldblatt 1981; Guha Thakurta 2015; Agnihotri 2001; M. Sen 2016; S. K. Das and Basak 2021; K. Dutta 2016) which reiterates the established nature of this craft, among others. The neighbourhood of কুমারটুলি/ Kumartuli itself is named after the artisanal caste. Kumartuli and its idol-making craft are iconic to Kolkata's urban history. The idol-maker or image-maker, the মৃৎশিল্পী/ *mritshilpi* (clay artist), or প্রতিমা শিল্পী/*pratima-shilpi* (idol-artist), crafts unfired clay idols for numerous annual Hindu religious worship purposes.[51] The clay image is made each year and immersed in the river after worship. Traditionally they were more relevant as a traditional artisanal caste who used to make earthen utensils for everyday use.[52] Through a series of encounters over the years the potters have become clay modellers. Compared to three other crafts the idol makers received some colonial patronage as well through the extensive network of colonial exhibitions (M. Sen 2016).

[51] I will be using the term *mritshilpi* in the thesis.

[52] Though there are more than one caste in Bengal who are involved in making idols, in Kumartuli it is mostly *'Kumbhakar'* caste with a surname of *Pal* who constitute the single most dominant group. They are locally known as *Pal-mosai*, because of their involvement in a 'ritual craft' they fall in the higher strata *(Uttam Shankara)* within the lowest Sudra caste (Goldblatt 1981).

Figure 4.1: Clay fingers for the deity are being made (source: author)

The early history of the city's neighbourhoods in the Indian quarter indicates that most of them derived their names from the inhabitants who were predominantly from one occupational caste. The name Kumartuli came from কুমার/কুমোর/*Kumar/Kumor* (potters) and the word টুলি /'*tuli*' signifies small localities; therefore, a neighbourhood of Potters.[53] There are different narratives (sometimes conflicting) and popular stories around the establishment of this settlement. A newspaper report suggests (IANS 2007), 75 acres of land was inhabited by the potters as mentioned in a 1707 journal Bengal Consultations. There is a possibility that the potter community was part of the village fabric of Sutanuti village before Kolkata began its journey as a city. Nevertheless, Cotton (1907) in his book 'Calcutta Old and New' has mentioned that the potters were initially displaced families from the flourishing Gobindapur village which was the chosen site for Fort Williams in 1757. East India Company's Kolkata Zamindar, John Zephania Holwell, instructed to distribute separate districts to the occupation/trade-based communities in 1757 (Cotton 1907; IANS 2007).[54] The name Kumartuli started appearing from 1785 as a *thana* (smaller police station which worked as a small administrative unit) and continued to

[53] Some other examples of this spatially distinct occupation/trade-based neighbourhoods are Kansaripara (Brazier), Chutarpara (carpenter), Suripara (liquor vendor), Aheritola (milk men), Colutola (oilmen), Beniatola (spice traders). Tola signifying neighbourhoods of professional groups and tuli, the diminutive of tola, signifying a much smaller quarter (Sukumar Sen 1990).

[54] The East India Company drew up a plan in the order of an Indian village community for the settlement of the Kolkata population. The Company had plans to allocate different sections of the town to different castes. It was 'resolved that all Weavers, Carpenters, Bricklayers, Smiths, Taylors, Braziers and Handicrafts shall be incorporated into their respective bodies one in each district of...Town' (Ghose 1981). This resulted in highly varied living and material conditions for different population groups like the European population, indigenous aristocracy, indigenous working class and migrants from other parts of the country in the emerging city.

appear throughout 1888 and 1911 (Nair 1990). It recorded the highest concentration (95 per cent) of the Hindu population in 1911 with the mention of some eminent citizens.[55] Alternatively, it is said Gobindaram Mitra, the infamous black zamindar who was a resident of Kumartuli built several temples.[56] Among them, was the famous nine-turreted Navratna Temple of Kali which had a 165-foot spire built in 1725 (in Cotton's account 1731) (B. Gupta and Chalia 1995). For this purpose, he brought clay modellers from the nearby village called Banshbedey. Following them, potters from nearby villages of Nabadwip, Krishnanagar, Shantipur came and settled here (S. Banerjee 1989).

Geographically, the riverside location was the guiding factor for the establishment of this settlement in eighteenth-century Kolkata. Clay, the main raw material for their livelihood was freely available from the river and the potters could fashion the clay from the river into pots and sell in the *Sutanuti* market. The early history of Kumartuli suggests that it was inhabited by the potters who used to make earthen clay pots, pans, and vessels with the potter's wheel. Later with the initiation of Durga *puja* in the city, the potters started making clay idols for religious purposes and rose to the status of *mritshilpi*. They continued making both till the late twentieth century when idol-making took over other forms of clay-based making practices. Therefore, the introduction of Durga *puja* in the city marks a definitive moment in this artisanal community's history. Association with this religious festival also gives them significance as a ritual craft and brings recognition for this community as part of the city's heritage.

4.2.1. From potters to God makers: Durga *puja* in the city

It is important to understand the historicity, growth, and culture of the Durga *puja* in the city because it acted as a stimulus for the growth and sustenance of the idol-making profession. Unlike the three other crafts, idol-making, therefore, proliferated because of its association with this religious festivity.

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[55] During the eighteenth-century residents from this locality who were not potters but mostly associated with British administration became notable such as Nandaram Sen, Gobindaram Mitra and Banamali Sarkar (Nair 1990). Banamali Sarkar who was the deputy trader of Kolkata built a palatial house in Kumartuli and it became a famous legend to be part of a popular proverb. A temple established by him and a bathing *ghat* by the river still exist in the locality.

[56] Gobindaram Mitra was the deputy revenue collector and judicial officer appointed by the EIC from 1720-1756 who was in charge of collecting revenue from the 'black town'. Apart from his lavish lifestyle, he was known for his stick which became part of a Bengali rhyme. 'বনমালি সরকারের বাড়ি/ গোবিন্দরাম মিত্রের ছড়ি/উমিচাঁদের দাড়ি/হুজুরিমলের কড়ি/কে না জানে?' (who doesn't know about his stick). He was also accused of dishonesty and tyranny by Kolkata zamindar Holwell (Cotton 1907).

Durga *puja* celebration started in the *thakur dalan* (courtyard for deity worship) of the new *babu*s (here signifying, a class of respectable wealthy Hindu Bengali men who emerged during colonial times) of Kolkata to show their new-found status and money during the colonial era.[57] It is a widely circulated story that Raja Nabakrishna Deb of Shovabazaar was the first one to bring *kumbhakars* (artisan caste who works with clay) from Krishnanagar who was known for this special skill (K. Dutta 2003).[58] The first Durga *puja* which inspired the contemporary format of the lavish religious festivity was initiated by Raja Nabakrishna Deb in 1757 for the celebration of the victory of the East India Company against the Mughal emperor's representative Bengal ruler in the battle of Plassey (figure 4.2). Exceedingly wealthy Hindu traders, merchants and intermediaries soon started to use this occasion to demonstrate their wealth, power, and status.

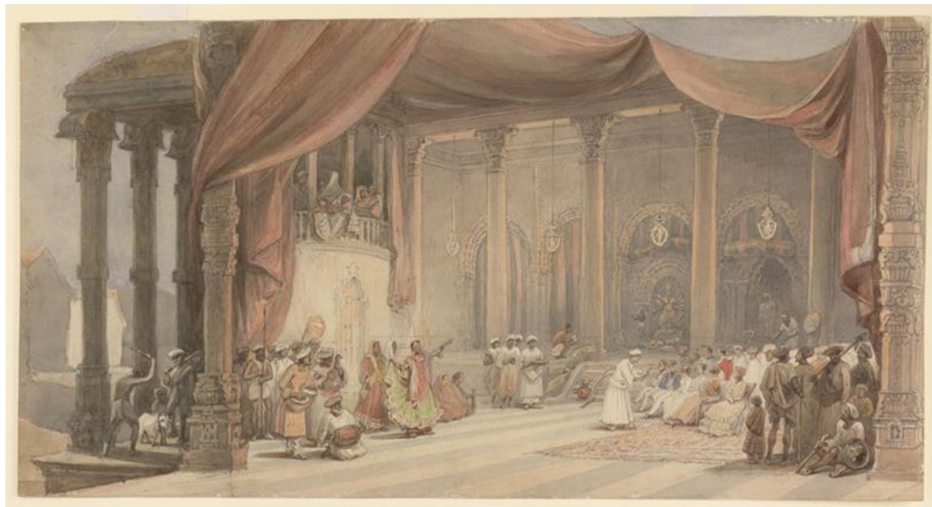

Figure 4.2: 'Europeans being entertained by dancers and musicians in a splendid Indian house in Calcutta during Durga *puja*' by William Prinsep c.1830s- 1840s (source: British Library India office Plate 25, WD 4035)

[57] *Babu* is also used in a derogatory sense in popular and satirical literature. See (A. Ghosh 2013) for more details. Outside Kolkata, Raja Krishna Chandra Roy (1710-82) of Nabadwip first used a grand clay image to worship the goddess. Before this incident, gods were not represented through life-size idols. Representation was more symbolic, often with a pot, a relic or a small painted picture or a small size figurine. The rich gentry of the newly emerging colonial merchant class and erstwhile rural landlords turned urban elites picked up this form of worship. Though some scholars have pointed out that religious scriptures had a detailed instruction on idol-making practices (M. Sen 2016).

[58] Krishnanagar of Nadia district in West Bengal is famous for realistic clay sculpting which is distinctly different from utilitarian and ritualistic pottery making in Bengal (S. Chakrabarti 1985).

The demand for idol makers in the city surged from the latter half of the eighteenth century. Initially, the aristocratic families brought the idol makers from nearby villages during the *puja* period of the year, and they were commissioned to make the idols. Eventually, potters from Banshbere, Nabadwip, Shantipur, Krishnanagar started settling in the potters' quarter of the city realising the livelihood opportunity. The settlement's nature was migratory throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth century whereby they would work from the Kumartuli area for three-four months. This was their subsidiary occupation, and they would go back to their villages for the rest of the year. As mentioned in Guha-Thakurta (2015) Sripantha writes that the ostentatious manner of the celebration did not continue from the mid-nineteenth century (1820'2-1830's). The festival became more democratised as it crossed the elite family homes and became a public affair first with *Baroari puja* in the nineteenth century and then with *Sarbojonin puja* in the twentieth century.[59] This is the time when some potters started to bring their families to Kumartuli because the demand for religious idols in Kolkata started to increase. The demographic nature of the neighbourhood started to change slowly.

[59] As a symbol of token philanthropy, the wealthy households would open their doors to the poor for a certain number of days during the festivity. With *Baroari puja* it became a community affair. Twelve Brahmin elders organised a community puja by collecting money from the public at Guptipara in Hoogley first and then it spread across the district towns and reached Kolkata in the mid nineteenth century. *Sarbojonin puja* signifies more large-scale neighbourhood based community puja (see Guha Thakurta 2015 for more details).

4.2.2. Huts and slums: Kumartuli's claim to heritage craft

Figure 4.3: The street as the workshop in Kumartuli: against the backdrop of a land-owning family house (source: author)

According to Goldblatt (1981) by the end of the nineteenth century, there were 50 image-making workshops in Kumartuli and some permanent settlements of the artisans were seen. Kumartuli emerged as a hub of various creative practitioners, and it continues to attract ancillary crafts related to idol worship. T. Mukherji's (1888) *Art Manufacturers of India* compiled for Glasgow International Exhibition indicates some of the crafts and among them, *shola* craft (white ornaments and decorations made from a plant that grows in the marshy land) holds a prominent place in ornamentation even today.

> ''…The potter makes the figures of such idols, the painter colours them, and Mali, a member of flower selling caste, adorns them with tinsel ornaments…' (Mukherji, T. 1888). The tinsel ornaments were made from shola…The artists showed great ingenuity in carving these plants and making ornaments of various types known as *dak* to adorn the idols' [cited in (S. Banerjee 1989, 128)].

Leading first settlers were Madhusudan Pal, Kanalicharan Pal, Kashinath Pal, Haripada Pal and Annadacharan Pal (S. Banerjee 1989). Nevertheless, they rarely became wealthy or landed residents of the area which is reflected in today's Kumartuli as well (figure 4.3). I will present a table (4.1) compiled from two street directories in the early twentieth century which shows even with their association to a ritual craft, there was an erasure of urban crafts from documented enumerations.[60]

1915		1933	
Street Name and Number	**Name of the resident or nature of the land**	**Street Name and Number**	**Name of the resident or nature of the land**
4 **Kumartuli Street**	Biprodas Pal	**Kumartuli Street**	No mention of the previous residents
4/1	Iswar Chandra Pal		
4/2	Nabin Chandra Pal		
21/1	Amrit Lal Pal		
1 **Banamali Sarkar Street**	Rameswar Pal	**Banamali Sarkar Street**	No mention of previous residents in the same address
2	Slum		
2/a	Stable		
7	Blank mark	7	Shops and huts
9	To let	8	Indians
19	To let	19	S N Pal
20	Fallow land	20	B S Chandra Das
33	Rameswar Pal	33	Huts
34	Habu Pal	38-c	Indians
35	Bamandas Pal		

[60] Kolkata Street Directory [1915] republished 2017. Ed. Samik Bandyopadhyay, Debasis Bose. Kolkata: P. M. Bagchi and Calcutta Streets 1935. Thacker's Press & Directories, Ltd. http://www.southasiaarchive.com/Content/sarf.141388/203436/024 . London: Taylor and Francis online (last accessed 17 August 2021).

262/1 **upper Chitpur Road**	Pots are being made	258 **Upper Chitpur Road**	G N Paul
263	Biharilal Pal's earthen utensil's shop	262	Shops
263/1	Durgacharan Pal's earthen utensil's shop		
Kebal Krishna Sur Street and Narayan Chandra Sur Street	Slum and Municipal Bathroom	Kebal Krishna Sur Street	No mention of residents or the nature of habitation
Present Durga Charan Banerjee Street (before Schalch Street) 5 and 6	Blank and then Shops and Slum	**Schalch Street**	No mention of residents or the nature of habitation

Table 4.1: The missing *mritshilpi*s: A review of the twentieth-century street directories (source: compiled by author)

The table mentions no profession as *mritshilpi*s or their workshops in Kumartuli. I have chosen some residents with Pal surnames from the surveys to make their presence visible. This exercise was done keeping in mind the conjuncture of the idol makers' caste identity and their historical presence in Kumartuli. The table depicts a scanty mention of potters and their workshops. Whereas the Bengali 1915 directory published by an Indian almanac publishing house, made some effort to document potters by mentioning three earthenware utensil shops, the English almanac by Thacker (1933) completely erases such category and created a strange category of 'Indians' (considering everyone in this Indian part of the town is Indian) and shops and huts.[61] It might be possible that idol-making did not dominate Kumartuli's landscape like today or this work was not considered a reputable one to yield higher social status in the early twentieth century.

[61] I use the term 'native town' with scrutiny here to remind the reader the racial division of the town in the colonial era.

Hence, this comparatively lower caste-based profession has been rendered without a prominent mention in the surveys. The absence is stark because some high caste professions such as ayurvedic doctors or professions related to colonial administration such as judiciary are mentioned additionally with some resident names. It would not be incorrect to suggest that though the neighbourhood bears the name of the potters, they did not become an economically influential demographic category in the early twentieth century and did not own land in the area until recently. The present landscape of Kumartuli shows mushrooming and saturation of the *mritshilpi*s, yet it still resembles the 'shops-huts-slum' cluster as mentioned in both the directories, showing the long-standing insecurity, precarity and poverty of the idol-making profession (figure 4.4). This archival exploration shows how socio-economic marginality informs silences and erasures in official documents, but it is not a commentary on the idol makers' visibility and relevancy in Kolkata's geography of urban craft. Individual *mritshilpi*s, such as Gopeswar Pal elevated to the rank of sculptors with colonial patronage and art school education. The postcolonial state also extended its support to this sector and many of the *mritshilpi*s have left their mark as sculptors by doing public statutes.

Figure 4.4: Unsteady tin-bamboo structures as the workshop in the deep lanes of Kumartuli (source: author)

On the contrary, heritage value is derived from this damp and dingy makeshift cluster as this represents the oldest and biggest hub (with approximately 500 master artisan/owner-artisan) of *mritshilpi*s in the city today. Despite some decentralisation in recent years, it acts as the node of ever-growing, year-round religious festivities in both public and private domains of the city (and abroad).[62] Among them, Durga *Puja* is the most historic, grand, and affective festivity in the city's calendar with a blend of artistic creativity, cultural exclusivity, and sacred aura. As mentioned above, it was nominated for the UNESCO ICH status in 2019. Kumartuli's association with this sacred ritual, historic location on the erstwhile pilgrim path preceding Kolkata's urban journey, seemingly unbroken hereditary tradition of working with unfired clay and unshakable visuality of poverty-stricken life gives the craft and the site its 'heritage capital'. I will be developing the idea of 'heritage capital' throughout the thesis. This heritage capital makes Kumartuli an inalienable part of Kolkata's cultural identity which gets reflected in every visual representation of the city from film to photography. Now I will move on to trace and reconstruct three other craft's histories in Chitpur Road. They will lead us towards understanding why some crafts and sites can already claim an 'unofficial heritage' status for being the most iconic intangible cultural heritage of the city while others wither away from the city's landscape.

[62] It is estimated that 40,000 idols a year, including 3,500 images of Durga and they export nearly 50 idols to all corners of the world (Mitra, 2011).

4.3. Goldsmiths of Garanhata

Figure 4.5: Garanhata neighbourhood (source: Prama Mukhopadhyay)

The neighbourhood of Garanhata is a few kilometres down Chitpur Road from Kumartuli. A nondescript winding lane stems away from the main road, on which is located one of the jewellery-making hubs of Kolkata (figure 4.5). This old street name (spelt Gorawhatta in figure 4.6) dates to at least 1784 as mentioned in Mark Wood's map of Kolkata. The name references 'Garan' the wood from a type of tree (Ceriops tagal) that is found in the lower Gangetic delta region and the mangrove forests of Sundarbans, close to Kolkata. *Hata* is the village weekly market. Kolkata was a marshy swampy rural land in the seventeenth century and the area could easily be a trading centre for such tree trunks. Therefore, as Nair has pointed out, 'Garanhata reminds us of the geological epoch through which Calcutta passed' (Nair 1987, 6). Basu (2014) suggests women from the *Vaishnav* sect who used to perform devotional songs known as *Kirtania* were residents of this area. This rendition of songs was known as '*Garanhati*', after the name of the locality.

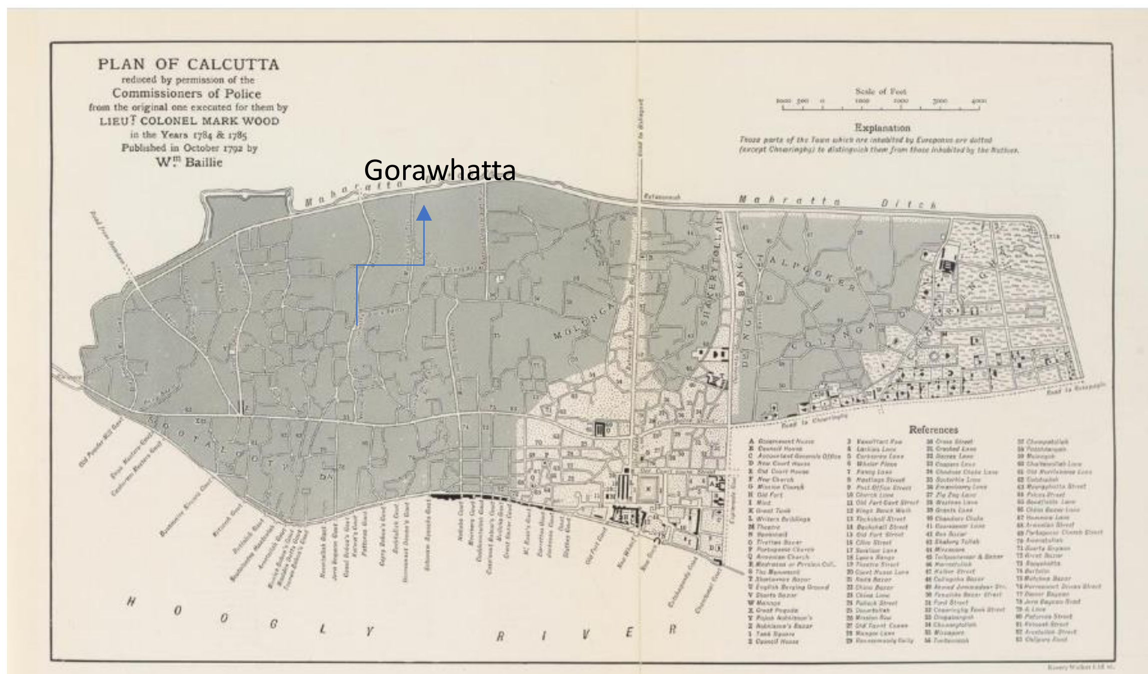

Figure 4.6: 'Plan of Calcutta': Lieut Colonel Mark Wood's Map 1784-1785

(Source: World Digital Library, Library of Congress with UNESCO, from British Government in India. The story of the Viceroys and Government Houses by the Marquis Curzon of Kedleston 192 published from Cassell and Company, London)

I will first examine Garanhata's socio-cultural associations before the jewellery industry sprung up here which will guide us towards the emergence of a future jewellery making hub. I will make two connections first a caste association of the craft and second its proximity to the prostitution quarter of the city. In the first section, I will point out that the trained woodcut artists from the first industrial art school, who were also from goldsmith and blacksmith caste might have initiated the jewellery making after the decline of the Bengali popular printing industry. Through a close reading of the street directory and oral historical account, the second section identifies the prostitution quarter's extension in Garanhata which was a potential market for the jewellery makers. The imperative of this section is to underline how this association also casts Garanhata's urban craft outside of the domain of heritage imaginary.

4.3.1. Industrial art to jewellery hub

During the middle of the nineteenth century, this area became a hub of Bengali printing and publishing houses famously known as Battala printing culture.[63] By narrating the

[63] The nature of this Bengali book publishing industry wasn't limited to the spatial boundary of Battala (literally means under the banyan tree) and forcefully made way for a genre of literature which was

nature of this print industry, I will assert that Garanhata has always been associated with subaltern cultural production even before jewellery making started in this locality. Bengali printing presses mushroomed during 1830 - 1870s in the narrow lanes of Darjipara, Kumartuli, Sonagaji, Aheritola and Garanhata; northern neighbourhoods spanning across the Chitpur Road, (Sukumar Sen 1984; Bhadra 2011; A. Ghosh 2006). In 1857, Reverend James Long documented forty-six printing presses in this area (Orsini 2016).[64] Battala prints were printed on thin paper and priced very reasonably to reach a large section of the population, including women and men, from non-elite castes. It reprinted old mythological stories, epics, religious verses, printed almanacs, literature on music, popular romance (*Vidya-Sundar*), ayurvedic medicine, *jatra* scripts (folk theatre), astrology, satires on the contemporary *babu* culture farces etc. (*babu culture* detailed in footnote 14) to name a few (A. Ghosh 2006 for more information about a variety of books). Nevertheless, it became associated with 'dirty stories, spicy accounts of local scandals and poor prints', and so was chastised by the enlightened English educated Bengali literati (S. Banerjee 1989, 184). Skilled engravers were needed because the printing technique was often accompanied by illustrations to make the book visually attractive. The earliest Bengali book with illustration was printed in 1816 which had six pictures followed by a periodical in 1822.[65] Wood blocks for small book illustrations and metal engraving for long-lasting fine prints were used and this technique continued throughout several decades of the nineteenth century.

An approach of institutionalised training in arts and crafts were started to be introduced by the colonial government around this time. Garanhata witnessed the establishment

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actively being suppressed by the Bengali elite literati and Christian Missionaries in the name of 'obscenity'. This would eventually lead to the Obscene Books and Pictures Act of 1856/ Obscene Publications Act 1857. Banerjee (1989) writes, 'Colloquial Bengali therefore crawled back into the semi-basement printing presses in the poor quarters of Battala in north Calcutta, from where it continued to appear in cheap chapbooks'(S. Banerjee 1989, 184).

[64] After the 1857 mutiny some of the vernacular press came under government scrutiny as it was believed they were propagating seditious literature. To bring them under the purview of supervision Reverend James Long was appointed to make a report on Bengali press. The survey was conducted between April 1857 to 1858 and the report was presented in 1959. (James Long, Returns relating to publications in the Bengali language in 1887 in selections from the records of the Bengal government, no XXXII, Calcutta general Printing Department 1859, p.35.).

[65] Annada Mangal printed and published by Gangakishore Bhattacharya is the earliest Bengali book with illustrations.

of the first ‘Calcutta School of Industrial Art’ in 1839.[66] Some sources say in 1854 East India Company re-established the school with the help of a local zamindar family in Garanhata.[67] Others say that the Calcutta School of Industrial Art was established through a joint venture between the Society for the Promotion of Industrial Art and with the blessing of Mr Hodgson Pratt, then under-secretary in the government (Sarkar 1983; S. Banerjee 1989). Apart from traditional art education like sculpting, sketching, and drawing, the curriculum also included metal and wood engraving, pottery and clay/wax culture and lithography. The institute specially focused on the training of engraving and the art of woodcut.[68] Sarkar’s (1983) analysis of woodcut prints in 19th century Kolkata suggests that a teacher named Mr Fowler was brought from England for this purpose. It mentions an account from the middle of 1855 which says, ‘in the other hall were about 30 boys drawing and engraving wood under an able professor Mr Fowler’ (Sarkar 1983, 17). Nevertheless, it was not always the academically trained engravers who were working with the printing presses but artists who were trained locally and had a connection with the printing presses. I am going to point out the names of the illustrators in the books to identify their caste backgrounds. Ramchand Roy, Biswambhar Acharya, Ramdhan Swarnakar, Gopi Charan Swarnakar, Panchanan Das, Nafar Chandra Banerjee, Netyalal Dutta, Madhabchnadra Das, Panchanan Karmakar, Heralaal Karmakar and Kartik Chandra Karmakar are some of the prominent wood and metal engravers of that time (Sukumar Sen 1984, 41).[69]

[66] The government took over from 1864 and the name changed to Government School of Art with Henry Hover Locke of the South Kensington School of Design (which later became Royal College of Art London) as the principal which followed a curriculum like European style of painting and fine arts.
[67] A mansion was donated in this area by Pratap Chandra Sinha and his brother Iswar Chandra Sinha (of Paikpara) to construct this school building (Bhowmik 2015).
[68] ‘The objective was not at all to impart training in the higher forms of art, the main attempt being to provide means of livelihood to some people of the country’ (S. Banerjee 1989, 191).
[69] Though Nikhil Sarkar (1983) writes that the engravers were a new age craftsman and it wasn’t a caste based profession because a list of ‘important’ inhabitants in The New directory of 1856 (as mentioned in appendix V of (Sinha 1978, 163–77) documents some of the engravers and lithographers from higher castes. Their existence signifies instead of living within a rural prototype of caste occupation-based neighbourhood quarters in Kolkata the new city dynamics was slowly breaking the hereditary profession structure. The list even mentions one Brahmin and one Kayastha artist. Nafar Chandra Banerjee (NCB) and Netyalal Dutta (NLD) also used to sign in English indicating their educated status among the artists. Furthermore, I would also like to point out, among the lower caste occupational groups the mobility was not always vertical in nature rather horizontal. Therefore, Sarkar mentions that *sutradhar* caste who were originally carpenters moved to become conch shell workers and painters. Similarly, Shambhu *babu* mentions that some Pal from the traditional *Kumbhakar* (potter) caste moved to the ornament making profession in recent times. He says, ‘*they easily adopted this art of ornament making. All are artists*’ (Shambhu Roy, Goldsmith interview, 28 November 2018).

Figure 4.7: One of the early founders of Jewellery making in Garanhata: Meghlal Basak's shop (source: author)

In the list of ten, I would like to draw attention to two names with 'Swarnakar' (goldsmith) as their caste surname and three artists with 'Karmakar' (blacksmith) surname. One of them, Ramdhan Swarnakar, signed his name in English and worked with metal engravings. The oral history documented during the fieldwork, corroborates with the fact that Basaks and Karmakars are the pioneers of this gold jewellery making industry. My research participant 70 years old Mr Shambhu Roy recalls Rajnikanta Dhar (R K Dhar), Gangacharan Roy, Makhanlal-Jashodalal Basak, Nandalal Basak, Meghlal Basak (figure 4.7), K L Dey as the founders of jewellery making in Garanhata (interview with Shambhu Roy, 28 November 2018). Calcutta Art Studio in Bow bazaar was established in 1878 and by the end of the nineteenth century, watercolour, oil painting, cheap oleographs and innumerable lithograph prints have pushed out traditional woodcut artists and metal engravers. The woodcut artists and metal (copper mostly) engravers from *Swarnakar* (goldsmith) and *Karmakar* (blacksmith) caste, who were previously involved in the printing industry of Battala might have paved the way for jewellery making in Garanhata. Then after partition in 1947, the artisans from East Bengal who were also initially from the *Karmakar* caste helped the industry to surge

forward. In all probability, their experience of working with metals helped them to switch from the printing industry to jewellery making.

4.3.2. Women and gold

My research suggests that the second factor was the proximity of the brothels of Sonagachi, the adjacent neighbourhood of Garanhata, which had a much wider spread hundred years ago. A careful analysis of the 1915 street directory reveals Garanhata Street's character. There was one bookseller (Afajuddin Md), two printing press (Bangla press and Beadon Art press), two mess (Uria mess and Marwari Mess), four residences of Basaks and Karmakars, at least six houses where unnamed (mentioned as just 'women') or women with a surname as Dasi used to live. One jeweller (Manilal and Co) and one shop of *rokar* also existed, which is a Banker's shop that deals with gold, silver jewellery and lends money.[70] In the 1933 directory, Garanhata Street has another goldsmith shop, six houses where women used to live. It has no mention of any printing presses inside Garanhata.[71] I found the names of some of the pioneers of the jewellery making industry in this 1933 directory as mentioned by my research participant Mr Roy.[72] Three trends emerged from this observation; one, the declining nature of the vernacular print industry; two, evidence of the early founders of the jewellery making industry and three, the constant mention of mostly unnamed women in the neighbourhood (see section 4.5.2). It is the third observation which in my analysis puts Garanhata's jewellery making craft in a contentious position in terms of heritage value within the elitist domain of the cultural heritage industry.

In the narrative of two old jewellers of Garanhata the connection between the jewellery industry and the proximity of Kolkata's biggest red-light area, Sonagachi was explicit. First, rent was cheap because of the dubious reputation of the locality. Secondly, the brothel became the immediate market for the jewellers as they had a rich clientele and had slightly more money in their hands. According to Mr Shambhu Roy, the displaced

[70] *Rokar*, as a Bengali term, is hardly used in Bengali vocabulary now. Therefore, a dictionary consultation revealed its meaning.

[71] Chitpur section near Garanhata has several bookstores which were occasionally publishers as well, known as libraries. In 1915 they are Arya Pustakalaya (bookstore), Jagajyoti Pustakalaya, Diamond Library, Mojumdar Library, Mhammadi Library, Public Library, Jagannath Library, Victoria Pustakalaya, Sri Krishna Library, town library and more. In 1933, there were, Bani book shop, Jagajyoti Pustakalaya, Diamond Library Mojumdar Library, Kamala Library, Jagan Nath Library, Sri Krishna Library.

[72] 36 Garanhata St listed as the residence of Makhan lal and Jasodha lal Bysack (Basak). 6 & 7 Fakir Chand Chakraborty Lane, a by lane from main Garanhata street listed R K Dhar and Sons.

refugees from East Bengal who were not monetarily wealthy or educated enough, involved in some form of crafting activity, and belonging to *Karmakar* caste, managed to rent a room on the ground floor of these houses from the second half of 20th century. To reduce the stigma associated with the neighbourhood, he repeatedly emphasised that when they came to Garanhata the nature of prostitution was different and only 'half-*gerostho*', a term which reflects the idea of a married man visiting a (long-term) mistress. Through the eyes of an observer like Mr Roy, men who visited these more 'reputable' houses and had one steady affair outside marriage appear to have had their promiscuity sanctioned. As an example, the elderly goldsmith remembers in the 150-year-old house where the jewellery retail shop and workshop are now located, there was a printing press of Eagle Litho who was famous for making maps and globes. In the same house lived a woman who was frequented by a man. In this particular case, when the man passed away his sons from his marriage came and took his mistress in a car so that she could attend his funeral. This indicates his family was aware of his affair. Even when she passed away a few years later his sons took responsibility for the last rites. Further, the quote presented below suggests why the refugee population who joined the jewellery making found an immediate market in this area with women involved in the sex trade. He said,

> 'They thought this area was full of women who would buy ornaments. This was a big attraction at that time. Same is the story with Bow bazaar. As a *najrana* (gift) from *babu*, they received these ornaments. If they didn't like the design, they used to remodel it here…With sudden money in their hand, they used to make *sitahar* (a type of necklace) and all. So, it was easy for them to buy ornaments. There were no showrooms. Everything was handmade.' (Shambhu Roy, goldsmith interview, 28 November 2018)

Another goldsmith who has been involved in Garanhata's gold industry for the last sixty years and now the secretary of the goldsmith's association (figure 4.8) tells me that when he first came to this area, it had a bad reputation. In his childhood, he was advised not to come here even during the day, and he shared that later on, some of his customers also used to be afraid. There were five to seven houses associated with the sex trade. Over time, the boundary of the red-light area has moved further north, and

the goldsmiths have made the area their exclusive domain. They live and work in old houses which are mostly rented, and share the space with families who live in the upstairs quarters, while they populate the ground floor. Though their working quarters look cramped, old, and worn out, this is a prospering industry.

Figure 4.8: West Bengal Goldsmith Association, Garanhata branch on the first floor as the banner on the top-left corner of the photo suggests (source: author)

Figure 4.9: Gold earrings are being made in the Garanhata workshop (source: author)

Unlike Kumartuli, the history of goldsmiths in the Garanhata area is relatively recent, being traced back only through the last 100 years. I have inferred this particular urban craft emerged because of multiple factors, such as institutionalised art and craft training in the locality, the decline of the printing industry, and the shift of metal engravers from *Swarnakar* and *Karmakar* caste to a new profession. Their prosperity, however, is prominently tied to a socially ostracised section of women and a refugee population. The area and its cultural production from printing to jewellery making remain tied to subaltern identity. These factors could not yield the necessary cultural capital on which heritage claims can be made. Jewellery making economically remained pertinent in the area but did not become a unique cultural identity of the city because of the stigmatised place association. As heritage is all about deriving value and ascribing meaning to past objects according to the demand of the present, the thesis will explore how the urban crafts like Garanhata's goldsmith enter the heritage imagination. I will move on to two other craft's history on the Road which will follow a similarly obscured trajectory and therefore remain excluded from the heritage narrative in the city.

4.4. Wood engravers of Notun Bazaar

Further down Chitpur Road, in between Notun Bazaar (New Market) and the mansion of Mullick family (locally known as *ghariwala* Mullick bari) a small stretch of Chitpur offers wooden utensils of all kinds. From wooden bowls to huge flat blows, from *Barkosh* (big platters) to *pire* (flat little low stools), from rolling pins of all sizes to *taru* (huge wooden paddles to stir the *chana* or *kheer*), one can get lost by the sheer size and variety of wooden items displayed in a series of shops (figure 4.10). Amid these wooden utensils mostly used for religious purposes or in sweet shops across the state, small wooden *sandesh* (sweetmeat) moulds often lie around inconspicuously. In this section, first, I will give a brief account of these wooden *sandesh* moulds, the material, size, and purpose to introduce these objects in the study. By juxtaposing an oral historical account with the street directory, the wood engravers historicity in the Road will be traced. This journey will highlight the social background of this craft community with an emphasis on their versatility in making diverse products related to wood engraving. Yet this struggling community has been deprived of any recognition for their craft skill and consequently made invisible in the heritage discourse of the city.

Figure 4.10: Wooden utensil trading and *sandesh* mould making cluster on Chitpur Road (source: author)

The moulds are used to give shape and a similar size to the *sandesh* which is made of *chana* or coagulated milk and sold in sweets shops all over the city and adjacent districts. The sweets are named after the design of the mould and hold a special space in the Bengali palate. Hence, they play an important role in the appearance and display of sweets. Initially, women used to make these moulds at home to give distinctive shapes to the homemade sweets. In some old families' private collection moulds of stone can still be found. Apart from stone, clay and wood are the two most common ingredients to make moulds. Mahogany and Teak are mostly used with some others. These follow fruits of various nature like *ata* (custard apple), mango, flower, and geometric pattern. This category of everyday moulds used in the sweet shops are relatively small (2-4 inches) and their size varies with the weight of the *chana* a mould can carry. Prices also depend on that. One can find moulds to make *thekua* (a delicacy from Bihar) available during *Chat puja* as well. The second type of mould is specially made for marriage ceremonies. They are in demand for *tatwa* decoration. Tatwa consists of a range of gift items exchanged between families during the marriage ceremony. Sweets shaped like a bride and groom exchanging garlands, fingers with engagement rings, butterfly, peacock, lobster, fish, conch shell and deer are common as auspicious symbols (figure 1.2). Moulds used for ceremonies are quite big (10-12 inches). The third category is purpose-built where a message is engraved on it depending on the occasion. They are wishing Diwali or *Bhai Phota* or *Bijoya*. Finally, there are always customised blocks for

any occasion or message. Political parties have ordered moulds with their symbol on them and organisations commission their logo design to be carved into a mould. Therefore, the *sandesh* moulds display innovative designs and require precise skills to make them.

4.4.1. Printing blocks to *sandesh* Moulds

In Chitpur area among nine wooden utensil selling shops, only four are still making hand-carved wooden moulds. Others are mostly sourcing them from craftsmen working in nearby villages. Murari Das, in his fifties, is the owner of Devi Art Co which is the oldest shop in the row. He narrated the story of his 100-year-old shop as he heard it from his elders. His family occupation was carpentry, and his grandfather used to make the furniture in the Mullick household of Pathuriaghata. Due to a disagreement with his grandfather, his father refused to do carpentry work anymore and obtained this shop in the Notun Bazaar area which used to be known as Kharampatti (an area where *Kharam*, a wooden flat heel shoe is sold). He started making the printing blocks for which Chitpur's Battala was famous during the late nineteenth century. Due to the transformation of printing techniques, demand for wooden print blocks started to decline and he started to make *sandesh* mould and reported that he 'modernised' it. Sunil Das, another shop owner, tells me the same, that Murari Das's father has been the pioneer in this trade, at least for the Notun Bazaar area. He was the shopkeeper as well as artisan and many of them continue to perform both as shopkeeper and artisan. Murari Das's father hailed from Katoa in a district called Bardhaman in West Bengal, and he came to the Chitpur Road to set up his shop. The three other shops selling the moulds are interconnected, as the craftsmen had ancestors from the same village of Murshidabad, and were related to each other. Many of them, or their fathers, learnt the craft from an elderly craftsman of Seva Art Co., who was a distant family relation. Like the *mritshilpi*s, a hereditary knowledge transfer can be seen in this sector as well. Every artisan in this sector shares the same surname. So, it is a niche craft that has a base among artisans who are from the *Sutradhar* caste and are involved in any kind of woodwork.[73] When the printing industry proliferated in Battala, not only *Sutradhar*

[73] To get a comprehensive idea of the artisans involved in wood work in various part of Kolkata, see (Panda 2018).

(carpenter) but *Karmakar* (blacksmith) caste also joined the profession of wood engraving.

A consultation of the street directories from 1915 and 1933 reveals two arts and crafts shops in this area.[74] In 1933, 358-1 upper Chitpur Road had two shops registered, Saraswati Artworks and Bharat Silpa Mandal. These names suggest a stark similarity with the present-day shops in this stretch, starting with Sakti Art Co, Bharat Shilpa Mandir, Ujjal Art House, Modern Art Co, Lokenath Art Co, Rudra Art Company on one side and Das & Co on the opposite side of the Road (original names used here for documentation purpose). It can be concluded that by the middle of the twentieth century the wooden mould makers had established themselves here. They rented rooms on the ground floor of the houses lined up on either side of Chitpur Road.

The wood engravers were initially experts in carving designs in furniture, doors, and windows. They were also the predecessor of decoration and ornamentation artists. Their designs influenced artisans in Kumartuli as well. The printing industry was entirely dependent on them for pictures. With changing printing technology from letterpress to lithography, big wooden letters for cover pages or small letters in a woodblock started to become obsolete. Eight shops closed during this transition period. The rest adapted to engraving for other purposes, such as imitating signatures, or stamp making. *Sandesh* mould, moulds for miniature animal models made with colourful sugar (*Moth*, sold during two festivals *Dol* and *Rath Jatra*), and wooden design blocks for saree or blouse are all such products made by them. At present two shops can claim exclusivity for making the wooden *sandesh* mould (figure 4.11). Four sell a wide variety of wooden products along with the *sandesh* moulds.

[74] The 1915 directory mentions a series of brass utensils shop which can be found today as well in between Prasanna Kumar Tagore Street and Pathuriaghata Street. It also documents a shop selling *Kharam* which corresponds to Murari Das's narrative on Kharampatti.

Figure 4.11: A wood engraver who exclusively makes sandesh moulds in Chitpur Road (source: author)

These urban crafts, print blocks and *sandesh* moulds mark the rise and decline of print modernity in the city that emerged in that milieu. Though 19th century stone moulds can be found (for designing mango pastes and possibly for *sandesh*) in Gurusaday Dutta folk museum, Chitpur's wooden engravers brought the rural folk craft of Bengal to urban Kolkata, in the period before independence when Bengal was divided. Various designs of *sandesh* as described above renders the city with an identity of an inimitable culinary palate. Yet this unique hereditary craft of *sandesh* mould has not been considered as Kolkata's heritage so far. A dynamic group of craftspeople from a lower caste background who constantly re-equipped themselves with new skills and design ideas remained entangled within the space of livelihood generation. This draws attention to the culturally elitist and selective nature of heritage making in the city.

4.5. Musical instrument makers of Jorasanko and Lalbazaar

In this last case, I focus on the musical instrument makers who are in the Jorasanko neighbourhood of Chitpur Road. At present only four shops continue to make these instruments with a shopfront to sell. A dense concentration of shops can be found further down the Road near the Lalbazaar area, but they are mostly traders with some repairing activity on site. First, I will give a short introduction to the musical scene of nineteenth-century Kolkata to understand the nature of patronage for this craft. Two

parallel musical cultures in the city, in the courts of the aristocracy and among the general people introduced a variety of musical instruments in the city. Due to the combination of both Indian and western instruments, it needs to be stressed that Chitpur's musical instrument making is a distinctly urban craft rooted in Kolkata's urban history. Second, I enquire why a significant section of Chitpur Road saw the rise of musical instrument making in the nineteenth century. The reason can be attributed to the courtesan culture of the Road which draws our attention to the moral geographies of this craft.

4.5.1. Musical traditions, instruments, and patronage

According to social historian Sumanta Banerjee (1998), in the nineteenth century Kolkata there were two distinct sets of musical pursuits in the growing colonial city, one being performed by the 'lower order', the term he uses to identify the subaltern class of the city, and the other being nurtured by the Bengali elites. Banerjee suggests the 'lower order' were the custodians of folk culture. Folk songs included '*Bhatiali Sari* (boatmen's song), love songs and wedding songs, women's doggerel, folk theatre songs (*jatra*).[75] The theatrical performance of *jatra* combined song, dance and dramatic aspects of mythological stories. Additionally, there were verbal compositions combining songs and recitations in a form of the contest known as *Kobi-gaan*.

The Bengali elites cultivated other musical traditions. The landed aristocracy (zamindar) had adopted North Indian classical music from the middle of the eighteenth- century due to their prior connection to the Mughal aristocracy. There are instances where classical dance and music were performed in front of East India Company officials during *puja* festivities and weddings as a form of entertainment. When Wajid Ali Shah, the Nawab of Oudh, was exiled to Kolkata by the East India Company in the late eighteenth century, he brought with him an entourage of musicians, courtesans and his encouragement saw a flourishing musical culture in the city. McNeil claims that the Nawab introduced a set of hereditary musicians from North India which included instrumentalists and other artists as well and they were often in contradiction with the

[75] For more details of the types of music and performance see (S. Banerjee 1998, 91).

Bengali *bhadralok*'s effort to institutionalise Hindustani music (McNeil 2018).[76] Some local forms of musical contests such as *kobi-gaan, akhdai, and tappa* also entered the courtyards and drawing rooms of the aristocracy in eighteenth century.

Nineteenth-century Kolkata saw a constellation of various genres of musical practitioners in the cityscape. Nevertheless, the Bengali elite solely harped back on Hindustani Classical Music aided by the feudal courts and temples to gain their social status. Kolkata's famous aristocratic families like Tagore, Deb, Dey, Mullick were all patrons of Indian classical music and were based around Chitpur Road. Shourindramohan Tagore from the Pathuriaghata Raj family founded the Bengal Music School in 1871 at 83 Chitpur Road which trained the next generation of aspiring educated *bhadrolok* class (Capwell 1986).

A variety of musical instruments were being introduced in Kolkata as a confluence of folk music, institutionalised Indian classical music and hereditary Hindustani music. The instruments which were mostly used during *Kobi-gaan* were *dhak* and *dhol* (barrel-shaped folk drum), the *kanshi* (a clanging bell metal dish) and the *mandira* (cymbals). *Jatra* performances, on the other hand, started to add other instruments like *tanpura* (tambourine) in the eighteenth century and by the end of the nineteenth century, many western instruments started to enter the *jatra* orchestra like table-harmonium and clarinets. In another folk song known as *panchali*, western musical instruments like violins were being added along with the use of Indian tambourine, drums, cymbals (S. Banerjee 1989, 103–7). Therefore, a combination of metal instruments and traditional folk percussion-like *khol-kartal* (twin clapping metal disc and a percussion instrument made of clay and animal skin), *kanshi* (a clanging bell-metal dish) and *dhol* (barrel-shaped folk drum) were in the scene along with violin (A. Ghosh 2013). In Capwell's

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[76] *Bhadrolok* indicates a class of middleclass gentleman, predominantly from the upper caste, who received English education and a product of the Bengali Renaissance. This category has been intensely studied by historians. Notable among them are Mukherjee, S.N. 1970. 'Class, Caste and Politics in Calcutta, 1815–38'. In Leach, E., Mukherjee, S.N. (Eds), Elites in South Asia (pp. 33–78). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Mukherjee, S.N. 1975. 'Daladali in Calcutta in the Nineteenth Century', Modern Asian Studies, 9(1): 59–80; McGuire, John. 1983. The Making of a Colonial Mind: A Quantitative Study of the Bhadralok in Calcutta, 1857–1885. Canberra: Australian National University Press; Sarkar, Sumit.1997. *Writing Social History*. Delhi: Oxford University Press; Ghosh, Parimal. 2004. Where Have all the 'Bhadraloks' Gone? *Economic and Political Weekly*, 39(3) 247-251. Ghosh, Parimal. 2016. *What Happened to The Bhadralok*. Delhi: Primus Books; Bandyopadhyay, Sekhar. 2016. 'Another History: Bhadralok Responses to Dalit Political Assertion in Colonial Bengal'. In Chandra, U., Heierstad, G., Nielsen, K.B. (Eds), The Politics of Caste in West Bengal (pp. 35–59). London: Routledge.

(1986) account, an observer notices Shourindramohan Tagore's Bengal Music School had *tempoora, setara* (currently spelt as *tanpura and sitar* both string instruments), flutes and other 'native' instruments in the classes.

Figure 4.12: A customer playing the harmonium before buying from Star Harmonium at Chitpur Road (source: author)

Many of the patron families and the quarters of musical performers were around Chitpur Road. As a result, a host of musical instrument makers and sellers emerged in this street. Among them, Dwarka Nath Ghose, who introduced the harmonium in the landscape of Indian classical music needs special mention.[77] The harmonium now dominates the Indian music scene which was invented in Europe around the late

[77] https://web.archive.org/web/20070409051040/http://dwarkin.com/dwarkinaboutus.htm (last accessed 10 March 2021).

nineteenth century (figure 4.12). He remodelled the harmonium and made it suitable for the Indian musical performance where the musicians mostly sit cross-legged on the ground.[78] He started his own manufacturing in 1875 in a shop named D. Ghose & Son at 2 Lower Chitpur Road (Kinnear 1994). The business of piano tuning and repairing of musical instruments were surging and he relocated to a larger workshop, 6 Lower Chitpur Road in 1878 as Dwarkin and Son. He soon had the Tagore family as his loyal customer, as well as Upendrakishor Roy Chaudhury (the famous writer and publisher). He proposed the anglicised name of Dwarkin which is a combination of Dwarka Nath's name as well as Thomas Dawkins, a London based musical instrument manufacturer from whom he originally imported some of the instruments (Bag 2012). Dwarkin and Son also sold the accordion, clarinet, cornet, piano, organ of western origin, as well as sitar, tanpura, and esraj of Indian origin. From the beginning of the twentieth century though, with the surge of nationalism and boycott of foreign goods, an Indian instrument, Sarangi, which was previously associated with courtesan culture returned to the market. Nevertheless, the harmonium remained an integral part of the musical ensemble for many genres of North Indian musical performance including devotional music, music teaching and folk music. Two more craftsmen, Kanailal brothers and Hemen Sen dominated Chitpur's musical instrument making, and esteemed classical musicians had close ties with these shops (S. Das 2008c). Das (2007a) also notes NM Mondal's shop in the Lalbazaar area of Chitpur Road received accolades from top musicians such as Yehudi Menuhin for repairing his Joseph Guarnerius del Jesu violin and from Ustad Vilayat Khan who received much fame after buying a black sitar from this shop. Over time, Chitpur became the seat of musical instrument making in the city.

4.5.2. Courtesan culture of Chitpur

Sumanta Banerjee (1993) notes that the rise in prominence of the colonial city of Kolkata attracted performers looking for patronage, including a class of concubines or mistresses associated with displaced Muslim musicians and dancers from the declining Mughal courts of northern India. The *nautch* (dance) performances by the *baiji*s (dancer-

[78] instead of foot-operated bellows, he used hand-operated ones. The instrument became much smaller in size and shaped like a box under after his remodelling. The bellows were placed at the back of the instrument instead of beneath the keyboard. His adaptation was perfect for Indian classical music where melody and notes were more important rather than chords. So one hand can be placed on the keyboard and another hand will press the bellow at the back instead of two hands on the keyboard (Bag 2012).

musician) and *ustads* (expert musicians) patronised by the officers of the East India Company and the *babus,* dewans, *banias* during the eighteenth century shaped much of the Hindustani Musical tradition in Kolkata. Patronage of the aristocratic gentry and the proximity of the music and dance performers prompted the musical instrument makers to establish their business around Chitpur Road. Using empirical evidence and oral historical accounts I reconstruct this history of the musical instrument makers to elucidate the reason for societal amnesia around this urban craft. The amnesia is well nurtured because the acknowledgement of this sector's connection with the courtesan culture will inevitably reveal the dark side of the history of *babu culture*. I argue among other reasons, this craft's connection with an 'immoral space', has resulted in it being silenced in terms of heritage claims.[79]

The courtesan and *baiji* culture of the eighteenth century slowly turned into an extensive sex trade industry city that originally valued the skills of singing and dancing. The middle of the nineteenth century saw the number of prostitutes in the city grow exponentially. Banerjee mentions that in 1853, Kolkata, a city of 400,000 saw 12,419 prostitutes and a decade later in 1867 the number rose to 30,000. Banerjee notes that according to official records the sex workers were concentrated in the main thoroughfares of the city. Chitpur Road and its by-lanes were one such designated area where Hindu women of high caste, who were supported by the rich *babus* used to live. A travelogue by a Bengali author writes, 'on both sides of the road, on the balconies of two-storeyed and three-storeyed mansions, prostitutes sitting and chewing 'pans' and smoking the hubble-bubble' (mentioned in S. Banerjee 1993, 2464). The owner of the present-day musical instrument manufacturing shops acknowledges that the musical instrument industry flourished in this area because Chitpur Road historically witnessed a concentration of brothels that were different in nature compared to the present scenario. Like the goldsmiths, they tell me in a hushed voice that the *baiji* culture was not a morally disgraceful profession, and the culture of performance in Chitpur Road has encouraged the musical instrument industry in this area (field note, 26 December 2018). After the

[79] A percussion musical instrument like *tabla* requires cow or goat hide. Therefore, as an impure job, Hindu lower caste and Muslims are associated with procuring this raw material and making some of the instruments in Kolkata and its hinterlands. This might be another reason why this craft never rose to the status of heritage. See Carnatic vocalist T M Krishna's book on Dalit Christian Mrdangam Makers and the socially excluded life they lead because of their involvement in this hide work (Krishna 2020).

initial patronage of the aristocratic families and concubines in the nineteenth century, the nearby *jatra* industry (folk theatre) and musical bands in M G Road, contributed to their growth.

1915	1933
Lower Chitpur Road	Lower Chitpur Road,
2, Mohan Flute manufacturer	3 Mohin Bros (Also advertised in the Calcutta Municipal Gazette 1925 vol II, no 2, consulted by me)
3, Mohin Brothers musical instrument seller	5 Shahu Mahadhar & Calcutta Musical Stores
6, Biswas and Sons musical instrument dealers	6 D N Mandal City Harmonium Co
10, W Ross and Co- Grand Musical depot,	12 N Fome & Co Harmonium Manufacturing Co
10/3, Von and Co- Indian Musical Store,	165 Bengal Harmonium Factory
31 J N Dhar Wood engravers	182/8 Oriental Art Gallery and Calcutta Musical Mart
49, Gawharjan Bibi (famous singer)	80 K C Dey and Sons' Gramophone Palace (advertised in the Calcutta Municipal Gazette 1925 vol II, no 2 consulted by me)
177, S brothers- the great Indian Musical Depot	
Upper Chitpur Road	Upper Chitpur Road
54, GN Das Sitar esraj new manufacturer and repairing (upstairs two women)	60/1 Cheapest Harmonium Co. and Star Harmonium Co.
58, Prangovind Mistri Tanpura Repairing	391 Imperial Harmonium Co
60, Radha Raman Kha and Sons Harmonium Manufacturer	
68, Sekh Abdul Rahim Duli and Tabla Seller (upstairs Baiji and women)	
70, Bholanath Roy All kind of musical instrument repairer (Women Kirtanwali)	

76, Bijoy Kumar Mullick Foreign and Indian Musical Instrument Seller	
374, wood and metal engravers, Narayan Chandra Das Narayani Flute, some photographers, and artists (later mentioned as Ganesh Garh)	
375, Nirodbaran Sen & Brothers Gramophone	
392H C Chandra & Co Harmonium Repairer	

Table 4.2: 'Women upstairs': A review of musical instrument making shops in the twentieth-century street directories (source: compiled by author)

Table 4.2 shows that lower and upper Chitpur Road had a significant concentration of musical instrument manufacturers in the twentieth century. 1933 documents a significantly lesser number of shops in the upper Chitpur area which now falls in the Jorasanko area indicating the declining nature. It is evident that many of the shops share the premises with or near *kirtanwalis,* women who sing a genre of a devotional song and *baiji*s, professional dancers who were skilled in music for the entertainment of the clientele. In my analysis, the unnamed women (in singular or plural numbers) in Garanhata (mentioned in section 4.3.2) and throughout Chitpur Road are indicating their involvement in prostitution. The street directory documented women either by their name or as someone's widow in a few cases. In terms of names, the surname sets them apart; *Devi* indicates high caste, and *Dasi* indicates low caste. The street directory served the purpose of documenting a socially acceptable narrative of the early 20th century. The erasure of women's names from the directory indicates there has been an attempt to silence their existence from the dominant historical narrative because these women do not conform to the social norms. The musical instrument making profession was sustained by the presence of a vibrant, yet outcast, community of performers in the area. Proximity to this quarter also became one of the reasons for their decline.

First, courtesan culture faded away from Chitpur along with the decline of the patronage of *babu*s; and second, higher scrutiny from authorities made the sector curb its territory. The nature of twentieth-century sex work and the singing-dancing tradition of the

nineteenth century are starkly different. In the twentieth century, the prostitution quarter came under heavy scrutiny of municipal officers. The municipal officer, Herbert Anderson, who was writing for the Calcutta Municipal Gazette, that I have consulted, was visibly perturbed about their presence. He recorded in the gazette, that 'Chitpore Road' can be designated as the Indian centre for 'commercialised vice'. They were referred to as 'social vice', 'civic disgrace' and 'moral plague in principal thoroughfares' (H. Anderson 1925, 55–59).[80] This scrutiny made the sector shrink its presence from the entire Road to a concentrated area in and around Sonagachi. Many musical instruments making shops lost their customer base due to these two reasons, along with infrastructural and real estate development in the area. Few shops survive in the Jorasanko and Lalbazaar area now.

Whereas Kolkata has a thriving cultural landscape of music, art and theatre, the instrument makers remained hidden from the narrative of cultural heritage. The patronage of the aristocracy made Indian classical music in Kolkata a valued and highly regarded profession. The same respect failed to get transmitted to the instrument makers who predominantly come from lower caste backgrounds and work with dirty/impure materials such as hide (see footnote 79 and Krishna 2020). Identification of heritage is a selective and political process. Carnatic music tradition in Chennai, therefore, bestows the city with a UNESCO tag of the creative city, but musical instrument makers remain unacknowledged.[81] Only some instrument makers with an association with famous musicians get some limelight in the media (S. Das 2008c). Many failed to survive in the trade and withered away from the scene.[82] As for the reason why they are left out of the heritage imaginary of the city, I argue one needs to see their affiliation with the courtesan culture. Claiming value from a past remained difficult which has been shrouded with a social stigma. One needs to unpack and acknowledge the hidden histories of the Road which nurtured the urban crafts to understand the selective nature of identifying and interpreting heritage at present.

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[80] Anderson, Herbert. Civic Morals I. 23rd May 1925. in The Calcutta Municipal Gazette. Vol II. No 2. p.55-59.

[81] https://en.unesco.org/creative-cities/chennai (last accessed 10 March 2021).

[82] The makers highlighted the introduction of mass-produced musical instruments from China which is replacing the hand made musical instruments.

4.6. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have analysed the reasons behind the hierarchies within four crafts to signify the politics of selective heritage claims and future heritage making. To do so, it reconstructed the history of four craft practices in Chitpur Road with special attention to some crucial configurations, such as caste, patronage, associations with stigmatised society or subaltern popular culture. It demonstrates how various encounters determined the fate of these urban crafts. These encounters either give them social capital for heritage making claims, or devalue the crafts and deny them the possibility of entering the heritage imagination. The issue of caste and patronage is a recurring theme in this analysis. Though all four above mentioned crafts can be associated with the lower caste population, they can be ordered in a hierarchy within the lower castes which makes them respected or marginalised in relation to the other caste group. Within the caste hierarchy which is predicated on purity and pollution, a ritual craft, and a craft that uses animal hide, are valued differently (Guru 2018). Consequently, the idol makers developed a series of patrons from the *zamindars* and aristocracy, alongside colonial patronage in terms of exhibitions, institutional education; and, post-independence, state support in secular statue making. With the help of this patronage, it shaped the city's cultural history through a powerful visual culture and solely supports the festival culture in public and private domains (discussed in detail in Chapter 6). In comparison, the three other crafts develop within a niche clientele. Their initial growth was due to the patronage of a socially outcast population, and they fall prey to the selective commemoration of the cultural heritage of the city. I have demonstrated why both jewellery making and musical instrument making could not draw social capital and power from their patrons. Proximity to prostitute quarter and courtesan culture made these craft geographies part of a dark history of the Road which often gets excluded from the elitist heritage narrative of the Road. The elitist heritage making also fails to acknowledge the role of the prostitution quarter in Chitpur's craft and in urban history which I tried to confront in this chapter. Whereas music and its patrons remained relevant in Kolkata's cultural history the makers suffered a discursive silence. It is also evident that powerful patronage elevated some crafts status, whereas some remained within the rubric of subaltern cultural production. Crafts like wood engraving, which showed continuous innovation, did not get any recognition due to its subalternity.

Methodologically, the chapter also seeks to elucidate why oral histories are important in reconstructing micro historical narratives where official archives erase identities of socio-economically marginalised and ostracised sections.

Chapter Five
Placing Craft Heritage within Urban Spatial Politics

5.1. Introduction

This chapter examines the relationship between urban crafts and the urbanity of Chitpur. It investigates how heritage becomes one of the key factors in the spatial politics for the survival and eviction of these crafts. How do urban crafts and their heritage claims get intertwined with urban spatial politics? The chapter argues that the crafts inhabit a specific kind of urban infrastructure, share a spatial relationship, and make such a claim on the land which lies at the periphery of the neo-liberal urban imaginary, which eventually leads to spatial conflicts. Through two strands of analysis, it argues historically production of peripherality was imposed but gradually it became intentional and internal to the place. Heritage claims act as a mediator in such cases. Crafts with strong heritage capital are able to maintain their peripheral urban practices and are also able to claim peripheral spaces, as their identified heritage value is asserted. On the other hand, crafts without such heritage capital are subjected to dispossession in the face of real estate, private developer-led urban redevelopment.

First, the chapter identifies how the urban crafts discussed in Chapter 4, were made to produce an urban peripherality by virtue of living adjacent to, but separate from, Bengali elite houses and colonial urban planning apparatus in the colonial era. The second section establishes a continuation of the production of peripherality in contemporary urban practice by unpacking some of the urban placemaking strategies by the urban craftspeople. The production of peripherality in the first case was imposed but gradually it became intentional and internal to the place. I demonstrate this through the mutability of their workshop infrastructure, their sense of ownership, and the diverse land tenure regime, that help the urban economy to survive. Conceptually, I use some tenets of 'peripheral urbanism' (Caldeira 2017), such as autoconstruction and transversal logic, which are used by people to make claims on the land. The entangled nature of law itself is discussed which help to maintain an alternative and affordable housing market for these crafts. These particular ways of urban placemaking inhabit a non-conformist space within the urban land restructuring regime in a postcolonial city where land appropriation and real estate development is the key. In other words, the

historic old core and its subversive land-use practices act as an impediment to private developer-led real estate development in the post liberalised Indian cities.

Thus, we can see conflicts emerge between inhabitants of these peripheral spaces and redevelopment projects. I will engage with two such conflicts, which act as contrasting case studies for the urban regeneration process concerning urban crafts. The first case addresses how heritage-craft works as capital to legitimise some of the urban placemaking practices. Crafts whose value has not received official affiliation or recognition, thus without heritage capital are at risk of eviction due to urban renewal processes. A comparative analysis of these two cases also suggests that heritage rhetoric can be harnessed by both the populist politics of the state and by the craft community to stake a claim regarding housing and land rights.

5.2. Production of peripheral urbanism

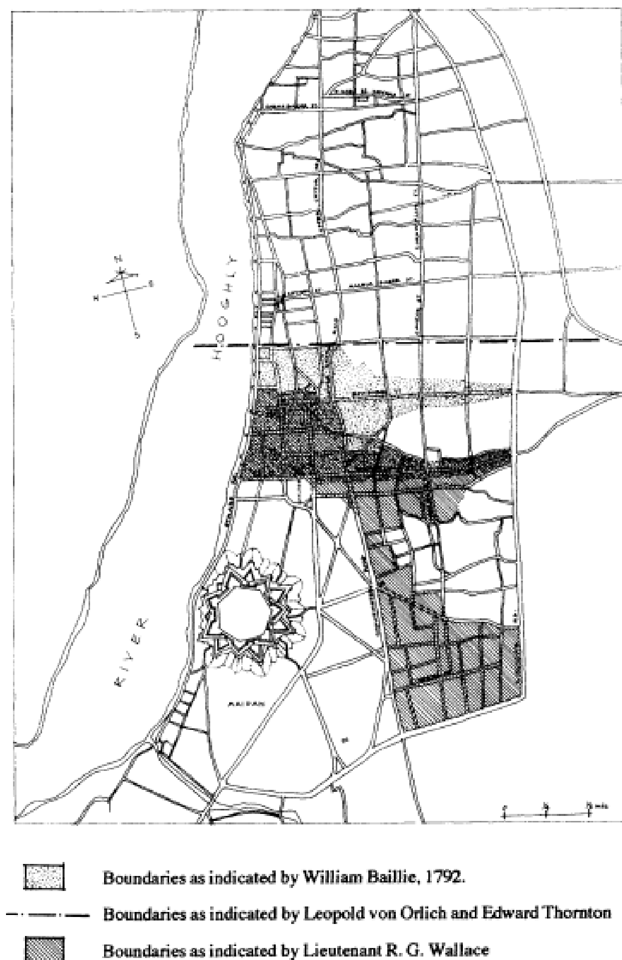

Figure 5.1: Approximate boundary between colonial 'native/ black town' in the north and European/ white town in the south, with an intermediary zone in between (source: S. Chattopadhyay 2000, 156)

This section aims to understand the peripherality of Chitpur Road and its neighbourhoods' urbanism within a historical context. This section is structured around two issues: first, it gives a broad overview of the historic nature of land distribution and dwelling types of the indigenous elites as well as artisanal and small trading communities of Chitpur. Specific modes of urban practices of two centuries are scrutinised and used here as analytical tools to understand the contemporary forms of urbanism that will be discussed in the next section. I establish how as part of the colonial 'native town' (detailed in footnote 17) this area remained outside of colonial planning machinery and therefore, developed urban practices that are 'not simply deviant or anomalous forms but rather fundamental components of urban landscapes' (Alsayyad and A. Roy 2006, 5). Secondly, the historic urban core's spatial politics is read through the lens of peripheral urbanism. It argues why Chitpur Road can be positioned in the conceptual periphery of the city.

5.2.1. Historicising peripherality: spatial othering of working people

As mentioned in the context of Kumartuli in the previous chapter, in the early eighteenth century the 'native town' of Kolkata (figure 5.1) saw the East India Company distribute land to various artisanal communities according to their occupation. Contemporary names of these northern neighbourhoods still reflect this distribution.[83] As pointed out by S. Gupta (1993) the metropolitan nature of early colonial Kolkata, was pre-industrial at this point. The socio-economic and urban land use pattern reflected an image of traditional Indian urbanism: a continuation of the rural caste and occupation-based layout. In the early eighteenth century, there was a flourishing Bazaar economy and a cotton trading market (Sutanuti which translates into the cotton market) along Chitpur Road. The EIC had yet to hold political control over Bengal. After being defeated by the Bengal Nawab, they regained control over Kolkata in 1757. According to Sen (2017), this is the start of the 'imperial urbanism' of Kolkata.

The indigenous elite was relocated from Gobindapur village in the south. They were compensated with large tracts of land in the northern part of the town, known as

[83] 'It was resolved that all Weaver, Carpenters, Bricklayers, Smiths, Tailors, Braziers and Handicrafts [sic] shall be incorporated into their respective bodies one in each district of Town' (in S. Gupta 1993: 35 from Benoy Ghosh, 'Some Old Family Founders in Eighteenth Century Calcutta', in Bengal Past and Present, Vol. 79, 1960, p. 33).

Sutanuti, after their land was acquired to build new Fort William. I follow Sinha's work, *Calcutta in Urban History* (1978) to explain the land use development and transformation of old Kolkata between the mid-eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The colonisers 'white town' was dotted with private brick and mortar houses with spacious gardens, private water tanks and administrative buildings. The 'white town' maintained its exclusivity by weaponizing architecture and orderly planning as a symbol of power (S. Chattopadhyay 2005).[84] In contrast, the residential pattern became heterogeneous in the Indian part of the town, when land became a lucrative investment for the indigenous elite and the comprador class from the middle of the eighteenth century.[85] It is mentioned that the comprador class kept purchasing vast amounts of land along the oldest axis of the city, Chitpur Road and their main intention was to 'peopling it' (Sinha 1978, 18) to collect as much as rent as possible. Seth, Basak, Deb, Sinha, De, Mullick, Tagore were the opulent families who acted as the urban landlords and dominated the real estate of the 'native town'. These houses 'attracted artisans, servants, scholars and dependents' and were 'surrounded by huts and embedded in slums' (p. 18).[86] It was left to grow organically with high participation of the dwellers in making their own dwelling, a trait which I observe even today (discussed in section 5.3). Thus, the rural nature of caste-based neighbourhood clusters transformed to a dense urban heterogeneity with the migrant workers and foreign traders of diverse linguistic, regional, and religious backgrounds by the mid-nineteenth century (detailed in footnote 7). The opulent houses, their bazaars, temples acted as a nucleus in each northern neighbourhood but the predominant nature of this part of the town was a collection of huts and informal dwellings.[87]

[84] A stringent exclusivity of 'white town' has been disputed by scholars. See (S. Chattopadhyay 2000).
[85] Comprador class was the dewans and banias comprising the intermediaries who were working for the EIC.
[86] According to S. Gupta (1993), since mud and straw were inexpensive, landlords and sometimes the local people themselves quickly erected dwellings around the mansions of indigenous elites.
[87] In between two types of habitation, elite houses and thatched houses the middle layer of the population built smaller houses though retaining some features of the palatial houses. Over time as big families started to fragment into smaller family units, these houses started renting out parts of their properties for both commercial and residential purposes. A common feature of these houses would be co-existence of multi-family occupancy and small trades; many of them are of artisanal class, Garanhata is one such example.

Figure 5.2: Colonial elite's palatial house (both Mullick family houses) and the thatched homes of service providers around it, year 1870-1880s (source: British Library, India office, ref no: 1081/2 (16), 1081/2 (18))

As figure 5.2 shows, the quarters surrounding the elite house did not receive services, nor did they follow any site planning. Vivid descriptions of narrow, encroached streets, filthiness, open drainage, public bathing, cooking and; thus the contrast with the European part of the town can be found in English travellers accounts between 1780-

1860 (A. K. Basu 2014, 10–14).[88] Swati Chattopadhyay (2005) suggests that the colonial drawings of 'native town' can be read as maps that intend to show the contrast between the expansive, bright, ordered British part of the town and the dark, dingy and chaotic Chitpur Road (Figure 5.3, 5.4 and 1.3).

Figure 5.3: 'Old Court House Street Looking South' by Thomas Daniell
(Views of Calcutta, no.9), 1788 (source: Rasico 2019, 28)

[88] One such example is Lord George Annesley Valencia's account 'Voyages and Travels in India', who visited Kolkata in 1803. He notes the contrast; 'The town of Calcutta is at present well worthy of being the seat of our Indian Government, both from its size and from the magnificent buildings which decorate the part of it inhabited by Europeans. Chowringhee is an entire village of palaces, and altogether forms the finest view I ever beheld in any city. The Black Town, however, is as complete a contrast to this as can well be conceived. Its streets are narrow, dirty, but the houses of two stories, occasionally brick, but generally mud and thatched, perfectly resembling the cabins of the poorest class in Ireland.' (Quoted in A.K. Basu 2014, 11).

Figure 5.4: ‘A view in the Bazaar, leading to the Chitpore Road'. By J. B. Fraser.

(Source: British Library; Coloured aquatint after J. B. Fraser. Plate 24 of J.B. Fraser's 'Views of Calcutta, and its Environs', London, 1824-26. Artist(s): Lewis, Frederick Christian (1779-1856), after Fraser, James Baillie (1783-1856), BL ref no: X644(24): 1824-1826)

As a result of the deliberate disconnection between the two parts of the town and the indigenous elite’s complicity in maintaining socio-spatial stratification and hierarchy, the public spaces of ‘native town’ did not receive any benefits and planned infrastructural development until the Lottery Committee came into existence.[89] Thus, it is observed from the mid-eighteenth to the nineteenth century, Chitpur Road, the nucleus of the Indian section of the town, remained in contradiction and remained outside colonial planning regulation. It remained in opposition to the sanitary and infrastructural

[89] Lottery commission first raised money for infrastructural improvement through a series of public lotteries in between 1807-1817. Seven and a half hundred thousand rupees were raised though bulk of the money were spent in building the town hall. The success prompted the initiative to be continued till 1836. It was the first town planning institution for Calcutta (S. Gupta 1993). The Lottery Committee (1818-1836) was the first planning mechanism which saw the town as a whole and wanted to take some drastic measures for hygiene, sanitation and other infrastructural development for the northern part. The 1825 map of Major John Augustus Schalch, made for the Lottery Committee, represents the ‘native town’ as a thick patch of houses and *bustees* (slums). S. Gupta (1993: 43) says, the Lottery Committee came up with nine parallel road construction plans as a ‘sweeping’ and ‘desperate’ move to eradicate the *bustee* habitation and remake the town in the image of the southern sector. The project, which did not take ‘people’ into account, could not materialise due to impracticality as the governor-general intervened. Again, in 1899 the British controlled municipal corporation proposed some road widening and slum demolition plans in this part of the town (Burra Bazaar) in the name of sanitation and congestion. The traders strongly opposed, and the scheme did not go ahead. However, by 1885-86 the work of the underground sewer system in the northern part of the town was completed.

mechanism and maintained its labyrinth-like organic structure. In terms of urban infrastructure, norms, and civility it has always escaped the normative urban values of the rulers as well as the puritan middle classes of the city. The discussion in section 4.5.2. on moral geographies of Chitpur considers its prostitution quarters and how that situates Chitpur Road at the edge of established civic moralities.[90] While consulting the 1963 Calcutta Gazette, I note that, when Chitpur Road was proposed to be renamed as Rabindra Sarani, as a memorial to the poet Rabindranath Tagore who was born in Jorasanko, some sections of the public objected. They opposed the proposal based on the Road's lack of the aesthetic standard.[91] Therefore, despite being considered as the oldest section of the city with the sprawling mansion of colonial elites, and a series of economically productive wholesale market centres, it could never fulfil the infrastructural promises of the urban core. I would argue, therefore, as it has grown, it has also been located at the periphery of the city's civic governance. Geographically it is located at the western edge of the city, parallel to the river and conceptually at the periphery of urban life.

5.2.2. Conceptual periphery

The 'periphery' has often been imagined as a space of the urban margin, often at the frontier, or at the border between the rural and the sprawling urban (Simone 2007). Nevertheless, the characterisation depicted by Simone also leaves room for conceptual peripheries in urban. Rather than claiming a geographical site as periphery, here I am proposing to look at the term periphery as a positionality. In the dense and tight-knit Chitpur Road neighbourhoods, adjacent houses share a wall, and many lives share toilets, water, cleaning facilities, right on the street or in the river. Mansions with Corinthian columns cohabit with stigmatised spaces of prostitution. Privately owned traditional bazaars are inhabited by migrant daily wage labourers who work and sleep on the bazaar floor. Craft traditions that underpin the districts are relegated as occupying spaces of the informal economy. Therefore, Chitpur Road occupies the 'periphery', not only in terms of its physical location, but also in terms of its deviance

[90] Delhi's Paharganj has been analysed through a similar lens. See Uddin, Kazi Ashraf. 2020. ''Understanding Deviant Space: A Study of the Subversion of Power Dynamics in Paharganj.'' *Crossings* 11 (September): 198-208.
[91] Source reference: The Calcutta Municipal Gazette, 1 June 1963. Letter to Editor. Vol LXXVIII, No. 6. p. 173. The letter shows support to the municipality's decision in response to objections published in 13th May 1963's Amrita Bazaar Patrika (a Bengali newspaper).

from the perceived norms of urban aesthetics, planning, practices, and moralities.

To make sense of this peripherality, we can contextualise the spaces of the Chitpur Road through the lens of the neoliberal urban values or exchange value of this space. As Kolkata grew, from city to metropolis, Chitpur Road was pushed further from the economic and cultural map of Kolkata. Around the 1950s, after India's independence, the elite residents lost their feudal entitlements and economic means. They were struck by a sense of insufficiency and congestion in this area. Throughout the latter part of the twentieth century, the aristocracy slowly deserted the area to search for newly emerging residential neighbourhoods in south Kolkata, leaving behind their houses as symbols of opulence, now in various states of disrepair, litigation cases and legal dispute (J. L. Taylor 2008).[92] Chitpur Road, once the central thoroughfare and heart of a thriving Indian quarter became the backyard of the ever-growing metropolitan city. In the public imagination, it became a place where time stands still (S. Das 2003; 2008a, 2008b). The craftspeople, along with other low-income migrant populations, remained as tenants. Over time, in collaboration and contradiction with the state, Chitpur evolved into a kind of urbanism which I will be reading through the characteristics of 'peripheral urbanism' (Caldeira 2017). In the next section through three modes of urban practices, I will demonstrate how the craft sector of Chitpur articulates, and exercises, various modes of peripheral urban placemaking in the contemporary time. Nevertheless, I must emphasise it will also be noticed that these placemaking practices, as I mentioned at the start of this section, following Alsayyad and Roy (2006) are not deviant, but makes them part of a structure and system of postcolonial urbanism where the State itself participates in enacting and enforcing informality (A. Roy 2009; Bhan 2016).

5.3. Mutability of the infrastructure

The first practice of urban placemaking is articulated through the building of one's own workshop/house, and developing the infrastructure for living and earning a livelihood. Unlike spectacular forms of urbanisation, often driven by the delivery of master plans drawn by the State or gated communities by real estate agents, much of the urban space

[92] A quote from popular literature captures this shift quite well. The author says 'Throughout the city's history, the flow of traffic has been one-way: from north to south. Over the years, families, businesses, public spaces have all taken flight from the northern half…with north Kolkata having become more of a departure lounge for middle-class residents over the last five decades, the shimmer of the 'artistic, cultural, tantalising North' is actually just the phantom of an afterglow'(Hazra 2013, 22–23).

in Chitpur is shaped by ordinary people's placemaking practices. Some vignettes from the fieldwork would explain how this process unfolds.

Medha Pal, a female idol maker in Kumartuli rents two workshops and a piece of land for residence.[93] None of these structures was built by Das, but he owns the land on which her workshops and homes are located. She has inherited both these plots – workshop and house – from her father, who built the basic structures. Medha Pal then added on other layers, invested, extended, and improved the facility to make it more habitable, as I noted:

> It was past lunch hour when I reached Kumartuli in the early days of September. I entered *didi*'s [Medha Pal is referred to as *didi* which means elder sister and a common way of addressing] workshop and found no one there. I was about to step out when I heard some voice coming from above asking me to wait for didi in the studio (in Kumartuli the workshops are referred to as studio by the *mritshilpi*s, but apart from the fieldnotes, I am using the term workshop for all craft spaces in the Road). As I looked up, for the first time I realised that what I thought as a roof or ceiling of the studio made by a wood panel, is actually a small horizontal compartment, where easily four/ five people can sleep together but they definitely cannot sit up straight in that space. There is a ladder that goes up to the first loft or '*macha*' which is as high as a grown-up person. This loft is at the very end of the workshop. That works as a landing base for a person to squeeze inside the next loft at the left which is spread towards the entrance. There is no door in the studio. On the other three sides, a worn-out wall demarcates its boundary. The front is completely covered by blue plastic sheets. It can be folded up to let sunlight in or pulled down when it rains outside. The studio has no cemented floor or concrete roof. It is thatched with a cane mat and the floor is made out of mud accumulated over the years. This 20ft x 20ft room's undulating muddy floor has been extended at least 7 ft towards the main road crossing its original floor area. The roof is supported by bamboo poles vertically from the inside. Electronic wires and switchboards are hanging from those poles. (Field note, 5 September 2018)

This, and many other idol-making workshops in Kumartuli, follow a similar mechanism of assembling materials to create a workspace in a space made out of elastic infrastructure. Once the busy season is over, the extended workshop shrinks in size,

[93] The plot is owned by Bhimchandra Das and Sons who sells earthen pots, decoration of deity and general accoutrements. His forefathers might have been artisans but he is now a retailer.

form, and density. Later on, it was also revealed that the lights and the ceiling fans were temporary installations. They appear and disappear from the premises depending on the season of the work. Many artisans expressed that a workshop set-up takes nothing more than a bamboo pole and some temporary cover, but they all intend to rebuild their workshops at some point.

Figure 5.5: Kumartuli's workshop before and after a corporate-sponsored street art carnival (source: author)

Another characteristic of such infrastructure is that over time the structures go through a gradual transformation and improvement (figure 5.5). Indeed, I noticed that the workshop went through a rapid material transformation during my fieldwork. Firstly, during Durga *puja* (detailed in the footnote 49) idol-making demanded more space and capacity; therefore, the workshop was expanded (with blue plastic sheets in figure 5.5). After the festive season, it was retracted again. A major and swift transformation was also witnessed in April 2019, when Kumartuli witnessed an overnight makeover as part of an art carnival (Basak 2021). Sponsorship by the company 'Asian Paints' gave professional artists the freedom to repaint tattered walls and brighten up dark alleyways (see figure 7.1). Defying the proprietor's objection to her plans, Medha Pal decided to rebuild her workshop. Iron poles replaced bamboo, metal sheets covered the roof and a collapsible gate was installed at the front and the walls got fresh burgundy paint. In a show of solidarity another female artisan actively supported her decision and remained vigilant when the structure was redeveloped.

Medha Pal's house in Kumartuli also showed a similar trajectory of incremental rebuilding. In the alleyway beside the workshop, her one-bedroom house had a small porch in front where women of the family would cook and wash utensils. She uses a common toilet cum bathroom and a municipal drinking water tap down the alley, which she shares with two more families. She told me that she recently built a wall around the porch, adding a roof to make it a front room for cooking, eating, and washing utensils, and houses a new fridge. It gives privacy to her and her mother, the only women in the house. Medha Pal also made a provision in the same room to store additional stocks of idols by following the common practice of building a horizontal loft parallel to the roof, accessed by a steep, narrow access ladder (from which she fell in 2017). The kitchen cum dining room is used for bathing in the evening using a bucket filled from the outside tap. Greater dignity is experienced as the women no longer need to use the shared bathing area in the dark outside. The new porch enclosure marks another generation improving the dwelling, building it incrementally, brick by brick.

Such initiatives show how people with limited means improvise to mitigate their housing needs, slowly improving their homes by deploying a logic of autoconstruction. This term is well used in Latin American urban studies (*autoconstrução*) (Holston 1991), and now scholars are using this term to explain existing forms of urban place-making in India as well (Bhan et al, 2017). This process creates 'a particular kind of space where people, with their devices, resources, tools, imaginations and techniques are always acting on each other, pushing and pulling, folding, and leaving out, making use of whatever others are doing, paying attention to all that is going on, fighting, and collaborating' (Simone 2018, 125-126). Like bricolage, they bring together timely available resources and opt for piecemeal development. Therefore, these are 'spaces that are never quite done, always being altered, expanded and elaborated upon' (Caldeira 2017, 5). These kinds of interventions and production of spaces have been mostly associated with '"majority" or "popular districts"' (Simone 2018, 126).[94] In the Chitpur Road neighbourhoods, it is hard to make a distinction between the practices employed in slums, intermediate spaces, and those in townhouses, as they exist cheek by jowl. Therefore, making provisions for oneself is not limited to a neighbourhood like Kumartuli, where a significant area can be

[94] According to Simone (2018) these districts are intermediary spaces between planned zones and temporary settlements.

designated as a slum, but the practice of rebuilding one's dwelling extends far beyond. My second example from the jewellery making cluster exemplifies this.

Figure 5.6: A goldsmith's workshop and living space in Garanhata where porches are enclosed and converted into a liveable space (source: author)

In Garanhata, where most of the jewellery workshops are located inside the houses, the structure and the purpose of the built-up area has been changed significantly by the tenants. The house that I was visiting for my fieldwork has at least seven showrooms and workshops. The ground floor was originally not like this. Shambhu Roy told me that this is a 150-year-old house, and there were three gates before one entered the '*bhetorer bar*i' or the inner house. Like any other old house in this area, it originally had an open courtyard that leads to a raised platform known as *thakur dalan,* where the family's revered deity (not necessarily Durga) would have been worshipped annually. Now, the raised platforms or porches surrounding the courtyard have been enclosed, and converted into homes and places of work (figure 5.6). The open courtyard has shrunk in size because shops have used some of its space. Shambhu Roy's entire family of four used to reside in the *thakur dalan* converted bedroom, which is at present the jewellery showroom. He asked me,

> 'Why do you climb up the staircase to come to the shop? This whole room was *thakur dalan*. It has been only twelve years since it was converted into a showroom. We used to live here before. The

manufacturing unit, on the other hand, is quite old, at least 55 years'. (Shambhu Roy, goldsmith interview, 28 November 2018)

When the family started living here around 55 years ago, they built a kitchen and toilet inside. Shambhu Roy installed small machines in the manufacturing unit, and there is a loft in the manufacturing unit where the workers live. When he became economically well off, he moved out to a new flat in the eastern part of the city, but retained his rights to do business in this property. He converted his bedroom into a showroom and rented out the manufacturing unit to his previous workers. They now rent the living and workspace from him.

All these arrangements proclaim one thing very clearly: that they have invested money to make these places habitable and liveable. Not only have they developed a right over their spaces of dwelling by inhabiting over a long-time scale, but they have also designed, incrementally built, extended, and remade their present houses and workshops by themselves in many cases. Therefore, they feel entitled to have a claim over that land, and, despite being tenants, they express a sense of ownership.

5.4. Ownership, claims and subject formation

It emerged from the conversations with the craftspeople that they claim certain rights over their rented workshops. The historic relationship with the land in section 5.2. gives a premise of such temporal claims and the previous section (5.3) on the incremental building of their habitat gives a possible explanation as well. Hence, histories of spatial production across generations give the subaltern population a right to city space (Brenner, Marcuse, and Margit 2012; D. Harvey 2008). In every conversation, I heard that while they give rent to the landlord, they 'own' their shop, or they own the structure, and in some instances, the land itself belongs to the government.[95] Following Caldeira's theorisation on peripheral urbanisation, I see this assertion as a key characteristic of new subject formation by the people on the margins (Caldeira 2017). This way of being and functioning can be read as a non-conforming practice as well as an engagement with the official logics of capital, property, law, and economy in a

[95] In the English property law these lands are known as freehold and the freeholder might have given a 'lease' to manage the property and, the leaseholder might rent out the property. In West Bengal, I found a three-tier tenancy system with three types of dwellers, landowner, leaseholder, and *bharatia* (discussed in section 5.5.1). In this particular instance I am talking about *bharatia*'s ownership claim, not the leaseholder's.

transversal way. Transversal politics of land claims also exposes the fault line of the perceived notion of what is 'official' in this setting. The ethnographic snippets from all four craft sectors that I will present now, reflect the assertion of claims and the production of peripherality. These assertions act to unsettle the perceived notions of legality/illegality and formality/informality.

Figure 5.7: Sunil Das's shop: two parts of the shop, on either side of the blue divider are visible here (source: author)

Workshops pass through the generations, and are passed on within the community in the Chitpur Road. In one of the wooden *sandesh* mould making shops, the craftsman, Sunil Das, inherited his shop from his father, whom he had been helping since he was aged 15 years. His father originally made wooden moulds and calendar headings in a different shop- Seva Art co, belonging to his father's uncle, just across the Road.[96] After practising in Seva Art co for around ten years, his father *bought* his own new premises from Mahadeb *babu*.[97] According to Sunil Das, Mahadeb *babu* a rubber stamp maker *owned* this place in partnership with Subimal *babu,* an engraver (he said বুলি, and

[96] At present Sunil Das's grandfather's brother's sons own the shop across the road and solely makes *sandesh* moulds. In the thesis I have named this shop Seva Art co.

[97] *Babu* is a prefix attached with names of elderly gentlemen to show respect.

engraving is the closest English in my knowledge). Mahadeb babu's section was *sold* to his father in 1989 and in the 2000s Sunil Das *bought* the other half of the shop from Subimal *babu* (figure 5.7). In Sunil Das's own words,

> 'আমার বাবা কে বেচে দিয়ে চলে গেল...আমার বাবা যখন কিনেছিল তখন ভাড়া ছিল ১৫ না ২৫ টাকা।'
>
> He sold it to my father and left. When my father bought it, the rent was ₹15-25. (Sunil Das, mould maker interview, 17 February 2019)

In the above instance, I highlight the words *owned, bought,* and *sold* to identify and suggest the language of claim-making used by the craftspeople despite being a tenant. The rent of the properties in Chitpur Road remains significantly low because of temporal ties as well as the rent control act of the State.[98] He also repeats the same thing for another shop across the Road,

> 'ভাড়ার হলে কি হবে। দোকানের মালিক ও। বাড়ির মালিক ও না।'
>
> It doesn't matter that this shop is rented. He is the owner of the shop but not the owner of the house. (Sunil Das, mould maker interview, 17 February 2019)

Again this 'owner' pays rent to the owner of the house. Far down the Road, Mr Sameran Pal from Kumartuli tells me that he has *bought* the structure, but the land belongs to the government which I later found out has been sanctioned by the Thika Tenancy Act (discussed in section 5.5.1.).

[98] Each time a tenant buys the tenancy right from another tenant the rent increases. The last name change took place when Sunil Das's father bought it and the rent increased to ₹35-40 (he didn't specify the exact rent). The name hasn't been changed to Sunil Das's since his father passed away in 1999. It ensures the rent stays the same. West Bengal Premises Tenancy Act 1997 ensures 'fair and reasonable rent' and presents a detailed guideline on rent fixation. Rent control as it is commonly known, started in India as a welfare measure and ensured freezing of a standard rent based on the market value for a certain time to aid the urban poor. It also protected the tenants' right to remain in the property thereby preventing the eviction of the tenant without the court order. It has been critiqued as a socially and economically inefficient move and impediment for urban reform (Alok and Vora 2011). The paper by Alok and Vora divides the rent control act of India into three distinct stages. The first phase is the pre-independence legislation, second, the post-independence when it became more tenant friendly and the third one is after 1991 which denotes the era of post-liberalisation in the Indian economy. They have identified this era as the post-implementation of Model Rent Control Legislation by the centre which put forward guidelines on how to make the rental law more balanced (MRCL, 1992).

Figure 5.8: Musical instrument maker's shop by the side of Chitpur Road (source: author)

In Jorasanko, the owner of the musical instrument maker has been a resident and shop owner of this area for three generations.[99] After his father lost their ancestral home and shop due to an urban development project, he and his brother now rent a narrow square of land as the shop on the ground floor of a building (figure 5.8). He says,

> ‘না ভাড়া দিতে হয় সামান্য। নইলে লাইসেন্স তো হবে না। ভাড়া বলে কিছু না। সম্পূর্ণ নিজেদের। কিন্তু লাইসেন্সে করার জন্য একটা স্লিপ দরকার, ঐ একবার ই দিয়েছি।‘
>
> It is a minimal rent. Otherwise, we won’t get a license. There is no rent as such. It is completely our own. A slip is needed for the license, so we had to pay once. (Deb Raha, musical instrument maker interview, 26 December 2018)

He completely dismisses his identity as a tenant and claims the shop as their own asset which might stem from de-facto rights developed as a result of their historic tie with the area. Temporal claims interact with the official logic of tenancy rights in complex ways (Degen 2018). Paying the minimum rent is seen as a token to get a sanction to run the

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[99] Star Harmonium near Jorasanko Thakurbari was founded by Binod Bihari Saha 115 years ago. During his son Piyari Mohan Saha’s time it became a hugely successful enterprise. He was a maker himself. In 1965, they were evicted from their place of residence because Rabindra Bharati University which was founded in Jorasanko Thakurbari needed a space for cultural functions. Roads were widened during this venture and their original shop had to be shifted to a new location. Piyari *babu* passed away as he couldn’t take the shock of losing his residence and half of his original shops. Two young children took over. Now two elderly brothers are carrying forward their grandfather’s legacy.

shop. This is not an illegal claim but the formation of a political subjectivity that emerged from the injustices of eviction and loss. It can be interpreted as a strategy in the face of their precarious status, a mode of organising to secure rights, tenure security, production of value and expression of a desire for ownership rights. Overall various illustrations of ownership claims, as mentioned above, counteract the precarious nature of dwelling and working. It counteracts 'legalisation, regulation, occupation, planning and speculation' (Caldeira 2017, 7) of the State with transversal politics. This attunes to rights-based politics over urban space, which, in the case of these craftspeople, emerges from a temporal relationship with space.

5.5. Diverse land tenure regimes

The next section grapples with how multiple tenancy regimes are created both by the state, and outside the state machinery. I will discuss two types of tenancy regimes that exemplify diverse modes of placemaking by the craftspeople which in turn helps the craft economy to function in Chitpur Road. The first section on Thika tenancy explains how a complex and layered tenancy system that was already in practice and customary in nature was sanctioned by judicial-administrative law in the post-independence era. It signifies 'customary law is the primary form of all law and then develops a conceptual framework for exploring how a legal order relates to the complex array of practices within a given society' (Webber 2010, 582). Yet two examples under that showcase two versions of the use of the law showing plurality in use and interpretation of the law. The second section on *Selami* or gift, showcases an extra-judicial law widely practised in the land market. I argue that the practised land tenure practices are often perceived as the law set by the residents. As long as the landlord, tenant, local administration, local housing agents and political leaders all agree, laws are often made and subverted. Consequently, this section argues that these tenure practices make these urban crafts tread between the judicial-legal or 'formal' set of land practices, as well as multiple interpretations, appropriations, and subversions of such legal provisions.

5.5.1. Thika tenancy

Kumartuli is the prime example where multiple and layered tenure regimes govern everyday land use, and a huge idol-making industry runs on the premise of these shared understandings. According to Bimal Pal, a sculptor and an idol maker,

> কিছু কিছু আছে মানে সরকারের জমি, কিছু কিছু নিজেদের জমি, কিছু আছে কি বলে ঠিকা, টেনেন্সি...
> আর কিছু আছে ভাড়াটিয়া।
>
> Some land is owned by the government, some we have purchased, there are some which are known as [*thika* tenancy] leased tenancy and some are [*bharatia*] tenants. (Bimal Pal, idol-maker interview, 19 November 2018)

Kumartuli is a notified slum and its land-use practice and dwelling habits, as mentioned by Bimal Pal shows us there are diverse forms of tenancy rights that have evolved over centuries based on a mix of conditions: historical ties, mutual agreements, dependence, belongingness, regulations, and rights. For example, in Kumartuli some artisans were given land by the zamindar to come from the village, settle and work there. According to some sources (Heierstad 2017), Raja Naba Krishna Deb granted some lands to the *Kumors* of Krishnanagar as a gesture of payment for their service. Furthermore, he explains that the nature of this grant was not a gift in exchange for service, but a right to live and work without paying taxes. The land relationship was an extension of the patron-client relationship. The vacant land was not developed by the urban landlords. Instead, *kuccha* (temporary structures) dwellings were erected by the (ঠিকা) *thika*-tenants (ঠিকাদার/*thikadaar or tenancy on lease*) as a right given by the landlord. In post-partition Bengal, another set of *mritshilpi*s came to settle in Kumartuli from East Bengal. Land was already scarce in Kumartuli but the existing *thika* tenants resolved how to accommodate more people. The *thikadaar*s rented out structures to another set of sub-renters. They were entitled to do so as they developed these structures and had rights over them. Such rental practice was already in existence in the city because of the issue of absentee landlords. The newly independent state wished to regulate and in turn validated this three-tier tenancy practice by introducing the first Calcutta Thika Tenancy Act in 1949 (Unnayan 1992; Das Gupta 1964). In this act, the intermediary developers were termed as *thika* tenants, to whom the land was originally leased. The *bustee* (slum) dwellers were known as *bharatia* or the sub-tenants. In 1981 Thika Tenancy Act was further amended to increase the security of the tenants under the left-wing government. It abolished the erstwhile landlords of these slums and acquired the land as state property. Schenk (2010) has observed that whereas colonial governance mainly focused on slum demolition for hygiene and road construction, post-independence governance, mainly because of its electoral politics, focused on slum improvement. The Thika Tenancy

(Acquisition and Regulation) Act of 1981 was a step towards giving security of possession and protective measures from indiscriminate displacement to the tenants. Therefore, Bimal Pal says some land is owned by the government whereas some old idol makers have been able to purchase some lands. Many are leased tenants or *thika* tenants who pay rent to the government. Whereas some are sub-lessee who pay rent to the *thika* tenant. I explain the complicated nature of land tenures in Kumartuli in detail to understand the urban renewal related land politics in section 5.6.1.2. Overall, the process of evolution of *thika* tenancy act suggests the law is deeply embedded within a social process and in Kolkata's context, it validates and legitimises land rights of marginal communities and helps to produce peripheral urbanism.

The second example demonstrates how the concept of *thika* tenancy which validates a three-tier rental regime gets appropriated beyond a slum setting. Garanhata's goldsmiths inhabit a similar kind of tenure status though this neighbourhood is not a slum and the residential pattern of the craftspeople are starkly different from Kumartuli. Here the trading units and the workshops share spaces with residential dwellings. Subletting is a common practice here whereas the primary tenant employs another tenant under him and the rent payable to the landlord gets distributed.

Figure 5.9: Sub-tenant Jit Gayen's rented space in Garanhata (source: author)

Jit Gayen a young worker who specialises in the work of তার দোলা '*tar dola'* (making fine

gold threads out of gold plates), rents a small loft in a shop that operates as a rented space itself (figure 5.9). Shambu Roy's example further ties the arguments I presented above with the subletting practice. As I have shown before (5.3), Shambhu Roy had designed, developed, and reorganised the ground floor for his living and working for 55 years. That might have given him the agency to make certain claims of being the primary tenant and sublet it further.

> What I learnt from the workers is that Jagabandhu Pal, owner of a silver jewellery shop is the main owner of the entire house. But each tenant has their rights and cannot be evicted. Only Shambhu *babu* (the workers pay rent to him) will be able to sell this portion to someone else. The signature of the main landlord is needed for paperwork as cursory. There will be some money involved to change the name of the tenant on paper. (Field note, 13 November 2018)

The field note and Jit Gayen's example in Garanhata suggests a system of three-tier sub-tenancy has been replicated here following the mechanism of the Thika Tenancy Act. I must point out the 'official' law of *thika* tenant which applies in informal settlements or slums may not apply here, but it has inevitably produced, and tacitly sanctioned, multiple layers of tenancy for subaltern groups in urban spaces. Tenants use the scope of legal plurality and tenancy claims are made under that remit. This is a transversal claim which interacts, converges, and countered the official logic of property and law, but this concurrently sustains the gold jewellery making industry. The industry is not outside regulation, but its land relations are produced and sustained by extra-legality. This is a customary law that enables cheap housing for workers. These spaces thrive in contradiction and produce value for the local economy. Through these diverse tenure regimes, the value of the space is being produced. The majority of urban crafts find themselves in this situation, and I would argue such a tenure regime is one of the reasons for their existence. Similar practices have been observed in Delhi and Bangalore where single leaseholds have been multiplied into various sub-lets (S. Benjamin 2014).[100]

5.5.2. Gift or *selami*: alternative value production through extra-legality

This rent agreement also falls under an extra-legal transaction, but it is not limited to Chitpur neighbourhoods. These transactions possibly take place across the peripheral

[100] Benjamin's work on 'occupancy urbanism' unsettles the singularity of urban land tenure regime. He emphasises that diverse tenure is a 'bundle of possibility' for the local economy (S. Benjamin 2007, 549).

spaces of the city where the rent is controlled like Chitpur Road. Rent for shops and workshops in Chitpur Road neighbourhoods are exceptionally low. However, during the transfer of tenancy rights, the new tenant generally gives a '*selami*' or a monetary gift to the previous tenant, as well as to the landlord, which creates an alternative market for these old properties.

Figure 5.10: The back-alley workshop of musical instrument making (source: author)

Mr Sekhar Saha, a musical instrument maker who was evicted from his previous rented workshop in Jorasanko area of the Road explained the procedure to me. To maintain their old customer base and trade network, they wanted to re-establish the business in the same area. At present, they have acquired two premises just opposite to their old establishment. To acquire the main shop on the main road, they gave '*selami*' of Rs. (symbol ₹ hereafter) 4,000,00 to the landlord to change the name of the tenant in the rental agreement; and ₹8,000,00 to the previous tenant who 'sold' the property to him. His monthly rent is as low as ₹1500 which will be paid to the landlord directly. The workshop in the back alley, where I was talking to Mr Saha, came at a cheaper price (figure 5.10). The monthly rent here is only ₹800, and he paid 8,000,00 as '*selami'*. This is a tenure practice set by the residents, both landlords and tenants, which acts as unwritten law in the area.

Thus, *selami* as a mode of payment creates an alternative housing market that maintains the overall rent below market price. It helps the land to be divided across multiple tenancies, and for the tail end tenant, often a daily wage earner, the rent becomes affordable. This type of peripheral urbanisation is often designated as illegal or unregulated, but the case presented showed they operate within the customary law of the land tenure regime set by the residents. It contradicts the normative understanding of tenancy legislation, and is produced through negotiations between various stakeholders. In this section, two examples of *thika* tenancy show the porous legal domains where meanings can be contingent. Law which validates de-facto rights and rights which appropriates law where the title may not be *de jure*. The second case of *selami,* though extra-legal, acts as a tool of negotiation to offer affordable housing to precarious workers in a craft economy. Overall a constellation of temporal land relation, economic possibility and embedded local polity produce a plurality of tenure.

5.6. Heritage capital and urban redevelopment

I have identified subversive ways, assertion-based agencies, incremental processes, and layered structures of urban practice by the craftspeople in Chitpur Road which sustain them. In the last two decades, these forms of peripheral urbanisms have come under constant threat by the real estate developers and land sharks who seek to extract market value by assimilating these lands into the neo-liberal land redevelopment paradigm. This assimilation does not necessarily result in dispossession, especially when the craft communities are able to harness, claim and use heritage as a capital. In this section, I will discuss two contrasting case studies of land redevelopment projects in Chitpur Road. The first case (5.6.1) is of the idol makers, who is the only community I have established in the previous chapter with a strong heritage claim in the city. Here heritage capital first acts as a tool to prompt urban redevelopment, but then heritage capital is also used to resist the project, and the existing spatial practices continue. I analyse the community's ties with the peripheral urbanity, through which their artisan identity in Kolkata is expressed and acted as heritage capital. The second example (5.6.2.) is of the musical instrument makers who could not establish the heritage value of their craft, and were subjected to eviction, the land being developed into a new shopping mall.

5.6.1. Kumartuli's urban renewal project

Kumartuli's idol makers are possibly the only craft community in the city of Kolkata whose intangible heritage value of idol making has been indirectly recognised by the state government. This became apparent when the government decided to launch an urban renewal project in Kumartuli to provide upgraded urban infrastructure for the craft community. The state inadvertently recognised the art of clay idol making as Kumartuli's heritage capital in the absence of any monumental heritage of the area and validated their claim on the land by proposing to resettle everyone in the same location. Therefore, the intangible heritage claim was mobilised by the artisans to generate an urban renewal project while retaining the artisan claims on urban land. I will first give the details of the project and then understand one of the reasons for the project's cancellation. They will indicate how an impasse was created by juxtaposing land politics with spatial belonging and affective ties. Yet the heritage capital of the community allowed them to maintain their status quo without any judicial intervention and they continued to live and work in Kumartuli. The information presented in this section is drawn from earlier research (Mukhopadhyay 2016; 2020). To contextualise, compare and argue how heritage value determines the fate of the crafts in the urban areas, referencing this previous research data becomes important.

5.6.1.1. Project plan

Kumartuli's poor working and living condition has attracted much attention from writers, travellers, and journalists. Filth, dirt, unhygienic, and cramped quarters have frequently been associated with this craft cluster (IANS 2007). Therefore, in September 2006, Kumartuli Urban Renewal Project (KURP) was proposed by the then Left Front government.[101] It was approved by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation, Government of India in 2007 under Basic Services to the Urban Poor scheme of Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM).[102] Kolkata Metropolitan Development authority notes, 3.22 acres of land in Kumartuli were to be redeveloped for 524 residential flats and 298 shops which included 166 *mritshilpli* (clay

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[101] Left Front government, (*Baamfront*) is an alliance of major left parties led by Communist Party of India (Marxist). CPI(M) led government in West Bengal was the longest running democratically elected government of 34 years.

[102] Comptroller and Auditor General of India report https://cag.gov.in/webroot/uploads/download_audit_report/2016/West_Bengal_General_and_Social_Sector_Report_3_2016.pdf (last accessed 16 August 2021).

artisans), 51 *shola shilpi* (sponge wood artisans), 81 *shaaj shilpi* (decorative artisans).[103] The plan was to rejuvenate the Kumartuli neighbourhood by demolishing existing residential and workshop spaces and to upgrade with upgraded modern infrastructural amenities.[104] The Chief Minister of the state inaugurated the project in February 2009. In March 2010, 170 families and 70 workshops were relocated to the temporary housing in a nearby godown of Bagbazaar renovated by KMDA (figure 5.11) and some of their ancestral homes were demolished in Kumartuli. One of my research participants, Ratan Pal, with whom I spoke in 2015 and 2018 is living in this shelter for the last 10 years and he still couldn't call it home. They were to be rehoused in the multi-story building in Kumartuli when it is done. At the time of the relocation, resistance started to brew in Kumartuli. A sit-in protest continued from May 2010 to June 2011 (Khatua 2013, 152). The project was abandoned by the end of 2011.

Figure 5.11: Temporary relocation site of the artisans for the urban renewal project (source: author)

[103] http://www.kmdaonline.org/home/statutory_plans (last accessed 16 August 2021).
[104] Majumdar notes (2009) high rise multi-storeyed (ground plus three and ground plus four) structures were to be developed. The ground floor with a high ceiling would have worked as the workshop and the rest of the floors will be residences. Each flat will be 27 m^2 with a multipurpose room, a bedroom, a kitchen, a bathroom and a balcony. The ambitious plan also included design tools as it proposed a 325 m^2 exhibition cum sales hall for the artists, a dormitory for the workers, a health centre, training hall, two parks, a stage and a community hall. The estimated cost of the project was ₹26.8 crore (approx. ₹260 million) (Mishra 2018).

5.6.1.2. Politics of resistance and affective ties

Among three reasons for the cancellation of the projects that I have identified in my previous research, I will focus on Kumartuli artisan's affective ties with the existing landscape and understand how heritage is manifested through the idea of 'lived space'(Mukhopadhyay 2020).[105] Their place attachment led to fear of displacement from the ancestral land. Thus, Kumartuli's intangible heritage was materialised within its existing urbanity as the 2010 banner in the locality suggests.

Figure 5.12: 'Do not pay any heed to rumours. 300-year-old Kumartuli is still in Kumartuli.'

(source: http://yougodeep.blogspot.in/2010/10/kolkata-kaleidoscope-kumartuli.html. last accessed on 8th January 2021)

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[105] There is one official reason as stated in the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India report https://cag.gov.in/webroot/uploads/download_audit_report/2016/West_Bengal_General_and_Social_Sector_Report_3_2016.pdf (last accessed 16 August 2021). It says KMDS failed to assess the correct legal status of the land that was being redeveloped which led to partial acceptance of the project. I refer to section 5.5.1 where the three-tier tenancy system in Kumartuli was explained. CAG pointed out *Thika tenants* were against the redevelopment because they were afraid they would not be compensated for losing their existing land rights and privileges. KMDA mainly took the *bharatias* (sub-tenant) into account. Second reason was the politicisation of subaltern resistance (Chandra 2015). Two political camps supported the claims of *Thika* tenants and *bharatia*s (sub-tenant). The left front govt, who initiated the project backed the sub-tenants who wanted the redevelopment whereas the other group was represented by the opposing political party Trinamool Congress (TMC). When TMC came to power in 2011 on the basis of their main campaign against two violent and forceful land acquisitions of the Left Front, the Kumartuli project was scrapped.

The banner in figure 5.12 conveys what the resisting artisan movement said. It made a temporal connection of 300 years with the land and claimed the *mritshilpi*'s heritage value through that historicity which is interwoven with the place. This line signifies they claimed the space itself is Kumartuli's heritage. The existing structural condition of Kumartuli was, however, not considered as heritage by the state. The craftspeople's heritage sensibility, in this case, transcended the heritage binary of monumentality and intangibility as they realised their value lie not only in their craft but where that craft has flourished. Sunil Pal wondered,

> 'নতুন করে কুমারটুলি হলে লোকজন কি আসবে আমাদের কাজ দেখতে'?
>
> Will people still come to see our work in the renovated Kumartuli? (Sunil Pal, idol-maker interview, 5 February 2015)

Kumartuli's existing landscape, its serpentine lanes, makeshift dwellings, and the overall struggle to produce work of art amidst hardship, is constituent of its heritage. Sunil Pal realises the value of their work lies in the existing conditions of Kumartuli and told me whether photographers still come to document their work in new apartments. The planners imagined a renovated Kumartuli by demolishing it, undermining its existing land use practice, and imposing their vision of Kumartuli of high-rise flats. A place-based planning approach could have worked here instead of a complete demotion and renewal-based planning. Even the displaced artisans who were willing to be rehoused in a modern flat expressed concern that a confined workshop was not ideal for their work. Ashit Mukherjee who was living in the shelter in 2015 said,

> 'হা এখানে বৃষ্টিতে ঢাকা দিতে হয় না কুমোরটুলির মতো. কিন্তু ঠাকুর তো খোলা রোদে শুকোতে. এখানে পাখার ওপর সব. খুব ইলেকট্রিসিটি বিল আসে. কুমারটুলি তো মনে আসেই'.
>
> Its true we don't have to cover our idols as we used to in Kumartuli during the rainy season. Other idols used to get dried up in the open by the sun. Here we are dependent on fans. Electricity bills are huge. Yes, I do miss the place. (Ashit Mukherjee, idol-maker interview 17 February 2015)

In Kumartuli, the nooks and crannies of lanes and by-lanes are intricate conditions for idol-making. The lanes are used to soak the clay idols in natural sunlight, and to accommodate the overflowing orders. It helps to expand and adjust their workshop spaces as I explained in section 5.3. The construction, destruction, and reconstruction rhythm of the work (see Chapter 8), extends to their spatial practice as well. A housing

society might not have accommodated that elastic infrastructure and scope of further building, adding, and removing are not part of such urban planning imagination. In my interpretation, because of Kumartuli's powerful heritage capital, the artisans were able to claim that not only the art of idol making, but their place of work and residence itself are part of the city's heritage. I read their resistance expanding the concept of intangible heritage from knowledge, skill, and art practice to the sense of place and affective ties. Therefore, an urban renewal scheme backed by two powerful state entities (central and state government), was ultimately stopped. Additionally, because of the lobbying power and unionising capacity of the idol-making craft community, they were not evicted. Even the relocated artisans in the transit camps continue to work from their temporary shelter in Bagbazaar where their lease would have been over in 2020. However, not all craft communities were able to receive recognition for their craft.

5.6.2. The evicted musical Instrument makers

In one of the back alleys of Chitpur, co-owner of the national harmonium, Mr Sekhar Saha, was making dancing bells (field note, 29 December 2018). He told me about his ordeal of losing his livelihood and how he got two cramped spaces in the same area, one in a back alley where we talked, and another on the main road, to relaunch the generational livelihood again.

263 Rabindra Sarani (erstwhile 374 Upper Chitpore Road in the building plan of 1894) was known as Ganesh Garh, comprising of a large mansion house, within a sprawling 4.5 acre (52 cottah) site facing the tram line of Chitpur Road just opposite to Jorasanko *thakurbari* (S. Das 2007b).[106] Das has compared the property to the architectural beauty of Hawa Mahal of Jaipur. It has had a chequered history and went through various hands

[106] Jorasanko Thakurbari is the residence of the Tagore family, Now a university campus and museum. Das notes, even in recent times, this house with a façade of small windows and ornamental arches has been described as a mini town which had multiple inner courtyards, a well and a temple (S. Das 2002). Staircases would lead to many hidden sections in this once ornate four-storied house where one would find perfectly repaired affluent apartment blocks.

before becoming a shopping mall in 2019 (figure 5.13).

Figure 5.13: New mall in the place of old Ganesh Garh (source: author)

5.6.2.1. Ganesh Garh: Who has the right to live?

Sekhar Saha along with three other brothers 'owned' four musical instrument making shops within Ganesh Garh. Wealthy business families in residential blocks shared spaces with musical instrument making shops and marble statue sellers in cubby holes. The house has hosted many commercial activities and was an integral part of small scale local economic activities as indicated by the street directories I have consulted.[107] In 1915 there were engravers, artists, and musical instrument sellers. By 1935, a flour mill, Iron factory office, photography studios, a medical practitioner's surgery, a silk store, and many residents. Residents complained about the stench of urine but took no initiative to clean the premises, or care for the exterior condition of the building. Like the fate of many old North Kolkata buildings, weeds had taken over the building and disrepair and ruin was evident everywhere.

[107] Kolkata Street Directory [1915] republished 2017. Ed. Samik Bandyopadhyay, Debasis Bose. Kolkata: P. M. Bagchi and Calcutta Streets 1935. Thacker's Press & Directories, Ltd. http://www.southasiaarchive.com/Content/sarf.141388/203436/024 . London: Taylor and Francis online (last accessed 17 August 2021).

Sekhar Saha enthusiastically recalls the historic association of the house with the Cossimbazaar Raj family. He says originally it was a property of reformist and philanthropist Maharaja Manindra Chandra Nandi. His death in 1929 marked the turning point for the property, with its glorious history behind it. From two newspaper reports (S. Das 2002; 2007b) and judicial hearing documents, I note, Manindra Chandra's son, Sris Chandra Nandi, the manager of Cossimbazaar Raj Wards Estate, leased the house for 50 years from 1931 for two hundred thousand (₹2 lakh), stipulating the property should be empty when the lease ran out.[108] The lease changed hands multiple times and the main property was also sold to a company within these 50 years.[109] As the fifty-year lease ended in 1981, the company didn't want to renew the lease, and Bajoria went to court to extend the lease.[110] In the meantime, the property was sold again in 1995 to a former tenant, Mr Lakhotia along with 200 tenants.[111] The Lakhotias became the transferee owners on the premises due to successive transfer of property rights, which protected the interests of the owners dismissing claims of the lessee, or the tenants who were just sold off by the new owner. He asked the tenants to vacate the premises in 2001 who refused to move out. In Sekhar Saha's words:

> 'লাখোটিয়া কিনে আমাদের বলল তোমরা ছেড়ে দাও। অথবা তোমরা আমাকে permission দাও আমি বাড়িটা করে তোমাদের দেব। টা আমরা বললাম তা তুমি কর। আমাদের দেবে সেটা লিখিত দাও। উনি লিখিত দেন নি। উনি বললেন আমি লিখিত দেব না। উনি এই যুক্তি দেখালেন যে লিখিত দিলে যার যতবড় ঘর আছে, তাকে ততবড় দিতে হবে। সে তো ছারবে না, আপনাদের না হয়ে ছোট ছোট, কিন্তু ভেতরে যারা ভাড়া থাকত ১০ -১২ টাকায়ে বড় বড় ঘরে থাকত। বিশাল বড় । বলল আমি দেব না। তুমি case এ যাও। case এ যা final হবে, ফএসালা হবে। দিলে আমি তোমাদের ১ লাখ টাকা করে দেব পার ঘর। যার ছোট তার ১ লাখ টাকা যার বড় তার দু লাখ। টা আমরা case এ গেছিলাম। আমরা টাকা

[108] The transfer details of the property can be found in this court case of 1950 https://indiankanoon.org/doc/1833042/ (last accessed 13 March 2021).

[109] Das (2002) notes, the leaseholders from 1930-1980 included: first Baijnath Bajoria; then Laddu Gopal Bajoria; then Meena Debi, and finally, Arun Bajoria in 1980. In 1967, after the death of Sris Chandra Nandi, his widow, Maharani Nilima Prova Nandy, and son, Maharaj Kumar Somendra Chandra Nandy, sold it to Great Bengal Properties and Construction Private Limited, one of whose directors was Samit Chandra Nandy, son of Somendra, therefore still keeping the property within the family, but transferring the property rights to a different company while it is still leased.

[110] Mr Arun Bajoria, the lessee, pursued his case for a long time, and went to Supreme Court but it was rejected. Das (2002) suggests that nevertheless, his *darwan* (caretaker/ guard), Lal Bihari Singh continued to collect rent on behalf of him even in 2002. The report says that only 30 tenants paid rent ranging between ₹25 to 30 (S. Das 2002). He lost the case.

[111] Great Bengal Properties tried to sell the property after the lease ended in 1980. First to Model Land Trust Limited, whose director was Chandra Nath Banik. They weren't successful in that venture but finally, they sold it in 1995 to a tenant named Amar Chand Lakhotia, who ran a transport business for ₹2.4 million.

নিনি। আমরা বলেছিলাম ছোট দাও কিন্তু আমাদের দাও। বলল না। টাকা নাও ছেড়ে দাও। ঐ ঘর কাউকে দেব না।‘

> Lakhotia asked us to vacate the property or give him permission so that he can redevelop the property and give us rooms for the shops. We agreed with the second and asked Lakhotia to give it in writing. He wasn't willing to do so. His logic was, if he puts it in writing then the tenant-residents who have bigger floor space would demand space of similar size. He said, you can go to court or I can give small tenants ₹1000,000 and 2000,000 to those currently with bigger space. We didn't take the money, instead went to court. We requested again to give us a space in the redeveloped house, even if it is small but he didn't agree. (Sekhar Saha, musical instrument maker interview, 29 December 2018)

37 court cases were filed against Lakhotia. He challenged the validity of their tenancy itself saying their tenancy right ended when the lease ended in 1980. The tenants lost the case and in 2006 including eight musical instrument making shops, the tenants were evicted in the police presence.[112] It is evident that the subtenants, such as the musical instrument makers, approached the issue from a right based perspective, whereas the judiciary made them illegal occupiers. In Ganesh Garh's case, political aid came from the state in the name of heritage conservation which attempted to give the tenants claim legitimacy. It has been noticed that subaltern groups approach courts as a strategy of their political resistance, and as a tool of negotiation, which has been termed as 'judicialisation of politics' (Comaroff and Comaroff 2006, 26–29). Here the tenants adopted the same strategy hoping their claim of collective right would trump the demand of the private property owner. Nevertheless, the verdict was against them. It should also be noticed that KMC's role at the beginning of this land dispute was hostile towards the tenants, a position that would eventually change.

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[112] Sekhar Saha told me, Lakhotia appointed an influential political leader, a lawyer by profession, to fight his case. The lawyer advised Lakhotia to move to the high court and appeal against all thirty-seven cases together. His petition said that he had bought the house in a dilapidated condition and the KMC had ordered to demolish this unsafe property. He argued that he could only start living in his property when it was redeveloped and the tenants were not willing to vacate. 200 tenants formed Ganesh Garh Tenants Welfare Association and moved a court case against KMC in 2002 The details of the court hearing can be found here https://indiankanoon.org/doc/447556/ (last accessed 13 March 2021). The high court ruling in May 2002, effectively labelled the tenants as occupiers, and questioned the legality of the tenants association itself. According to a newspaper report, four tenants even moved to the Supreme Court to establish their tenancy rights, but their case was dismissed. The 2004 ruling of a division bench of High Court bench said; 'we are unable to hold that the appellants have been able to establish any independent right or title and their legal status at the material point of time was that of a sub-lessee/sub-tenant under a tenant governed by Transfer of Property Act' (Staff Reporter 2005b, n.p.).

5.6.2.2. Heritage rhetoric and populist politics

Territorial claims and oblique modes of politics are not only observed by urban poor such as 200 tenants of Ganesh Garh but the state itself participates in these practices by creating provisions, fostering deregulation, and granting exceptions. Bhan's (2019) observation on squatting as a practice of occupation and inhabitation not only used as a 'weapon of the weak' but how the Delhi government itself appropriated that process and built its neighbourhood clinics on sidewalks is a brilliant example, how the state itself is a 'deeply informalised entity' (A. Roy 2009, 81). In Ganesh Garh's case, political aid came from the state in the name of heritage conservation which attempted to give the tenants claim legitimacy.

In 2005, after various legal proceedings, the elected representative, Member of Parliament (MP) Mr Sudhangsu Seal came to the aid of the tenants, rather than facilitating the transferee owners. With this active intervention from the MP, the Mayor of Kolkata declared Ganesh Garh a 'heritage structure' in 2005 and directed the heritage commission to consider the plea of 200 tenants (Staff Reporter 2005b).[113] The building itself was considered as heritage, not the musical instrument makers or other small trades such as marble statue dealers. At this moment, the commitment towards architectural heritage conservation was harnessed to aid the right based claims of the tenants by the state government. The newspaper reports: 'He [Mayor Bikash Ranjan Bhattacharya] has also declared that tenants who have lived in a building for a long period of time cannot be evicted' (Staff Reporter 2005a, n.p.). A legal dispute between the Lakhotias and the state government erupted in the scene.[114] During the court hearing in 2009, the Lakhotias accused the MP of obstructing the eviction procedure in front of the police, and for being the main architect of the land acquisition procedure. His counsel stated that as an elected representative he must look after the welfare of

[113] Mr Lakhotia challenged this order and decided to approach the court again. Soon the government changed its manoeuvres, and withdrew the heritage structure plan to protect the interest of the tenants. Instead, they decided to acquire the land under section 4 of the West Bengal Land Acquisition Act for the purpose of public interest. First, they declared there was a need for a Hindi medium women's college in the area to cater to the majority of Hindi speaking residents of this locality. This strategy failed. The state government went on to argue they wished to open a second campus for another established women's college.

[114] Politicisation of the matter was further complicated because it was a fight to establish power in the neighbourhood between two major political parties. The sitting MP of the constituency resisting the eviction and the legal council appointed by the petitioners to remove them from the property was from an opposing political party.

people in his constituency. The political class tried to use the rhetoric of justice, and emerged as a welfare state through this intervention. The court ruled in favour of the petitioners again in 2009 and the owners went ahead with their plan to make the best financial use of the property. The building was completely razed to the ground and sold off to a private developer to erect a new structure. It now houses a retail chain store owned by one of the Indian billionaires. During this entire process, the tenants were the most affected. Mr Saha remembered:

> ‘বিরাট ধাক্কা। কত লোক মরে গেছে, কত লোক পাগল হয়ে গেছে। যার কারখানা ছিল র ঘর ছিল, তাদের ওপর শোক টা খুব লেগেছে। আমরা তো এখানে থাকি না। দোকান বন্ধ করে রাতে চলে যাই। কিন্তু যারা থেকেছে ঘরে, plus বাইরে দোকান, তারা একদম নিঃস্ব হয়ে গেল।’
>
> It was a big shock. Many people died; some went mad. Those who had a workshop/factory and a residence were the biggest hit. We never stayed here. Closed our shop and used to go back home. Those who stayed here plus had a shop were completely ruined. (Sekhar Saha, musical instrument maker interview, 29 December 2018)

The economic incentive of the land brought this piece of historic property within the circuit of corporate capital by displacing the small-scale trading units and residences. Thus, it is a beginning of a changing relationship between neighbourhood centric local business networks embedded within a nexus of elite patronage of the colonial era, political leverage of postcolonial democracy and real estate developers who want to earn profit from this land-use change. A new regime of individualised private property ownership has been initiated in the historic urban core which thrives through the dispossession of the craft community who couldn’t claim any heritage capital.

Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that the local and state administration mobilised by the electoral representatives, both at the municipal and parliamentary level, worked for the people. They utilised every means to give rights to the tenants based on the *de-facto* tenure regime, and heritage designation was one of the ways to achieve that. Solomon Benjamin called these land-related local politics at the municipal level *‘embedded* institutionalisation’ (S. Benjamin 2007, 550). Heritage is often materialised through these entanglements. With civic society’s heritage awareness campaign, more often than usual, it is the heritage structure that gets sanctioned to be saved in recent years. In this case, neither the structure, nor the small trades could utilise their heritage claims. Like the majority of the urban crafts in the historic core, the musical instrument maker’s

workshop produced by peripheral urbanity is under threat, without the identification of a heritage claim.

5.7. Conclusion

This chapter puts forward two arguments. First, urban craft's heritage capital is one of the strongest means through which it can resist dispossession and eviction under the dominant mode of urban redevelopment. Through two case studies, it shows how heritage claims confront, interact, and materialise during urban conflicts over land. Second, it shows through practices of peripheral urbanism urban craftspeople sustain their livelihood in historic urban cores. It traces the production of peripherality for Chitpur Road's craft practices from colonial times when they were part of the 'native town' which was placed at the periphery of urban governance. In administrative imagination, it was, and it remained, the neglected part of the town that defies the norm of planning, and devises its own way of being/functioning. In contemporary times these crafts continued to produce peripherality through specific urban practices, and have reclaimed their rights through transversal politics.

The chapter demonstrates how the survival of the craft workshops is entangled with these urban practices. The first of the three traits are the mutability of workshop infrastructure which shows how the workshops are autoconstructed and designed, built, developed over time by the craftspeople. Second is a strong claim of ownership over their dwelling and workshop places which exemplify a sense of political subjectivity rooted in temporal ties, agency, desire, and value of the place. The third one delves into a further complication in the land tenure regime which the craftspeople appropriate and subvert for their survival. Two underlying themes of this discussion is the porous nature of legality/illegality, formality/ informality, and the plurality of the nature of law, which can be customary as well as judicial. It grapples with various negotiations, interpretations and assertions of *de-facto* rights which ensures affordable housing spaces for precarious craft workers. These peripheral urban placemaking practices of the craftspeople, hold and sustain the craft industry, but they are under constant threat of urban redevelopment. The vulnerable crafts organise through political mobilisation and legal system, but these interventions materialise in this analysis through two drastically opposing ways. For religious idol makers, with powerful heritage capital resting on the centrality of contribution to faith-based practices, the claim on the land

and existing urban practices were retained. The chapter further indicates that the idol makers community was able to establish their affective ties with the land and their use of peripheral urban practices as heritage itself, thereby claiming a heritage of urban peripherality. For the musical instrument makers, the land was finally secured by a private developer through dispossession and eviction of the craftspeople. In both cases, the politicisation of resistance, informality of the state machinery itself, and a modality of rights-based assertion were noticed, yet utilisation of heritage capital distinguishes them apart.

Chapter Six
A Postcolonial Reading of a Diverse Craft Economy

6.1. Introduction

This chapter gives an in-depth insight into the economic organisation of one of the urban crafts of Chitpur and explores the conditions and reasons behind its existence. The craft economy has been theorised in contemporary craft scholarship emerging from the west as a sector modelling alternative modes of production and marketing (Luckman and Thomas 2018; Luckman 2015; Gowan and Slocum 2014; Grimes and Milgram 2000; Carr and C. Gibson 2016). It is also identified as a space pushing back against the global advancement of capitalism in the post-Fordist era (Gowan and Slocum 2014). The new age designer-makers are constituting an ethical creative economic space who are pushing back against the capitalist production regime of mass-manufactured goods often utilising the digital space. This moment has been applauded as a 'renaissance of the handmade' while acknowledging tensions within this privileged and gendered nature of micro-entrepreneurial work (Luckman 2015, 1-6). While writing about the creative economy, Susan Luckman (2015) suggests that '[c]raft practice and items are being increasingly located as ethical alternatives in an age of low-cost mass-produced items frequently made under conditions of labour exploitation in industrialising nations' (Luckman 2015, 9).

I chose one craft from my field site to understand how its economic lifeworld might speak to this production of an ethically driven, non-normative economic activity. The focus is, therefore, on artisanal practices of the global south and its economic logic. The craft of idol-making will be looked at to venture into this exercise for two reasons. First, it has a strong claim to the status of heritage craft as explained in Chapter 4. Second, this craft has gone through a rapid transformation in the last two decades, with increasing corporate funding and state support for religious festivities in the public sphere. Hence, its interaction with external structural conditions demonstrates the complex nature of the urban craft industry, which has the potential to be institutionalised as 'heritage craft' in future.

I have engaged with three conceptual apparatus to understand the idol-making craft's socio-economic organisation and condition of existence. Feminist geographer Gibson-

Graham's (2006) diverse economies framework is used to unpack the enterprise, labour, and transaction practices of this craft, which brings out the complexity within heterogenous economic practices of a craft sector (Gibson-Graham and Dombroski 2020). Secondly, one of the postcolonial conditions of the craft is analysed through Kalyan Sanyal's (2007) work, which brings this craft economy in close conversation with development discourse.[115] In this vein, I question the *intentionality* of creating alternatives, and critically look at the nature of existing alternatives in a craft economy (Samers 2005). What emerges is that diverse economic practices in the Indian craft sector may not solely exist on the premise of performative politics of ethical production. Moreover, it might not be an immanent part of a 'capital-non-capital complex' of a developing economy (K. Sanyal 2007, 40).[116] I suggest that a discernible part of this sector shows intention towards progressive change, from the vantage point of social justice. I argue that post-capitalist world making is possible through otherwise obfuscated moments of intimate and everyday activism (Tironi 2018; Chatterton and Pickerill 2010).

The organisation of the chapter comprises three main sections. The first analytical section on diverse economies comprises a discussion of the following themes: family-run quasi capitalist business enterprises, where multiple class processes converge; the nature of seasonal wage labour in the idol-making industry; a critique of non-capitalist labour relation, migration, and mobility in creating labour subjectivity; and, how faith-based socially agreeable contracts and government regulations interact with the niche market transaction. The following section focuses on the encounter of this sector with the festival economy, where corporate sponsorship and state sanction play important roles. The final section discusses the nature of intimate politics, which is existing and

[115] The principal enquiry of both these frameworks involves the space of the 'outside' of capitalism and how to explain its existence (Gidwani and Wainwright 2014). Keeping in mind the vastly different geographical and context-specific forms of alternatives, I am interested to engage with some perspectives from the postcolonial context. I would like to point out here, Gibson-Graham's framework has been constructively used later in understanding some already existing economic forms from across the globe emphasising local embeddedness and distinct politics (K. Gibson et al. 2018; K. Gibson, Cahill, and McKay 2010; Community Economies Collective and K. Gibson 2009; J. K. Gibson-Graham and Dombroski 2020). Rural agricultural systems and their economic organisations have been enquired with this conceptual tool.

[116] Capital-non-capital complex is discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.5.3. I would like to flag up that I engage with Sanyal's thesis partially, and there remains further scope to engage critically with his set of arguments concerning India's craft economy.

unfolding through assertions of subjectivities, agencies and negotiations that lead to social transformation.

6.2. Diverse economic practices of Kumartuli

I address the diverse economic practices of *mritshilpi*s (idol-makers) through three analytical tropes: enterprise, labour, and transaction. Writing on the commodification of caste and illusion of tradition, scholars have identified that 'modernity and capitalism perhaps are the best terms to describe and analyse the recent changes Kumartuli has undergone' (Heierstad 2017, 9). Following Gibson-Graham (2020), I take an unconventional route to read the *differences* within Kumartuli's seemingly capitalist modes of production, and make these absences in the scholarship visible (Gibson-Graham 2020). While not disqualifying that a transition towards a capitalist mode of production is visible, it is clear that non-capitalist relations of production still exist. In that process, Kumartuli will emerge as a space where multiple socio-economic forms cohabit and constitute a diverse economic landscape.

6.2.1. Enterprise

The present structure of Kumartuli's idol-making industry follows different fixes and configurations. An enterprise is categorised under different firm types based on its production, appropriation, and distribution of surplus-value. In Gibson-Graham's framework, the nature of the enterprise is mainly determined by addressing one particular question.[117] Following Marxist political-economic analysis this question is often answered by asking how the surplus value is being appropriated. The diverse economies approach makes it easier to identify various economic relations that operate within one single business enterprise. Accordingly, I would see how 'within any one business, a range of market and nonmarket transactions are enacted, various kinds of labour are deployed, and different class processes of production, appropriation, and distribution can coexist' (Gibson-Graham 2006a, 74). This reading would unpack the multidimensional nature of the idol-making business enterprise, mainly focusing on the transition of this enterprise from a non-capitalist craft, to a family-run, quasi capitalist'

[117] Some enterprise types can be a capitalist family firm, (private unincorporated firm, public company, multinational) or a non-capitalist firm (a communal, independent, feudal) or an alternative capitalist (cooperative, NGO, state-run, green firm).

one. The emphasis will be on various class processes within the enterprise which unsettles the idea of accumulation and reproduction within a purely capitalist setup.

6.2.1.1. Communal to simple reproduction

To position the *mritshilpi*s within a diverse economies framework it is helpful to contextualise some trends of economic production experienced by this sector over time. In the long history of craft production in India we look to the place of the 'master artisan' or in Kumartuli *'Palmosai'* (Veteran male artisans with Pal surname), who was originally self-employed makers of earthen pots and religious-non-religious clay idols in the village with occasional involvement of family labour (Chakrabarti 1985).[118] When family was the only source of labour, the enterprise would follow the structure of a *communal or independent non-capitalist firm*. This especially holds true for idol-making, as this is a pre-capitalist activity, that developed as it comes into contact with a capitalist mode of production. Beth Goldblatt (1981) suggests till the early nineteenth century, the idol-makers would migrate to the city for three to four months to make religious idols for the aristocratic families but it was a subsidiary occupation (see Chapter 4 for the early days of Kumartuli and Durga *puja*). It was termed as a 'Patron-Client economy' (Heierstad 2017, 148). The nature of this community-centric hereditary caste-based profession started to change its character with the introduction of hired labour to meet its production demand. The employment of seasonal wage labour became essential when idol worship expanded from aristocratic residential houses to the public sphere.[119]

[118] A potter's profession used to be simple in terms of their relationship with the production process as they had control over the means of production. The raw material was abundant in the natural surroundings; family labour would help in the production, and land would be leased to them by an urban landlord when they moved to the city to take advantage of seasonal markets (linked, for example, to religious festivals), while keeping their rural establishment. The produced commodities, both religious idols and domestic pottery goods, had an immediate market, and the return was enough for the subsistence of the artisan family.

[119] As mentioned in Chapter 4, in the late eighteenth century twelve Brahmin elders first started a local subscription-based *puja* which became known as *Baroari* (meaning twelve friends) *puja.* From the district towns it travelled to Kolkata and became popular in mid nineteenth century. As mentioned by Guha-Thakurta (2015) this move was a reaction of denial to entry in the mid household puja or *zamindari puja* was no longer taking place in this place. Initially these festivities also followed the lavish spending of the household *puja*s. The festival became a more civic public festival within communities in various *para* or neighbourhoods of the city with the anti-colonial nationalist movement of early nineteenth century Kolkata. It came to be known as *Sarbojonin puja* when the religious element of the festival was secularised and it became a place for community engagement, conviviality, cohesion and cultural celebration (see Guha Thakurta 2015, 92-94 for more details).

Exactly when seasonal labour was introduced could not be said according to Goldblatt (1981) but she suggests it can be traced back to at least 100 years.

During the introduction of wage labour in this industry, the master craftsmen were part of the subsistence economy. When Goldblatt was writing in 1981, she observed that the chance of capital accumulation utilizing the lower salary of wage labour, and the profit from the sale of the idols, were minimal. She categorised it under the 'simple reproduction', where 'although capitalist relations of production were being reproduced, shop owners must nevertheless have operated on a subsistence basis' (p.105).[120] in my analysis following Sanyal (2007), these kinds of economic enterprises were part of the 'need economy' which is in the domain of non-capital (p.208-215). Here surplus value was spent on everyday consumption, or used for the following year's investment buying means of production (such as raw material or labour), and for subsistence survival during long months 'off-season'. His theorisation also suggests that the surplus produced in this kind of economic setup, with a limited inflow of capital, would not account for accumulation on a large scale. Nevertheless, nationalised bank loans made accumulation possible, at least for the large scale enterprises from the 1970s. Labour unions also fought against capitalist production relations (Heierstad 2017, 158).

6.2.1.2. Family-run business enterprise: quasi-capitalist firm

Conventionally the enterprises in Kumartuli can be divided into small, medium, and large scale depending on the number of hired labour and scale of production (figure 6.1). Accordingly, the surplus accumulation would vary greatly within this craft industry. Sandeepan Pal's example is one of a small-scale *malik*s of a Kumartuli workshop.[121]

> R: কত জন কারিগর এখন আপনি রাখছেন? How many *karigar* do you have?
>
> S: আমার ধরুন মোটামুটি গোটা চারেক থাকে। তার পরে কী বলুন তো, তারা আবার ওই কিছুটা কাজ করে চলে যায়। চলে গিয়ে আবার বাইরে চলে যায়। I have more or less 4. Though they leave after starting the work. They go outside.

[120] To understand simple reproduction, one might find this explanation helpful. 'If the capitalist consumes all of the surplus-value that he gets and simply advances a capital of the same size in each period, then production continues at the constant level. This is what Marx calls simple reproduction. It is an analytical device to pick out those features of reproduction that arise out of simple continuity, before going on to look at reproduction on an ever-increasing scale'(Brewer 1984, 68).

[121] Male owner-artisans are called *malik* in Kumartuli. Because of the rise of female owner-artisans in Kumartuli I will be using the word owner-artisan in most of the cases.

R: বাইরে মানে পশ্চিমবঙ্গের বাইরে? Do you mean outside West Bengal?

S: পশ্চিমবঙ্গের বাইরে। Yes.

R: আচ্ছা, ওই সময়টায় আপনাকেই করতে হয়। So during that time you have to work alone?

S: এই যে এই যে আমি করছি। আপনি তো দেখছেন। Yes, now I am working alone. You can see that.

R. হুম। এখন কি কোনও কারিগর নেই? So, you have nobody now?

S: এই টাইমে নেই। আবার কালী ঠাকুর যখন হবে, তখন দু'জন আসবে। Not during this time. They will come back when I will make Kali idols.

R:তার মানে এখন থেকে দুর্গাপুজো অবধি বাকিটা আপনিই করবেন? So, you will work from now until Durga *puja* alone?

S: আমি তিন মাস ধরে করছি একা একা। Yes I have been working alone for the last three months.

R:একাই করছেন? Oh, I see.

S: হ্যাঁ। এখন তো আশ্বিন মাস। আমি এই জ্যৈষ্ঠ-আষাঢ-শ্রাবণ-ভাদ্র-আশ্বিন... চার মাস তো আমি একা একাই করছি। Yes. Now it is *Aswin.* I have been working for last four months actually Jaishthha-Asar-Srabon-Bhadro-Aswin.

R:ও বাবা। আর ফ্যামিলি থেকে হেল্প পাচ্ছেন একটু। That's quite long. You do get some help from your family, right?

S: ফ্যামিলি থেকে হেল্প কোনও ব্যাপারই নয়। সে কেউ অসুস্থ হয়ে গেলে হেল্প করবে। আমি একা একাই করছি। কারণ আমার অল্প। আমি যদি কারিগর নিতাম, তা হলে আমার ভিক্ষে করতে হত লোকের কাছে। Family help is not that much. They help if somebody is ill anyway. I am working alone because I have fewer orders. If I would have taken *karigar,* I would have had to beg people.

R:কতগুলো ঠাকুর এখন গড়ছেন? How many *thakur* (thakur: God but referred to as idol here) are you making?

S: এই এখন পাঁচটা ঠাকুর। I am doing five.

R:ব্যাপারটা এখন বুঝতে পারছি। কারিগর থাকলে অনেকটা করা যেত... I understand. You could have made more with *karigar*'s help.

***S*:** হ্যাঁ, যেহেতু আমার জায়গা নেই, প্রোডাকশন করার পরিস্থিতি নেই... Yes. But I don't have space so I don't have the means to increase the production. (Sandeepan Pal, idol-maker, 30 September 2018)

I will address two issues from this interview excerpt, the seasons, and the nature of small-scale businesses. The season for Kumartuli *mritshilpi*s starts in the month of

Falgun (spring).[122] From interviews like above, and informal conversations with *karigar*s, I realised the main need for *karigar*s emerges from *Sraban* (monsoon) to *Agrahayan* (late autumn), for five months. Monsoon to autumn is the main festive season of Durga *puja* and Kali *puja*, leading up to Jagadhatri *puja*.[123] Though no one referred to the seasons in terms of English months, it essentially means from July to November Kumartuli is most busy.

Sandeepan Pal, who was making only five Durga idols in the busiest season, owns, produces, and manages his workshop all by himself. He cannot afford to hire labour all throughout the season. Four labourers come and go to help him start the production before major *puja*s, but it is quite possible in the lean season, as well he is working on his own. I observe, for these kinds of small workshops, surplus generation is for subsistence/need purposes. For most of the small, medium, and large-scale production, hired labour is a norm during the festive season. The number of recruits varies significantly based on the number of orders and size of the enterprise. A medium-size workshop, such as Medha Pal's where I was doing my ethnography, delivered 50 Durga idols and hired 7 *karigar*s in 2018. For a large-scale workshop, it can rise to 20, as Bimal Pal explained to me (idol-maker interview, 19 November 2018). At this point, the hired labour would lead to small scale accumulation.

[122] Everyone speaks in terms of the Bengali calendar or refers to the period with the help of a religious festival.

[123] Jagadhatri, Durga, Kali are names of various goddesses and the word puja means worship.

Figure 6.1: Inside an idol-making workshop in Kumartuli (source: author)

I propose that the present operational nature of the enterprise can be categorised under the family-run quasi-capitalist firm for the lack of a better category, where the surplus generated by the *karigar*s is appropriated by the family members. I am going to identify four types of hereditary family-run businesses: a) Run by an artisan owner or *malik;* b) jointly run by artisan father and son; c) hereditary business, usually managed by the son, who is not an artisan; and d) art-school graduate sculptor from the clay idol-making community. I will discuss these categories subsequently but before that, the question that is important to me is whether the structure of the 'firm', if we at all chose to call it so, follows a capitalist structure that looks towards growth and accumulation, and how the placed nature of the business constrains or enables it. Sandeepan Pal's business remained small scale because he doesn't have space to expand production. Only then he can hire more labour. Bimal Pal echoed the same that to invest the surplus for reproduction on an increasing scale, the workshop would need more space. Kumartuli's severe space constraint impedes that expansion as expressed by artisans unequivocally. Bimal Pal, compares their need for land to a business enterprise of industrialists and said,

> 'আমাদের জায়গা... প্রচুর জায়গার দরকার। ইন্ডাস্ট্রিয়ালের মতো। যত জায়গা দেবেন, আমাদের কম পড়ে যাবে।'

> We need a lot of lands…like industrialists. The more land we can get, the better. Nevertheless, it seems little. (Bimal Pal, idol-maker interview, 19 November 2018)

To resolve this issue the owner-artisans hire more storage spaces and store the basic structure of the idols before the commencement of peak season, taking advantage of a cheaper rate of waged labour during the lean season as told by Bikash Pal.

> এই যে ধর আমরা দিন ১৫/২০ র পর থেকে কাজ শুরু করে দেব৷ এখন যদি আমি কাজ করতে পারি, আগামী দিনে আমি ঠাকুর যদি সস্তাতেও বেছি তাহলে লস খাব না৷ কারণ প্রথম দিকে কাজ তো সস্তাএ করিয়েছি। একন যে লেবার ৫০০ টাকা নেবে, সে ধর এটা চৈত্র মাস এসে গেলে ওর ই হবে ৮০০ টাকা রোজ৷ তাহলে কি আমি যদি নিজের মূলধন নিয়ে ব্যাবসা টা শুরু করতে পারি, পরে যদি লস এও বেচি গায়ে লাগবে না৷ জাএগা থাকতে হবে৷ অবশ্যই৷ অনেকেই এখন ভাড়া নিএয়েছে৷ লিজ নিএয়েছে৷… নিজস্ব জাএগা চাই৷ স্টক করে রাখার জাএগা৷ যত advance করে রাখব কাজ, ততই আমার লাভ৷ পরে সস্তাএ বেচতে পারব৷

> I will start the work in 15 to 20 days. If I can do it now, I can even sell it at a lower price later. I won’t face any loss because now the wage will be cheaper. If a labourer demands ₹500/day now, in the month of Chaitra, the same person would ask for ₹800/day. If I can start the production with my own capital, then even if I sell it at a loss, I won’t be much affected. You need space for this. Many people have taken rent nowadays to stock it. The more work will be done in advance, the more I will gain. (Bikash Pal, idol-maker interview, 14 February 2019)

My field note of 1 September 2019 documents that Medha Pal rents two other places, apart from the main workshop, one to store the idols in Kumartuli and another to make big idols in Bagbazaar. I noticed Most of the Laxmi and Kali idols were already made before Durga *puja*’s work commenced.[124] As mentioned in Chapter 5, Kumartuli Urban Renewal Project provided a temporary living and working space in Bagbazaar to some artisans who were about to lose their homes in Kumartuli. The demolition was partial. Some artisans like Medha Pal and Subir Pal did not lose their home or workshop in Kumartuli but additionally were allocated workshop spaces in the Bagbazaar godown. As a result, they expanded their production in this new location in addition to their Kumartuli space. Artisan father and son often rent two workshops and increase their production as well as income. For example, Subir Pal’s son, whom I will be discussing shortly, has rented his own workshop within Kumartuli (interview with Subir Pal, 3 October 2018).

[124] Three pujas, Durga, Laxmi and Kali are lined up one after another with 7 and 14 days gap in between. Hence, additional storage space is the solution.

From this observation, one can see for medium and big enterprises, idol making is no longer part of the 'need economy'. The production exceeds the category of simple reproduction, and small-scale accumulation enables gains in profit. Buying property outside Kumartuli reflects this ongoing transition from a 'need economy' to an 'accumulation economy' for middle and large-scale enterprises. Second or third generation artisans such as Medha Pal or *shola shilpi* Saroj Malakar (interview on 4 December 2018), have managed to buy a house or a flat in recent years. Medha Pal's flat is in Barahnagar, a far northern municipality in Kolkata (field note 1 September 2018). However, the surplus-value gets distributed to various agents in the market. Paying rent and repayment of bank loans is one of them which I will discuss in section 6.3.2.

6.2.1.3. Multiple class processes

Among the four types of hereditary family-run businesses, I observed above, I will focus on the fourth one in more detail here and give brief introductions for the rest. The majority of workshops are run by an owner-artisan, like Sandeepan Pal's, and then passed on to the son. On rare occasions, a wife or daughter or sister learns the craft and joins the business and becomes an equal contributor as well as the beneficiary. Among 500 registered artisans in Kumartuli, only five female artisans have made their way to become the owner of the enterprise. Among the five women artisans I have met, three of them have taken up the responsibility after their husband passed away and one after her father.[125] In another case, a sister has joined because her brother encouraged her from childhood (figure 6.2).

[125] One of them, whom I am calling, Medha Pal, took up her father's business in 1994 when he passed away. She is the fourth girl child in the family and her parents decided to give her a name which translates into 'not wanted' hoping it will prevent having more girl children in the family. She still bears the pain of being least wanted in the family and recalls the massive resistance she faced in her initial years in this profession. Senior artisans working in her father's studio as well as the family including the larger community boycotted her when she took over the business. Her father never taught her the craft as he believed the studio is not a space for her daughter. Senior artisans refused to teach her the craft and she had to learn by observing. In her twenties she built her own team who would accept her as the master artisan and work under her.

Figure 6.2: A female artisan's work who is recognised for her miniature idols and exports some of them abroad (source: author)

The second type of business enterprise is managed by the sons who are not artisans themselves. They are the business managers or supervisors and the entire production is dependent on the hire of labour. A veteran artisan, who has recently passed away, told me in the interview, his entire extended family is involved in the craft but he made one point bluntly clear that the next generation hasn't learnt the craft. They merely look after the business.

> S: দাদা ছিল।এখন মারা গেছে।...ভাইপোরা আছে। নাতি আছে। My elder brother has passed away. Nephews and grandsons are here.
>
> R: তারা কি এই কাজে এসেছে? Have they joined this line of work?
>
> S: হ্যাঁ, এই কাজেই আছে। ওই আগের দোকানটায়...Yes, they have. They have a separate shop just a few metes ahead.
>
> R: আর আপনার নিজের ছেলেরা? What about your son?
>
> S: নিজের ছেলে এর মধ্যেই আছে। ওই যে নামটা... সুমিত পাল... Yes, he is also involved in this. His name is Sumit Pal (name changed).
>
> …

R: তা হলে আপনাদের পরিবারের সবাই এই মৃৎশিল্পের কাজে এসেছে। So everyone in your family is in an artisan.

S: না। No.

R: সবাই আসেনি? What do you mean?

S: ছেলে জানে না। শিল্পটা জানে না। My son doesn't know the craft.

R: ছেলে শুধু ব্যবসার কাজটায় এসেছে। Your son only looks after the business?

S: হ্যাঁ। ওই দেখাশোনা করে। Yes, he just looks after it.

R: ও আচ্ছা। তা হলে আপনার পরে আপনার শিল্পটা কেউ এগিয়ে নিয়ে...I see. Who is going to take this craft forward after you?

S: এগিয়েও নিয়ে যেতে পারে, আবার জলেও চলে যেতে পারে। কিছু ঠিক নেই। He may take it forward or he may fail miserably. Nothing can be said.

R: কিছু ঠিক নেই? You aren't sure?

S: না। ছেলে কিছু জানে না। আমি যেমন টপটপ কাজ জানি, মেঝের থেকে ওপর অবধি, ও পারবে না। No. Because my son doesn't know anything. I know how to make an idol from scratch. He doesn't. (Subir Pal, idol-maker interview, 3 October 2018)

As Mr Pal notes so clearly, this new generation is business owners, but are not interested in learning craft. An interaction with one such next-generation business owner is Bikash Pal, now in his fifties illustrated the matter.

আমি ধর, আমি যেহেতু একা, আমর ঠাকুরদা করতেন, জেথা, কাকা রা করেছেন, বাবা চলে জাওয়ার পরে আমি হাল ধরেছি। আমি আগে গেঙ্গি র ব্যাবসা করতাম। ওটা তুলে দিয়ে ঠাকুরের লাইনে নিয়ে এসেছি। আমার প্রজন্ম তো শেষ।

Take me for example. I am alone. My grandfather, uncle and father were all *mritshilpi*. After my father passed away, I took charge. I used to run a hosiery business. I gave up that and came to this business but I am the last one. (Bikash Pal, idol-maker interview, 14 February 2019)

He further explained that he understands the craft because it is essential to run this business, and pointed out that the knowledge was essential to rectify mistakes that the labourers might make. He says he does the eyes, the fingers, and the face. He explained that if a customer found any fault with the idol during delivery, the responsibility would fall on him as the owner of the enterprise, not on the labourer. What it means is that the business thrives because of the association of the name of the owner and his

forefathers. The value of the production is therefore associated with the main artisan's name (gained from previous generations' skills), not solely through the business management of the current owner. A different dynamic is noticed in this model, where the inter-generational firm becomes one step removed from the direct skills of the master artisan. They become businessperson with the responsibility of investment, management, administration, supervision, some artisanal work, and branding process.

Figure 6.3: Art School Graduate artist and sculptor (source: author)

There is a third fraction of artisans working in Kumartuli: a group of art school graduates who have acquired professional training which distinguishes them from *mritshilpi*s who have only received training from forefathers at home. Bimal Pal's family has long been involved in realistic statue making. In the interview he told me, his family has been the chief artist for seven generations in the famous Rajendra Mullick family.[126]

> B: বাবা-কাকা-জ্যাঠা। ওই জন্য আমরা ছোট থেকেই এখানে ইনভলভড। ধরুন, ছোট থেকেই আঁকতাম। আমার ভাইপো এলে বুঝতে পারবেন। এই রং-ফং নিয়ে এ রকমই আমরা করতাম ছোটবেলায়। করতে করতে আঁকা শেখা। … My father and both my uncles. So, we were involved here from childhood. I used to draw. If my nephew comes here you

[126] Locally known as the marble palace, Raja Rajendra Mullick's mansion was built in 1835 in one of the Chitpur Road neighbourhoods. His house has a vast collection of renaissance art and antiques and a major tourist attraction.

> will understand. He is almost always covered with colours and paints. Exactly like us.
>
> R: আর শেখার সময়ে?ধরুন আর্ট কলেজে শিখলেন, তখন কোনও স্ট্রাগলের মধ্যে দিয়ে যেতে হয়েছিল আপনাকে? When you were learning in college, did you go through some struggle?
>
> B: না, আমার এখানে কোনও স্ট্রাগল করতে হয়নি। কারণ আমি তো সব আগে থেকেই... No. I didn’t have to struggle at all. Because I knew everything from before.
>
> R: আগে থেকেই জানতেন? Oh, I see. You knew it then?
>
> B: এইট্টি পার্সেন্টই জানতাম। আমার বাবা আর জ্যাঠামশাই হচ্ছে গোল্ড মেডেলিস্ট। Yes I knew 80%. You see my father and elder uncle are gold medallists. (Bimal Pal, idol-maker interview, 19 November 2018)

The conversation suggests, Bimal Pal’s learning from home was an added advantage when he joined the art college. It made his foundation strong and in the art college, he mostly learnt formal techniques. He continues the traditional idol-making business for main religious festivals and employs labourers during this time. Outside this ambit, he maintains his independent sculpting work which is part of the secular statue making genre. For example, in figure 6.3 the sculptor is making a statue of the current Chief Minister of West Bengal. Sen (2016) notes, the Indian Art College style follows Western Academic Realism and professional learning this genre of modelling has proven to be beneficial for a section of the Pal community. Mr Pal identifies himself as an artist and sculptor, not a *mritshilpi* and makes busts and statues from permanent materials including fibreglass, stone, cement, and bronze. Mr Pal shared that his independent work is quite profitable, and he can live comfortably as he has a steady demand for statues and models.

> B: রেগুলার আমার মডেলের কাজটার চাহিদার আছে। যার জন্যে আমি পুষিয়ে দিতে পারছি। I have a regular demand for the modelling work. I can compensate and survive because of that.
>
> R: সেটাই বলছি... I see
>
> B: আর এগুলো নিজে করি তো... এখানে আমার কোনও লেবারকে দিতে হয় না। You see I do these by myself, I don’t need any additional labour for this work. (Bimal Pal, idol-maker interview, 19 November 2018)

As a self-employed sculptor, he can decide his own benefits and remuneration, whereas as a *malik* he performs a different role. His role affirms that ‘any one economic actor participates in many kinds of economic relations in the diverse economy, no one of

which can necessarily be designated as primary or essential' (Gibson-Graham 2006, 75). Here I follow Gibson-Graham's proposition on 'class as a process' where the focus is shifted from the enterprise as a whole to a key player, in that particular economy (Adrian Smith et al. 2008). The individual actor, here the owner, performs multiple and hybrid class identities, at any given time. The produced surplus-value of the *karigar* in the idol-making industry is appropriated in a quasi-capitalist class process by Mr Pal but when he works as an independent sculptor outside the religious idol-making industry, he participates in a non-capitalist class process. Not only people like Bimal Pal, but the village artisans and labourers, all become self-employed for a significant time in a year and work outside Kumartuli's market to establish their individual identity.

Figure 6.4: A *karigar* as well as self-employed artisan who specialises in drawing the deity's eye (source: author)

As the main festival approaches, I observe village artisans who are specialists in one set of artisanal work come to Kumartuli to assist (field notes 1 and 7 October 2018). Drawing the eyes of the goddess is one such area (figure 6.4). I met Bhelo *da* in Medha *di*'s workshop who paints eyes of the goddess across various workshops in Kumartuli, and in other places in and around Kolkata, such as Saikia and Barahnagar, before Durga puja.[127]

[127] The word *da* and *di* implies elder brother and sister consecutively. This is a common way of addressing someone familiar and I use these to maintain how people are addressed in the field.

He calls it '*paikari hare chokh dya*' (someone who paints eyes in a wholesale manner).[128] He might receive contracts to paint eyes for fifteen to twenty thousand idols during a season, but this specific skill is not otherwise required for the entire duration of the main season. Throughout the year he works from his village home in the Nadia district making small idols for domestic worship purposes. Rather than fixed class identity and its resultant antagonism, here Bhelo *da* also moves between two identities; a *karigar* who paints eyes as contractual wage labour and an independent *mritshilpi* in his village home who is in charge of his own means of production. Thus, multiple class processes also operate here.

To conclude, I have shown how Kumartuli's business enterprise can be seen as a transition from being a communal or independent non-capitalist firm towards a family-run quasi-capitalist firm. Though the small, medium, and big enterprises hardly follow a capitalist governance structure, for some of them, aspects of surplus accumulation and capitalist relation of production come across strongly. Due to increased demand, simple reproduction, solely to mitigate need, has slowly turned towards profit. Production has been increased by expanding workshops negotiating the land scarcity in Kumartuli. Intergenerational practices and shifts from artisanal work to business-managerial work has also helped in accumulation and reproduction. A closer reading also reveals, different actors within this enterprise perform multiple class processes, and shape the diverse functioning of the enterprise.

6.2.2. Labour practice: diversity of seasonal wage labour

Kumartuli Mritshilpa Sanskriti Samiti's (*mritshilpi* organisation) secretary told there was at least 500 owner-artisan, and 2800 *karigar*s in Kumartuli working and living during the peak season me (interview 14 February 2019).[129] The *karigar*s who come to Kumartuli are migrant seasonal workers from the surrounding rural areas.[130] A brief introduction to the different payment modes and contract types will be given establishing the

[128] He charges ₹ 1000 to ₹ 2000 per set of idols (there are five idols in one set which he calls '*taqta*'). Each day he attempts to complete 10 to 12 sets. The lowest estimation of his earning would be ₹ 10000 per day during the last few days preceding the festival. I realised the auspiciousness of bestowing eyes of the deity on a particular day is a myth is this market (field note 1 October 2018).

[129] There are two registered *mritshilp*i organisation in Kumartuli, one for the West Bengal and another for the East Bengal *mritshilpi*s. Kumartuli Mritshilpa Sanskriti Samiti is for West Bengal *mritshilpi*s and Kumartuli Mritshilpa Samiti is for the East Bengal ones. There is one organisation for the labourers as well, Kumartuli Mritshilpa Karigar Samiti.

[130] This echoes the historical practice of the craft sector as described in section 6.2.1.1.

diversity within this wage labour economy. This form of waged labour is then critically analysed, first addressing the valorisation of the non-capitalist labour relations and interrogating the custom of providing food. I go on to tease out instances of labour agency and subjectivity which defies more 'traditional' non-monetary labour relations, and claims more autonomy in the site of the economy. The life histories of this migratory labour show they demand occupational mobility that is not tied to their caste background. This desire often pushes them to be footloose workers, and they sell their labour outside Kumartuli under similar exploitative conditions.

6.2.2.1. Contract types

The *karigar*s either get a contract for the whole season from spring to autumn, till Jagadhatri Puja in the month of *Agrahayan* or for 3 or 4 months from monsoon to autumn. There is no monthly salary for the *karigar*s; they are daily wage earners.[131] My interview suggests, in terms of the contract, the system practised reveals autonomy favouring the *karigar*, which the owners can find hard to negotiate. Even if the *karigar* is nominally hired for the entire season, he might leave the workshop if it doesn't suit him, taking advantage of the 'open contract' enabled by the high demand for labour during the main season. A master artisan revealed some of their frustration with this flexible labour market:

> 'এই লেবারকে কন্ট্রোল করতে হলে তোমাকে কুমোরটুলির প্রোডাকশান বাড়াতে হবে, তাদের মাসিক বেতনে আসতে হবে। কিন্তু মাসিক বেতনে কোনও লেবার কাজ করছে না, সব ঠিকে। আজকে তোমার কাছে ১৫ দিন, ওর কাছে ১০ দিন, ওর কাছে ৫ দিন, ৭ দিন, ঠিক আছে?'
>
> To Increase the production of Kumartuli, one must control the labourer and make it a point to bring it down to monthly wage. None of the labourers is working on a monthly contract, everyone is temporary. Today they will work with you for 15 days, then 10 days with someone else, 5 with another workshop and 7 with another. Did you get the point? (Ratan Pal, Idol-maker interview, 20 October 2018)

[131] A previous research paper pointed out there are two types of employment (Goldblatt 1981). The first one is more flexible and temporary where the worker is paid daily and he is not contract bound with one workshop. The second one is more permanent. Here the worker is attached with a single master artisan for the entire season and receives a monthly wage. According to her study in 1981, 53% of Kumartuli's master artisans ran large enterprises and had 76% semi-permanent 'full-workers'. Whereas the small firms had a higher unit labour cost and their function primarily subsistence based. In my fieldwork, I haven't found two distinctly clear categories. Rather wage and contracts are fluid and mixed.

They infer that a monthly wage would be more profitable for the owners, and payment per day becomes far more expensive in the long run. It corresponds to what Goldblatt (1981) pointed out that large workshops are often capable of employing monthly *karigar*s and that enabled them to function like a capitalist firm where the mechanism of capital accumulation is greater.

The issue for me is around *when* the wage is paid. No matter what the basis of the contract is, daily or monthly, I found out that the wage is almost never paid on a daily or monthly basis. *Karigar*s are paid at the end of each festive season, or after idol delivery, when the owner gets his return of capital investment. For a less experienced *karigar* in the industry, the daily wage would be ₹500 per day. The senior *karigar* (artisanal labourer) would get ₹1000 and it can rise to ₹2000 depending on the time of the year, their responsibility, and efficiency (field note, 25 September 2018). I observed that if a *karigar* returns home in the middle of the session, or needs money for some reason, such as a health emergency in the family, they simply ask for it. For example, ₹4000-5000 might be distributed on request. Some *karigar*s requested me to fill up their bank forms to deposit money in their accounts. I realise they intend to send this money back to their village. Sandeepan Pal reported a recent trend of *karigar*s demanding an advance and specific living conditions:

> S: তার পর সবথেকে বড় কথা, এখন আবার দাদন দিতে হয়। Moreover they even demand an advance now.
>
> R: দাদন মানে? What kind of advance?
>
> S: ধরুন কারিগর বলল, আমার ১০০০০ লাগবে। The *karigar* would say they need ₹10,000 before joining the work.
>
> R: মানে? Can you explain?
>
> S: অ্যাডভান্স। এই ব্যাপারটা এসে গিয়েছে। তার পর চারবেলা চার বার খেতে দাও। থাকার জায়গা। This advance system has been introduced recently. Plus, one has to provide food four times within a day and lodging. (Sandeepan Pal, Idol-maker interview, 30 September 2018).

It is not hard to understand why the owners do not like this practice of paying in advance. They agree to do so because of the changing labour relation and increasing agency of the *karigar*s which I will discuss below (see section 6.2.2.3). Nevertheless, it needs to be pointed out that in both these instances, the labourers are exercising agency

in choosing where they want to work, what should be the nature of their contract, when, and how they will be paid.

6.2.2.2. Between care and compensation: food and unpaid labour

I learned from Sandeepan Pal the workshop owner is responsible for giving temporary *karigar*s their food and lodging. In this section, I am going to discuss two issues. First, what does the practice of providing food signify within a wage labour contract, and second, how can the custom of unpaid labour in the craft industry be understood? I tackle these questions from two perspectives, care, and compensation, which are often intertwined rather than distinct. Does the gesture of giving food portray a value of care and empathy? Is it provided to complement the lack of basic facilities, hardship, and deprivation that the *karigar*s endure? To what extent is the experience of hardship associated with apprenticeship also marked as a 'tradition' of learning and endurance in the craft industry? Overall, what are the ethical implications of already existing non-monetary alternatives in a diverse economy? Are these alternatives intended or justified? Can the traditional alternatives be equated to progressive politics? Do we need to acknowledge them as 'mundane yet exploitative, sites of informal employment' (Samers 2005, 877) within this diverse economy? To understand these questions first I am going to present an observation regarding the *karigar*s' everyday work life in Kumartuli, and then proceed towards the analysis of labour and reward.

6.2.2.2.1. Food as compensation or care

Figure 6.5: A loft in the workshop (source: author)

The *karigar*s' day runs on a fairly consistent routine which I witnessed during an embedded ethnography at Medha Pal's workshop and noted in the field diary:

> After spending a few days, I became acquainted with their [the *karigar*] daily routine. They start work from 8 in the morning. 10.30/11 am is their breakfast time when they eat a portion of staple food, *muri* and *telebhaja* (puffed rice and fried snacks made with eggplant/potato/flour rolled in batter). At 1 pm they all go to the nearby river [Hugli/Ganges] to take bath and use the communal toilet built by the municipality in the neighbourhood. At 1.30 they take their lunch. An afternoon nap occurs from 2-3 pm and then work continues till 8 pm. As the date of the festival approaches nearer, overtime work starts when the work may continue till 11 pm to midnight. There is no payment for the overtime work which is creating a lot of tension in the group. During this time, evening refreshment is provided at 8 pm and dinner time is pushed further. (Field note, 3 October 2018)

*Karigar*s live on-site and sleep on the workshop floor or the loft which is common to every workshop (figure 6.5). In this workshop, the owner-artisan provides the money to arrange the morning and evening snacks that the *karigar*s buy from outside. Cooked lunch is either provided by the owner-artisan or the *karigar*s are given money to eat from nearby 'pice-hotels' (affordably priced hotels typical to Kolkata). As a female owner-artisan, it was noticeable that the responsibility of cooking meals for 10 people twice a day fell to her. In this case, the *karigar*s took turns helping her with daily food and grocery shopping. In other workshops, such as Ratan Pal's in Bagbazaar and Gurudas Pal which are run by the male owner-artisans, I witnessed (field note 20 October and 1 September 2018), the *karigar*s were given a food ration, stove, and gas cylinder to cook for themselves. Even in Medha *di*'s workshop, during the quiet season, a gas cylinder and a stove could be seen inside the workshop for the *karigar*s to cook for themselves.

The gesture of providing food can be explained in two different ways. First, food is often used as compensation for working overtime without a wage. I witnessed an incident of rebellion amongst *karigar*s regarding this issue. The owner, clearly unhappy with the growing resentment and demands from the *karigar*s, explained to me that in certain workshops where East Bengal artisans are owners, the *karigar*s are paid for overtime, but they don't offer food four times a day. The workshops run by West Bengal artisans, on the other hand, do not have a system of payment for overtime. Instead, they are given food. The joint secretary of Kumartuli Mritshilpi Sanskritik Samiti affirms this and told me this rule has been implemented after the annual meeting of the artisan forum.

Their forum allows 10 hours of work where food will be provided. The East Bengal artists' forum, Kumartuli Mritshilpi Samiti, decided upon 8 hours of work where the *karigar* would arrange for his own food (interview on 14 February 2019). Nevertheless, the *karigar*s evidently work more than 10 hours when the overtime starts.

Given that the *karigar*s' ten-hour work schedule (which clearly exceeds at peak times), and unhealthy, substandard, makeshift living arrangements that violate the basic requirements of living conditions, the gesture of offering food, may offer some offset to the poor living and precarious working conditions. The labour condition appears exploitative and the provision of food and shelter becomes a perfunctory gesture of the owner-artisan to redress these deplorable conditions. In addition, there is a complete absence of social security in *karigar*s job cycle and with any disruption in the consumption side of the business, they are the most vulnerable ones to bear the burn of being unemployed. This becomes more problematic because one of the *karigar*s told me they no longer have a functioning union because the owner-artisans didn't approve of it. Though during my walks in the neighbourhood I saw the *karigar*'s organisation's office which was established in 1973 (figure 6.6). It was closed at that moment and I couldn't verify the present status of it.[132]

Figure 6.6: Kumartuli Mritshilpa Karigar Samiti (Kumartuli's artisanal workers' association) (source: author)

[132] The workers union played a major role in regulating and negotiating their work hours, holidays and living wage (Heierstad 2017, 158–65).

Figure 6.7: A woman owner-artisan preparing lunch for *karigar*s in her kitchen (source: author)

The case of providing food can also be interpreted from a gendered perspective. When a woman owner- artisan cooks for the *karigar*s, it is also a form of unpaid labour which a male artisan would not be expected to do (figure 6.7). Additionally, I also noticed during the fieldwork, when Medha Pal makes arrangements for holidays with her mother, some of the *karigar*s accompany her. It may also be said, therefore, a different regime of value operates under the wage-labour contract when a woman assumes the role of a *malik* (sic). Cooking, providing food or taking them on holidays are distinguishing markers of economies of care in some cases (Morrow and Dombroski 2015). Here the *karigar*s are not the only entity who is being compensated with food for their overtime work, but the woman owner-artisan's unpaid work shows a value of empathy and care in operation. Nevertheless, both forms of unpaid labour involved in this economic production, cooking and food instead of wages, cannot be glorified.

6.2.2.2.2. Apprenticeship, tradition, and struggle: ethical implication of non-capitalist alternatives

For the *karigar*s within the idol-making workshops of Kumartuli, the exploitative nature of work is often explained with reference to accepted traditions or customers of the craft industry. For example, the relationship between a young apprentice and master artisan doesn't fall under purely monetary wage relation, and can be framed under a non-capitalist wage relation (Patchett 2017; Simpson 2006; Marchand 2008; C. Bose 2016). Though unpaid apprenticeship is not widely prevalent in Kumartuli, I witnessed owner-artisans discussing the positive benefits of the system. Medha *di* told me she met

with an accident last year, and a young boy named Joy helped her with household chores. From her story, it also seemed Joy, who came to her workshop to learn the craft, was doing some care work for her, assisting her to recover better. She shared she wanted to employ someone like him the following year, but was unable to find one. In her workshop, the *karigar*s help by making tea, fetching water, and undertaking small household chores, but the relation of mutual support doesn't extend beyond that. A *karigar* who is learning the craft is often expected to spend the most time on the household chores, and will receive full board (food and shelter) in exchange for the skills and knowledge they develop during their stay. This is part of a *Guru-Shishya parampara* (teacher-disciple tradition) where the student is expected to come and live in the teacher's house to learn, and is treated as a member of the household. I also noticed this tradition within Garanhata's goldsmith industry. The veteran artisans in Kumartuli shared with me that a life of struggle is the only way of learning

> এখন তুমি চিন্তা কর, আমরা যেভাবে কষ্ট করে কাজটা শিখেছি, এখনকার ছেলেপুলেরা কি শিখবে? আমার বাবা কত গালাগালি করেছে আমাকে। বকেছে। কিন্তু আমি যদি আমার ছেলেকে বকি না, একবারের বার দুবার তাহলে বলবে ধুর আমি কাজ ই করব না তোমার কাছে।... কষ্ট যে না করতে পারবে, সে কাজ ও শিখতে পারবে না। বড় হতে পারে না। শিল্পী কোনোদিন পেট ভরে খেতে পারে না।, বেঁচে থাকার আশা সবাই চায়, কিন্তু সে পারে না। সে আধমরা হোয়েই থাকে।
>
> Can you imagine today's generation learning the craft as we did? Imagine the hardship we have endured! My father used to make scathing remarks, scolded me severely. Imagine I do that to my son more than once. He will leave saying why should I work with you… If they don't know what is suffering, neither they can learn this craft nor do they know how to develop as a person. An artist always falls short on the promises of a better life. One can only hope, but can never really achieve. Life remains poverty-stricken. (Saroj Malakar, *shola* artisan interview, 4 December 2018)

Struggle, perseverance, the occasional scolding, and hardship are seen as part of the training process. The principle of learning is premised on absolute surrender, where one doesn't question one's master or *guru*. The master artisan's learning trajectory often followed this process, commonly learning from their father, uncle(s), or elder brother(s). Despite having the position of owner-artisan, their small one-bedroom households in Kumartuli highlight their humble background, and the living conditions of the *karigar*s they employ are not out of the ordinary for them, as they have gone through the same process, and continue to live in the same locality.

One elderly artisan lamented that non-monetary relationships between *karigar*s and owners have deteriorated in the last ten years:

> 'না, না। এখন গিভ অ্যান্ড টেক। কারিগর-মালিকের সম্পর্ক। সে বিশ্বাস তারা রাখেনা বলে আমরা আর করি না। এক হাতে তো আর তালি বাজবে না, তোমাকে তো করতে হবে সে ব্যবহারটা। তুমি যদি তোমার স্বার্থ... এখন তারাও তাদের স্বার্থ বোঝে, আমিও বুঝি আমার কাজ দরকার। টাকা দেব, মিটে গেল। সম্পর্ক ওখানেই শেষ। আর সম্পর্ক বলতে কিচ্ছু নেই'।
>
> No no! Now it is a 'give and take relation' between the *karigar* and the owner. They couldn't maintain trust in the relation. You can't clap with one hand; one needs to behave accordingly to keep that relation. They know their self-interest and I mean only work. It is a monetary relation now. The familial relation ends when this transaction starts. (Ratan Pal, Idol-maker interview, 20 October 2018)

Here the craftsman dwells on a past era where a monetary transaction had a derogatory meaning attached to it, and, under the guise of valorising familial relation and romanticising it, unpaid labour had been justified. Gibson-Graham (2006) showed in their diverse economies framework that varied types of unpaid labour have been compensated in different ways. In the context of Kumartuli, I suggest, for the young apprentice, in exchange for their unpaid work, the knowledge and skill education of idol making, and experience of staying in a workshop was considered as compensation (Gibson-Graham 2006, 63). Family members who often help the male master artisans in their work, might be compensated with love and support. The non-monetary nature of the work by the *shishya,* or the male master artisan 's family members, remains a form of unpaid labour, and the compensation does not disqualify the work from assuming an economic role, and contributing to the success of the workshop: any unremunerated labour helps produce a surplus-value that is appropriated by the owner-artisan. Therefore, any compensation cannot make the non-monetary wage relation any less exploitative.

I demonstrate in this section that non-monetary relationships which might be enrolled into imaginaries of non-capitalist formations are often romanticised. They are imagined to be a social safety net, but it must be stressed, that established norms and customs, such as unpaid labour extracted by providing food, through gender roles, or caste relations, are symbols of oppression and violence. They violate aspects of social justice

and need to be challenged. Hence the ethical aspect of non-capitalist dynamics integrated within a quasi-capitalist diverse economy needs to be looked into critically.

6.2.2.3. Labourer biographies: caste mobility and migrant subjectivity

My field diary notes the life story of five *karigar*s working in Medha *di*'s workshop during the period of September-October in 2018. Life stories in labour geography often reveal rich details which often remain obscured (M. Dutta 2016). There is a common thread that connects their lives together. Each person narrated a similar trajectory of having at least one family member involved in the craft, either in his village or in Kumartuli, and their extended families were still engaged in similar craft traditions in their village of origin. In these *karigar*s' cases, the village economies could not generate enough demand to retain this population, who can earn more once they become a mobile artisanal labour force. The thesis of primitive accumulation proposed by Sanyal (2007) in his thesis of 'capital-non-capital complex' in a postcolonial capitalist economy, where an independent producer becomes wage labourer when their means of production such as land has been violently taken away comes under scrutiny here. The craft labourer is not exactly estranged from his means of production in the rural village, as they are not agricultural workers who have lost the means of production. However, they can gain economic mobility by moving from their rural home. We need to have a new language to understand how skill, migration and mobility have contributed to creating an agency of the craft labourer. I start this section with a long excerpt from my field note.

> *Pujo* [religious festivity] is only 15 days away. The work was going on in full swing. I visited the Bagbazaar studio in the evening where big idols are kept, before going to Kumartuli. It was on my way. Three *karigar*s whom I call by their name suffixed with dada (elder brother) told me they would be very happy if I could join them for evening snacks. Someone from Kerala was making a documentary on Medha *di* in the Kumartuli studio when I reached there. Not much was going on. Therefore, I decided to go back to Bagbazaar studio thinking it would give me some scope to know the *karigar*s better. They might open up a bit more away from their owner's surveillance. It was already 9 pm but they were yet to have their 'evening snacks'. Overtime has started from 19 September. It means the *karigar*s will get a tiffin at 8 pm and continue to work till midnight. Dinner will be arranged only after that. As the festival approaches nearer, Kumartuli doesn't sleep. Everyone is under tremendous pressure to deliver the idols on time. Upon my arrival, Rana *da* went outside to get four egg

rolls as our evening tiffin. When four of us sat down on the muddy floor of the workshop and started to peel off the paper wrapping from the roll, they began to tell me about their life.

Hridoy *da*, the shyest one in the group, went ahead by talking to me about his village in Murshidabad near a relatively well-known village Kanthi. He spoke about his village life, the river Marurakshi, and the fish of that river and various festivals of the village very passionately. He invited me earnestly to his village and told me with a tinge of sadness in his eyes, they may look like this in Kumartuli, covered with mud, but his house in the village is completely different and I will have no problem staying there. He is proud of his family tradition. He emphasised they are not only Pal (referring to his surname which indicates his caste identity) but they are *Kumor* Pal (a clan within Pal who are potters) which is a very respectable caste. His male family members, his father and three brothers are in the same profession. He learnt it from them. During the off-season, when he isn't working in Kumartuli, he goes to other parts of the country to do similar kinds of work. He told me in January, he will go to Delhi. His work will involve making sculptures and models for the tabloid in the 26 January Republic Day parade. Last year he went to the hill town Darjeeling to make a huge Shiva statue. These are all contractual jobs. His independent job is making Kartik idol in Agrahayan (late Autumn-Pre winter) at his own village. Again, in Chaitra/Baisakh (summer), he will be back in Kumartuli. Buro *da* joins in and tells me both of them make khata-paykhana (dry-pit toilet) in the village which requires the skill of working with sand and clay.

Rana *da* comes from Bethuadahari of Nadia district. He says people in his village have been involved in this tradition for a long time. His father was a carpenter because their surname is Sutradhar. His brother works in Kumartuli. He left school after 9th standard, one year before the final exam of secondary school and came to Kumartuli in search of work. He worked in Delhi, Gujarat, Kerala, and many other places across the country wherever statues and idols and models are needed for beautification or religious purpose. Kumartuli's seasonal job gives him the skill to work in these places. He has been working in Medha *di*'s studio for the last three to four years. He doesn't work in one workshop for more than five or six years. He thinks, if one spends too much time in one studio, the owner takes advantage (বেশী থাকলে পেয়ে বসে). (Field note, 2 October 2018)

In both these cases, the *karigar*s have a lineage in making idols, either because of their caste background, or because they have switched jobs from a similar artisanal caste. In the first example, it is the traditional caste background that has enabled Hridoy *da* to

take up this profession. In the second instance, within two-generation, there has been an occupation switch from being a carpenter to a potter. Scholars have explained that within 'clean' castes, occupation changes between potters, carpenters, weavers, and manufacturers of bell metal utensils are common (Goldblatt 1981). These *karigar*s testimony suggests that within the migrant population occupation diversification has also shaken the caste barrier. Hridoy *da* ventures to make idols, as well as a dry-pit toilet, both jobs vastly different, yet require the same skill. The common thread between all of them is that they are artisans, makers, or producers of some sort, who are creating handmade objects, or utility goods. Sometimes they also do menial labour in the construction site where their skills are needed. Hence all of them belong to relatively lower-caste backgrounds. A potter caste may not be doing pottery, and shift to weaving, as some of the examples in Goldblatt's article suggest, but they are inevitably scheduled caste (SC) or other backward castes (OBC) or scheduled tribe (ST).[133] The mobility is entirely horizontal in nature, within the artisanal caste, and it would be rare for a person from a higher caste to join these professions as a labourer. I have met a *mritshilpi* during my previous research in 2014-15, from the Brahmin caste (highest in order) but in his case, his caste identity gave him more leverage and respect in this profession.[134] The only way to attain vertical mobility for these castes would be to move into professional and service-oriented jobs. Craft-work is not considered an honourable or reputable profession within the hierarchy of the modern knowledge system. Hence artisanal work might be a livelihood option, but not an aspirational career. Therefore, I would argue that caste affiliation, and the associated social stereotypes or positioning, for these artisanal workers, has not been eradicated.

Secondly, both of them are not completely dependent on selling their wage labour in the labour market of Kumartuli. They are not simply alienated labour working in a factory line. They can travel to other parts of the country where they can use their skill

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[133] SC, ST, OBC are constitutionally recognised groups representing historically discriminated castes, based on occupational hierarchy following the varna system. As a measure of social justice and affirmative action, the constitution guarantees reservation for these castes in political office, government jobs and higher education. See Guru, Gopal. 2011. Social justice. In Jayal, NG, Mehta, PB (eds) Oxford Companion to Politics in India. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 361–380. Kumar, Deepak, Bhanu Pratap, and Aggarwal, Archana. 2020. "Affirmative Action in Government Jobs in India: Did the Job Reservation Policy Benefit Disadvantaged Groups?" *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 55, no. 1 (February): 145–60.

[134] While introducing him Ratnakar Pal, whom I interviewed in 2014-15 as well as for my PhD research in 2018-19, mentioned his caste identity specifically to show respect.

to earn a better wage though the labour conditions remain the same. They don’t own the necessary means of production in the city but often they switch between working under the owner-artisan in Kumartuli and becoming self-employed when they go back to the village**.** Working in Kumartuli gives them enough social capital to prosper in their places of origin. Hridoy *da*’s narrative clearly showed that his house in the village has far better infrastructural facilities than what he gets in Kumartuli. There are also examples when the apprentices who learnt the craft under the aegis of the master craftsman of Kumartuli often open their own workshops in remote corners of the city where a small area of land can be easily rented. I have heard stories where a *karigar* left the owner-artisan and started his own enterprise. Veteran artisan Ratan Pal told me,

> ‘এই কুমোরটুলির কারিগর ই গিয়ে বেলগাছিয়া, দক্ষিণদাঁড়ি, এই খালপাড়ে কাজ করছে আর লেবারকে তুমি আটকাতে পারছো না৷ লেবার যেখানে পয়সা পাবে সেখানে চলে যাবে৷‘
>
> *Karigar*s from Kumartuli are working in Belgachia, Dakshindari, Khalpar. You can’t stop them from leaving you. They will go wherever they find the money. (Ratan Pal, Idol-maker interview, 20 October 2018)

In recent years, Kumartuli has ceased to be the only centre in Kolkata to supply idols. Small clusters of artisans have sprung up in other parts of the city such as Belgachia, Dakshindari and Khalpar as mentioned above. They are giving some degree of competition to the main hub of idol making. Ratan Pal also explained these places sell idols at much lower prices compared to Kumartuli. Local production centres also save the hurdle of the customers in terms of transporting the idols from the northern corner of the city where Kumartuli is located. Porter cost is also curtailed significantly. Another significant opportunity for the *karigar*s has been opened up by interstate migration**,** in other parts of the country where skilled idol makers aren’t available. Two senior *karigar*s in Medha *di*’s workshop work outside of West Bengal during the main season of Durga Puja. They earn more compared to the rest of the group during this time as they work independently and come back to work with Medha *di* before Kali Puja in October.

New work in feminist, poststructuralist and postcolonial theories around migration studies have often challenged the structuralism of conventional Marxist theories on labour migration and asserted the notion of migrant subjectivity (Gidwani and Sivaramakrishnan 2003; Rogaly 2009; Buckley, McPhee, and Rogaly 2017). These biographical accounts illustrate that the migrant labourers have the agency to leave the

job if they feel the owner is taking advantage of his loyalty. Rana *da* makes it a point not to remain with the same owner for a long time. They are willing to negotiate on their salary and demand advance if needed. They sought to transform and challenge the labour relationship with their owners.[135] Scholarly work on rural seasonal migration in Bardhaman and Purulia district of West Bengal reveals that it is time to rethink the category of migrant labour itself. 'Seasonal migration …is not simply an inevitable part of the cycle of indebtedness, but can enable workers to save and even accumulate capital on a very small scale' (Rogaly 1998, 22). Thus, the seasonal migrant workers are challenging dominant constructs of wage labour, reflecting aspirations, and gaining autonomy.

6.2.2.4. Summing up: diverse labour relation

This section demonstrates how different categories of labour operate within the idol-making industry and though they are 'paid but can be distinguished from capitalist wage labour' (Gibson-Graham 2006a, 64). Often diverse labour relations have traditional exploitative unpaid labour roles imbibed in them and rather than glorifying these relations we need to build a more equitable labour relation for progressive social transformation. With women assuming the role of the 'master' (sic) artisan in Kumartuli an interesting flip in the labour role has been noticed. By cooking for two meals for seven *karigar*s, the woman artisan is also participating in non-monetary labour roles of self-exploitation which coincide with her sanctioned gender role as caregiver. Wage labour performs different roles during different times of the year. They are migrant wage-earning seasonal labour at times and become self-employed when returning back to their village. With more work opportunities outside Kumartuli, the *karigar*s don't necessarily come and knock on the owner-artisan's door in search of work or show the same loyalty to one workshop. Migration and mobility give them relative independence to make choices, which has made the *karigar*'s economic relationship with the owner, more autonomous from the conventional labour role. Diverse work opportunities give the *karigar*s different degrees of freedom to negotiate the role they want to perform

[135] Yet this strategy does not end the systemic structure of oppression. As noticed by Geert de Neve (2005) in his study in Indian textile industry, 'The Power loom workers appear successful in escaping individual owners whom they do not like, yet fail to escape structures of subordination that keep them tied to the employers as a group' (Neve 2005, 200). The wage labourers in Kumartuli too could not escape the structure of precarious employment but they try to break free and find a way.

within wage labour set up. This power to negotiate has helped them to achieve a wage level that slightly adds to their subsistence needs but still not enough for a dignified life in the city. Though the nature of the job remains precarious, un-unionised (at least non-functioning), part-time, seasonal, and low paid, the *karigar*s exercise some degrees of agency. Their demand for advance wages, not hesitating to change workshops and challenging the established norms of non-monetary compensations, such as food are such assertions and expressions of labour subjectivity and critique of non-capitalist alternatives.

6.2.3. Transactions

I layout the transactions of the idol-making industry from three perspectives in this section. The transaction between the makers and the institutional structures, the makers, and the raw material suppliers and finally between the makers and the customers. They don't quite remain as distinct as described above during the discussion. Hence, I approach these three interactions with a focus on three aspects of economic activities: market, production, and exchanges. The first section seeks to elucidate the nature and rule of the market for idol makers. It is followed by an estimation of production cost from the material cost of raw materials used to make idols. At this point, how these material costs are influenced by external factors such as inflation is noticed. The final section argues that despite the escalation of the total cost of idol production, the producers do not necessarily work for profit maximisation as a rational economic subject. The exchange between *mritshilpi*s and customers are a culmination of various socio-cultural factors and behaviours such as bargaining, reciprocity, trust, and obligation. Moreover, the relation between the state and the *mritshilpi*s unravelled through exemptions and fuzzy regulations also suggest the industry flows in and out of capitalist market norms.

6.2.3.1. Market, taxes, and exemptions

Two issues are addressed in this section. The first question that I grapple with is the nature of the market of this urban craft, between regulation and informalisation. The second one is diversification of the craft skill and expansion of the market. It also indicates estimated economic transactions generated by the biggest festival in the city which is heavily dependent on Kumartuli's idol makers. Overall, they indicate the growing economic return of the industry because of external sponsorships.

The answer to the first question on regulation is not quite simple, i.e., urban crafts cannot be classified simply as the formal or informal economy. They negotiate with regulations and navigate through various modes of production and exchanges. Talking about income, expenditure and taxes have often been a sensitive issue because not every transaction is shown on paper, however, some are documented. Much of the information was gathered after prolonged interaction with the community, by not asking these questions directly but observing and verifying from other sources. For example, Medha *di* revealed to me she doesn't have to pay any taxes. Her monthly expenses are paying rent for her workshop and house, an electricity bill of ₹2000-2500 and a maintenance cost of ₹400 for her flat (field note, 19 September 20218).[136] The issue of taxes has been verified from a trusted source who introduced me to many artisans, belongs to an aristocratic family who orders annual Durga idols and is a frequent visitor of Kumartuli for over 30 years. He has easy access inside many artisan households. He told me candidly,

> 'সবাই না হলেও অনেকেই income tax দেয়। তবে corporation এর trade license দেয় বলে মনে হয়না। অনেকেই income tax এর আওতায় পড়ে, কিন্তু সঠিক income দেখায় না। সাধারণ শিল্পী বছরে কম করে ১০ থেকে ১২ লাখ টাকার ব্যবসা করে। সব খরচ খরচা বাদ দিয়ে ৩০ শতাংস লাভ ধরলে ৩ লাখ টাকা হয়, এটা ছোট শিল্পী দের কথা বলছি তাহলে মাঝারি বা বড়দের কি রকম তা অনুমেয়`
>
> Even if not everyone but some of them pay income tax. I don't think they pay the corporation trade license. Many would fall under income tax but they don't show proper income. An artisan of humble means would do a yearly business transaction of at least ₹1- 1.2 million. If you consider the expenditures and keep 30% profit, it is a yearly income of ₹300000. I am talking about a small-scale artisan here, but you can estimate the income of middle and big artisans. (A conversation with Bijoy Dutta, 24 September 2019)

This conversation suggests that a small-scale business owner would have a yearly income of ₹300000. Medium and large-scale enterprises would have reasonably more transactions but not everyone would show the actual income on paper, or lead a lifestyle that reflects their income. One of the artisans I talked to was able to buy a flat without a bank loan, and the reason might be that they had not paid the tax, and were able to

[136] Not only Medha *di* but many master artisans in Kumartuli, involved in this intergenerational trade, have been able to buy a flat or a house in some suburbs of Kolkata or in Kumartuli itself. I have met a few artisans who have now achieved the position of being a landowning class in the locality after years of struggle.

invest this money in their property. Some large-scale workshop owners pay income taxes because not only their transactions but income often amount to over ₹2 million.

I probed about the issue further from another source who works at the bank which gives artisans loans (discussed in section 6.3.2). He confirmed every registered artisan must have a municipal corporation's trade licence and only those who are registered with two artisan organisations (detailed in footnote 129) are eligible for a bank loan (conversation with Bank of Baroda employee on 16 May 2020). A municipal licence is, therefore, required, which brings the industry under regulation, however, that does not make it mandatory that artisans make a direct tax payment. Only those artisans who reveal an income above tax exemption thresholds are liable to pay income taxes. Artisanal businesses with a turnover of ₹2 million, provided they follow certain rules, have also been exempted from GST (PTI 2017; Mastani 2017). In addition, some products such as religious idols are exempted from GST (Goods and Services Tax).[137] These two examples show that the state also creates provisions of non-payment of taxes for the artisanal sector, relaxes controls and eases regulations to facilitate the idol-worship market.

One of the reasons for the high value (estimated at ₹500 million) of the idol industry's transactions is its expanding market reach by diversification of craft and sponsorship.[138] As noted above, the origin of the idol-making hub in Kumartuli was tied to a niche market. The idol maker's immediate market was the Durga *puja* of a select few aristocratic households. The market grew as religious worship became a community festivity from the twentieth century (detailed in footnote 119). By the late twentieth century, it had attracted large-scale sponsorships. A small example might help to understand exponential growth. According to Medha *di*, when she joined this business after her father passed away in 1994, her order book consisted of only 10 idols of Durga. In 2018 she made at least 50 Durga idols, and made other idols throughout the year (field note 19 September 2018). In addition, the expansion of public festivities of at least

[137] Source: https://cbic-gst.gov.in/gst-goods-services-rates.html refer to no 69, idols made of clay are levied 0% GST rate. The list was amended in 2017 and the tax was brought down from 28% to 0% http://texmin.nic.in/sites/default/files/changedGSTrates21stGSTmeeting.pdf (last accessed 19 August 2021). Also See (B. Ghosh 2019).

[138] If 500 idol-making artisan workshops of Kumartuli do yearly transaction of minimum ₹1 million. Then for the whole industry it is estimated at ₹500,000,000.

ten other religious festivals all based on idol worship, apart from the Durga *puja*, in the city's festive calendar has increased Kumartuli's business.

Furthermore, some artisan's businesses had grown beyond clay idol making. Exporting fibre idols, making decorative items, statues and busts are under the remit of the artisans. The joint secretary of West Bengal artisan's organisation recounts:

> 'এক সময় তো শিল্পীরা শুধু ঐ ঠাকুর ই গড়তেন। ঐ জগদ্ধাত্রী পুজো হয়ে গেল যে যার বাড়িতে চলে যেত। আবার *season* এর সময় চলে আসতো। এখন কিন্তু তোমার, হাঁ নিশ্চয়ই কাজ তো হচ্ছে, পার্ক গুলো সাজানো হচ্ছে। তারপরে তো বিয়েবাড়িতে থাম, pillar, extra decorator রা, আমাদের দিয়ে তৈরি করে রেখে দিচ্ছে ৫-৭ বছর। তারপর fibre এর প্রতিমা গুলো বিদেশে যাচ্ছে। শিল্পীরা ঐ কাজের মধ্যেও থাকছে। তারপর ধর শেরাওালি পুজো র সৃষ্টি হয়েছে। এখন সপ্তাহে, মানে এমনিতে তো এক দিনে পুজো হয় না। যার যেমন date সেরম ঐ পুজো গুলো করে। শেরাওালি র একটা পুজো ভালই মোটামুটি কুমারটুলি তে প্রচলন হয়েছে।'

> There was a time when we used to make only idols. After Jagadhatri *puja* everyone used to go home. But now there are more jobs available. The parks are being decorated. We are making pillars and other decorative items for wedding halls. These items can last for 5-7 years. Then there are fibre idols which we export abroad. Artists are doing various kinds of works. Moreover, new religious festivals have been introduced like Sherawali *puja*. These dates vary widely. People do it according to their convenience. Therefore, Kumartuli gets business around the year. (Bikash Pal, Idol-maker interview, 14 February 2019)

As we can see from the interview two factors, new religious festivities and experimentation with various materials have drastically changed Kumartuli's market reach. Now for many artisans, work is available during lean season as well. Production of small deities is an all-year-round activity, and during the slow period between March-May, deities like Annapurna, Manasa and Sitala are made for worship. The record of Kumartuli's yearly transaction was not available from Kumartuli Mritshilpa Sanskriti Samiti's as they cited a lack of comprehensive record-keeping.[139] Hence Durga *puja*'s economic return was consulted from the secondary source which revealed the craft not only has a socio-cultural significance but it fuels the city's festive economy, explaining

[139] Bikash Pal said, they have an overall estimation. ' না। একটা sell এর আন্দাজ করা যায়ে, দুর্গা ঠাকুর প্রতিমা ক লাখ টাকা বেরল? কালী ক লাখ? জগদ্ধাত্রী কত? লক্ষ্মী কত? বিশ্বকর্মা। এগুলো একটা আন্দাজ করা যায়ে। পুরো একটা estimate পাওয়া যায়ে।' (We can guess the total sell of every idols, Durga, Kali, Jagadhatri, Biswakarma- we can estimate them in hundred thousand rupees) (interview on 14 February 2019). He didn't reveal the numbers.

why the craft enjoys a rare privilege.[140] Now let's look at the production cost of this sector from a micro perspective.

6.2.3.2. Existing networks of materials in circulation

I focus on the cost of raw materials and ornamentation on a small scale which indicates the circulation of these materials and the networked nature of its transaction within a wider community of ancillary crafts in the rural economy. This relationality indicates multiple forms of economic production and exchange structure which is sustained by this craft.

The idols are made with easily available natural materials like clay, straw, bamboo, jute rope which are sourced through trusted networks across South Bengal for generations as told by many interviewees. However, large-scale consumption has made the availability of some of these materials quite precious and the nature of supply is changing, such as clay. For example, Ratan Pal told me clay is no longer sourced only from the nearby river (interview, 20 October 2018). Clay mining is a well-established business in Bengal because it is situated in the Gangetic delta. Even Bengal exports clay to Western and Southern Indian states where Ganesh *puja* is celebrated on a large scale (Bean 2011). Debu *da*, the chief artisan among the *kariga*rs in Medha *di*'s workshop told me (field note, 1 September 2018) Ganges clay which is sandy and porous *(bele mati)* in nature and are easily available from nearby Bagbazaar *ghat* (bank of the river) are less used. One van of sandy clay cost ₹600. They mostly require non-porous clay (*etel mati)* which is procured from Uluberia and Diamond harbour area far from the city (Subir Pal also told the same, interview 3 October 2018). The soil from Uluberia reaches Kumartuli via boat but in 2018, the supply has been erratic, Ratan Pal told me (interview 20 October 2018). The dependence on the soil from Diamond harbour was greater which needs road transportation, hence more costly. One van of non-porous soil would cost ₹1000. The height of Durga idols varies widely from 6/7 ft to 16/18 ft. Debu *da* said an idol of 6/7 ft would require a 15-16 bundle *bichali* of paddy-straw. Five bundles now cost ₹200 whereas it used to be ₹150 a year back (field note, 19 September 2018). They are

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[140] The corporate firm's sponsorship for individual festival organisers ranges from 1.5 to 10 million of which one can assume, a substantial amount is invested in the idol itself. Bengal has approximately 10,000 Durga Puja celebrations across the state with Kolkata having a concentration of 4500 pujas in 2019 (Niyogi and Mukherji 2019). According to the same report, it generates a transaction of 150 billion for the entire state and 45 billion for Kolkata itself.

mostly collected from the supplier at Bagbazaar riverbank but during scarcity, they are transported by truck from Panihati and Sodpur. These two are the main ingredients that create the basic structure of the idol and the cost of these items have doubled in the last two years due to the change in charges of Goods and Services Tax (GST).[141]

An idol's final cost estimation depends more on the decoration and embellishment rather than the cost of basic raw material, according to Ratan Pal (interview 20 October 2018). A top *puja* committee can invest ₹135000 only for the decoration and embellishments as a start. He said, a good quality '*saaj*' (ornamentation) is traditionally brought from Krishnanagar of Nadia district but Kumartuli also has an ancillary industry of decorations. My field diary on 6 October 2018 notes that Chadu Malakar from Krishnanagar came to deliver *saaj* to Medha *di*'s workshop. Depending on the material of ornamentation the cost may vary considerably. For a pure white *shola r saaj* (decoration which is made out of a sponge wood plant), which is sourced from Katoa, Bonkapasi the cost is more compared to a *tarer saaj* or *daker saaj* (decoration made with silver or golden wire). The Sari is generally cheap and not of good quality because it is not often visible under the decoration. It is bought from nearby Barabazaar wholesale market who source it from various mills across Gujarat, as told by Subir Pal (interviewed on 3 October 2018). I observed the hair of the deity is made from jute and a Muslim community makes them in Amtala region of Kolkata (figure 6.8).

[141] Indirect tax, GST (Goods and Services Tax) has been levied on some of these raw materials since 2017 and the idol makers pay them inevitably. Being an eco-friendly raw material clay is exempted from GST but not others. For some other raw materials, the price has hiked nevertheless and this inflation has determined the final pricing of the deity. A newspaper report also estimates, 'the price of bamboo went up from ₹110 apiece to ₹150; the price of rope went up from ₹70 to ₹100 per kg; the price of nails went up from ₹30 to ₹60-65 per kg' (B. Ghosh 2019, N.P).

Figure 6.8: Labels from the packet of jute crepe hair of the deity made by the Muslim community (source: author)

Combining all these material costs and labour costs, a 9 ft idol can range between ₹40,000 to ₹60,000 recalled by Ratan Pal (interview 20 October 2018) and one can have a profit of ₹10,000. By this calculation, a workshop that produces 50 Durga idols, such as Medha Pal's, would have a profit of ₹500000 from one season. This estimation corroborates with my previous finding on the yearly profit of small-scale artisan. I would suggest this figure is for a middle scale enterprise, and demonstrates the system provides a surplus at the end of a specific season. I was periodically able to observe the exchange between the suppliers of raw material suppliers and the purchasing artisans, however, these few instances of negotiations that were observed fall outside my ethical considerations as the external parties had not consented. It is important to explain the

description above as it demonstrates the networks and circulations of the materials as a mode of transaction, and how institutional schemes, like GST, influence them.

6.2.3.3. Negotiations in trade

This section establishes how, through socially agreeable contracts and a mutual sense of trust and obligation, this industry escapes and muddles the rational logic of capitalist exchange. It shows how various modes of exchange coexist within a market. I highlight that personalised transactions in which relationships are valued are more important than profit maximisation.

As mentioned above, idols are exempted from GST. This means that the makers buy their raw materials with GST, but are unable to reclaim that money from the customers (B. Ghosh 2019). Though, it is unlikely from a business point of view, that the artisans would not include the extra cost incurred due to GST in the final pricing of their product. They sometimes have no choice but to sell them below profit due to two reasons I note below; obligation and negotiation.

Figure 6.9: Idol making at Shovabazaar Rajbari (Source: Ajoy Dutt)

I accompanied the *karigar*s to some of these family houses where the idols are made in the courtyard (figure 6.9).[142] During conversations, it emerged that these aristocratic families enjoy a price freeze by being loyal customers and there is no profit in making idols of old customers. The aristocratic families continue to order their idols from one particular *mritshilpi* whose family has been making and supplying idols for generations. This long-trusted relation makes the price negotiation quite hard for the artisan. The artisans feel an obligation to these families because they have made idols for them for generations. Therefore, even when raw material and labour wages increase exponentially, the artisans are in some cases unable to get a price that gives them a substantial margin. Despite various troubles and low profits, they can't refuse them. Artisans look forward to a new order which always brings more money as the price reflects the market value of labour and materials (field note 1 October 2018). For example, I have noted a negotiation process in my field diary:

> 'Three boys [aged between 18-20] were negotiating on the price of a Jagadhatri idol. Ratan Pal gave an estimate of ₹17000 including the truck to transport and porters to carry. They told him their budget for the whole festival is half of that amount. A young boy in the group knew Mr Pal from before [his family has ordered idols from him before]. Therefore, he kept requesting him and started addressing him as an uncle. Begging him at some point to bring down the price considering they are starting the *puja* from this year. They promised from next year they will definitely be able to increase their budget and they will take the idol from him again. Ratan Pal brought down the price to ₹10000. Yet they kept requesting. This haggling kept on going for over an hour. At one point, he left the room, saying ten thousand is final considering the kind of decoration they want (Shola Bangla Saaj) and he cannot reduce it more. He told stories of all his plight. How this business is like gambling. There is a huge investment but no guarantee of return because once the particular date of the religious function is over, they cannot sell the idol for that year. Among 50 Ganesh idols, he was only able to sell 27 idols and the rest they had to find proper storage for next year. He kept comparing it with other businesses and how this is more precarious. As he left, I thought the negotiations didn't go well and he left in despair. Soon he came back with a plastic bag and I realised it was the bag with the receipt book. They indeed reached an amount after long hours of negotiation and gave the order. He knew somehow they would!' (Field note, 20 October 2018)

[142] Though I visited two different family homes where idols are made in the premises (Adhar Bhavan in Shovabazaar and one in Dumdum) but this picture captures the setting very well.

The excerpt illustrates how an hour-long price negotiation brought down the initial price of ₹17000 to ₹10000. The customers, in this case, initiated the conversation by forging a familiar bond with the artisan from the beginning, by calling him, uncle and reminding him one of them has an intergenerational connection. The artisan, in turn, expressed his struggle, difficulty and risk of this business repeatedly. In the end, though, he had to agree with a considerably low price compared to his asking price. The surplus in these cases might cover the expenses barely yet most of the transactions follow this route. The logic of these transactions is often governed by personal relations of being an old customer, as one of the boys is or a verbal agreement of ordering every idol from the same artisan for the foreseeable future. Old customers and artisans thus tend to develop trust and dependence, much like a remnant of old patron-client relations. These are 'context-specific power relations rather than abstract and universal logics' (Gibson-Graham 2006, 62). As other research in economic anthropology on alternative market exchanges has suggested, the market transaction here is not entirely free where rational producers and customers are interacting with the sole motive of profit maximisation (Applbaum 2012). Value is often placed upon socially agreeable contracts between the producers and the customers where monetary benefits take a secondary place.

To conclude, the niche idol-making market in Kumartuli, does not always follow the rule of the free market. Interpersonal trust and obligation are also common factors in negotiating a price between producers and consumers. Though its market has exploded over the last two decades with considerable state intervention and corporate sponsorship, its inner operations are run by existing networks of material circulation and patron-client relations. The exchange of commodities takes place under an agreement created by faith-based social practices. The government regulations are often eased and relaxed so that the artisan community can circumvent some of the rules of taxation. It makes them both inside and outside the informal economic structure. A diverse economies framework helps to make these transactions visible and gives these forms similar power along with the free market transactions. The chapter will now turn to probable reasons as explanatory frameworks of diverse economic activities in this craft sector.

6.3. Reverse flow of capital

This section looks at the regulations, influences, incentives, and relaxations from two outside actors: the state and the corporate companies. The section unfolds in three subsections with a focus on Durga *puja*, the main festivity of the city to which the Kumartuli artisans cater. First, a boom in the festive economy in the post-liberalisation (after the 1990-91) period will be attributed to corporate sponsorship. Second, state mobilisation for the heritagisation of this craft and the festivity will be identified. Further, I argue state promotion and protection for small and medium enterprises and provision of bank loans indicate that a huge flow of capital is accrued from the domain of accumulation economy. Finally, with the theoretical input from Sanyal (2007) I identify this capital input as a postcolonial state's strategy for development in the domain of need economy. It is worth pointing out that because of idol-making's status as a ritual craft it has encountered the presence of these external structures more strongly than any other crafts in my field.[143] Therefore, the developmental politics of the state pertains to this craft specifically and might be extendable to other crafts only with similar cultural capital. I do not wish to claim these two external factors function in a similar way for any crafts and therefore, without further study, this explanation cannot be applied to other craft's economic organisations in India.

6.3.1. The corporatisation of religious festivity

The niche market of *puja* has slowly expanded to public spaces over the nineteenth and twentieth century. Durga *puja* has become a community affair organised in temporary *pandals* (large decorated bamboo marquees, figure 6.10), in lanes and by lanes of the neighbourhoods, apartment blocks or open parks and grounds in the city. The funds to support this five-day-long festival are heavily based on local subscriptions, with occasional sponsorship from local businesses with advertising banners. In the last two decades, however, the nature of sponsorship has changed significantly as the main annual festival of the city has scaled up to become 'the most spectacular, extravagant and publicized event in the city's calendar' (Guha Thakurta 2015, 1). More than a ritual religiosity, it is now a public street art festival fuelling the city's economy (detailed in footnote 140). A small portion of the public funding that supports this festival trickles

[143] Some state patronage has been noticed in the musical instrument making sector of Chitpur as well during field work.

down to places like Kumartuli where the main attraction of any religious festival, the idols, are being made.

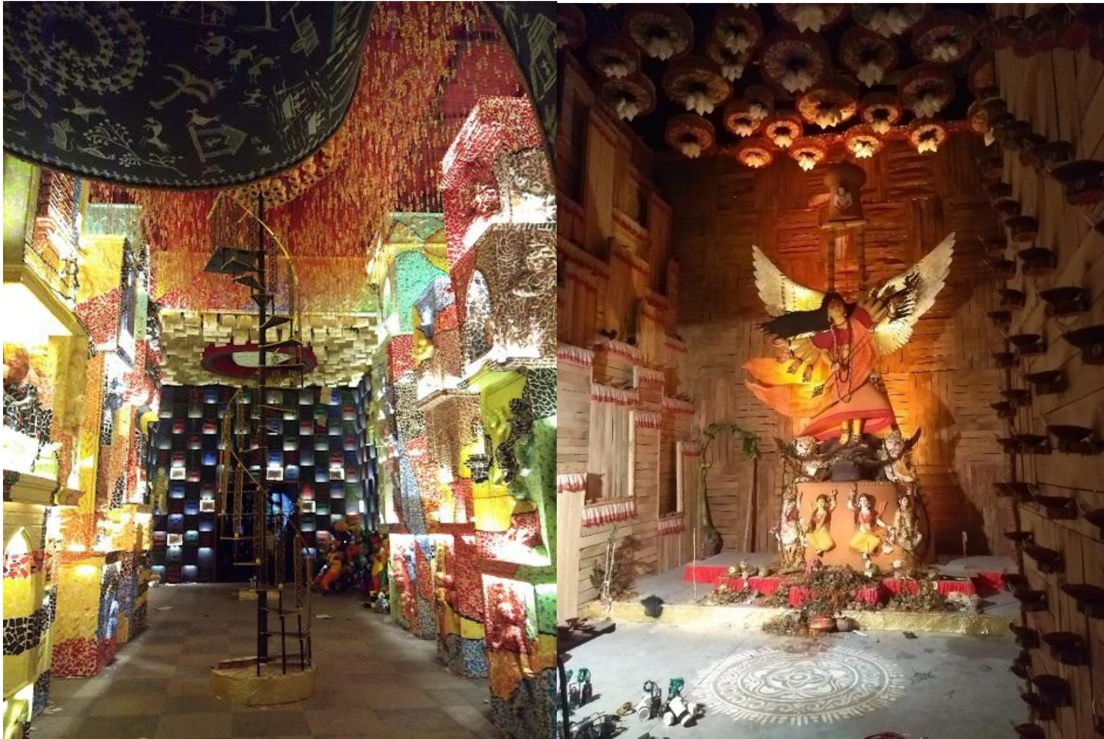

Figure 6.10: inside a Durga *puja* pandal (source: author)

The event also supports a thriving *pandal* making industry (which involves bamboo craftspeople), food, beverage, and apparel industry.[144] Artists, writers, musicians, *dhaki*s (traditional drummers), and porters are now an integral part of this annual festival. Tapati Guha-Thakurta (2015) has described in her book, *In the name of the Goddess*, how Durga *Puja* is now a 'civic communitarian event, a time of mass public festivity, a mega consumerist carnival and a city-wide street festival' (Guha Thakurta 2015, 1). The post-liberalisation festival economy introduced a new form of sponsorship, organisational work, and publicity in this domain. Big media houses, corporate houses, political leaders now singularly sponsor *puja* committees. They pay a huge sum to the *puja* organisers and buy the rights of advertising in the *puja* premises. According to Niyogi and Mukherjee (2019) sponsorship for individual festivals, organisers range from ₹1.5 to 10 million. The report says the festival generates a transaction of ₹150 billion for the entire state and 45 billion for Kolkata itself. British Council's creative industries

[144] https://dspace.mit.edu/handle/1721.1/32341 see a thesis on pandal making. Oza, Nilay. 2000. *Puja Pandals : rethinking an urban bamboo structure*. Graduate thesis. Department of Architecture. MIT.

mapping project estimates Durga *puja*'s economic worth is USD 5 billion.[145] Along with local youth and *puja* committee members, event management firms create promotional strategies, organise shows, functions and are in charge of publicity. Media houses broadcast live events from their sponsored *puja*s throughout the day. The committees compete with each other to win awards and prizes for the best idol, decoration, and lighting of the innovative *pandals.* As a result, the budget for stylised idol-making has also increased. With ritual commingling with the commercial, vernacular artisanry has met with contemporary artist's experimental theme-based idol making.

6.3.2. State allowances for promotion and protection

Figure 6.11: Durga *puja* carnival procession (source: The Telegraph India

https://www.telegraphindia.com/west-bengal/2-new-moons-in-ashwin-puja-2020-a-month-after-mahalaya/cid/1709521, last accessed 10 June 2021).

In the last four years, the West Bengal government has put considerable efforts to spin the annual festivity of Durga *puja* into a street carnival (figure 6.11). Traditionally the

[145] https://www.britishcouncil.in/programmes/arts/opportunities/open-call-creative-mapping British Council's creative industries mapping project's call for proposal to estimate Durga puja's economic worth as livelihood generator of the state in 2019 (last accessed 21 August 2021). https://www.qmul.ac.uk/research/collaborate-with-us/case-studies/british-council-/ Queen May University of London's centre for Creative and Cultural Economy undertook the research in collaboration with IIT, Kharagpur (Indian institute of technology). Five economic sectors were surveyed: Installation Art, Idols, and Illuminations, Retail, Advertising and Communications, Rural and home crafts, Tourism (last accessed 21 August 2021).

idol is immersed in the river after the five-day festivity. Now there is a roadshow of selected deities after the completion of the religious worship with a special theme and performances. The iconography of the deity has become the most influential brand for advertising, not only for commercial companies, but for West Bengal tourism itself. The tourism department has been trying to attract tourists particularly targeting this season to showcase the glamour and grandeur of the cultural extravaganza of the state. Kumartuli has been pitched as a major tourist destination during the month preceding the festival. Kolkata's Durga *puja* was India's official nomination to UNESCO's list of Intangible Cultural Heritage for 2020 and Kumartuli artisans are one of the consenting communities (discussed in Chapter 4, detailed in footnote 50).

Already the idols are exempted from GST and artisanal businesses with a ₹2 million turnover are outside the GST tax bracket. The current state government (TMC, at time of writing in 2020), often accused of minority appeasement by its right-wing opposition, is eager to roll out subsidies and allowances for this Hindu religious festival. The Chief Minister, Mamata Banerjee has generously distributed funds to local clubs, granted more allowances to *puja* organising committees, special concessions were given to women-led organisations and waived a 25% electricity bill for *puja*s who would source power from the Calcutta Electricity Supply Corporation and the West Bengal State Electricity Board (The Hindu 2019). The Chief Minister has publicly instructed the clubs to not pay income taxes waging a war against the central government's agency, The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) (A. Sengupta 2019). The Chief Minister's official statement reflected her commitment to protecting the marginal craft communities associated with the festival such as *dhaki*s (drummers) and artisans (A. Sanyal 2019). Though these strategies are politically manoeuvred and aimed to reach a large section of the electorate, they aid in the protection and expansion of artisanal work. However, Kumartuli's idol-making could not make its way to the West Bengal government's Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) clusters. Rural crafts have received considerable impetus from the government.[146] In 2018, West Bengal reported a maximum number (5269814) of MSME units in the country with a share of 11.62% enterprises (PTI 2018).

[146] https://wbmsme.gov.in/ see the government website where the focus is on connecting the government with entrepreneurs which will lead to development and employment. Rural crafts, textile, handicrafts have received special attention (last accessed 10 June 2021).

The same report suggests that the biggest bank credit flow of $15billion took place in the MSME sector of West Bengal.

Special bank loans are a common source of finance for many artisans in Kumartuli. Since the bank nationalisation in 1969, private moneylenders have become less powerful in Kumartuli (Heierstad 2017). Ratan pal told me there is no private moneylender in Kumartuli and artisans generally borrow from their friends and relatives (interviewed on 20 October 2018). Medha *di* received a bank loan from 1995-2013 which usually ranged between ₹10000-15000 (field note, 19 September 2018). Yet, many artisans could not repay the loans due to the high interest rate, decreasing margin of profit over the years and became defaulters.[147] The joint secretary of the artisan's forum admits (interviewed on 14 February 2019) that they requested the minister of Cottage Industries during the previous left front government for low-interest rate and a shift from commercial to a cooperative bank. It didn't come through due to unsatisfactory repayment of loans. He, along with a few other artisans said the provision of loans has stopped in recent years but I found out two banks UBI and UCO have stopped this facility. Another bank, Bank of Baroda has started giving loans to artisans again. A bank official says (conversation on 20 May 2020) the loan amount gets sanctioned through two artist forums. The condition of the loan involves a full repayment within 10 months of the loan. There is no EMI or collateral for the loan. Most artisans take the loan in July and repay it by November or February. Some artisans with large scale businesses take loans of up to five hundred thousand rupees for procuring basic capital as Subir Pal did.

> R: আচ্ছা। পুঁজির সমস্যা আছে? না কি পুঁজির সমস্যাটা নেই? Do you face any trouble in organising the capital?
>
> S: পুঁজির সমস্যা বলতে ব্যাঙ্ক দিয়েছিল। Yes, there is some. The bank gave us.
>
> R*:* ব্যাঙ্ক লোন দিচ্ছিল? কী রকম লোন দিচ্ছিল? Bank? What kind of loan?
>
> S: ওই সিজন... Seasonal.
>
> R: সিজনের ওপর... আপনারা সেটা নিয়েছিলেন? I see. Did you apply for it?
>
> S: নিয়েছিলাম। ওটা কোনও রকম শোধ করা হয়েছে, আর নিইনি। Yes. I somehow managed to pay it off. Haven't gone through that path after one experience.

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[147] For a critical analysis of the cycle of debt, role of micro finance in rural development and poverty alleviation in Andhra Pradesh see (M. Taylor 2011).

...

R: কত টাকার লোন ছিল ওটা? What was the loan amount?

S: পাঁচ লাখ। Five lakh (five hundred thousand)

R: পাঁচ লাখের লোন... সেটাতে সুবিধে হয়েছিল? Was it beneficial?

S: সুবিধে কিছু ছিল না। না দিতে পারি, চক্রবৃদ্ধি হার... Not as such. If one can't repay on time then it will increase in a rate of compound interest.

R: কিন্তু নেওয়ার কেন দরকার পড়েছিল? Why did you feel there was a need for the loan?

S: এখন কী করব... এই পাবলিক লোন নিয়ে কাজ হয়। What can I do? Otherwise, I have to take a loan from the public (I think he meant a loan from a private lender). (Subir Pal, idol-maker interview, 3 October 2018)

There have been sustained initiatives from the government to improve sanitation, water supply, lighting, paved road, and waste management in Kumartuli, a veteran sculptor Kamalesh Pal told me (interviewed on 3 October 2018). The Left Front government came up with an urban renewal plan for complete regeneration and infrastructural development of the whole colony in 2007 which I noted in Chapter 5. Therefore, we see, on the one hand, prolonged effort to aid the idol-making business through measures of development, subsidies, public sector loans, allowances; and on the other hand, promoting the State's tourism and heritage industry by capitalising on Kumartuli's brand value, idol Durga, has been noticed over the recent years.

6.3.3. Developmental governmentality[148]

Drawing on Sanyal (2007) I delineate two phenomena that are happening in this rapidly transitioning space of need economy. First, there is clear evidence that a flow of resources from the domain of capital (formal financial sector) to the so-called domain of non-capital, which is the craft sector, and more specifically, in this case, the idol-making is taking place. From the corporate sector's funding of the festival, to bank loans to idol makers, this industry is witnessing an external in-flow of capital. The capital deprived craftspeople were living in a state of 'financial apartheid' (M. Taylor 2011, 485) because of their exclusion from the formal financial system. The state had hoped that small credit from public sector banks would be a means of social reproduction for this

[148] A similar phase has been used by Kalyan Sanyal in his book.

sector and the producers would be exposed to merchant capital (K. Sanyal 2007, 15–18).

Secondly, the state incentives and allowances for this sector can be seen as a form of governance, which, following Foucault, Sanyal calls governmentality (P 170). This form of governmentality of postcolonial state has a key motive of development and upliftment of the poor, which brings a stream of finance into the need economy sector. The postcolonial democratic state, because of its electoral politics, often shows signs of contradiction, which Chatterjee calls 'pushes and pulls of governmentality' (Chatterjee 2016, 109). It navigates between accumulation which interests the urban upper class on one hand, and 'providing social security in the informal sector' (Chatterjee 2016, 108) for the rural and urban poor. Chapter 7 will also show, albeit selectively, it is using the trope of development to aid the craft sector with external pressure from civil society and NGOs. Through this, the state also wants to heritagise the festival and space of Kumartuli, to economically bolster its tourism industry. The next two chapters will further explicate how in the craft-based heritage sector NGOs are 'acting as mediators between capital and the need economy' (Chatterjee 2016, 110). The reproduction of this sector is ensured by national and international agencies, both state and non-state, who fund poverty alleviation schemes, livelihood generating, skill-building projects. The promotion of microcredits for self-employed, artisans and loans for women in the informal sector is the target of this development-driven governmentality which allows this sector 'access to means of productive resources' (K. Sanyal 2007, 65). In Kumartuli, providing infrastructure, giving allowances, facilitating bank loans and tax cuts are an extension of this developmental agenda.

I must mention here, that the argument of state-initiated development has been widely critiqued by the post-development school (Escobar 1995). This school of thought identifies that the motive of the state aligns with capitalist development, which helps disproportionate accumulation in one sector of the society when the other half remains deprived. There are ample examples of development projects which often resulted in the dispossession of the poor from their land and thrown them out of their traditional livelihood (Bhaduri 2018; Whitehead 2010). In the 1950s when independent nations came into existence in Africa and Asia as a result of decolonisation, a new form of development discourse emerged from the west. Though the welfarist externalities of

development is not a new phenomenon and can be traced back to the era of colonisation (Gidwani 2008), this had a clear economic motive. The post-1950's development politics fundamentally intended to integrate the 'traditional' under the formal sector for a complete overhaul of the 'developing' countries economy. Over the last seventy years, the traditional, sometimes renamed as informal, not only failed to disappear rather expanded in many countries. Evan it has often managed to penetrate the capitalist production process in some cases (T. Connor 2001; K. Sanyal 2007, 237-242). Sanyal, himself traces the cause of this visible existence of need economy to primitive accumulation. The steady growth of informality, which is part of the need economy, according to him is a space of rehabilitation for the victims of primitive accumulation. Thus, he would argue that the non-capitalist spaces are a product of capitalist development in the developing world, not necessarily a pre-capitalist entity. Moreover, both the domain of capital and non-capital exist within capitalism as capitalism thrives with heterogeneity, difference, and contradiction. This web of 'capital-non-capital complex' (2007, 40) constitutes postcolonial capitalist formation. Nevertheless, the case of idol-making as a craft is quite unique and I propose a significant departure from the above explanation.

I do not subscribe to the premise of primitive accumulation for idol-making craft, and similar caste-based artisanal crafts which are not the product of dispossession, rather can be traced back for centuries. The continuity of these practices, indeed with significant adjustments and transformation in the present era, make them a distinct case in the postcolonial economy. I agree with Nigam's argument for this instance, that, 'these practices represent the recalcitrant other of capital and capitalism- that which capitalism must attempt to seize, discipline, control and subsume within its own domain but which constantly escapes its logic' (Nigam 2014, 509). Gibson-Graham's critique of capitalocentrism would certainly apply to Sanyal's 'capital-non-capital complex' because he has ascribed the non-capital as endogenous to capitalism, giving capitalism the sole power to dictate the norm. Even a site like Kumartuli which has been exposed to a steady flow of capital from outside shows many parallel systems are operating, organising, negotiating, asserting their agency. Hence, a diverse economic framework seemed pertinent here. It identifies and gives credibility to this vast swath of economies that are

outside the logic of capitalism but are increasingly coming in contact with postcolonial state's governmentality.

6.4. Politics and intentionality

In this final section, I move beyond the above explanation where power is exercised through regimes of governmentality. The question of politics and intentionality is pursued and enquired within the ongoing diverse economic practices of the everyday. I locate it within the micro practice of the women artisan and artisanal labourers of this craft and amidst their struggles and antagonisms while pondering about the emancipatory evocations of these practices.

The diverse economic space is as much a political practice as it is an economic practice (Jonas 2016). An active ethical intervention has been one of the principal motivations for *performing* non-capitalist and alternative economic systems. In other words, within this framework, alternatives do not simply exist at the periphery but are consciously *made* by economic actors/groups with distinct agency and intent. It carves out a space for postcapitalist politics of alternatives that are rooted in collective action, hope and solidarity. It involves a 'conscious and combined effort to build a new kind of economic reality' (Gibson-Graham 2006a, xxxvi).

The case study presented above significantly differs from the performative politics of the alternative. They are not actively or consciously trying to be an anti-capitalist alternative. Some simply exist and some existing alternatives such as non-capitalist relations have been strongly questioned because they disregard tenets of social justice (section 6.2.2.2). Drawing on the discussion on care and agency, I presented above, I observe that these practices do not necessarily confront the capitalist system, but it does challenge heteropatriarchal social relations and exploitative informal labour relations.

I argue that beyond a political radicalness of transformative change, a space for everyday and ordinary practice can exist. In Kumartuli, an ecosystem of diverse economic practices has developed over the centuries purely based on its agility and negotiation with the changing times. The use of natural materials was already in practice because of the temporal aspect of worship. The artisans didn't have to choose an ethical

craft practice based on contemporary awareness of valuing the environment.[149] The principle of the circular economy is already embedded in Kumartuli's material practice, mainly to reduce cost. Once the idol is immersed, the bamboo and straw structure is often resurrected from the river and used to make a new idol, often of less importance. These craftspeople and craft workers have been adjusting to contemporary times but that doesn't mean they are always complying. Often, they are challenging the norms in an unspectacular way. Within STS, Manuel Tironi has analytically used the term 'intimate activism' to identify such 'ethical and political affordances of the subdued doings and engagements' (Tironi 2018, 438). Moving on from the phenomenology of political as the assertive collective action, somewhat provocatively the author places it at a junction between 'passiveness and action, coping and contesting, reclusion and mobilisation, feeling and knowing' (Tironi 2018, 439). The community's endurance in an urban slum, their everyday struggle under heat and rain while continuing their genealogical work is a form of politics.

In Kumartuli, some women's rise as 'master' artisans can be viewed as another kind of activism that arises out of circumstances rather than an explicit political intention of challenging gender roles. These 'activities [are carried out] not as conscious political acts; rather they are driven by the force of necessity-the necessity to survive and live a dignified life' (Bayat 1997, 58). A politics of challenging social norms, politics of claiming power amidst a male-dominated artisanal society and politics of making individual identity is asserted through their action. The female artisan, for example, was also the first to create a transgender Durga idol (India Today Home 2015). The rupture it has created within the existing socio-economic relation does not come from a 'pure, romantic, figure of resistance' (Chatterton and Pickerill 2010, 479) but it is the micropolitics of the women on an everyday basis that contributes towards a

[149] The only issue of concern is the use of harmful colours which causes lead pollution in the river. From 2008 toxic lead contamination of the river water came under scrutiny. West Bengal Pollution Control Board and Indian Toxicology Research Institute revealed that each gram of colour, especially yellow, used to paint the skin of the idols contain six to ten microgram of lead (S. Basu 2008). A campaign was started by the state pollution board in 2008. The board conducted workshops with the artisans to make them understand the toxic effect of these paints with the help of an NGO (India Foundation for Sustainable Development). Some big paint manufacturers like Berger Paints and Asian Paints also came forward to promote lead-free paints. Some big puja organisers are also increasing their budget to include costly lead-free paints. They are interested in a green tag which can bring more sponsors and can enter and win competitions riding on the environmental bandwagon. A 2015 report suggests many are complying with this new trend (Mitra 2015). Though my research suggests not everyone in Kumartuli follows this because of budget constraints, but some are adopting an old and natural way of making colour.

postcapitalist future. Following Chatterton and Pickerill (2010) I would argue these are spaces of everyday activism where struggles for social transformation and resistance towards exploitative practices don't crystallise through political organising but they run underneath. Despite their association with a ritual craft, these artisans have routinely questioned the status quo and norm by crafting various representations of the goddess beyond the traditional iconography of the idol. As I have analysed before, established non-monetary production relations and conditions of informal employment have been resisted because they do not serve the purpose of social justice. Incidents of labour autonomy point out rather than glorifying existing forms of non-capitalist alternatives in the diverse economy of Kumartuli, one needs to identify these spaces as the 'locus of potentially progressive economic politics' (Jonas 2016, 13). A will for progressive change both in terms of social and economic relations is observed in this case which does not necessarily lead to the formation of an 'intentional economy' (Gibson-Graham 2006b, 101) but creates its own version of mundane and unspectacular political space.

6.5. Conclusion

The chapter addresses the diverse economic operations of the idol-making craft of Kumartuli while analysing the conditions, intentions, and motives of its existence through a postcolonial reading. It has identified development discourse as one of the key rhetoric of a postcolonial state through which a reverse financial flow in the craft sector is taking place. To highlight the main contributions of this chapter, the diverse economies framework made alternative and non-capitalist economic practices visible. The chapter brought out the nuances of the economic organisation of an urban craft. In that process, it has made contributions in understanding the craft economy concerning other social logics such as class, caste, and gender. In this craft sector, instead of romanticising or glorifying, the chapter has also revealed non-capitalist exploitative practices and questioned the efficacy of existing alternatives in this space. Furthermore, the chapter has located a non-essentialist version of micropolitics geared towards social transformation in this economy which creates political space for the mundane and where the meaning of intention gets recast.

To summarise, through three modes of analysis – enterprise, labour, and transaction – I have argued that it is imperative to understand the capitalist mode as only one mode of economic practice among many in this craft sector. The enterprise can be identified as

a family-run quasi capitalist firm where various actors perform multiple class processes. A wage worker can be a self-employed artisan in a different space and time of the year. A *mritshilpi* can function as an independent artisan when he does modelling and sculpting in his own time and with different materials. Despite an absence of capitalist governance in the craft industry, intergenerational practice and shifts from artisanal work to business-managerial work have amounted to small-scale accumulation and reproduction. The seasonal migrant workers' life stories, therefore, pose a powerful critique of non-capitalist labour relations from a social justice point of view. Their mobility gave them power and agency to negotiate exploitative labour relations. They demand greater autonomy and create a distinct labour subjectivity in the process. It also shows women master artisans often take up non-monetary labour roles and distribute their surplus in a non-capitalist way which can also be interpreted as a display of different regimes of value and care. Business transactions don't necessarily take place under the garb of a free market with the sole intention of profit maximisation. Old networks of material circulation, regulations and relaxations from the government, incentives from sponsors and relationships of trust and obligation with old customers facilitate the creation of a socially agreeable negotiated space for the transaction.

The significance of the study is that it reconfigures the diverse economies approach within a postcolonial setting while adding new insights to theories such as Sanyal's (2007) 'postcolonial capitalist development'. It agrees partly with his theorisation regarding postcolonial nation state's project of developmental governmentality but departs from his propositions on two accounts. First, it distinguishes the economic relation of a craft such as idol-making, with significant heritage capital as not being a product of primitive accumulation induced by capitalism. Secondly, therefore, to imagine the space of 'non-capital' as part of capitalism simply doesn't hold in this case. Further, it robs the spaces of non-capital of the possibility of imaginative transformational politics. An ambition towards progressive politics for social change can get reflected through expressions of 'intimate activism' (Tironi 2018). Subdued politics of undoing, re-worlding, and rupturing disrupts the capitalist social relations and creates a space for negotiations and assertions of the agency.

In the next chapter, I will see how the support of the state and the corporate sector that I have identified here merges with active interventions from artists, NGOs, and civil

society groups. Development discourse reinvigorates heritage imaginary even for crafts that don’t have Kumartuli idol maker's heritage capital. Those cases also showcase how development discourse is selectively applied to crafts depending on its heritage capital.

Chapter Seven
Creating Cultural Value: Artists in Chitpur

7.1. Introduction

> It has been three months since I have been back to Exeter from my fieldwork in Kolkata. Many of the craftspeople with whom I spent time there keep contact with me. I am also in touch with the artist collective and receive a regular update about their new projects, such as the 'Connecting Local' 2019. An artist open house was scheduled to take place in mid-September where a professor of mine from Delhi would conduct a social mapping exercise with the artists. This time instead of Studio 21 in South Kolkata they organised the lab in Chaitanya Library, a 130-year-old institution in North Kolkata. The artists would present their ongoing work in front of a wider audience of the city during this two-day event and get critical feedback. The artists invited the craftspeople.
>
> I received a text from Sunil Das, a wooden mould maker, asking me what is the event about? I explained and encouraged him to attend it in Chaitanya Library since this time it was taking place closer to his home. He would never travel to South Kolkata for these events, and he would not leave his work to attend events. One day later I asked him how the event was, and he replied, আমি ভেতরে যাইনি। 'I didn't go inside'. I was surprised he went there but just did not step inside! I imagined Sunil Das standing on the doorstep of Chaitanya Library, his hands stretched to open the door, hesitating; finding it hard to step inside, pausing to think whether he belongs there, whether he should venture inside and then giving up. What stopped him? What made him think this is not his place? (A post-field thought, 17 September 2019)

This chapter critically engages with a socially engaged art project of an artist collective in Chitpur Road and examines the nature of collaboration between vernacular craftspeople and contemporary artists. The focus will shift away from idol makers to the other craftspeople who I worked with, and the artists who connected with them. I carry forward a thread from the previous chapter where the artists emerge as agents of development and mediating between the government and the craftspeople. The chapter interrogates this role while probing the intention and the implication of the artists' presence on the road. It unpacks the possibilities of radical socio-economic transformation through an experimental, non-normative art project. In that process, it examines the

intervention of the artists in terms of creating heritage capital for the crafts and the road. Does the act of reframing mundane spaces and craft practices as living heritage democratise the heritage imaginary of the city (Atkinson 2008; Mubayi 2020)? Or risk creating a spectacle of the ordinary? What kind of aesthetic, cultural and economic value does it add to the struggling crafts of the road and how might it get co-opted by the capitalist forces through commodification, marketisation and possible exploitation?

This chapter argues the artist collective tried to fulfil the radical potential of a socially engaged art project by engaging with various communities of Chitpur Road, such as the craftspeople and the school children. They offered a critique of the existing heritage paradigm and evoked a people-centric, mundane, and affective understanding of living heritage (L. Smith and Campbell 2015; Tolia-Kelly, Waterton, and Watson 2016).[150] Yet it falters from its promises when instead of 'radical creativity' (Mould 2018), it subscribes to commodification where some craftspeople showed no interest to have an equal stake in the venture. Some of them even showed a commitment to immaterial value towards their work rather than actively adapting to diversification.

There are four main sections in this chapter. First, I introduce the artist collective's work and derive two conceptual analyses around art's sponsorship and creation of distance by producing hierarchical categories among artists. Then I outline an art trail and take the reader on a walk to Chitpur. The chapter unravels the political and poetic possibilities of walking in relation to affective heritage making. It moves on to an art project with children where cultural value was co-produced for the local crafts. Next section explores the transgressive nature of socially engaged art through its commitment to an alternative site, subject and sensitivity. However, it complicates the initiative by questioning issues around spectatorship, authorship, and power. The last section looks at the venture of new product development with artist-led designer interventions. It identifies the cultural injustices by the

[150] My argument is inspired by the affective turn in heritage studies and I use this tool to explain the trope of walking. However, I haven't engaged with a more-than representational approach throughout the thesis. That strand of literature remains outside the scope of this thesis.

government craft emporium when they refused to accept those products yet offers a thoughtful critique of the top-down process of marketisation.

7.2. Artists in Chitpur: catalyst of urban revitalisation

Since the late 20th-century culture and art have been mobilised by the State in the name of urban regeneration and heritage production (Pinder 2005; Griffiths 1999). To follow Lefebvre, it can be said the city has been produced through and by art in the post-industrial urban societies located mainly in the global North. A similar attempt has been seen in Ahmedabad, India (Costa 2015). In Chitpur road, Kolkata's historic neighbourhood such attempts were absent till 2013. From 2013, a trend has been noticed where artists and creative practitioners showed increasing interest in engaging with the cultural landscape of Chitpur Road. The goal was far from large scale urban regeneration projects through art, rather art was used to connect back with cultural producers of the Road and decrepit spaces by individual artists. Chitpur Road's role in the cultural production of nineteenth-century Bengal and its contemporary landscape with multi-layered histories have a stimulating effect on artists and creative practitioners. In this section, I will introduce these artist initiatives in Chitpur and delineate two analytical moorings of the chapter, mobilisation of arts by capitalism and the distance between the artist and the craftspeople. It explores these issues by asking who funded these projects, what meaning does this sponsorship convey and how they created the category of contemporary artist and vernacular craftspeople?

7.2.1. Hamdasti and socially engaged art

Three projects need special attention. I will start with Hamdasti whose work constitutes the core of this chapter. I am going to discuss the formation and evolution of this organisation in detail. The description will indicate how a socially engaged art project of an artist collective with an intention of grassroot local community engagement grew into a yearly street festival in Chitpur.

Hamdasti, meaning partnership in Persian, started working in Chitpur Road neighbourhoods from 2013.[151] Prabhat *da*, one of the trustees of Hamdasti told me the idea of an artist collective who are interested in experimental forms/mediums of art was

[151] https://www.hamdasti.com/ (last accessed on 6 July 2021).

conceived in 2011 and 'শূন্যস্থান (empty space) Artist Collective' was formed.[152] Later the founder member of Hamdasti, whom I shall call Sucheta, participated in this workshop where she involved local children of the community in creating a local library and garden. A few months after the event, she joined the Harvard Graduate School of Design to undertake a master's degree in Social Art and Design. At the end of her degree, her proposal of a non-profit arts organisation, Hamdasti, who would work closely with the civic authorities and local communities was selected as a finalist in Harvard Innovation Lab Dean's Cultural Entrepreneurship award from seventy other proposals.[153] As a finalist, the organisation received prize money of $5000 which kick-started the initiative. Some other Kolkata based artists who are trained from Srishti School of Art, Design and Technology (Bengaluru), Indian College of Art (Kolkata), Kala Bhavan (Shantiniketan) and Rabindra Bharati University (Kolkata) with interest in graphic design, art history, interdisciplinary visual art, signage, and printmaking joined the core team. Hence, Hamdasti's inception was tied to a group of internationally networked artists who wanted to bring some change in the gallery based elite art scene in India by collaborating with the local community and do art in public space.

They launched their pilot project 'Chitpur Local' in December 2013 with grants from India Foundation for Arts (hereafter IFA) and the above-mentioned Harvard prize. Their main motivation was to give a two-year fellowship to artists and more broadly to creative practitioners from the diverse field who in turn engage with communities, schools, and government departments from Chitpur Road neighbourhoods, to collectively design, and later implement cultural projects. Following the principle of socially engaged art projects, they have devised a structure that ensures that the artists who receive their fellowship engage in a dialogue with the community. The process of art-making becomes important in socially engaged art rather than the final art piece. In an interview with Sucheta, (interviewed on 20 December 2017) she tells me in the first three months the artist went into the neighbourhood and via a social mapping exercise finds a community collaborator from any sphere of work in the neighbourhood. A

[152] Prabhat *da* was the artist-curator of studio 21 in South Kolkata, an alternative space for young artists, performers and film lovers. The studio emerged from CIMA (Centre for International Modern Art), intended to be a different space from the mainstream commercial art gallery. The experimental and fluid artist collective was first formed here. Interview conducted with Prabhat *da* on 19 March 2019.

[153] https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2013/04/cultural-entrepreneurship-finalists-named/ (last accessed 20 November 2020).

collaborative community event must take place thrice a year which they call 'interventions'. This is where the community members engage in a dialogue with the artist. The artist expresses their ideas and asks the participants what they want out of this interaction and how they envisage their participation. Throughout this interaction, the role of the participant begins to develop and change. Through various examples from Chitpur Local, she told me how from participants they become moderators, contributors, writers, volunteer. Thus, the power relation between the artist and the participant begins to shift. Each of these iterations builds towards a community art festival in Chitpur Road, where artists express their work through installations or performances or games and participants from the community or audiences (who come from Kolkata or abroad) engage.[154] An open house (for example 'Chitpur revisited' in December 2017 at Studio 21) which Sucheta calls a 'lab' (further locating the event in international art world language) takes place before the final festival where the artists present their work in progress in front of a wider public and subject their work to critical evaluation. University professors or established artists and performers, who are considered 'experts' from various fields are invited during these open houses or labs for talks and feedback, as the introductory paragraph showcase.[155] After the festival, the artists go back to the community for feedback and start thinking about further developments based on those suggestions. After a year of follow up and reflection, the next fellowship cycle starts.

A detailed reflection on my involvement with the team can be found in section 3.7. In summary, Hamdasti extended its interest into the urban craft sector of Chitpur Road and

[154] The pilot project was conducted in 2014-16 with focused engagement with a century-old local school, Oriental Seminary and a 143-year-old book store, Diamond Library. First public art festival in Chitpur took place in 2015. The second edition of Chitpur Local (2017-18) saw increased artist fellowships with seven projects running in Chitpur with wider community collaboration. Students, residents, craftspeople, a local police station, community clubs, photography studios and women participated in building further dialogue between artists and local people. 'Tales of Chitpur', the second public art festival took place in 2018. The third edition, 'Connecting Local' started in July 2019 where some community collaborators took up the role of being a host and at present, six artists and performers are working with various collaborators but this time they are moving beyond Chitpur. Detailed reflection on each of these editions can be found on their website.

[155] A two-week long (26 February to 11 March 2016) lab at Studio 21 and an exhibition in Mumbai, 'Chitpur (dis)Local' was organized (20 May to 23 July 2016) later for critical evaluation and new brainstorming for the next phase. In 2017-18 round, a series of labs and other open houses were organised under the title 'Chitpur Revisited' where experts were invited. I attended one such lab in December 2017. Finally, in 15-22 September 2018 a week-long lab, Stereoscopic Narrative, was hosted by Max Mueller Bhavan, Goethe Institute, Kolkata. Community collaborators were invited to this lab to open up a space of further reflection and perspectives from both the groups.

led to the formation of Chitpur Craft Collective during my fieldwork in 2019. I was part of the core team that designed and planned agendas for this new venture, and I continue to be a part of the collective. The analysis I present, therefore, is also self-reflexive and introspective. This collective was launched through a public art trail in March 2019. The Kolkata Festival approached Sucheta to curate a community-centric art festival and West Bengal (hereafter WB) Tourism financially supported a three-day public art trail in Chitpur.[156]

7.2.1.1. Arts sponsorship

This is not the first time the WB Tourism department supported Hamdasti. Their second edition street art festival 'Tales of Chitpur' was also co-funded by them, along with a host of private donors including corporate organisations.[157] I noticed that the artist fellowships have been supported by IFA under their 'Arts Practice' program whereas the street festival aspect has repeatedly ignited the interest of the tourism department. I analyse this sponsorship from two perspectives. First, the tourism department has supported and used artists' work as an aesthetic tool to transform a derelict urban neighbourhood, even if for a short duration. They are keen to project Chitpur Road as a historic neighbourhood of Kolkata and as a tourist destination. They funded the artist collective's work, hoping it will help to visually sanitise the space for touristic consumption. They realise that this non-profit artist group's ability to revalorise a degraded urban space, curate place-making activities, produce nostalgia and affect among the public will also harness capital investment for the area. An artist said,

> '…you know work in these heritage spaces where we were so attracted to and which has so much potential which are kind of defunct now… these are some of the spaces which immediately attracted us and we thought okay we can play some kind of role here and maybe reactivate these spaces to start with…' (Sucheta, artist interview, 20 December 2017)

She identified heritage spaces and wanted to 'reactivate' them because they were 'defunct'. It suggests, the group viewed Chitpur as an idle asset ready to be cultivated. They certainly paid attention to the heritage question during the street festivals. Their

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[156] https://www.facebook.com/thekolkatafestival (last accessed on 6 June 2021). Their website is currently not functioning.

[157] https://www.hamdasti.com/tales-of-chitpur---the-chitpur-local-art-festival-2018.html (last accessed 6 June 2021).

'reactivation' initiatives with the old aristocratic houses showcase an effort to repackage private-public spaces as heritage. The workshop organised by a conservation architect for the heritage house owners about adaptive reuse shows the funders wielded art for heritage awareness. For Kolkata, the government has not proposed any heritage-led large-scale urban regeneration project in the old city core. The artwork has not been manipulated for the neoliberal use of gentrification. Nevertheless, the tourism department's interest in Hamdasti's street art festivals shows certain sections of Chitpur Road has the potential to become a gentrified neighbourhood with the use of heritage and public art.

Secondly, the tourism department's sponsorship in Chitpur Craft Collective's art trail enabled Chitpur to be developed as a burgeoning creative economic space of Kolkata, as the crafts can be revitalised as curio goods through the artists' creative input. While conceptualising sentimental capitalism, De Costa writes it 'valorizes the cultural practices, enterprise, and creativity of the poor, in particular through a fetishized emphasis on grassroots participation and empowerment' (Costa 2015, 91). The funding agencies realised with a socially engaged art project's interest in the craft sector, two issues can be resolved; these practices can be revitalised, and the practitioners can be invited to participate as well.

7.2.2. Contemporary and vernacular artists

I will give a brief overview of two more projects to understand how they created two categories of artists in Chitpur. Lalit Kala Academy, the national academy of arts in India commissioned a project in 2013 to document the 'Popular Native Arts of Chitpur and Allied Areas of Kolkata' co-ordinated by artist Ashit Paul.[158] Trained in Government College of Art and Craft, one of the oldest art colleges in India, Paul has a deep engagement with Chitpur's woodcut prints of the nineteenth century (Paul 1983). The project had two purposes: research and documentation of 'popular literature, music, theatre, social movements, etc. related to the Chitpur area' (quoted from project description of the website). Secondly, bringing together two genres of artists, who are classified as 'contemporary' and 'native' artists. The workshop organised, invited artists from both genres and looked at this cultural heritage of artist encounters facilitated by

[158] https://lalitkala.gov.in/showdetails.php?id=330 (last accessed on 6 June 2021).

the Road from a contemporary perspective.[159] Through this monolithic categorisation, it has inadvertently created and validated a stark hierarchy between artists based on their institutional training, exposure, aesthetic sensibility, and privilege in the art world. Further, it establishes a relationship of dominance and power between these two groups. Though it has envisaged Chitpur Road as a space that facilitated the cultural milieu of two genres of artists from the east and the west, the label does not help the cause. It needs no clarification that they have assigned the term 'native' for the artists grown and learned in the eastern tradition whereas contemporary artists have had the opportunity of studying in an educational institution of art from India or abroad. I will replace the nomenclature of native with vernacular due to the racialised nature of the former term but use this categorisation in the chapter to understand how this division further widened the gap, with the vernacular relegated as craftsman whereas the contemporary gets to claim the status of an artist.[160] Through this categorisation, the contemporary artists automatically achieve a cultural taste that endows them with distinction whereas the traditional lacks such a cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984). Staying

[159] It has organised a workshop in 2014 titled 'Cross Road Art Workshop- heritage in Contemporary Perspective'. The workshop questioned the dominant mode of modern art production by juxtaposing it with indigenous art forms. It took place in Jorasanko Thakurbari (the residence turned university tuned museum of Tagore family, the cultural doyen of Bengal), located at Chitpur Road. It culminated into an exhibition at Victoria Memorial Hall.

[160] See (Hacker 2000) to understand how a similar category of tribal art and craft of Orrisa has been created through museum display.

with this classification also reiterates that a distance between two kinds of arts and artists has been produced through this official parlance.[161]

Figure 7.1: Neighbourhood revival through art: street carnival at Kumartuli (source: author)

The second example is of a public art exhibition, Rang Matir Panchali (A Chronicle of Clay and Colour) which took place in Kumartuli in 2019 (Basak 2021).[162] On the occasion of World Art Day and Bengali New Year, Asian Paints, a commercial paint company sponsored this two-day street carnival. This event had an element of neighbourhood regeneration aspect, in its approach albeit on a small scale. It completely transformed the visual appeal of Kumartuli by painting the walls of the houses and upgrading some

[161] The distinction between art and craft is a recurring theme in craft literature where craft is associated with repetitive doing with hand whereas art symbolises engagement of mind and cognitive thinking (Sennett 2008). Sen (2016) writes about the struggle of the master artisans of Kumartuli who try to transcend the aesthetic hierarchy between artisan and artist. In the context of Indian craft, the category of 'native craftsman' was operationalised during colonial era through industrial art schools and colonial exhibitions. Western art's categorisation and distinction between different creative expressions were thus transported to India. Colonial administration's need to educate and train the artisans in the field work industrial art have been noticed during archival research as well (section 3.8).

[162] https://www.getbengal.com/details/rang see a report of the event here (last accessed on 6 June 2021). Basak's (2021) book chapter on the street carnival, *Rang Matir Pnachali*, addresses the tensions between the celebrated professional artists from the Pal community who led the art festival and the plight of the custodians of hereditary skills, the artisans. It paints a stark reality of contrast between these two groups within Kumartuli questioning the representation and power dynamics of the festival and highlighting a 'hierarchy-ridden fractured and fragmented community, [where] a few even living on the brink of existence' (Basak 2021 221).

of the idol maker's makeshift studios (Figure 7.1). It followed a similar pattern to Lalit Kala's initiative and brought contemporary and vernacular artists together to create a visual spectacle. It posited the initiative as a tribute to the artistic knowledge of Kumartuli's artisans.

7.2.2.1. The aura of the distance

In the above-mentioned cases, the contemporary artists initiated and included the vernacular ones in the former's proposed art projects. One event even framed it as paying tribute to their knowledge. I argue that the distance between these two fractions of the artist community not only was produced through such initiatives but had to be maintained because this distance created the aura of these initiatives. In Walter Benjamin's work aura has been theorised as an experience and 'a unique phenomenon of a distance, however, close it may be' (W. Benjamin 1968, 222). It has been described as a 'strange tissue' or weave of 'space and time' which evokes the desire to come closer to a unique phenomenon or experience which one can never quite grasp (Rickly-Boyd 2012, 270). Aura is not immanent within a thing or a landscape, it emerges from intersubjectivity. In my case, it stems from a mutual distance between the internationally mobile artists and vernacular craftspeople embedded within Chitpur's landscape. Aura is double-blind here as both subjects maintained their distance. In other words, the aura is augmented not only because the contemporary artists wanted to perpetuate the distance these terms created, however, the vernacular craftsman, for example, Sunil Das in the introductory observation, also did not step inside an artist lab. As the chapter will unfold, we will see that the local people were hesitant to be part of the art festival (section 7.4.2) and some craftspeople showed indifference in new product development opportunities (7.5.3). For two different reasons, for vernacular crafts practitioners who refuse to be co-opted by cosmopolitan sensibility, and for contemporary artists who wanted Chitpur's alluring experience for their artistic endeavour, both groups kept each other at bay so that the collaborative events unfold on a yearly basis.

To sum up, in the three examples of artist involvement with Chitpur, I have shown how Chitpur Road and its vernacular crafts have repeatedly emerged as a site of cultural engagement and locus of creative production by the contemporary artists to yield the heritage capital of the road. With socially engaged art's commitment to a grassroots

participatory engagement, the artists secured national and international arts sponsorship. These engagements created the category of contemporary artists and vernacular craftspeople which is premised on a distance between two genres of artistic training, expressions, and privilege. The distance of these categories remained with us throughout the chapter because it produces aura. Nevertheless, there are moments when both these factions engaged with each other created experiences which reproduce the aura.

7.3. Experiencing living heritage

In this section, I will take the reader on an experiential journey to Chitpur Road through an embodied account of the art trail, *chitpurer chalchitra* (চিৎপুরের চালচিত্র) (Chitpur Chronicle), I was part of in February 2019.[163] The nature of the writing is slightly different in the first section as it directly speaks to the reader and introduces them to the street life of Chitpur through a walk, just like a visitor. This form of writing is intentional as the visitor of the art trail might have similarly experienced the trail. I also offer the titles of the stops during the walk, in brackets that the visitors would have noticed while walking and paused. The discussion below enunciates the core team of artists who are working to create an immersive experience for the visitors with the help of the craftspeople**.** More than the visual grandeur or dazzling spectacle of installation pieces, an experience of the cultural landscape of the Road was the key intention. The creation of an interactive experience rather than passive participation of the visitor was an important feature for this art trail. The trail signifies a marked departure from the heritage discourse of Chitpur Road. As it shifted the focus from the architectural grandeur of

[163] https://www.facebook.com/events/1150796958378300/ - the event invitation on Facebook (last accessed 8 June 2021).

aristocratic families' mansions and their cultural legacies to everyday mundane spaces and craftspeople of the road. It marks a distinctive moment in acknowledging a democratised and affective notion of the living heritage of Chitpur. Through their exercise, the art trail reconfigured the heritage narrative of the Road and made it a people-centred discourse.

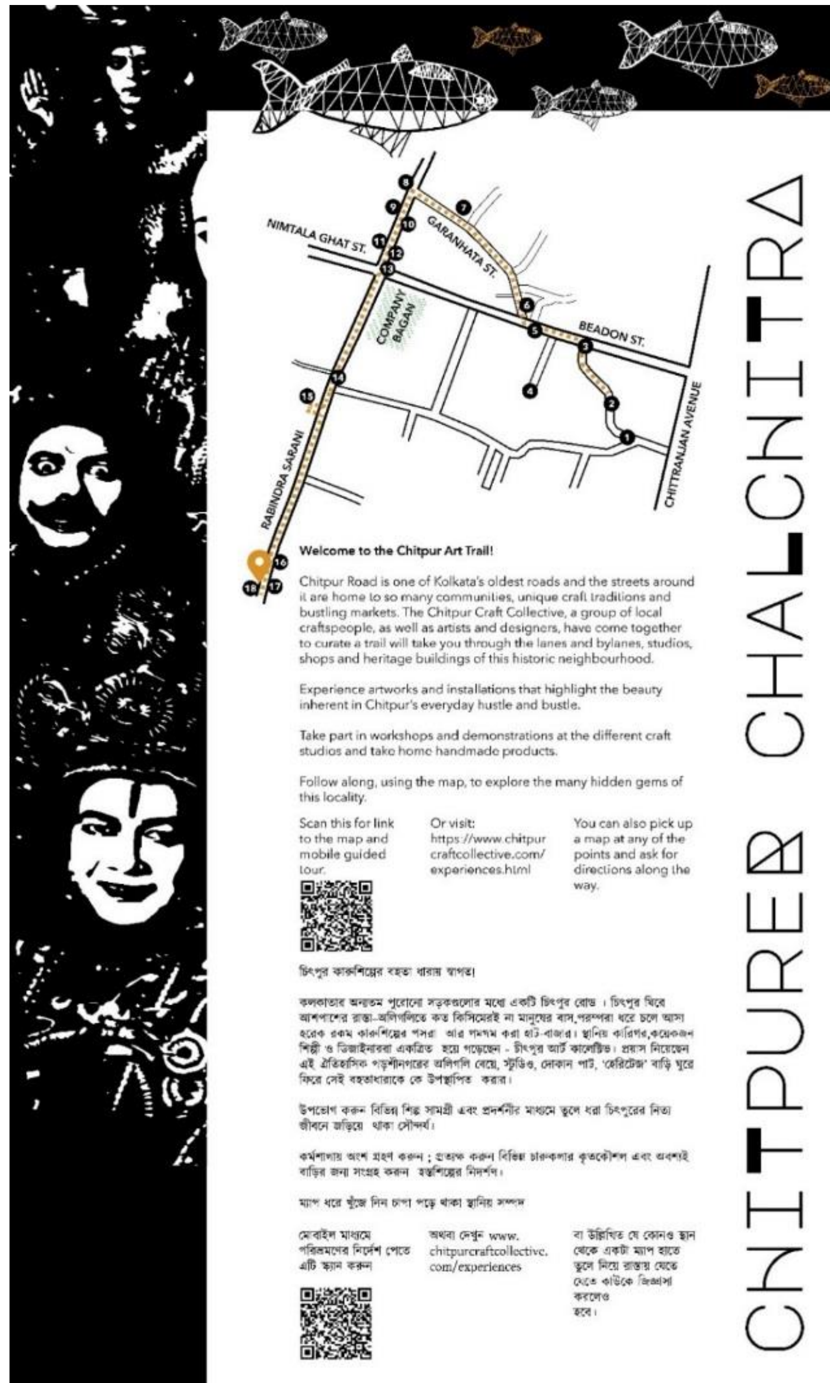

Figure 7.2: Map of the Art Trail and main signage for the public display (source: Sucheta and Vidya from team CCC)
To see the map digitally click here
https://uoe.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapTour/index.html?appid=524dabc8d4a04c949e43088e226e6ce5
(Digital map source: author)

Figure 7.3: (from top to bottom) Installations: Armour of Weakness, Jatra Japon, Zubaan - e-Urdu (source: Hamdasti, Author and Avijit)

7.3.1. Tracing footsteps of the art trail

You are entering the walk at Ram Bagan's *Dompara,* a neighbourhood named after a community of low caste people, *Dom*, who cremate the dead. Nevertheless, the bamboo craftspeople in the locality distinguish themselves from that profession and say that their profession has been basket weaving for generations. As you walk, keep an eye on the walls. Swarup's installations (Armour of Weakness, figure 7.3) hanging on the worn-out walls and terraces would lead you to Beadon Street, in front of Minerva Theatre.

You are in front of Manas's installation (Coming to Life) at the Road junction now. With the help of Bamboo craftspeople, the installation is a mirror of what awaits in the trail. Sucheta is stationed here, in front of the theatre entrance to welcome visitors like you to the registration desk. Register here and pick up a map of the art trail.

Turn left, in a narrow alley squeezed between Minerva theatre and Chaitanya Library Swati's organisation The Community Art Project, which has been working with the Chinese community of Tiretta Bazaar has an installation (Tiretta Times). It showcases the Indo-Chinese community's art, food and festivals with photographs, paper lanterns made by Chinese paper cutting technique, banners, masks, and other visual aids used by the community.

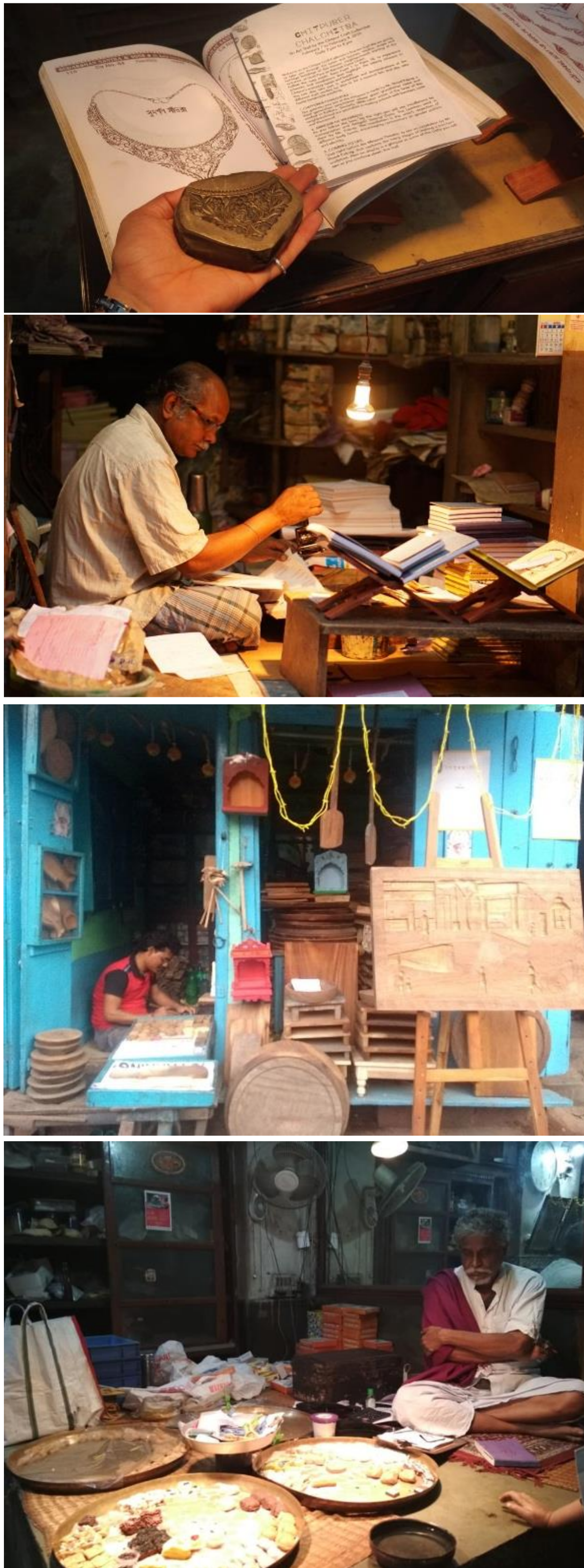

Figure 7.4: (from top to bottom) Live Demonstrations: Designer Mould, Book Bind Bond, Chitpur Impressions, Sweet Indulgence (source: first two Hamdasti, author, Saaz Agarwal)

This would lead you to a back alley behind the library where Artsforward displayed an installation (*Jatra Japon,* figure 7.3) on the humorous, meaningful, and quirky names of Bengal's folk theatre *jatra* from the 1960s till today through a display of *jatra* posters inside curiosity boxes as a tribute to this living theatre which travels and performs across Bengal. If you walk a few steps down this road, you can see in the corner between Beadon Street and Chitpur Road, building facades completely covered with *jatra* show advertisements in billboards proclaiming that it is the district of *jatra* offices.

Come back to Beadon Street again. In the 130-year-old, Chaitanya Library, the first public library in Kolkata, an audio-visual interactive art installation (Zubaan-e-Urdu, figure 7.3) is organised by Art Rickshaw in association with Sirri Saqti Foundation. It focuses on Urdu calligraphy which is predominantly seen near the Nakhoda Mosque area of Chitpur Road. For these three days, the grim and dusty library which now sustains itself by

Figure 7.5: (from top to bottom) Display: Preserved Blocks, Khelna Bati, Star Harmonium (source: Hamdasti, Manas, Author)

renting out training and coaching classes has been transformed into a space of surreal poetry. Mark this place, we have two workshops for you here in the coming days.

Now cross Beadon Street and enter the winding Garanhata Lane, one of the Jewellery clusters of the city where gold and silversmiths manufacture and sell their wares. Suhasini who worked with Chitpur Local in their second edition made four installations with the help of stamp and signage maker Bholanath Das. Amidst the usual liveliness of this neighbourhood, can you spot her rickshaw installation (Poetry of Daily Life) which is a distinct yet familiar part of the landscape? Take the lane to reach Sudarshan Satra's shop which specialises in making Jewellery moulds (Designer Mould, figure 7.4). You can go inside the workshop, and they will show you how brass moulds are made. He has also displayed an old collection of design catalogues and moulds designed by his father. Have a look!

Continue the walk, where Garanhata Lane meets with Chitpur Road, two bookbinding shops are showing the technique of handmade bookbinding (Book Bind Bond, figure 7.4). You can also take home a few handmade diaries made by them with old-school red and yellow bind. On the right-hand side of the road, bookseller, and publisher Diamond Library (World of Rare Books) is allowing people inside and showing them their collection of old *jatra* scripts.

Now walk a bit further and catch up with Baidyanath Das's 100-year-old wooden and zinc stamping block collection (Preserved Blocks, figure 7.5). You can make your own bookmark with this rare collection! Cross the Road and enter Annapurna Press where 130-year-old letterpress is awaiting (Life of a Letterpress). Here Nilanjan's art installation plays with the multifarious and ambiguous use of the word 'gold' (*sona*) in the area through letterpress printing.

You are at the junction now, where Chitpur Road meets Beadon street. Make your way through the long lines of autos and buses running in both directions and cross the road. Rabindra Kanon or Company Bagan will be on your left. Do you see the stack of raw sugarcane sticks that rest by the boundary wall of the park? You might find a vendor who will offer you fresh sugarcane juice. You must be hungry by now and we have a specially made *sandesh* mould to make your own sweet inside Notun Bazar's Makhon Lal Das (Sweet Indulgence, figure 7.4).

Outside the Bazaar, you might encounter a sea of people engaged in various activities. Vendors loading and unloading piles of goods, street hawkers selling fried snacks to fruits and vegetables. You can stop, take a break, wait, and immerse yourself in the cacophony and vibrancy of this street life. Browse the shops selling iron, brass, copper and aluminium utensils, trays, cane baskets, boxes - a collection of such magnitude is hard to come by in any other street of Kolkata. Try finding Swarup's second installation (*Khelna Bati,* figure 7.5) inside the iron utensils shop amidst pots, pans, woks, and ladles.

You need to walk a bit more to find the three last stops of this walk. Walk past Seth Bagan, a narrow alley where the prostitutes stand outside to make a living and walk until you see a few shops with wooden utensils of all kinds. Biman Das has used his *sandesh* mould making skill to depict a scene from Chitpur on a rectangular wooden block (Chitpur Impressions, figure 7.4). Rudradeb, another wooden mould maker, can teach you a technique or two if you have some time to sit with him and try your hands in wooden mould making (Woodcut Workshop).

Now you are in front of the ruin of the old KC Das building (figure 7.5). A section of it has already collapsed and we have been warned that this is an unstable structure. So be careful but try your hand on the old musical instruments who have found their home here, at least for three days! You can talk to Star Harmonium's Sukdeb Saha whose

father made these. He is keen to talk to you about the history of their shop in Jorasanko, Star Harmonium. Have some tea and the conversation will continue! The trail ends here but your association with Chitpur has just begun.

7.3.1.1. Why walking

Figure 7.6: Guiding through Chitpur (source: Hamdasti)

I took the reader through the walk and now discuss what difference this form of walking made in creating a sensory nature of heritage? The pioneering scholarship of walking in the city de Certeau (1988) has elucidated how walking can be at once political; a tactical production of space 'from below' and poetic; sensing the haptic spaces. Within heritage scholarship walking has been adopted as a method for 'spatial, emplaced and embodied encounter with the past' (Svensson 2020, 2). For the Chitpur walk as well, the trail had both potentials. The walk was open-ended and there was no walk lead. We had 18 stops and one can enter and finish the walk anywhere they like or leave in the middle. At each stop, we kept some leaflets where the map of the trail with a number assigned to each stop and a brief description of what awaits the visitor in those spaces was written. In the first and the last stop, two large signs explained the art trail is about different communities and crafts of Chitpur, introduced the collective nature of the artwork and invited people to take part in it by following the walking route. These large signs provided the link to the virtual tour and a QR code to scan and instantly get the map on one's mobile.

The signage maker in our group who is a landscape architect by profession designed some arrows (figure 7.6) and pasted them on the walls, gates, or electric boards to guide the visitors. They merged with a hundred other advertisement posters and political graffiti on the wall and could not be identified later. So, a route was indicated, a brief

guide for each of the stops was offered and most people were inclined to follow that. Nevertheless, one could arrive at the same stop via multiple routes and traverse through the trail in their own way. I observed some visitors and mostly local people chose to do that. We had 260 visitors who came from other parts of Kolkata and abroad and many passers-by over three days. Chitpur's overwhelming street life made it impossible for people to just visit the numbered stops and ignore the street life which surrounds them.

The artists wanted the affective nature of the street to be part of their work. The individual installations were not finished art objects. The walk was purported to engage the spectator in the process of art-making in Chitpur. The movement of traffic on the road, its sound and smoke; the jostling crowds on the sidewalks, the smell of the garbage and potholes, were meant to trigger the sensory experience of Chitpur for the visitor. As Mulcahy and Flessas (2018, 234) explained, 'the taste of pollution; the smell of dog excrement or takeaway food; the noise of cars and conversation; and the feel of jostling bodies on the pavement' mediate the experience of street art. One can also view the act of walking mediated by embodied experiences as a mode to connect the disjointed installations, exhibitions and complete the art trail. The entire process can then emerge as a single piece of art. Though the focus of the art installations and live demonstrations was the crafts of Chitpur, the walk made the site of Chitpur an integral part of the project. The craft traditions ceased to remain a social activity and became socio-spatial in nature when one started walking.

Visitors took different approaches to walk the stretch of the road. Some visitors asked local people for directions and conversations around personal history associated with Chitpur had begun. There was no singular narrative of Chitpur Craft actively laid out by the artist group through display and exhibition. Those who interacted with the local residents or engaged in conversations with the craftspeople were offered different interpretations. On the other hand, some found the solo walk in Chitpur overwhelming. Walking also rendered a different meaning to the same art trail because different groups of visitors experienced Chitpur through the prism of their own identity and relationality with the city.

> People who were visiting from outside, mostly other parts of Kolkata, were often lost from the very first day. It was a self-guided walk. They had a map digitally as well as in print. All they had to do is follow the

> map and stop wherever there is a sign. Most people could not do that, after crossing Beadon street when they entered more busy parts of Chitpur they were lost. I had to constantly run across the stretch to show people the way. The foreigners, on the other hand, followed the map quite well and reached the last spot without difficulty. (Field note, 7 February 2018)

> The third day again I heard some people got lost in the middle. They were very few in number, but I had a hard time directing them. Two ladies were utterly shocked to find an art installation inside an iron utensils shop. They complained about the smell in Notun Bazar! They had their car following them throughout the walk. We asked ourselves why are people getting lost here? (Field note, 9 February 2018)

In the above instance, the feeling of being lost in Chitpur can be interpreted in many ways. Some residents of the city who are used to see art in pristine galleries experienced the marginalised and unfamiliar part of the city for the first time whose memory has been obliterated by the sanitised, 'pseudo-public spaces of malls, plazas and theme park urbanism' (Pinder 2005, 398). These spaces artificially create the experience of an open public space which are in reality highly under surveillance and restrictive spaces accessible to selected citizens who can afford it. In contrast to that Chitpur Road embodies a form of unmediated urbanity which constitutes the very fabric of sensory urbanism. Even without having an explicit political intention or activist strategy, we made some people uncomfortable while navigating through this city fabric where nothing is hidden under sterilised city design. Labour - prostitutes – temples – vendors – lorries – craftspeople – traders - heritage houses – ruins – bazaars – cars – rickshaws, everything that creates Chitpur and its popular aesthetics was open for them to experience. Perhaps Chitpur's chaotic rhythm of life made them lost, art installations in unexpected spaces shocked them or the smell of fruit in a market disgusted them or they felt 'out of place'. Maybe we had indeed created something which made people think about the 'comfortised city' and its 'purified' public space that they are used to seeing (Pinder 2005, 398).

In their imagination of heritage, Chitpur itself can appear to be out of place, distant and strange from popular heritage aesthetics. People who complained, made me wonder if maybe we were able to disturb the nurtured nostalgia of the old city, its heritage and its golden past? Nostalgia often implies an 'imagined and unattainable past' (Blunt 2003,

720) and a yearning to go back to a temporal point that never really existed.[164] By a selective reading of the past, nostalgia produces a version of the past to suit the imagination of the present (Bonnett 2015). Following that essentialised reading, Chitpur's popular heritage embodies the progressive modernity of the nineteenth century Bengal renaissance and the colonial elites who were associated with that movement. Consequently, informed by this sense of nostalgia, rather than lived experience of the past, the imagination of the pristine past underpins the Idea of Chitpur's heritage. The present materialisation and aesthetic physicality of heritage landscapes also play along with this idea of the past. Heritage landscapes are often designed to purge human interventions. To experience the past, a landscape is curated, cordoned off and admired from a distance that is frozen in imagined past evocations. The art trail is the start of imagining a heritage landscape with its perpetual noise, teeming daily activity, aromatic-pungent smells of bazaars and jostling crowds in the street. Through the act of walking in Chitpur, the past, mediated by the present, revealed itself in its entirety. People who live with the past or by reinventing the past or in contradiction with the past attained 'dignity and intellectual relevance' (Nandy 2011, 449) when they are imagined as part of a living heritage landscape. The discomfort of few might also come from the fact that art has democratised heritage by ascribing value to a peripheral space. On the other hand, this immersive walk made some people listen to the city closely and embrace its life through the art trail. For them rather than being lost, the contemplation of an evocative city-life emerged from the walk. Thus, the walk remained open to multiple readings and interpretations but overall, it showed how Chitpur's withering practices, mundane spaces and humming life can be imagined as heritage.

7.3.2. Creating cultural value through children's participation

From the walking art trail of 2019, I will go back in time to discuss a 2013-14 project by Hamdasti's Chitpur Local initiative, to elucidate how the artists set in motion a sense of cultural value towards Chitpur's craft and created awareness of living heritage among

[164] Though Blunt, 2003 proposes the concept of 'productive nostalgia' which has a practical bearing in the past.

students as part of their artistic practice.[165] The previous case highlights while unsettling the idea of manicured heritage landscape to a wider audience who came from other parts of Kolkata, some of the visitors felt lost and discomfort. This case study showcases a contrasting picture of overwhelming participation and spontaneous engagement. It had a deeper impact in co-creating a value for existing crafts by engaging with local school children.[166] By presenting this different case study, I observe that while some elites are entitled to experience socially engaged art in Chitpur yet feel out of place, the artists did influence some impressionable minds. The children embraced the idea of living heritage yet finally denied such cultural capital when the school did not continue the collaboration.[167]

I am told that they chose Oriental Seminary School in the neighbourhood of Garanhata which was established in 1829.[168] The school has a rich cultural legacy and educated prominent figures in the past, including Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore for a brief time and the first president of National Congress W. C. Bonnerjee. At present, it caters to mostly underprivileged children from the local neighbourhood. A teacher at the school headed the collaboration on the school's behalf, Mr K P Dasgupta told me,

> 'উদ্দেশ্য ছিল ছেলেমেয়েদের কে চিতপুরের tradition গুলো সম্পর্কে স্টুডেন্ট দের aware করা। এবং এই গুলো যাতে এই tradition গুলো যাতে থাকে সেগুলো যদি ছিতপুরের এলাকা র local ছেলেমেয়েদের যদি aware করানো যায়ে, ওরা ব্যাপারগুলো জানলো, ছিতপুরের tradition গুলো, plus ওরা নিজেদের profession এর ক্ষেত্রে যদি কেউ interest পায়, তাহলে পড়ে এই tradition গুলো থাকবে বেঁচে। এটাই ছিল ওদের purpose ··· ওরা জানত যে এই তো এই কাজ টা করি। সেটা সম্পর্কে এত লম্বা একটা tradition জরিয়ে আছে, সেই sense গুলো খুব একটা ওদের ছিল না। '

[165] By cultural value I mean contribution of the crafts of Chitpur beyond its normative economic sense. Value has the ability to bring change. What I am interested in understanding is how individual and society might experience and remember the value of these activities in the domain of culture (Crossick and Kaszynska 2014).

[166] In the second edition, they gave a fellowship to 'Think Arts', who work with children specifically and collaborated with a girls' school from the area Sree Bidya Niketan. Like Oriental seminary, students here come from disadvantaged backgrounds. After some interventions to generate intergenerational dialogue around the neighbourhood and memory, they were taken for walks around the neighbourhood and museum visit in Jorasanko, (the family home of Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore located in Chitpur), a place they have never stepped inside before. The girls made a heritage trail, 'Our (Un) familiar Streets' highlighting a blend of historic landmarks and livelihoods in the area which they didn't know before.

[167] The project could not continue due to internal politics of the school because some teachers opposed it.

[168] The present school building, now a heritage structure, was constructed in 1914 by the famous real estate firm Martin Burn Ltd. but the institution itself is going to be two hundred years old in 2029.

> The aim was to make the students aware of the traditions of Chitpur. If they get to know the rich legacy, some of them might take these up as a profession and these will survive. This was the purpose…The students knew about these kinds of work, but they did not have much sense about the long tradition associated with them. (K P Dasgupta, school teacher interview, 18 February 2019)

The most important objective of this collaboration was to make the students aware of the historicity of the craft traditions, which they see as everyday livelihood practices around them in the neighbourhood. Many of their parents and relatives are involved in these activities but they have not realised the value of these professions beyond their economic viability. The project offered a meaning of value that is not limited to economic worth (Hutter and Throsby 2011). The teacher emphasises the 'tradition' associated with these crafts and rather than locating 'tradition' in the domain of custom or belief of the past. The intention was to recognize the inherited legacy associated with these crafts and how they can be taken forward by the students. The teacher laments how the knowledge of history is limited to school textbooks and there is an absence of any formal school curriculum which focuses on neighbourhood history. Therefore, most of the teachers have a limited understanding of the wider purview of history which can inspire the students to connect with the past and value the present.

> 'এখন মুশকিল টা হচ্ছে যেটা সেটা হচ্ছে, teacher রা আমাদের এসব স্কুল গুলোর teacher দের কাছে history মানে হচ্ছে একটা text বই। printed matter. র একটা syllabus, এই। history যে living হয়ে পারে এই idea টা নেই।'

> History is a textbook for teachers in our school. It is a printed matter. That history can be living, they don't have this idea (K P Dasgupta, school teacher interview, 18 February 2019).[169]

The artists assumed the role of an educator in the Chitpur local project but not in a conventional way. Nayanjyoti, an artist and trustee member of Hamdasti, who has been engaged with the Chitpur Local project for a long time, told me how they generated interest in some old craft practices such as woodcutting and printmaking by introducing the students to the history of the neighbourhood.

[169] I am using the term 'living heritage' here though the teacher used the term living history. I am cautious about the difference between history and heritage and do not wish to conflate their meaning (Lowenthal 1998). Here, the use of the term 'living history' by the teacher denotes not an authentic re-enactment of history in the present time or a 'simulation of life' (Handler and Saxton 1988, 242) but a lifeworld that might have a resemblance with the past yet which has gone through considerable changes in the present.

'স্কুল এর বাচ্চদের কে সুচেতা mainly history টা বলত...একটা তো overall চিৎপুর এর history আমরা জানি। সেটা একটা black town ছিল। কি ধরণের activities হত। কারা থাকত? বাবু culture এসব। এবং তার সঙ্গে স্বগেই যখন ই চিৎপুর এর কথা বলি, তার সঙ্গে সঙ্গেই বটতলা র কথা চলে আসে। এবং printing টা চিৎপুর এর সঙ্গে কিন্তু প্রথম থেকেই ওতপ্রোত ভাবে জরিত। You can't deny that. সেইখান থেকে তারপরে আমরা printing কি সেটা বাচ্চাদের শেখাতে চাইছিলাম। আমরা ওদের দিয়ে প্রথমে woodcutting এর একটা workshop করেছিলাম।... তারপরে আমরা আস্তে আস্তে ওদের কে বাইরে বেরিয়ে দেখছি যে এখানে এতরকম printing এর দোকান রয়েছে, lithography রয়েছে।... আমি বাচ্চাদের নিয়ে বিভিন্ন activities দেখাতে চেষ্টা করতাম। যে আগে এরকম ভাবে ছাপান হত।'

Mainly Sucheta used to tell the history…of Chitpur which we know. Such as, it was the 'black town'. Then what kind of activities used to take place and who used to live here. Babu culture was an integral part of it. Moreover, as soon as we talk about Chitpur, the print culture of Battala becomes an inevitable topic. You can't deny it. Then we tried to teach the students what is printing. We organised a woodcutting workshop for them. Took them in the neighbourhood to show them various techniques of printing such as lithography…and activities in the neighbourhood…how printing used to take place in old days. (Nayanjyoti, artist interview, 18 February 2019)

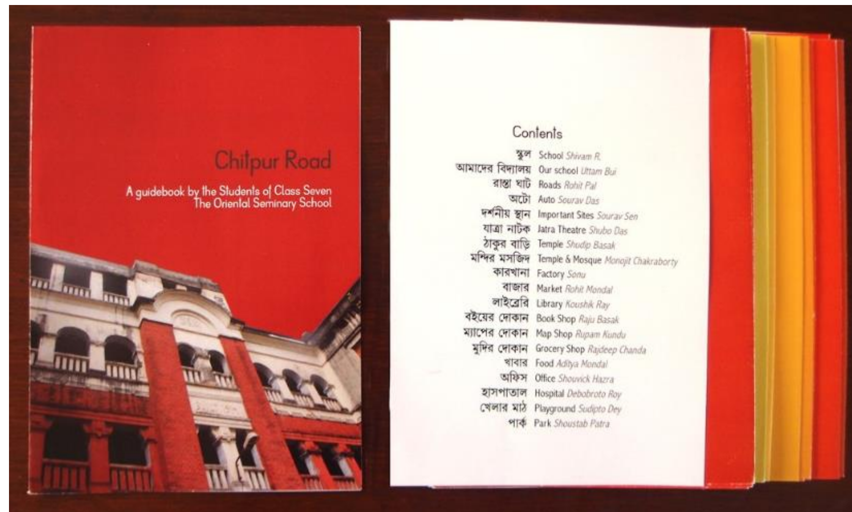

Figure 7.7: Guide book by school children (source: Hamdasti)

By narrating the popular history of Chitpur Road, the artist collective contextualised the present crafts within a long historical lineage. Then the children were introduced to some applied skills such as printing and woodcutting which are present in the neighbourhood. As noted in Chapter 4 (Section 4.3.1.) Battala print culture is a landmark in Chitpur's subaltern cultural production, but it is hardly discussed in the public domain.

Printing shops are still part of the landscape in this section of Chitpur Road. The artists invited the students to understand printing not only as an art form but also the significance of it particularly in the context of this neighbourhood.

They were asked to bring pictures and postcards from home to understand the nature of printing. They created a pop-up museum with objects from their own houses and borrowed some items from the school itself, K.P. Dasgupta told me. By narrating the story of the objects, they were able to express their attachment with the old things. Collecting household objects from their home and school and displaying them in the pop-up museum, can be seen as ascribing value and meaning to their seemingly mundane family heirloom as well as family history. Around 90 students participated in a street play that took the audience around the neighbourhood. Through this act, they reconnected with an old performance tradition of the area known as *jatra* or folk theatre and communicated its value out to a wider audience.[170]

In my observation, the artists did not want to assume the role of a teacher or instructor. They created an atmosphere where the children learnt from their own surroundings. They went to the neighbourhood, visited the shops, collected stories from residents, bought old objects from home and reconnected with their own locality with a new perspective and noticed things that are generally taken for granted. The interaction with the children initially resulted in an alphabet book, a game with a set of cards and a guidebook for the locality (figure 7.7) each showcasing some narrative of the community or the locality. For the alphabet book, the artists taught them how to do woodcuts and they collected stories or visuals which will correspond with the letters. Instead of wood,

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[170] This project had a long-lasting effect on the school. After the first Chitpur Local project, Mr K P Dasgupta from Oriental Seminary took an initiative to create a school archive. The inspired him to retrieve and document the school history. In 2015 a school archive was inaugurated which documents old records, books and old objects stored in the state of neglect in obscure corners of the school. His team salvaged and unearthed documents and records as much as possible from the school library collection about the school and the neighbourhood. Though Mr Dasgupta has retired the archive is still functional. With the help of INTACH, he opened a heritage club in the school and organised museum day. Following Chitpur Local's precedence in creating a pop-up museum, the students brought everyday things from home which has a story associated with it. The exhibition titled 'our old little things' showcased lantern, old spectacle, binoculars, gramophone record, grandma's jewellery box, old telephone, and *itar* sprinkler from their family collection. During this particular event, the school archive also displayed some of its collection such as a globe written in Bengali and some first edition library books. This is a form of participation that the artists hoped for where the community partners would create something on their own without the artist's involvement. This is undoubtedly a remarkable achievement but the enthusiasm failed to transmit to other teachers of the same school or even the next school Chitpur Local has worked with.

they used a lino floor mat, Nayanjyoti told me. His method is similar to the learning by doing approach or learning through small stories (Lorimer 2003). A set of card games were developed by him where the content was created by the children and the idea and technique of card making using an old printing technique in a local printing shop was created by Nayanjyoti.

I can see an attempt to co-create knowledge in this endeavour. The artists embraced an interactive and lively way of communicating the history of the neighbourhood through everyday objects, stories, performances, and games which was a different kind of learning exposure for the students as well as audiences who came to visit the Chitpur Local festival. Children's knowledge and experience around their own neighbourhood were validated through the process of the creative making of the alphabet book and guidebook. The artist taught them the skill of woodcut as an art-making process, but the contents sourced from the neighbourhood, or the households indicate that the meaning-making process was co-constitutive (Pringle 2002). The artists, in this case, did not engage in a didactic practice and present interpretations, similar to the art trail. The students articulated their own ideas through writing and drawing and drawn on from personal stories and experiences. The walks in the neighbourhood, telling stories of the objects were part of experiential learning rather than artists being the source of objective knowledge of their neighbourhood. In this Chitpur Local project, therefore, through a creative learning process, the cultural value of the crafts was realised. The concept of living heritage has become crystalised due to the interaction between the cultural properties of the neighbourhood and local children facilitated by the artists.

The contrast between this initiative and the art trail's intervention in Chitpur is, here the local children were invested in the lived realities of the place and passionate about gaining a certain cultural capital from it, to borrow from Bourdieu (1986), which is otherwise unattainable for them. The privileged visitors on the other hand already hold a certain cultural capital and while confronted by the expression of Chitpur's living heritage, it seemed to not align with their desired sense of synthetic heritage or what they would wish to experience as art or heritage of the city.

7.4. Examining art's radical potential

This section first takes up the issue of the transgressive nature of art where Chitpur's crafts and spatial aspects became an alternative site for art. Then it problematises this proposition and asks what gets curated, displayed, and exposed as spectacle. Finally, the third section illustrates the uneven nature of collaboration with the example of an installation piece that questions the radical and emancipatory aspect of that project.

7.4.1. Street performativity: bringing art to people

> Today was our second walk-in Chitpur with members from Kolkata Festival and Chitpur Craft Collective to finalise the points where the installations will take place. Binood *da*, a bamboo craftsman from the Dompara area, was accompanying us. He will be making an entrance gate with his bamboo work which indicates the point of entry into the locality for visitors. He suggested that we should change the starting point. Our art trail will take place a few days before Saraswati Puja. This area will be very busy with their work because it is the hub of bamboo craftsmen who deliver bamboo sculptures for decorative purposes to various puja organisers and work on the very street which we have selected. Furthermore, visitors might get confused with the festivity and would not understand where the art trail starts. I thought this might be a concern but an artist from the group said, 'Let them experience the locality as it is. It can be a good setup for our trail. (Field note, 16 January 2019)

I was not certain how the artists envisaged this street art trail when they told Binod da, let Saraswati *pujo* and its surrounding activity be part of the 'experience'. I was about to find out how through site-specific art practice, the artists respond to the evocations of the street.

The art trail was conceptualised as part of The Kolkata Festival's (2018) community art projects. We took the members of the Kolkata festival team around Chitpur to 'show' them the potential of the area from January. The team of Chitpur Craft Collective started to grow from this time as these members were immediately drawn towards the artistic potential of the area and joined us. Those who were familiar with Chitpur would conduct repeated walks with the new members to make them familiarise themselves with the neighbourhood as well as for planning and curating the art trail. During such walks, the team would identify and select common features of the landscape of Chitpur; nondescript walls, iron gates, wooden door frames, *rowaks* of houses, back alleys,

electric poles, shops and their signage, craft workshops, heritage houses. As a slightly lost researcher amidst artists and designers, I would accompany them every time and wondered what exactly they would do here. Soon I realised there will be a combination of site-specific art installations, demonstrations, workshops, and exhibitions but the artists will not be involved in all these engagements.

Figure 7.8: Studio on the street: observing a live demonstration (source: author)

The first half of the walk was curated around installations which was visually and thematically conceptualised by contemporary artists. The local craftspeople helped in giving them form and shape rather than intellectually contributing to the art production. In the later part of the trail, where Chitpur Road hosts most of the craft workshops, there won't be any 'intervention' or 'situations' created by the artists. Borrowing MacCannell's notion, there was no 'staged authenticity' (MacCannell 1999). These studios will present the crafts as they are as if they were 'found' as art! Nothing was out of the ordinary as the 'display' blended into the landscape. Only some extra lights, installations and signage were setting the curated trail apart from the rest of the activities in the street. Here the craftspeople will work as usual, and this 'live demonstration' does not have to be curated. Some workshops were organised separately in a library where a craftsperson would come and teach the interested audience a specific aspect of their craft. Others were offered within the setting of the craftsperson's studio which is often the street

(figure 7.8). The main signage (figure 7.2) encouraged people to 'experience artworks and installations that highlight the beauty inherent in Chitpur's everyday hustle and bustle'.

Figure 7.9: An installation hanging above a street vendor: Armour of Weakness (source: Hamdasti)

Naturally, Chitpur emerged as one of the characters in the art trail along with installations and exhibitions. It was also the space of the performance where '*Chitpurer Chalchitro'* (Chitpur Chronicle) was unfolded. The artists used this site, a buzzing Road like Chitpur, as their canvas to tell the story of Chitpur's craft. As I mentioned above, the road's everyday life became an affective tool to tell the story of the community and space. The vernacular architecture of the space, popular art and objects from the artisanal production were moulded into the contemporary artist's aesthetic framework.

For example, a reputed scenographer and designer Swarup Dutta, who already used bamboo sculptures made by Binod *da* and iron utensils from Chitpur's shops for his artwork on body politics, gender identity and everyday objects wanted to bring his art to the public.[171] From the sterilised white gallery space, he wanted to bring his artwork amidst people who made those structures for him in the visceral world (figure 7.9). The bamboo craftsmen have no workshop of their own and literally sit and work on the street. So, the installation was on the walls around the area where they work. For the iron utensil sellers, the installation was inside each shop, amidst heaps of iron utensils. Nevertheless, the framed black and white photographs of models in stiletto with their

[171] To know more about his exhibition see https://www.indulgexpress.com/culture/art/2018/nov/04/scenographer-swarup-dutta-raises-questions-of-identity-at-new-solo-show-kaw-in-kolkata-10977.html (last accessed 20 November 2020).

faces covered by the iron utensils or trapped inside the bamboo cage starkly stood out from the battered walls of Chitpur road! It raised a lot of questions, debates and sometimes appreciation among ordinary people, passer-by, and homeowners in the Dompara area. It made Chitpur an alternative exhibition space and the props in those photographs became integrated with the street from where they emerged. Even after the three-day art trail, Swarup's installations were not taken down and eventually, it became part of the landscape.

Figure 7.10: Assemblage of art and everyday bamboo craft sculpture (source: author).

Multimedia and visual artist Manas Acharya's installation used most of the bamboo objects that the Craftspeople made and chose a space at a road junction right beside where the making was underway. Amidst structures of half-built *Saraswati puja* pandal (figure 7.10) (a marquee visible in the background of the picture) and ongoing bamboo work (a bamboo dome making underway in the picture), it was hard to distinguish art and everyday work/festivity separately. The space between the many workshops and exhibitions were blurred because both took place in the street. Some other installations also chose by lanes and back alleys. They used every aspect of the lane, the electric pole, shuttered windows, overhead wires, door frames, porches as part of their installation (figure 7.11). Therefore, Dompara's bamboo craftwork, which Binod da was worried about as an undesirable distraction, itself became part of the trail without 'curating' the environment.

Figure 7.11: Everyday urban furniture as art (source: Community Art Project)

I remember one particular incident in the sweet shop that made a Kolkata festival special *sandesh* for these three days with a specially made *sandesh* mould. This *sandesh* making workshop whose lineage in making *sandesh* goes back to the 1830s is situated inside a crumbling market called Notun Bazar. There was a strange sour smell around the shop, and I was worried about the source of it because it did not resemble the smell of c*haana* (cottage cheese) which is the main ingredient for *sandesh*. We wanted to pour bleaching powder to cover the smell. The elderly shop owner who is always ready for a lively chat took this opportunity to tell me this is the smell of ripe Indian jujube, a fruit I am familiar with but never noticed the smell! Therefore, we had no reason to hide the smell with

chemicals. We thought people should wander inside the bazaar and experience it like hundreds of residents and shopkeepers of the bazaar do. We could not 'curate' the smell of a bazaar.

Throughout the curation process, there was an attempt to transgress the boundaries between art, craft, and everyday spaces of Chitpur**.** Sunderburg (2000) points out that though site-specific art installation emerged from a Eurocentric modernist notion of liberal progressiveness, it also has radical potential. The potential lies in giving meaning and expression to everyday work, objects, spaces and smells through the work of art. It pushed the boundary of where to do art and how to do it. This type of artwork shows 'intense engagement with the outside world and everyday life' (Kwon 1997, 91) by including non-art spaces, such as tattered walls, bazaars, shutters, electric poles. In some cases, the artists also worked against the grain and worked towards de-aestheticization by exposing some of the craftworks, instead of covering them with other materials. A phenomenon called 'folly' emerged in Europe between 1720 and 1850 who were often 'defiantly and proudly antifunctional, existing cross-culturally beyond the well-charted euro-western tangents' (Sunderburg 2000, 8). In the 1960s artistic aesthetic discourse when the distinction between high and low art was continuously questioned, follies re-emerged as alternative spaces of art display. Through the art trail, Chitpur Road emerged as one such site where 'the line between art and life…(is) fluid, and perhaps indistinct as possible' (Allan Kaprow, 'The Event' as mentioned in Sunderburg 2000, 1). The lived space of craftwork, the smell of the bazaar and vernacular built environment of Chitpur were intertwined and entangled with the art trail showcasing spatial performativity.

The display of the objects and the live demonstrations were not staged inside a museum space, detached from their reality, therefore not completely decontextualized. They were not removed from the continuity of everyday life. There was no intention to showcase a craftsman locked in a timeless world. They were not voiceless and had the agency to interact and offer their story in the absence of a walk leader. The artists were radical not only in their approach of where and how to do art but also in their interest in the social question of why produce art in a peripheral landscape with disenfranchised people. In my interpretation, this engagement also offered an implicit critique of the elitist nature of heritage sites. The art trail of 2019 in particular avoided entering into

any 'heritage houses', meandered through ordinary public spaces such as pavements, lanes and by lanes and symbiotically worked with the cultural production of the 'other'. Thereby making the craftspeople's work a field of knowledge, a space for experiential exchanges, learning and a discursive site for art itself. I am suggesting, following Kwon (1997), that the meaning of the 'site' in this art trail expanded from Chitpur Road to its craftspeople and their process of making. Thereby the radical potential materialises by interweaving the content and the site of the art trail. The artists' provocation towards an unconventional art trail must be seen as a critique of modernist vanguardism in art. Nevertheless, the apparent lack of curation and intervention can be problematized which I will take up in the next section.

7.4.2. The spectacle of everyday

Figure 7.12: A gate welcoming visitors for Chitpur Local festival (source: Hamdasti)

The artist community had to walk between a thin line where at one point they wanted to engage the local people as collaborators in artistic production to bring about Chitpur Road's subaltern cultural value and significance. On the other hand, they wanted to reach out to a wider audience and showcase the road's hidden potential in the cultural heritage landscape of the city through new products (section 7.5) and walks. They made an effort to bring art from traditional 'exhibitionary complex' (T. Bennett 1988) like galleries and museums to the street and retain the collective's commitment towards a social cause. Nevertheless, they also could not resist but to tap into the diverse, chaotic, and exotic allure of the Road and create a festival around it. Drawing from anthropological literature on festivity and spectacle (Debord 1994), it can be suggested that the yearly festival was more geared towards representing Chitpur itself as a

spectacle and attracting visitors from outside rather than doing ‘art for art’s sake’ (Addo 2009; Gotham 2005). The artists needed to maintain the ‘uniqueness, authenticity, particularity and speciality’ of the place, in other words, the aura of the place, because these highly localised traits and its heterogeneous culture gave the Road its purchase (D. Harvey 2001, 401). Yet, only representing these spatio-cultural features was not enough to organise this festival. These local heterogeneities were commingled with cosmopolitan design aesthetics to create a festive ambience that will fetch internationally mobile art lovers.

There were discussions amongst artists about whether amplification of visual grandeur through large scale art installations can bring more focus to the area. There were tensions within the group around the focus of the festival; should the artists limit themselves in small scale local engagement or venture into large scale dazzling visual display. One of the artists explained this,

> ’যেটা আমার মনে হয়, festival এর থেকেও ভালো ছিল, সেটা হল, test করেছিলাম initially. তার কোনও planning ছিল না। আমি just এগুলো কে নিয়ে একটা রক এর মধ্যে গিয়ে বসেছিলাম। একটা megaphone কিনেছিলাম। সবাই কে ডাকছিলাম আমি র মানাস দা। সেটা কোনও pre-planned কিছু ছিল না। সেটাতে যে activities হয়েছিল, gathering হয়েছিল, সেটা খুব spontaneous এবং সেটা আমার মনে হয়ে, because এই কারনেই বলছি, সেটায় অনেক community involve হয়েছিল। কেননা, যখন ই ফেস্তিভাল হয়েছে তখন বাইরের কিছু লোক এসেছে definitely. ওখানকার লোকজন ও আসে। কিন্তু বাইরের visitor দেখে হট করে হএত অতটা involve হতে চায় না। কিন্তু initial যে prototype check হয়েছিল, সেটাতে কিন্তু as a community art project সেটা অনেক ভালো।
>
> I think the initial ‘test’ was much better than the festival. There was no planning. I just sat in a *rowak* (a platform outside the house) with these objects. I bought a megaphone. I and Prabhat da were calling the passer-by. It was not pre-planned. I remember the activities and gathering was very spontaneous. Many people from the community got involved. Whenever there is a festival there are definitely some people from outside. When the local people see a lot of visitors, they get a bit startled and do not want to get involved much. The initial prototype check was a better idea for a community art project. (Nayanjyoti, artist interview, 18 January 2009)

Nayanjyoti’s observation clearly states that whenever the Road was transformed into a festival space the chasm between the local community from the marginalised background and art-loving visitors from other parts of the city has been reinforced. The

local people distanced themselves on those occasions and it has paved the way for Chitpur to be commodified as a spectacle.

Like any spectacle, the artists paid attention to the visual aspect of the festivals with focus lights, signage with old-world motifs and art installations. The local councillor was repeatedly visited to ensure a garbage-free stretch of the Road during the festival. A dead rat created quite a stir one afternoon and the municipal cleaning contractor was immediately summoned to bestow Chitpur its festive look. Indeed, the crumbling look of the neighbourhood was an essential part of the Chitpur story but so was the garbage-free Road for visitors. The combination of these two produced an experience of the landscape which can be consumed by the visitors. The experience was not entirely unmediated. The road's everyday living spaces were curated to a certain extent and for three days they were made to perform in a way that the audience thought they were experiencing quintessential features of Chitpur. The artists did attempt to 'de-exoticise' the Road by offering minimum mediation, categorisation, and interpretation but there was a selection. I would point out that the very inclusion of these specific craft workshops, designing of a route and providing a map were part of a well thought out curation process and the people and their practices were indeed on 'display'.

Through the street festival, the 'local other', the craftsperson, their dark workshops, forgotten cultural institutions and Chitpur Road itself was exposed to be ogled by the visitors. The disparities along the lines of class, taste and status were reified. Craftspeople with whom I was working closely, such as Sunil Das and Mahadeb Raha suggested after the trail, we should have done an 'exhibition' in a park or a similar space. They liked the concept of a single space where the craft products and installations will be displayed and the visitors don't have to make an effort of walking in Chitpur. In other words, they wanted to attain a cultural capital whereby, *they* would not be displayed as working in their workshop in Chitpur. Rather they would arrive at a place of higher social status and cultural repute. So that the visitors see them within a context that is not culturally, economically, and spatially alien to the visitors. There was a sense of discomfort and an attempt to avoid being situated in Chitpur. In the artists' attempt to do art away from the gallery, and our attempt to celebrate the vernacular of Chitpur,

'we', the artists, and people like myself, did not realise some people might want to move away from this space.[172]

7.4.3. Questioning collaboration

This section explores what kind of collaborations individual artists forged with the craftspeople. This observation on collaboration and participation focuses on one particular installation object which was part of the *Chitpurer Chalchitra* Art Trail in 2019 and represented as 'Poetry of Daily Life' but made during the second edition of Chitpur Local (2016-2018). A solemn still object drew my attention; a hand-drawn rickshaw. I was confronted by this installation piece quite often during my visit to the artist open houses or 'labs'.[173] Before taking up this particular analysis, I want to acknowledge that the nature of collaboration depends on an individual artist's training and background. Though the artist collective is referred to here as a single entity, the artists worked independently rather than as a group. The context and the form of collaboration in each project were different. Most of them paid attention to the process of art-making and subscribed to the idea that 'individual artwork is no longer the privileged object of analysis but the relationship between the artist and the local community is the starting point' (Rasmussen 2017, 67).[174] Yet to evaluate the nature of collaboration with the craftspeople this particular installation stands out.

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[172] Works on cultural display of places, crafts and arts from colonial era to the present suggest that cultural fetishism and auto-exoticism constitute narratives of nationalism and heritage. Often they are even folded into the articulation of an indigenous modernity which is premised on the notion of difference from the European counterpart (Winter 2013a; Mathur 2007; McGowan 2009). In the above analysis, live display of the craftspeople's work also occupy that space of difference towards which the elite artist collective gets drawn to but nonetheless it is undeniable that the difference gets mobilised to create the affective heritage led art trail. Particularly important in this context is ethnographic exhibits of crafts and live artisanal display at colonial exhibitions (Hodeir 2002). While writing this analysis, the case of slum tourism in Global South also came to my mind. On 'tourist gaze at the poverty of the Others' see (Steinbrink 2012). Holst (2018) writes on how city walks in slums of Delhi creates affective economies of cultural encounter.

[173] I attended two 'labs' of second Chitpur Local, one in studio 21 when the projects were still being shaped and another in Max Mueller Bhavan at the end of the two-year process. In Max Mueller Bhavan some community collaborators (not the craftspeople) visited, some were present to explain their reflection on the project and some recorded their thoughts on their participation in the project which was played.

[174] In the second edition, six artists were given fellowship and they collaborated with school children, neighbourhood clubs and its members, photography studios, local women, residents of old houses, local printmakers, stamp and signage makers and a local police station. In some projects, the participatory aspect, as well as the progressive and transformative nature of the project, were clearly visible. They took up social issues such as gender and identity through matrimonial photography, courtyard spaces as a milieu of public-private interaction (refer the picture). Someone addressed the issue of community perception around the notion of heritage. School children did a social mapping of the locality by creating their own heritage trail.

Over two years (2016-2018) artist Suhasini Kejriwal who has art degrees from Parsons School of Design in New York and Goldsmiths College, London, did four interventions. This involved three objects from the neighbourhood, and she collaborated with a local stamp and signage maker Mr Bholanath Das. I picked up three brochures from Max Mueller Bhavan where her project, 'Everyday Extraordinary' was explained. I will do a content analysis of the brochure text and combine that with participant observation to engage with the question of participation in this project. A hand-drawn rickshaw, a large mirror, a stained antique mirror with a carved wooden stand and a cycle van; were the objects chosen by the artist. Each object had a line of poetry installed on it which was inspired by Suhasini's creative idea and her interpretation of the object's meaning. Mr Das was commissioned to produce the brass text of the poetry. The texts were then placed on the objects and the combined montage was taken back to the road. The artist then documented how the local people and the visitors reacted to those objects during the festival, and how they engaged with them.

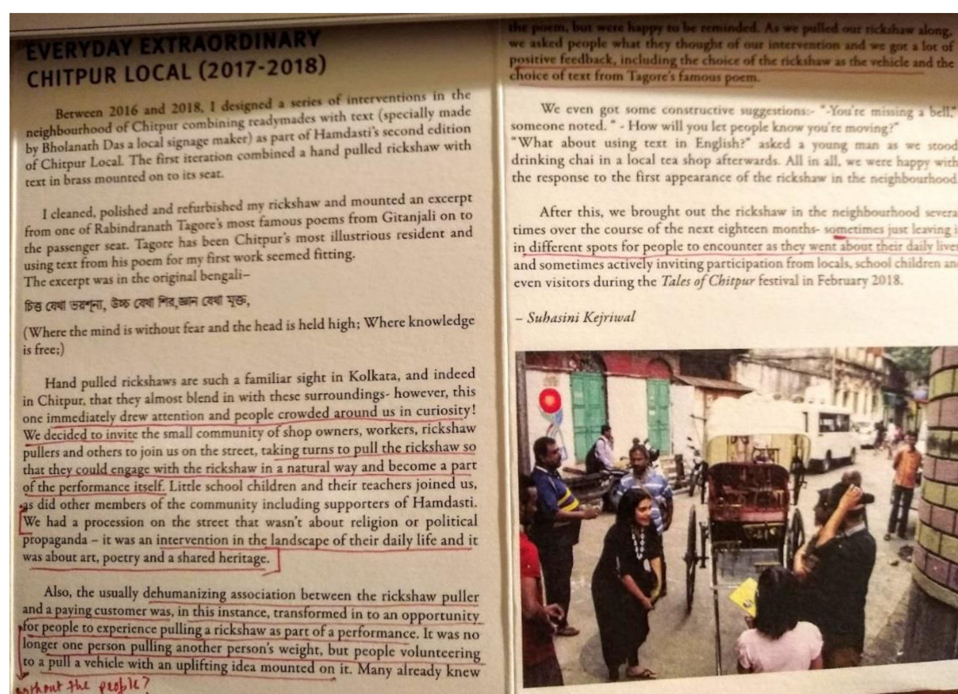
From the text, I derive two layers of participation in the project. First the commissioned signage maker was the key community collaborator of this project but apart from making the brass texts of the poetry chosen by the artist he had no other creative input in the project. This is a trend visible for some of the collaborations over the years. This nature of token collaboration reiterates that the artists are the source of ideas, and the craftsman executes the idea through his physical labour. Privileging of mind over body gets bolstered through this artistic practice.

Figure 7.13: The rickshaw in the gallery- ‘sacred space of installation art’ (Rasmussen 2017, 62) (source: author)

The second was the response of the people who became part of a performance when the objects were placed in various corners of the neighbourhood. The artist documented how people interacted with the object. She noticed, they looked at them, touched them, saw their own reflections, and giggled, adjusted their hair. They gave feedback, commented on it, or gave suggestions to improve. In some cases, they went on to do their daily work ignoring the presence of these objects. The objects were there to evoke reactions from the people when they encounter a ubiquitous yet uncanny object. So, this was another layer of participation- audience participation.

Figure 7.14: The rickshaw in the street (source: Hamdasti)

Now let's take the object and see what the artist tried to convey by combining poetry with this object; a hand-pulled rickshaw (figure 7.14). According to the brochure, the artist acknowledges the dehumanised relation that this public transport embodies but instead of directly engaging the rickshaw puller who draws such vehicle she staged a 'situation' and designed it as a performative piece. People were invited to pull the rickshaw 'as part of a performance' to 'experience' it, the artist writes (figure 7.15). The reading suggests it was a fun activity for visitors and schoolchildren. Instead of one, sometimes two people took turns to share the load of pulling a vehicle. By involving people to pull the rickshaw together the performance made it imperative that no one person pulls the weight of another person. The rickshaw, however, had no passengers. So, the experience remained artificial, theatrical, fanciful, and sanitised just like the object. The object was specially ordered for the project. It was cleaned, polished, washed and painted to rise in status as an aesthetic art sculpture. The poetry, 'where the mind is without fear and head is held high; where knowledge is free' (Tagore 1912, 18) hardly transpires the question of labour, alienation, dehumanisation, sweat and struggle of a migrant daily wage earner who carries a human being over his shoulder and runs in a busy street. However, it involved people from various strata of society in the act of pulling the object and putting them all in the same status quo for that particular moment.



EVERYDAY EXTRAORDINARY
CHITPUR LOCAL (2017-2018)

Between 2016 and 2018, I designed a series of interventions in the neighbourhood of Chitpur combining readymades with text (specially made by Bholanath Das a local signage maker) as part of Hamdasti's second edition of Chitpur Local. The first iteration combined a hand pulled rickshaw with text in brass mounted on to its seat.

I cleaned, polished and refurbished my rickshaw and mounted an excerpt from one of Rabindranath Tagore's most famous poems from Gitanjali on to the passenger seat. Tagore has been Chitpur's most illustrious resident and using text from his poem for my first work seemed fitting.
The excerpt was in the original bengali–

চিত্ত যেথা ভয়শূন্য, উচ্চ যেথা শির,জ্ঞান যেথা মুক্ত,

(Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high; Where knowledge is free;)

Hand pulled rickshaws are such a familiar sight in Kolkata, and indeed in Chitpur, that they almost blend in with these surroundings- however, this one immediately drew attention and people crowded around us in curiosity! We decided to invite the small community of shop owners, workers, rickshaw pullers and others to join us on the street, taking turns to pull the rickshaw so that they could engage with the rickshaw in a natural way and become a part of the performance itself. Little school children and their teachers joined us, as did other members of the community including supporters of Hamdasti. We had a procession on the street that wasn't about religion or political propaganda – it was an intervention in the landscape of their daily life and it was about art, poetry and a shared heritage.

Also, the usually dehumanizing association between the rickshaw puller and a paying customer was, in this instance, transformed in to an opportunity for people to experience pulling a rickshaw as part of a performance. It was no longer one person pulling another person's weight, but people volunteering to a pull a vehicle with an uplifting idea mounted on it. Many already knew the poem, but were happy to be reminded. As we pulled our rickshaw along, we asked people what they thought of our intervention and we got a lot of positive feedback, including the choice of the rickshaw as the vehicle and the choice of text from Tagore's famous poem.

without the people?

We even got some constructive suggestions:- "-You're missing a bell," someone noted. " - How will you let people know you're moving?"
"What about using text in English?" asked a young man as we stood drinking chai in a local tea shop afterwards. All in all, we were happy with the response to the first appearance of the rickshaw in the neighbourhood.

After this, we brought out the rickshaw in the neighbourhood several times over the course of the next eighteen months- sometimes just leaving it in different spots for people to encounter as they went about their daily lives, and sometimes actively inviting participation from locals, school children and even visitors during the *Tales of Chitpur* festival in February 2018.

– *Subasini Kejriwal*

Figure 7.15: The brochure (source : author)

In the artist's words, 'We had a procession on the street that wasn't about religion or political propaganda- it was an intervention in the landscape of their daily life and it was about art, poetry and a shared heritage' (figure 7.15). I ask can we replace labour and subjugation with poetry? Whose shared heritage is a rickshaw? Can we depoliticise symbols of oppression by terming them shared heritage? Is this the radical intervention a socially engaged art project symbolises? The feedback and suggestions of people who interacted with the object, therefore, became very superficial. According to the brochure, they asked about the absence of the bell of the rickshaw (which the rickshaw puller generally carries) or asked why the text is not in English. Can we consider them as initiating dialogue with the community or as provocations for social change? I wonder where the perspective from the collaborator during the object's haunting presence at 'The Stereoscopic Narrative' is promised to show two perspectives of the same project, one from the artist and another from the community. How was the role of the community collaborator, Mr Das, different from any other commercial activity of his where he contributes his physical labour and skill in the exchange of money? Does the community have any ownership over these objects? Can we say it is a product of collective authorship when the artist has the sole right to sell the art object which emerged from collaboration? How did the project help the artist elevate her career status? In 2020 these art sculptures by the artist were put up in a gallery in New Delhi for a solo show of the artist and a price of $7,500 - 10,000 was ascribed to it.[175] How does then the artist with training from international art schools, value the collaboration with a signage maker in Chitpur and what does her two-year-long engagement with Chitpur entail for the community? At this stage, we must acknowledge that not all socially engaged art radically alters relationships between two disparate groups and transforms power structures.

7.5. Craft commodification: branding Chitpur

Hamdasti's core members initiated a new project line from the existing visual culture and crafts of Chitpur. The introduction of the new product line can be read from two perspectives. First, I will look at this initiative as a way of adding symbolic value to the crafts rather than economic justice. The next section will show how the government

[175] https://www.artsy.net/show/nature-morte-everyday-extraordinary-suhasini-kejriwal (last accessed 8 October 2020).

emporium denied giving recognition and representation to these crafts. In the consequent section, the product line will be looked at from the perspective of branding Chitpur. I will present a critique of this attempt and see how creativity and entrepreneurship can be co-opted by capitalism where the craftspeople risk being victimised.

7.5.1. Reframing livelihood as craft: new product line

The motivation to start a new line of Chitpur inspired products, emerged from the first edition Chitpur Local festival whereby the core team of artists saw the potential to diversify and contemporise the existing products. This initiative intended to *give* the craftspeople the opportunity to use their skills to be more creative, though the creative ideas were instilled by the artists. It prompted two results. First, it recognised the everyday livelihoods as 'craft forms'. Hence, categorised and classified mundane activities as crafts and the practitioners as craft producers. Secondly, cosmopolitan aesthetics was added into Chitpur's popular culture. Thereby giving it a new identity and audience. A resident of one of the neighbourhoods along Chitpur Road and later a member of the Craft Collective expressed,

> 'It's that classic thing about something you know exists but then somebody from outside would come and ask you and suddenly takes a whole different thing. So ya I mean they were businesses for me…But to, obviously, they all require a skill set but to revisit it as a craft, I guess when you start talking about it like a craft rather than, you know it did get a bit elevated status, the shop that does stamps to a guy who carves or engraves that's the whole, to see it in a different light'. (Subhojit, a walking tour lead interview, 15 May 2019)

Subhojit, a reputed walk-lead of one of the walking tour companies who grew up in one of the neighbourhoods, never recognised the eclectic bunch of making activities that Chitpur Road offers as a 'craft'. They are work or livelihood or business or trade for him. The word craft has been hardly uttered by the people who are involved in these activities. The artist collective, composed of people who are mostly 'outsiders', identified these as crafts and 'elevated' their status according to him. What possibilities can be unfolded by this reframing? I will offer two interpretations. According to Sucheta, by giving a new name, the craft practitioners can reclaim a sense of pride in their own work. They have been excluded from a certain cultural capital which the contemporary artists have and 'an important part of the experience of exclusion is a weakened or non-

existent sense of identity and pride' (Griffiths 1999, 463). The semiotic shift undoubtedly added a discursive value to craftspeople's livelihood. Sucheta shared this view:

> 'Because all those craftspeople they really look at themselves not as an artist, not as craftspeople but you know as commercial producers. So, it's all reduced to '*stamp banacchi company r jnyo'* (I am making a stamp for the company), *halkhata banacchi* (making a receipt book), they are reduced to a most basic form of labour. So, we were thinking how to do that.' (Sucheta, artist interview, 20 December 2017)

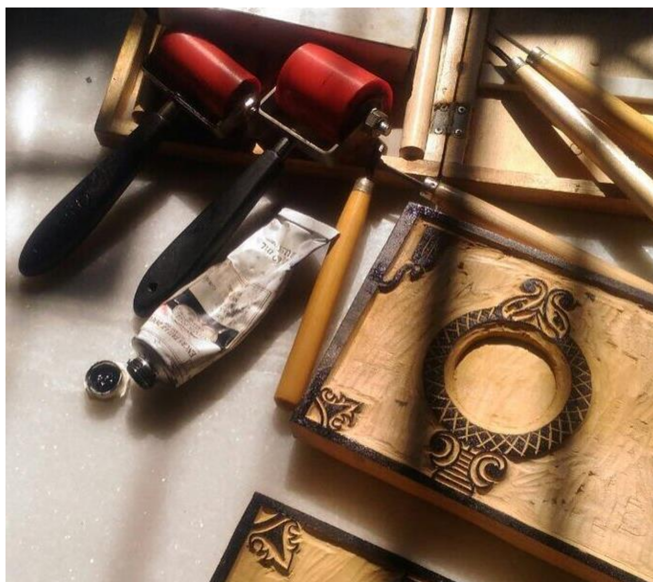


Figure 7.16: A wooden block designed as candle holder (source: Hamdasti)

The quote suggests, by categorising everyday livelihoods as crafts, the artists acted as a saviour. From victims of capitalism, who are reduced to the basic form of labour, the artist intervention would elevate them to the status of artists and craftspeople but will it bring any redistributive justice to their financial situation? Only fifteen percent of profit from these products went back to the craftsman who was making it, Sucheta told me. The profit margin was really small, and I wonder whether it helped towards the artist collective's sustenance rather than becoming a regular source of income for the craftspeople. It is only a symbolic intervention rather than an economic one in the hope that the reframing would make them visible, valued and give them self-esteem. Yet the question remains, is recognition and visibility to subaltern art form enough or a commitment to economic redistribution should be part of an artist collective's agenda?

Figure 7.17: Notebooks and handmade diary with *jatra* visual art (source: Hamdasti)

The collective started with seven products. Among them, four were inspired by the visual art on the book cover and *jatra* scripts which they found in Diamond Library itself (figure 7.17). A canvas bag, a set of matchboxes, a notebook and a set of postcards were developed from the cover art and titles of the *jatra* scripts. There is a handmade diary where the cover design was created from students' drawings and the handprint outer cover was created from stamps and screen-print. A magnet created from jewellery moulds and a wooden block with three candle holders can be used in many different ways (figure 7.16). These products were first piloted in CIMA (Centre for International Modern Art), Kolkata during their annual exhibition and later they found a place in one of the elite boutique cafes in South Kolkata, Sienna store and café which leads me to the second interpretation. This form of reframing is one step towards creating a brand for Chitpur's products, a step towards marketisation. The elevated status exposed the products from Chitpur to an elite clientele, who are often the ones who actively *make* heritage narratives. Sienna's shopfront sells exclusively artisanal products of West Bengal. Sienna's founder Sulagna later became part of the Chitpur Craft Collective. The products also caught the eyes of Biswa Bangla, the official arm of the Government of West Bengal which promotes Bengal's craft and craftsmanship. One can also read this as a way towards commodification and commercialisation of vernacular art forms and artists being the catalyst in making these objects part of the capitalist value chain where the craftspeople do not have an equal stake. I will discuss this reading in the final part of the chapter. However, let me first address why giving recognition to these cultural forms demands more attention.

7.5.2. Biswa Bangla and cultural injustice

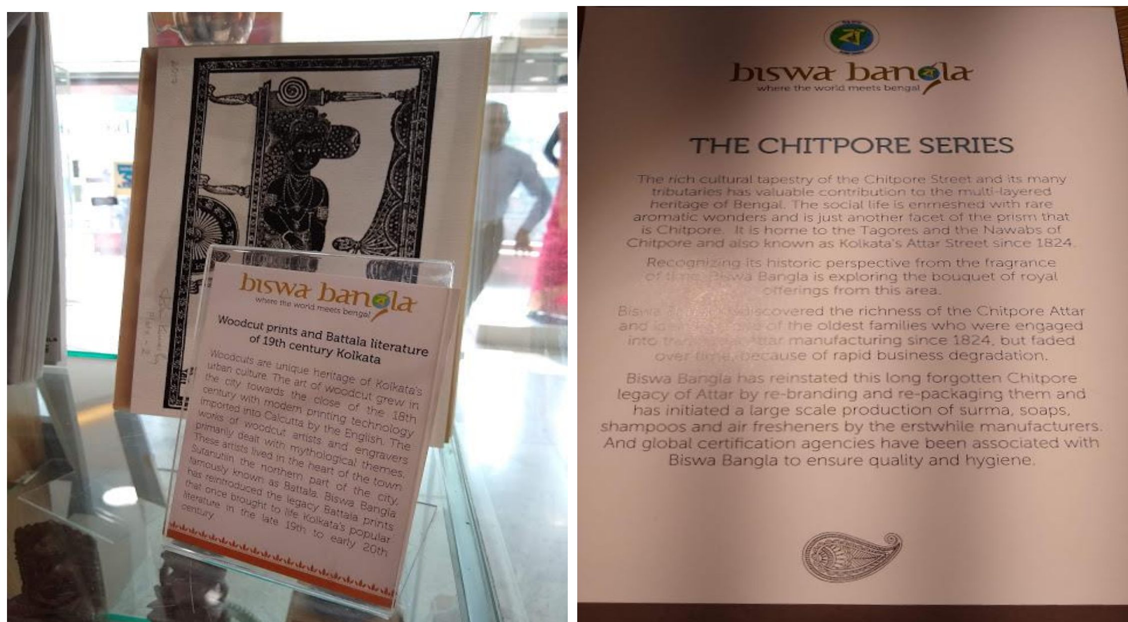


Figure 7.18: West Bengal Government's emporium Biswa Bangla's Battala print culture and 'The Chitpore Series' write up at the Delhi outlet (source: author)

The collective's endeavour to market these products in places like *Biswa Bangla* was seen as an initial success in terms of creating symbolic value and appreciation for Chitpur's craft, however, their origin from popular aesthetics could not mobilise a cultural capital to hold a space in the government showroom. Unlike Kumartuli, where the government indirectly supported the craft sector and an official heritage status was sought for a festival they are involved in through UNESCO (discussed in Chapter 6), the rest of the crafts in Chitpur has received a stern rejection, though the tourism department's support should be reminded here.

This government outlet refused to showcase them as 'Bengal's heritage' even after ordering a large number of products from Hamdasti's Chitpur Local series. *Jatra* art inspired products include tongue-in-cheek titles of *jatra* or folk theatre such as *Desh Bechbo Dalal Chai* (I want to sell my country I need a broker); *Kaalo Meyer Ranga Charan* (A Dark Girls Crimson Dancing Feet); *Haremer Kanna* (Cries from the Harem/Seraglio); *Bangali Aajo Kaande* (Bengalis are still Lamenting); *Sadhu Soetan* (Saint Evil) to name a few.[176] They are often visually and linguistically provocative and raunchy in nature,

[176] http://wotweb.com/wot-article/sienna-best-handcrafted-items/ (last accessed 10 June 2021). See this report as a reference to these folk theatre titles. These titles, along with the visual art of *Jatra* posters were used in matchboxes and handmade notebook covers.

hence were not considered 'heritage' enough to be promoted by a State emporium. The products in Biswa Bangla's 'Chitpore Series' are carefully chosen and curated to represent the 'Tagores and Nawabs'; two elite fractions from the Hindu and Muslim community who had a legacy associated with the road.[177] Also, it is noticeable the use of the spelling 'Chitpore' which is a colonial Anglicization of place name instead of 'Chitpur' which is a local one. Instead of decolonising the name, it indicates a subtle effort of reintroducing this name in the heritage imaginary of the Road(see Uluocha 2015 for decolonising place names in post-colonial Africa). Chitpur's Muslim heritage has been 're-branded and repacked' in the form of *Itar* (a fragrance made popular by the Muslim gentry and Hindu *Babu* of the 19th century) and used as a token to represent the 'multi-layered heritage of Bengal' (figure 7.18). The Chitpur series of Biswa Bangla went further and invented soaps and shampoos under this banner; products that have no cultural association with the place. It shows a form of cultural appropriation which threatens the cultural identity of Chitpur as a place and its craft communities (Bruce and Rao 1997).

Another art form with a close association with Chitpur Road neighbourhoods, the woodcut prints and associated Battala literature have found their way in their product catalogue. Biswa Bangla claims to 'reintroduce' this 'unique heritage of Kolkata's urban culture' without any mention of the subversive nature of this literary genre and its association with Chitpur Road neighbourhoods. In this case, it uses *Sutanuti* (the name of the village which later comprised the northern part of the city) as the original place associated with this printing and engraving culture omitting Chitpur. The name Sutanuti is usually associated with the North Kolkata aristocracy and the use of this name gives these products cultural legitimacy. The language of the display establishes woodcut printing's focus on mythological themes forgoing the social issues it used to comment on. A selective interpretation of the Battala print culture should be noted here. By denying these new products a place in the catalogue, *Biswa Bangla* shows a deliberate attempt to represent Bengal's as well as Kolkata's elite urban culture as heritage. The erasure of folk theatre art form *(jatra)* and deliberate expunction of people who make

[177] These phases are used by Biswa Bangla's 'The Chitpore Series' content as displayed in their Delhi emporium (Figure 7.18).

them from the public view is what Fraser (1995) has termed as ‘cultural (or symbolic) injustice’. She explains they are:

> ‘rooted in social patterns of (authoritative) representation, interpretation and communication’ which leads to ‘non-recognition (being rendered invisible via the authoritative representational, communicative, and interpretative practice of one’s own culture) and disrespect (being routinely maligned or disparaged in stereotypic public cultural representations and/or in everyday life interactions)’ (Fraser 1995, 71).

Biswa Bangla’s treatment towards Chitpur Local’s product showed how deeply ingrained the issues of exclusion, marginalisation and selective representation are in the context of Chitpur’s subaltern art production. This incident emphasised why reframing of the livelihoods as crafts and through the new product line, the artists wanted to validate the craftspeople’s history as cultural practitioners against hegemonic narratives of the state emporium.

7.5.3. Lure of the market

The final section attempts to critically look at the new product line initiative from the perspective of the marketisation of cultural production. I will analyse this issue by looking at the craftspeople’s reaction to this initiative first. The question is whether the craftspeople perceived this as an opportunity for artisanal development or as an imposition. I observe that fixing the identity of a diverse range of practices as craft, a fusion of cosmopolitan aesthetics in the products and design intervention by the contemporary artists received a hesitant response from the community. I identify that the community had little stake or interest in the venture to contemporise or diversify the existing skills. Indeed, when the new line of products was developed, the artists didn’t want to monopolise the initiative. They had novel intentions and only developed products with people they have built a relationship with before, but that cannot deny the fact that the initiative was premised on uneven power relations. Sucheta, one of the founding members told me,

> ‘We thought that first, we will just pilot it then we will hand it over to someone in the community. We thought they could take it forward like that. They asked us to take it forward…’. (Sucheta, artist interview, 20 December 2017)

Ideally, they thought that the power of decision making as well as representing Chitpur will be carried forward by the craftspeople in due course. Though the initial authorship of the products rested with the artist group. Sucheta's approach was similar to socially engaged artistic practice where authorship will be relinquished slowly and eventually withdrawn. Instead, the local collaborators asked the artists to take responsibility.

To think about reasons, we need to question the very nature of the collaboration where the need to give recognition to Chitpur and subsequent projects emerged from the civil society's concern of 'revival', 'reimagination', and 'reactivation' of the space. The craftspeople didn't *ask* the artists to start a new product line from their craft. It was Chitpur Local's idea, initiative and in some way an imposition which the craftspeople were not ready to carry forward. Consequently, the craft community didn't want to actively engage in diversifying their product range. The collaboration was already uneven, the politics were fraught, the faultline as wide as has been observed in many other cases. The ideas and designs came from the artists and the craftsman's contribution to the collaboration was only in the form of craft labour and skill. Thus, the boundary between contemporary artists and vernacular craftspeople were never unsettled, instead, it was reinforced through this venture.

When I visited the shops after the Chitpur Art Trail in 2019, I observed closely how the community reacted to the proposal of new products. I am going to narrate two incidents here. In the first case, there are some products already in the market and in the next cases there are possibilities to start a new product line. My field note documents an afterthought of one particular conversation with the owners of Diamond library whose book covers inspired most of the existing line of products of Chitpur Local.

> He was really stubborn that he won't be able to produce any new products from his collection of books. He talked about sales taxes and he doesn't know whether anyone would buy those. He says if someone takes responsibility, he can think of selling them here but he can't go into a different business. He is a bookseller and he is not sure of any other business. He observed that during these festivals only non-Bengalis or art lovers buy his books. That too not for reading purposes but mostly for the cover art. He knew that the diaries with the *jatra* book cover are sold pretty well but he isn't sure about a long-term initiative on his part. (Field note, 20 February 2019)

From this field note, two issues stand apart. Firstly, the artists' attempt to make the bookseller more entrepreneurial, innovative, and creative had no appeal to him. He has been able to resist the capitalist co-option of creativity which urges people to be more efficient and productive by yielding value from creativity (Mould 2018). Even when his business of selling *jatra* script books is dwindling he is not willing to give in to the bandwagon of 'diversifying' his business. He is holding onto his business of selling *jatra* scripts, recipe books, mythologies, astrology, almanac etc everything that this 143-year-old bookstore stands for. Once a thriving area of vernacular book publication, now it is only Diamond library that is carrying forward the legacy of Battala print culture. By resisting to be appropriated by the emerging artist and designer-led contemporising craft initiative, he is reaffirming what Diamond library stands for, which is an ode to lost time. He even requested the artists to keep the profit that was generated from the first round of handmade diary covers, matchboxes, tote bags, postcards using illustrations and tongue-in-cheek titles from his books. Despite earning meagrely, he is refusing to tap into contemporary high-end urban market potential thereby asserting that profit is not his sole motivation for running this book shop (see D. C. Harvey and Riley 2005, 24 for similar sentiments shared by farmers).[178] As a result, when the artists brought the subaltern cultural art form into the high-end boutique café or art gallery, this displacement produced value which the boutique café appropriated. As Pasquinelli has pointed out, often there is a 'profound asymmetry between the cultural domain and the material economy: value is accumulated on the immaterial level but the profits are made on the material one' (Pasquinelli 2008, 150–51). The café, even though a promoter of contemporary handcrafted items, expropriates economic value from the symbolic value of a nineteenth-century institution. Therefore, rather than reconciling the gap between two social worlds, one with privilege and another with subalternity, it was more pronounced and enhanced.

Secondly, the civil society intervention created the category of 'Chitpur crafts' thus collapsing various cultural forms and economic practices that exist in the road. In this

[178] Resistance towards designer led craft revival has been noticed among artisans who make metal mirrors (*kannadi)* in Aranmula Kerala. The article alludes towards a tension between innovative design intervention and traditional artisanal values. However, questions can be raised whether, apart from the one maverick artisan, other craftspeople were involved in the conversation. See the report in https://www.thehindu.com/entertainment/art/aranmula-mirrors-are-getting-a-makeover-courtesy-of-a-leading-designer/article33471117.ece?homepage=true (last accessed on 7th August 2021).

case, the elderly bookseller reaffirms his identity as a bookseller and publisher who is more interested in the content of the book rather than the aesthetic potential and visual appeal of its cover art.

Figure 7.19: A designer walk at Chitpur (source: Chitpur Craft trail's Instagram)

In the next examples, the craft collective wanted to develop new products with the wooden mould makers and letterpress printers and offered some suggestions for new products. Sunil Das, the *sandesh* mould maker and a printmaker from Annapurna Studio, a long-time collaborator of the artists, appreciated the potential design ideas. For the printing studio, Sucheta showed them some of the samples from one of the printing studios in New York where customised letterpress postcards, visiting cards, wedding cards are now a trend. Yet the mould maker and the printmaker said something similar that they understand these designer 'stuffs' or merchandise have a mark in the art world but not in the commercial world where their business is based.[179]

[179] Interview with Sunil Das and conversations with printing studio owner on 20 February 2019.

In both cases, the craftsman showed a certain amount of disdain towards the art or designer 'stuff'. Similar to *Patchitra* (Scroll painters) artists of Bengal, who address their new product range as 'items' after they diversified and moved away from their traditional material to various other media (Shrutakirti Dutta 2020). *Patchitra*, oral storytelling and visual art-form has seen rapid designer-led craft revival and branding of their art form after the intervention of an NGO which helped to reach a wider network of buyers. In Chitpur's case, the tension between the artists' interest in creating a product line where the craftspeople will take ownership and the latter group's indifference to that is palpable. There is also a commitment towards their primary source of livelihood. It is possible, they don't want to lose their existing safety net in the lure of a high-end market that can turn out to be flimsy, unstable, and undependable in the long run or strip them of their freedom and individuality. Maybe the craftspeople are not willing to take the risk because even though the cultural consumption of these products are often in high-end boutique and lifestyle stores, the cultural producers do not get their dues and remain in precarious condition. They are aware that collaborations often remain fragmented and they are relegated to behave as commissioned agents rather than an equal partner in these projects.

7.5.3.1. Designer walks in Chitpur

ডিজাইনার কক্ষপথে চিৎপুরের শিল্প

সাবেক কলকাতার নানা ধরনের ক্রাফ্ট দেখে শহরের ডিজাইনাররা অনুপ্রাণিত হবেন। তার জন্য ব্যবস্থা এক হেরিটেজ ওয়াক-এর। আজই। লিখছেন দেবলীনা ঘোষ

সাবেক কলকাতা। চিৎপুরের অলিগলি। আর সেই অলিগলি ধরেই এগিয়ে চলা। উদ্দেশ্য হেঁটে এমন কিছু ক্রাফ্ট দেখা যা ঘরের পাশে থাকলেও কখনও ভালো করে দেখাই হয়নি। বা জানা নেই এখানেই সে সব জিনিস পাওয়া যায় কি না। এই সব ক্রাফ্টকেই এক ছাতার তলায় এনেছে 'দ্য চিৎপুর ক্রাফ্ট কালেকটিভ'। না কোনও সংস্থা নয়। কিছু সমমনস্ক মানুষ এই নামেই চিৎপুরের নানা ক্রাফ্ট নিয়ে কাজ করছেন বা করতে চলেছেন। এর মধ্যে রয়েছেন, ডিজাইনার, জুয়েলারি ডিজাইনার, টয় ডিজাইনার, ফোটোগ্রাফার, আরও নানা পেশার মানুষ। সবার উদ্দেশ্য একটাই, এখানকার শিল্পকে নিজেদের কাজে ব্যবহার করা। বা এখানকার শিল্পীদের কাজে লাগানো। এই 'ওয়াক' বা হাঁটার উদ্যোক্তা সিনেমাটোগ্রাফার স্বরূপ দত্ত আর সুমনা চক্রবর্তী। সুমনার স্বেচ্ছাসেবী সংস্থা অনেকদিন ধরেই এই শিল্পীদের নিয়ে কাজ করছে। তিনি শহরের নামকরা ডিজাইনারদের সঙ্গে সেই শিল্পীদের যোগাযোগ করাচ্ছেন এ বার। 'চিৎপুরের ক্রাফ্টগুলো যাতে সবাই নিজেদের কাজে ব্যবহার করতে পারেন, শিল্পীরাও যাতে আরও কাজ পান সেই চেষ্টাই করছি আমরা কয়েকজন। ভবিষ্যতে একসঙ্গে কাজ করতে চাই আমরা', বলছেন সুমনা।

হাঁটার শুরু জোড়াসাঁকো থেকে। প্রথমেই দেখতে পাবেন খোল, তবলা, ডুগি, ঢাক তৈরি হচ্ছে। এমন দোকান পাবেন যেখানে এখনও তবলার তামার খোল তৈরি হয়। যা কলকাতা শহরে আর কোথাও হয় না বলেই দাবি করলেন বিক্রয়কর্তা। তার পর গন্তব্য টিনের ওয়ার্কশপে। সেখানে দুধের ক্যান থেকে টিনের ট্রাঙ্ক—সব পাবেন। এখানে রয়েছে বিভিন্ন বিখ্যাত মিষ্টির দোকান। আর সেই সুবাদেই এখানে বিক্রি হয় নানা ধরনের দুধের পাত্র। তার পর লোহাপট্টি। বিশাল কড়াইয়ের পাশাপাশি অদ্ভুত ডিজাইনের হাতা, ঝাঁঝরি চোখে পড়বে। এর পর দেখতে পাবেন প্রতিমার চালচিত্র তৈরি হচ্ছে বাঁশ দিয়ে। কলকাতার নব্বই শতাংশ প্রতিমারই চালচিত্র এখানেই তৈরি হয়। কাঠের ব্লক তৈরির কারখানাও পাবেন এখানে। সোনার গয়নার ছাঁচ পেয়ে যাবেন গরানহাটায়। পুরোনো লিথোগ্রাফ প্রিন্টের দোকান, স্ট্যাম্প প্রিন্ট, ডায়মন্ড লাইব্রেরিতে পুরোনো বই—সব পাবেন এইটুকু জায়গার মধ্যেই। এক টুকরো পুরোনো কলকাতা আর কিছু চিরকালীন ক্রাফ্ট মন ভালো করার জন্য যথেষ্ট। রাজস্থান, মুম্বইয়ে তো হেরিটেজওয়াক করেনেই। নিজের শহরটাও একটু হেঁটে দেখুন না এ বার।

'চিৎপুর ক্রাফ্ট ওয়াক'-এ স্বরূপ, সুমনা, পারমিতা, সায়ন্তন ও অন্যান্যরা

কে কী বললেন

'ল্যাম্পশেড বানাতে চাই'

□ ডিজাইনার পারমিতা বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায় বলছেন, 'আমি পোশাক ছাড়া অন্য কিছু ডিজাইন করতেও সমান উৎসাহী। এখানে কঞ্চি দিয়ে যে কাজ দেখেছি তার ভিত্তিতে ল্যাম্পশেড বানাতে চাই। এ রকম আরও অনেক ক্রাফ্ট রয়েছে যা আমি আমার ডিজাইনে ব্যবহার করব।'

'শেরওয়ানির বোতাম বানাচ্ছি'

□ 'এখানে গয়নার ছাঁচ দেখে আমি মুগ্ধ। শেরওয়ানির বোতাম বানাতে চলেছি আমার ব্রাইডাল কালেকশনের জন্য। এখানে যে ট্রাঙ্কের দোকান আছে সেখান থেকে মিনিয়েচার ট্রাঙ্ক কিনে প্যাকেজিং-এর কাজে ব্যবহার করব', বলছেন ডিজাইনার সায়ন্তন সরকার।

'তামার কাজ গয়নায় ব্যবহার করব'

□ জুয়েলারি ডিজাইনার বসুন্ধরা মন্ত্রী বলছেন, 'এখানে ডুগি-তবলার দোকানে তামা দিয়ে বেস তৈরি করা হয়। এর পর গয়নায় তামার কাজ করাব। এখানে যে ডিজাইন দেখেছি তা সত্যিই অনবদ্য'।

'সন্দেশের কাঠের ছাঁচ দিয়ে দরজার হাতল বানাতে চাই'

□ ডিজাইনার পরমা ঘোষ জানাচ্ছেন, 'যাত্রার পোস্টার আমাকে সব সময় টানে। সেই নিয়ে কাজ করতে চাই। পুরোনো, এ ছাড়া সন্দেশের কাঠের ছাঁচ দিয়ে দরজা বা আলমারির হাতল বানাতে চাই'।

Figure 7.20: A newspaper coverage of designer walk at Chitpur (source: Swarup)

Few months after our (Sucheta and me) feedback trip, the collective organised a walk for contemporary designers of Kolkata in Chitpur Road and introduced them to the craftspeople (figure 7.19 and 7.20). The designers were immediately inspired and wanted to work with them. Instead of being part of the collective, I must argue that in the absence of the craftspeople's equal partnership, this venture can turn out to be a rather unequal one where the existing marginality which gave the Chitpur Local product line its purchase in the first place, can be reinforced. 'Designer walks' in Chitpur can be read as the beginning towards creating a cultural economy which 'can be understood as strategies to transform local knowledge into resources…'(C. Ray 1998, 9). Whereas local knowledge constitutes the immaterial value but the cultural economic value extracted out of that has far-reaching repercussions. Herzfeld has termed them as a 'globalised form of local tradition' which can be sold worldwide (Herzfeld 2004, 18). He further asserts that this is a 'classic operation of hegemony whereby the delicate creatures that we call local worlds are caught in the spider's web of global value and struggle' (Herzfeld 2004, 17). My observation above, on the letterpress revival following design ideas that

have been tested and worked in New York, is an example of the effort of internationalisation.

In this venture, I identify that the artists were insistent that the craftspeople should be exposed to new urban entrepreneurism. They were 'mobilizing artisans as entrepreneurial agents, not victims of capitalism'(Costa 2015, 74). Instead of 'radical creativity' (Mould 2018, 131) to forge 'entirely new ways of societal organisation' (Mould 2018, 10), they were integrating the artisans within another unequal production regime. For example, Lucknow's Chikan embroidery went through a similar process where the craftspeople were 'positioned as mere technicians' whereas the designers and development agencies impart artistic vision (Wilkinson-Weber 2004, 293). In another example from Rajasthan's hand block print craft, scholars have noticed designers perform a 'discursive suturing' between local labour or tradition and global market or innovation (DeNicola 2003, 100). It can be read as an effort of 'cooptation by inclusion' (Desai 2012, 50) by artists who seem to be acting as an agent of development in the creative economy sector of India (S. Roy 2007). At the same time, one can also put forward a view that they were indeed acting out of benevolence. Few possible scenarios might happen. The craftspeople can make the new products for the designers without their creative inputs or equal financial partnership in the venture and end up creating hybrid simulacra of objects for the designer's label where Chitpur's name will be used as a brand. Much like the case of *Patchitra* artists they may end up doing 'items' for the designers which will be sold in art galleries and boutique cafes in India. Alternatively, the neutral participation, indifference, and refusal of the local community will render them the tag of being unproductive within the capitalist value chain. Hence, if they don't participate, they will be termed as stubborn, inefficient, 'ineffectual, rebellious, and irremediably inferior' (Herzfeld 2004, 17). As this event is still unfolding and I wish to remain hopeful, here is a third possibility. There is a potential that a more 'co-operative, horizontalist and less marketised' (Mould 2018, 124) form of economic organisation, with a commitment towards postcapitalist politics can be forged here. I hope to be part of this third possibility.

7.6. Conclusion

The chapter navigates between the artist collective's collaborative, process-driven and non-conforming art interventions in Chitpur Road on one hand and its more market-

driven initiatives on the other. By charting these overlapping trajectories of the artist collective's work, firstly, the chapter addresses how the artists created cultural value for the subaltern cultural production of Chitpur. Secondly, the chapter considers that the artists created a heritage capital for the Road which involves an embodied and affective experience of Chitpur's streetscape. Finally, the chapter suggests, the artists tried to fulfil socially engaged art's radical potential by bringing art from galleries to ordinary spaces and engaging with a community of craftspeople who are not recognised as craft producers. Thus, the chapter observe that the collective's work brought new heritage sensibilities in the city, yet not all the outcomes were entirely emancipatory for the craftspeople.

I have delineated a few tensions in their practice, which stemmed from the fact that a distance between two genres of creative practitioners, contemporary artists, and vernacular craftspeople, have produced and sustained the aura of this initiative. This distance and hierarchy, as the introductory post-field note alluded to, reified during the project as the power relation remained lopsided. The authorship of some of the art pieces remained with the artists. The craftspeople's engaged work and the road's overwhelming street life offered a sensory palate that became a tool to be used as a mundane spectacle in creating an art festival. Additionally, the Chitpur product line can be seen as a way of recognising cultural expressions who have been marginalised by the state craft emporium, yet I have noticed the economic model of this initiative endows the designer and the high-end boutique with more authority. So, there is a possibility that the value this place and its craftspeople would produce can be co-opted by the market forces with little profit coming to the craftspeople. It is more concerning because historically the users of craft objects have remained powerful whereas the makers remained as 'valued object of attention with little change of their material condition' (Viswanathan 2009, 79).

The chapter also identifies two diverging trends of the government departments which entails institutional heritage making will remain selective in Chitpur. The festival centric outcomes of the artist collective have consistently received financial support from the WB tourism department which shows they want to use art to sanitise and revalorise the historic urban core of the city for touristic consumption. However, another arm of the state, its Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise (MSME), is cautious about bestowing

heritage value to more popular cultural expressions of Chitpur and gives cultural value to a selected, at times appropriated Chitpur craft. The state might mobilise the artists to reimagine the street under a neo-liberal urban regeneration framework but the subaltern nature of the crafts disturbs their heritage imagination.

The collective can resist this co-option by flipping the power relation between the artist and craftsman dynamics. Contemporary artists and designers with significant class privilege, trained in various art schools of the country and abroad cannot simply be salvation to the craftspeople (Thompson 2012). Craftspeople are not waiting to be rescued by cosmopolitan artists and designers only to be marketized as high-end cultural consumption where there is no commitment to economic justice. The political motivation of some of the creative interventions and dialogic art practices shows a commitment to co-creation, such as the project with children. It shows an evocation towards a more people-centric and democratic heritage making during the walks yet the analysis remains wary of uncritical acceptance and valorisation of artists' role as changemakers.

Chapter Eight
Pluriversalising Heritage Discourse

8.1. A walk: living vs experiencing past in the present

Figure 8.1: Shovabazaar Rajbari

(source: https://www.flickr.com/photos/20338761@N06/7037569723, last accessed 20 July 2021)

It was the month of February in 2019 and Kolkata was unexpectedly hot. I was heading towards one of the esteemed *Rajbari* (palace of the erstwhile Raja; [king] or regional landholder, figure 8.1) of North Kolkata, which is considered as the genesis of Kolkata's urban life. As I entered the lane, I noticed three people distinctly different from the locals, who were sipping tea and reading newspapers in the roadside tea stall. They were soaking in the old neighbourhood of Shovabazar with wide eyes and clicking photos of the lane. From their attire dotted with hats, shorts, sunglasses and walking shoes I felt we were here for the same reason. Before I could follow them, a local man who was just standing in the middle of the road, pointed out a small alley and told me, 'Apnader lokera sob odike ache didi' (Your people went that way, sister). I smiled at him and nodded my head, gesturing a thank you and followed two gentlemen and a woman in front of me. As we entered the courtyard of the *Rajbari*, I found some foreigners and some Kolkata residents, all gathered there on a Saturday morning for a heritage walk in Kolkata's oldest road, Chitpur Road. They are welcomed by the organisers with tea served in the earthen pot. The event is partially sponsored by West Bengal Tourism Department among other cultural patrons. It was indicated that people are here to get the 'authentic' taste of Bengal. I could see from their expression, that standing in a majestic *Rajbari* courtyard and sipping tea from earthen pot have made their morning. The start could not have been any better. Unlike other heritage walks in the city, this was not scheduled early in the morning. There was a talk on Chitpur Road's urban trades and crafts in the afternoon. Therefore, I imagined

keeping in tandem with the talk afterwards, the walk was scheduled to take place when the shops are open for business.

Figure 8.2: The group at Madanmohan Tala Temple (source: Abhik Bhattacharya)

> A big group of thirty started to walk along Chitpur, from Madanmohan Tala [a temple est. 1761, figure 8.2] to Garanhata [the gold and silver jewellery making hub] to Pathuriaghata [erstwhile seat of Bengali Hindu aristocracy] we covered a lot in almost two and a half-hour of the walk. We hardly interacted with locals as we had our guide, a conservation architect who has worked in Chitpur, to tell us all about the neighbourhoods. From architectural characteristics to old photographs of important landmarks and the niche livelihood of each neighbourhood were shown during the walk. Some found the long walk tiring and went back to the *Rajbari* from the middle of the walk. The rest of the people donned in their walking shoes braved the afternoon sun, the potholes, the garbage, and the human and vehicular traffic of the road and came out victorious. They clicked ample photographs and some even nipped out to taste some local delicacies while walking. In Garanhata, I saw some people pointing at us, heard them laughing and saying, '*oi dekh heritage dekhte eseche'* [Oh look! they are here to see heritage]. (Field note, 23 February 2019)

While we were experiencing the subaltern heritage by looking and clicking photos of people, places and practices around the neighbourhood, some people had to live and endure the reality of inhabiting the past. Or is it past for them? Chitpur is an organic landscape that never entered the scope of official heritage management frameworks, where materials, structures and identities are fixed in past. When heritage walk enthusiasts were happy to experience the decaying neighbourhood and express their exasperation about the need/lack of heritage conservation, it is possible that for people

who are living and working in that landscape, it is their past, present, and possibly future. How do they articulate their heritage understanding? At what point did the temporal break occur when the everyday livelihood of some people becomes heritage for the rest? How did the selective audience produce a particular form of heritage for Chitpur?

The central argument of this chapter is twofold. First, heritage enthusiasts of the city, as mentioned above and the state heritage machinery are governed by the colonial principles of heritage where Eurocentric rationality of stasis and permanence is the guiding principle. Although the civil society was able to push the boundary of heritage making in the city, it can learn from Chitpur's existing craft practices to decolonise mainstream heritage ontology. The concern of how colonial-era heritage framing has been replaced by UNESCO's universalist managerial framework from the middle of the twentieth century is explained in sections 8.2 and 8.3. While acknowledging UNESCO's role in expanding the meaning, nature, and scope of heritage, I explain how in this case, the experience of the old is created by freezing the past or by creating simulacra, which can be marketed for leisure and consumption. These two sections investigate the consequences of this globalising trend of neoliberal governmentality in heritage making.

Second, the chapter then turns towards a radical counter-narrative to mark a significant departure from the universalist heritage conservation paradigm towards a pluriversal worldview inspired by decolonial thinking. Four empirical examples around change and continuity of craft material and form; repair and impermanence of craft object are put forward to partake in a pluriversal politics (section 8.4). I argue that the craftspeople's constant experimentation, adaptation, alteration with new material and form of their craft object can be read as a desire to break away from the casteist and gendered nature of these practices. Various modes of repair; altering, melting, and patching are a commentary on the livingness of the objects. Both of these observations question the notion of material authenticity and conservation of fabric and form central to conventional heritage practice. Hence, a constructive, regenerative and justice-oriented form of heritage sensibility is the first provocation towards pluriversal politics. My second provocation is centred around the example of religious idol making and its cyclical nature of creation and destruction of craft objects. I explain an abstract cosmological relationship with the material and the metaphysical world which honours

different modes of 'knowing, being and doing' (Barker and Pickerill, 2020, 646) heritage in my study area and beyond.

The chapter organisation can also be read as an intervention in geographical studies of heritage. It engages with three scales of strategies, governance, power and values to set out the critique of the existing heritage conservation framework in the city. This multi scaler analysis of heritage production and counterheritage sensibility contributes to the domain of geographies of heritage. The chapter suggests, from craftspeople to civil society groups to state heritage commission to colonial-era bureaucracy to UNESCO regional office, within each geographies, a different version of heritage is being produced. It elucidates how a relationship with the past is 'context bound and power laden' (Graham *et al.*, 2016, 5). Hence the craftspeople offer a strategic view on their heritage in order to save their livelihood, whereas the state heritage commission emulates and adopts the UNESCO framework seeking inclusion in a sacrosanct list. As a researcher, I read the craft practices from a decolonial perspective and question the geographical singularity of 'othered' heritage sensibilities.

I consciously argue for a discursive shift within heritage studies by not framing this argument under 'Asian perspective' or 'alternative discourse'. Alternative creates a 'hierarchy of value' (Herzfeld 2004) where the deviant form constitutes the alternative whereas the mainstream enjoys a hegemonic power. Rico (2016) questions the idea of alternative saying, 'the idea of "alternative" heritage value, however, promotes a rhetoric that suggests a hierarchy of mainstream and deviant heritage constructs, and moreover, a rhetorical destruction of heterogeneity within regional or perceptual categories of heritage that are perceived in this hierarchy to be homogeneous' (Rico 2016, 103). Whereas Rico directs us towards the heterogeneity within the mainstream or hegemonic, I argue for a reversal of the hegemonic heritage construct and extension of our knowledge base by creating solidarity between 'othered' worlds. I will not rehash orientalist exoticisation or 'essentialism by the west' (Winter 2014a, 134) by reinforcing differences between west and east. It is not an 'Asian perspective' of heritage either, because then we flatten the heterogenous discourses coming from Indigenous studies, feminism, posthumanism and many pockets within the settler-colonial societies across the word. This discussion is further expanded in the conclusion of the thesis.

8.2. Heritage produced

After spending six months in four of the identified clusters along the road, instead of heritage, I heard words like ‘work’ (কাজ), ‘business’ (ব্যাবসা/ কারবার) or ‘family business’ (পৈত্রিক ব্যাবসা), ‘livelihood’ (রুটি রোজগারের রাস্তা/জীবিকা) to refer the crafts. Instead of an artist or craftsman, I heard ‘mechanic or artisan’ (মিস্ত্রি). The craftspeople only use the term heritage or considered whether their crafts are Heritage when asked by me.[180] That too came with a preceding tale of identifying houses of colonial elites and famous people as Heritage.[181] I trace the colonial legacy of this monumental heritage production briefly in the first section. In some cases, the word heritage was used selectively and strategically by the craftspeople. In this context, the question needs to be asked how the meaning of heritage has been expanded by the civil society in terms of identifying and recognising crafts as heritage? How was their knowledge production informed? This section, titled Heritage Produced, will focus on how the word heritage gets deployed, and how its meaning is created by different groups in specific contexts. I put forward a narrative of heritage making which is the result of a larger socio-political and economic force within and outside the heritage sector.

8.2.1. Colonial legacy of heritage production

Since the introduction of ‘modern’ heritage conservation discourse in India, which has its roots in the European enlightenment idea of scientific rationality, the general population has distanced itself from this structuralist formation of ‘Heritage’. An apprentice, a migrant worker from rural Bengal, working in the goldsmith workshop of Garanhata, therefore asked me what the meaning of ‘heritage’ was. After explaining it in the vernacular language he could not identify his work within an understanding of ‘heritage’ (interview with Jit Gayen, 20 November 2018). First, the English term ‘heritage’ is alien for many of the craft-workers in Chitpur area. Second, my explanation of the meaning of heritage informed by my education and modernist upbringing could

[180] I use capital H to signify institutionalised and dominant construct of heritage which often informs people’s heritage understanding in the field. The distinction between heritage with a small h and capital H, along with Geography and geography has been discussed by D.C. Harvey (2014) https://geographiesofheritage.wordpress.com/2014/11/18/the-disciplinary-hheritage-of-ggeography/. The same argument has been extended to History as well as mentioned in the next page (last accessed 10 May 2021).

[181] Rico (2016) also discusses how the word heritage often prompts the imagination of monumental sites as it has been normalised by the institutionalised standard practices.

not capture their heritage sensibilities. Some of them immediately referred to the elite houses as 'Heritage' because their heritage thinking has been conditioned and informed by local and international organisations' obsession with tangible architecture and its banal monumentality. [182] Since the 1990s KMC's heritage conservation committee has introduced a regime of selecting-listing-grading houses across the city as their commitment to heritage conservation. When I visited the municipality headquarters in Esplanade to speak to the Mayor in December 2017 during my pilot fieldwork, his staff immediately thought I wanted to measure something of that old building itself because I uttered the word 'heritage'. I trace this formulation of the built environment as Heritage; part of a legacy introduced by the colonial governance.

Colonial governance with its paternalistic approach towards the 'native' population wanted to teach Indians their own history. First, they identified this society as a 'people without history' (E. R. Wolf 2010) and then established institutions to impose a new form of knowledge, norms, and order (T. Bennett, Dibley, and Harrison 2014). This was to educate the 'ahistorical' society as to what written historical consciousness might look like through survey, mapping, documentation, and conservation of the past, thereby demystifying a mythic society and civilisation (Nandy 1995). In India with the establishment of ASI (Archaeological Survey of India) in 1862 by the British colonial government, 'Heritage' was introduced as a discipline that starts with a capital H much like History (Peterson, Gavua, and Rassool 2015). It has been described as 'legislation driven, heavily bureaucratised and procedure-oriented practices of preservation' (I. Sengupta 2018, 111; also see Menon 2015). Heritage became equivalent to conservation from this point and entered the domain of science, measurement, and technique. The legacy of conservation introduced by the colonial state was faithfully adopted by the postcolonial nation-state. Conservation of physical artefacts and historic buildings (rebranded as monuments and historical sites) and beautification gained utmost attention and came under the ASI's bureaucratised heritage management idiom.[183] Monuments and sites were cordoned off from the everyday use of the public and

[182] The distinction between tangible and intangible heritage has been institutionally sanctioned and they are determining factors of conservation depending on the urban and rural location of the object or practice as pointed out by an UNESCO accredited NGO in section 8.2.3.

[183] See Herbert (2012) for Lord Curzon's effort of landscaping and beautifying which transformed the Mughal gardens of Taj Mahal. Also his efforts have been to save architectural relics of India from 'decay' has been applauded (Linstrum 1995).

protected from its own population who were termed as 'trespassers' (I. Sengupta 2018). This scientific heritage production was essential to establish a modern secular nation state which claimed political modernity via self-rule by separating itself from the divine, the mythic and the metaphysical. These entities remained in the popular domain, interacted with the political and were manipulated for the electoral gain but remained separate from the scientific and professional domain of heritage conservation. I will address the issue of the mythic and metaphysical in section 8.4.4. to counter the erasure of this knowledge in the scientific heritage sector. The monumental heritage of the colonial aristocracy is in a state of ruin and disrepair in Chitpur and the crafts which survive here are an antithesis to scientific heritage paradigm introduced by the colonial framework. As a result, it never came under the scope of state sponsored conservation. The craftspeople first articulated their concern about heritage, therefore, through the idiom of loss and uniqueness.

8.2.2. Heritage production through strategic essentialism

The craftspeople use the term heritage strategically and selectively. As mentioned earlier, they do not bring it up by themselves in connection to their craftwork. When they do, in few scenarios, their expression corresponds to ideas of loss, but not necessarily regarding their crafts. Secondly, heritage sensibility emerges when they make claims about the uniqueness of their craft. Heritage, therefore, has a context-specific deployment in their articulation.

Loss:

Risk and endangerment are forms of capital in heritage studies because an object or practice is considered rare which often produce value. A sense of loss often engenders heritage value for places and practices. The desire for conservation, in relation to heritage, is often a manifestation of loss aversion (Holtorf 2015). For the craftspeople in Chitpur, loss aversion plays out in an unusual way. The threat of loss or extinction only prompts them to identify and articulate their work within the ambit of the road's heritage. Loss does not make them continue the craft tradition by themselves or actively formulate a conservation plan. As we will see below, loss only elicits the imagination that the crafts are part of Chitpur Road's heritage. Yet many of the craftspeople seek new opportunities and explore new identities.

Murari Das, in his late fifties, is the owner of Devi Art Co in Chitpur Road. He says his father, the late Baidyanath Das, was the pioneer of wooden *sandesh* moulds. Murari Das was only one and a half years old when his father passed away, and when he came of age, he started to learn how to make moulds by himself. Murari Da claims that he cannot know for sure how old his shop is, but it must be over 100 years. According to his calculation, his father, his elder brother, and he, have each run the shop for about 40-45 years. That makes the shop at least 120 years old. In his initial years, he had gone through a lot of struggle but now he owns three shops in the area. His business has expanded. He has stopped making the moulds by himself for the last twenty-five years. He has expanded his business in a new direction. He supplies any kind of designer wooden utensils to five-star hotels like ITC or Hayat in Kolkata. He knows artisans from across West Bengal. He gives them designs and they supply the wooden materials be it *sandesh* moulds or any other wooden utensils. As the quote suggests, during a conversation with him, he laments that the Road has lost 'eighty per cent of its heritage'.

> M: এইট্টি পার্সেন্ট চলে গেছে। তা হলে এই রাস্তার ঐতিহ্য মানে...Heritage of this Road is eighty percent lost.
>
> R: তা আপনার কি মনে হয় এগুলো...so what do you think these are…
>
> M: বিলুপ্তির পথে। way to extinction (Murari Das, mould maker Interview, 18 November 2018)

He thinks that the rest of the heritage of the Road is about to be lost. 'Extinction' in his language is acting as a force to recognise or reconcile with the road's heritage. This is a dominant mode of thinking in heritage studies. Heritage consciousness often emerges in the face of a threat of losing or in terms of risk or endangerment. Vidal and Dias (2016) have identified that the feeling of loss might bring a sense of protection is required, which they have coined as endangerment sensibility**.** It entails a sense of urgency in protecting something vulnerable that leads to forming conservation mechanisms to prevent loss. However, a traditional 'Heritage at risk' (Rico 2016) narrative does not fit in the context of saving the craft of mould making per se. Drawing attention towards his use of the word 'heritage' specifically in terms of the Road and not his craft, Murari Das might be nostalgic about the past and lament about the loss but he does not continue to be a mould maker himself. In his understanding risk of loss is associated with the road's heritage nature at large but not with his craft. Precisely because he can find rural

craftspeople who can do the wooden mould making when he ventures into new opportunities (figure 8.3). His way of preservation is more strategic where he has established external mechanisms to continue selling wooden moulds rather than making them himself. He has dispatched the craftwork to rural craftspeople and opted for socio-economic upward mobility for himself and his son. To maintain his father's legacy, he has realised his direct engagement in the making tradition is not needed. Though not expressed explicitly, for him, heritage lies in maintaining the shop front, established by his father, and selling wooden items including the moulds. Heritage is also the everyday ritual of veneration to his father's photograph which he unmistakably does before stepping inside the shop. However, making wooden moulds does not translate into his heritage expression.

Figure 8.3: Rural craftsmen delivering wooden moulds to the shop at Chitpur (left), making the moulds in village home (right) (source: author)

Uniqueness:

When asked the question of heritage, Abhay Das from Seva Art co in the same row of shops along Devi Art co affirms without hesitation or pause that this is indeed a heritage for him.

> R: আর একটা কথা। চিৎপুর রোডের ঐতিহ্য বলতে কি আপনার এই কাজটাকে মনে হয? যে এটা একটা ঐতিজ্য এটা বেঁচে থাকা দরকার | Do you think when one talks about heritage of Chitpur Road, your work is also heritage and it needs to survive?
>
> A: হ্যাঁ, এটা ঐতিহ্য তো বটেই। কেন বলছি। কেন এই জিনিসটা আর কোথায় পাবেন না। সারা বিশ্বে আর কোথাও পাবেন না। তার পরে যারা আর্টিস্ট, এই তারের মডেল-ফডেল করে, তাদের সর্ব ওয়ার্ল্ডে পাবেন। কিন্তু এই জিনিসটা... এই গর্তের মধ্যে, ডীপের মধ্যে উল্টো করা... এটা কোথাও...Indeed, this is our heritage. Why am I saying that? You can't find it anywhere in the word. Artists who make models…you can find them all over the world

> but this technique.... this deep engraving inside the wood block, that too in a opposite direction.... never.
>
> R: কোথাও পাওয়া যাবে না। so you are saying this can’t be found anywhere?
>
> A: এটা আমাদের ঐতিহ্য। কুটিরশিল্পের মতো। আগে যেমন একাট বন্ধ হয়ে গেছে... প্রিন্টিং ব্লক...This is our heritage.... much like a cottage industry.... One has already lost printing block already. (Abhay Das, mould maker interview, 30 November 2018)

Prompted by my question, Abhay da uses the term heritage to claim the uniqueness of the practice and he is also apprehensive about losing it. He takes pride in the exclusivity of his craft as well as shows vulnerability and concern for his craft. I wonder if he is suggesting that ‘heritage’ might be the only trope through which these languishing practices can be saved?[184] I also interpret Abhay *da*’s use of the term heritage to assert uniqueness for his craft as a strategic use that can be attributed to my presence as an interviewer. He would categorise me as part of civil society, whom he, along with many other craftspeople would see as the maker of this craft heritage for Chitpur. The interview excerpt I present below illustrates that.

8.2.3. Production of craft heritage in Chitpur

I argue that the word ‘heritage’ for urban crafts, is an imported idiom for people whom we (including me), members of craft collective are identifying as the bearer of subaltern cultural heritage. These cultural practices have not been expressed in terms of ‘urban craft’ by the practitioners. The cultural producers of these crafts do not by default claim institutional heritage status for them from the state authorities.

Sandesh mould maker Sunil Das has been participating in collaborative art-making ventures with contemporary artists for the last ten years. He was first recognised by artist Bhabatosh Suttar who was designing a wooden Durga idol for the annual religious festival and needed a wood engraver to execute the intricate wooden design. He then joined Lalit Kala Academy’s 2013 project as a ‘native’ artist that documented ‘Popular and native arts of Chitpur and allied areas of Kolkata’. He also made a wooden installation for Chitpur Craft Collective’s art trail. In my reading, these engagements

[184] Similar use of strategic alignment with politically relevant discourses are observed by allotment holders of Scotland to claim selfhood (DeSilvey 2003). Also in the ex-Danish colony of Tranquebar in the coast of south India, heritage is seen as an aspiration by the locals and the Danish officials which can bring a remote town under the development purview (Jørgensen 2013).

made him aware that the craft of wood carving is valued by contemporary artists and therefore he explains,

> S: আমাদের এটা হাতের কাজ শিল্প ঠিক আছে। কিন্তু আমরা এটাকে অন্য ভাবে দেখি। This is a handicraft. Alright? But we see it in a different way
>
> R: কীভাবে। how?
>
> S: আমরা জানি এই নকশার কাজ করছি, দোকানদার কে দিচ্ছি, মিস্তির পএসা নিচ্ছি এই হচ্ছে আমাদের ব্যাপার। আমাদের দাম টা আমরা জানি না কিন্তু। বাইরের লোক দেবে এসে। এটাই ঘটনা। we know, we are doing some design, selling it to a shopkeeper, receiving money for the labour. This is how we see it. We don't know our value. Outsiders may assign value. That's the fact. (Sunil Das, mould maker interview, 17 February 2019)

It might seem striking that as a wooden mould maker he gives the responsibility to 'outsiders' who ascribe value to their handicraft. Even though I would like to find his agency in valuing his work, he lists the mundanity of his work; designing, selling, and getting compensated for his labour, to deny it from achieving aesthetic or artistic value. Nevertheless, when reading within the context of his wider profile, the statement makes sense. Interactions with artists and designers, who are part of the larger civil society made him value his work. He now associates it with handicraft. Though he believes his craft community does not regard it as such. In order to understand why the community of wood engravers do not claim the identity of a craftsperson, I turn to a further interview with another woodcut artist who makes *sandesh* moulds at his village home and distributes them in one of the shops of Chitpur (figure 8.3). He regrets,

> শিল্পীর মর্যাদা পেলাম কোথায়? Have I ever got the respect of an artist? (Bishnu Roy, mould maker interview, 23 November 2018)

Sunil Das has started to receive recognition and respect from a wider artist community of the city, but Bishnu Roy's location in the village did not grant him such opportunities for the same craft. There is also the underlying issue of caste association of craft practices as discussed in Chapter 4. It was observed during the interview that he is conscious of his caste identity and the nature of the job he is expected to do.[185] Without

[185] First, he placed me within my caste background and made a distinction between us. Second, he mentioned that he is doing a supplementary job with the local municipality which is a 'dirty' job on paper. However, because he knows the chairperson, he doesn't have to do that 'dirty' job; which generally refers to waste collection related services. Instead, he paints water supply vehicles for the municipality. Third, he emphasised repeatedly he made a chair and table to work instead of sitting on the floor which his

respect, how would one value their work as art and why would they claim heritage status for that work?

India's heritage framework, as I have discussed before, made it imperative that only built environment assets rose to the status of heritage through legal protections. Within the sector of cultural heritage, therefore, a hierarchy has been maintained between tangible heritage in historic cities and selected intangible practices in rural areas which deserve institutional attention and protection. None of the four crafts I worked with made it to that official list. An interview with the founder member of a UNESCO accredited NGO who works in the rural intangible cultural heritage sector made this point explicit.[186] The NGO works in craft skill-based rural livelihood development, micro-enterprise development, cultural enterprise development and creative industries sector with a clear agenda of linking the rural crafts community with the market.

> 'In urban area, the focus is on built heritage. Intangible has been worked on rarely. But there is always scope. Kolkata is such a living city of art and culture …so urban আমাদের এখনি কাজ করার দরকার নেই৷ They are fine. They won't give it up. Rural এ যেটা হয়েছে, কুমারটুলি নিজের ছন্দে চলছে তাই না৷'
>
> So, we don't need to work in urban areas because they are fine. They won't give it up. Rural does. Isn't Kumartuli continuing its own rhythm? (Founder member of the NGO interview, 18 February 2019)

In my interpretation, her narrative instrumentalises the idea of loss and validates selective heritage making based on two binaries, urban/rural and tangible/intangible. She designates the urban areas, such as Kolkata, a citadel of monumental heritage requires attention in saving its tangible cultural heritage. Maybe because of the imminent threat for rapid urbanisation? Whereas by saying *'Kolkata is such a living city of art and culture'* she is implying why would it need an NGO to safeguard intangible culture in a city? In the course of the interview, she also says, crafts are essentially tied to a community and in urban areas idea of that community is diffused. In other words, these urban crafts might not be considered as crafts, and therefore the NGO sector never thought of safeguarding them. There are two issues here, first heritage value and

father did. The elevation gives his profession an esteem which he believes gentlemen (he said *babu der moto*) who works in the service sector of Kolkata have. (Interview with Bishnu Roy, 23 November 2018).

[186] https://ich.unesco.org/en/accredited-ngos-00331 (last accessed on 14 December 2020) registered as 'contact base' in the website.

recognition are equated with conservation. If Bishnu Roy would have been recognized as an artist, he would have continued his work much like the Kumartuli artisans who have been referred to in the quote. Second, apart from Kumartuli, the crafts I worked with did not make it to the gallery of elitist art and cultural representation of the city before the Craft collective's intervention. So, the narrative of a 'living city of art and culture' is a politicised domain of selective recognition and heritage making.

Heritage value in terms of recognition was first created by the civil society (which includes me and the members of the artist collective), by the conservation experts who shifted their focus from buildings to landscape approach and by the bureaucratic apparatus (West Bengal tourism in this case). I have partially mentioned this in Chapter 7 but here I will focus on these players individually and critically look at their role in this heritage making. Since the establishment of non-governmental organisations like INTACH in India, a trend has been documented that identification of diverse forms of heritage values has been 'pursued by a well-educated, urban and cosmopolitan elite' of India (Jørgensen 2017, 57; Hancock 2008). Chitpur's subaltern heritage was conceived by a cosmopolitan milieu of Kolkata's educated literati and western educational institutions who funded the Chitpur project, such as Harvard or Exeter. Though the artists did not claim they are working in the heritage sector of the city, they had a role in transforming an old city landscape into heritage through their socially engaged art project. This intervention paved the way for the larger civil society and media to suddenly 'discover' a peripheral landscape of the old city as 'heritage' beyond its aristocratic houses. My disquiet with the culturally elitist monumental discourse of heritage conservation in the city led me to identify these crafts as heritage (reflected in the introduction as the background of the project). My knowledge, informed by UNESCO's legitimacy to intangible cultural heritage provided me with the language to recognise these practices as heritage. Independent heritage conservation consultants saw this landscape as a quintessential urban vernacular heritage of a colonial city that has the potential to be moulded into UNESCO's Historic Urban Landscape or creative city framework or even developing a cultural economy aspect from it (K. Bose 2015). Then the local state government picked up the idea and saw this newly produced heritage as a resource to mobilise its tourism industry and funded the Chitpur Local festival and Chitpur Art Trail over the years.

Before this act of identification and documentation, Heritage, as such, did not exist for the craft practitioners of Chitpur Road. The temporal shift I mentioned in the introduction, from a domain of livelihood to potential heritage landscape takes place at this moment. What these multifarious intentions did was to appropriate subaltern life and livelihoods as heritage, while at the same time, push the boundary of the institutional heritage discourse of the city. In other words, the heritage imagination has been broadened by the civil society groups which include subaltern craft practices and a peripheral landscape approach. Consequently, subalternity and peripherality have been reinforced to produce this heritage.[187]

By production, I mean craft heritage was not always already present in Chitpur as a remnant of the past, rather by framing the existing practices within the language of heritage**,** we invented it according to the present circumstances. Kirshenblatt-Gimblatt (1998) has identified this heritage as 'a mode of cultural production in the present that has recourse to the past' (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998, 150). The artist collective's role in the heritage making was attuned to the existing practices of creative making, yet we saw in the previous chapter how this heritagisation process might lead to commercialisation and place branding of Chitpur. In the next section, I will focus on this growing trend of heritage production engineered not only by the city's civil society but a group of transnational players. I propose the rise of civil society, among others, as heritage makers, is symptomatic of the postcolonial state's devolution of power, while exercising neoliberal governmentality.

8.3. Heritage as neoliberal governmentality

The role of civil society should be seen within the larger domain of heritage governmentality across the world where local people's involvement in heritage making is now paramount. What this framework does not define is what and who constitutes 'local' for a networked metropolitan city like Kolkata. In West Bengal, cultural heritage is now a transnational institution-driven cultural management strategy. Hence, what we see is the state heritage commission relinquishing power to civic society-led institutions and NGOs, partnering with universities and cultural organisations from abroad. First, I

[187] See the discussion on representation and subalternity in section 2.2, specially Jazeel's (2014) reflection on Spivak's [1988(2010)] work.

will give a couple of examples from Kolkata, and more broadly from West Bengal, to elucidate the nature of this networked, yet local, heritage making. The second section looks at the role of the supranational organisation like UNESCO in standardising heritage management framework in Kolkata/West Bengal, which leads to some critical reflections. I focus on the issue of 'epistemic governance' (Alasuutari and Qadir 2014) where first local government learns how to define heritage under the tutelage of international experts, and secondly, the local value is evaluated against scientific criteria of international organisations. In the third section, I point out how under the new heritage regime, local cultures become sites of inventory, documentation, intervention and are treated as resources to yield economic returns. Overall, the focus will be on the intermingling of global patrimony with neoliberal governance where various state and non-state actors work together to create, document, evaluate, save, and reinvent the cultural heritage of the state primarily according to universal standardisation.[188]

8.3.1. Devolution of state Power

Following Foucault, T. Bennett et al. (2014) has identified culture as a 'transactional reality' which mediates between 'governed and governing' (T. Bennett et al. 2014, 141). Drawing on this work, Harrison (2018) proposes that the relationality between government and heritage practices is the transactional reality of heritage. Governance, in this case, is not only a state subject but various non-state actors also participate, negotiate, and influence the process of heritage making. Though there is a 'decentralisation and distribution of governmental power' due to 'cosmopolitan energies and ideologies' (Coombe 2013, 378-379), the state is held responsible in Kolkata's case. In my observation, heritage narratives in Chitpur and the state of West Bengal are neither being shaped by craft community-led heritage movement. nor solely by the state. This is a space of negotiation between civic activist groups and state institutions, palpably illustrated in the following case.

[188] There are scopes for departure from this framework and it has been observed in the artist collective's work as discussed in the previous chapter. However, it needs to be noted the artists do not work as part of the heritage sector. Here my focus is specifically on the institutional apparatus.

Figure 8.4: Joint heritage walk organised by PKG and WB Heritage Commission in Chitpur (source: PKG)

The heritage sector in Kolkata and West Bengal has seen a rise in citizen activism and NGO interest in recent years. During my fieldwork, I came across one such citizen network which emerged in a digital platform and garnered approximately one hundred fifty thousand members over a brief period (2015-2020). 'Purono Kolkatar Golpo' (Old Kolkata Chronicle, PKG hereafter), was initially a digital platform where people would share the historical narrative, personal memories, stories, pictures and reminisce about the city. The virtual nature of the group changed suddenly when they launched a citizen-led movement around the slogan 'action for saving heritage'. The 'admins' (a common phrase used for people who launched the group and controls what will be published in the group) of the Facebook group, who are teachers by profession, came to the forefront in mobilising people and saving 'heritage structures' from getting demolished by private players in the land market. One such effort was saving a 200-year-old school building, Metropolitan Institution, in Pathuriaghata neighbourhood of Chitpur Road, and securing funding from the government to restart the school again. Their demonstration and active intervention brought them in close contact with West Bengal Heritage Commission. I have spoken to one of the central committee members from this group. She told me how during the World Heritage week (19-25 November 2018) celebration they influenced the Heritage commission's decision to organise the walk in Chitpur (figure 8.4 and 8.5).

মানে এটা ওদের থেকে বলেছিল আমাদের একটা walk curate করতে হবে। আমাদের কে ডেকেছিল আর তথাগাত দের ডেকেছিল। এবারে ওদের পুরো ঘর ভরতি লোক, ওদের মেম্বার। আমাদের

> suggestion দিতে বলা হল কোন জাএগা। আমি বদ্ধপরিকর ছিলাম যে পাথুরিয়াঘাটা তে নিয়ে আসবই। কারণ আমাদের metropolitan এ ঐ লোক গুলো কে ঢোকাতে হবে। কারণ তখন ও আমি জানি না কীভাবে কি করব। দিশেহারা। যেভাবে হোক আমাদের লোক ঢোকাতে হবে। তো আমরা ঐ plan টা chalk out করলাম| অনেক প্রবলেম ছিল। অত লোক আসবে। অত সরু রাস্তা। বাজার ভর্তি। They were preferring naturally Dalhousie. যেগুলো চলে ওইসব।··· সেই গাড়ী park কোথায়ে করব? সেই প্রশ্ন সবার। কারণ বড় বড় dignitaries রা আসবে। কিন্তু খুব ভালো ভাবে আমরা করেছি। প্রায় ১৫০ লোক এসেছিল।... French consulate থেকে এসেছিলেন, they were very happy.
>
> They told me we have to curate a walk. Tathagata's group [HWC] was also invited. There were so many people in the room, including their members. When they asked our suggestion, I was determined to bring them to Pathuriaghata. All I wanted was that they visit the Metropolitan school. There were many problems when we chalked out the plan. Many people will come but it is a narrow Road with street vendors everywhere. They were naturally preferring Dalhousie. That is the most common destination…They were asking about parking because dignitaries will come…Finally, it was a success. 150 people came. Dignitaries from the French consulate also visited. They were very happy. (Interview with PKG committee member, 18 January 2019)

Beating all the odds, their proposal of a heritage walk in Chitpur Road got approved by the commission, even though the commission did not initially desire a heritage walk in the Chitpur area. I would like to point out that the West Bengal heritage commission invited 'Heritage Walk Calcutta' (now Immersive Trails - a non-governmental for-profit heritage walk company) to the meeting as well.[189] The main walk on 23 November 2018 saw delegates from the French consulate walking in Chitpur. So, the event saw a partnership between a state heritage commission and citizens group as well as international diplomatic missions.

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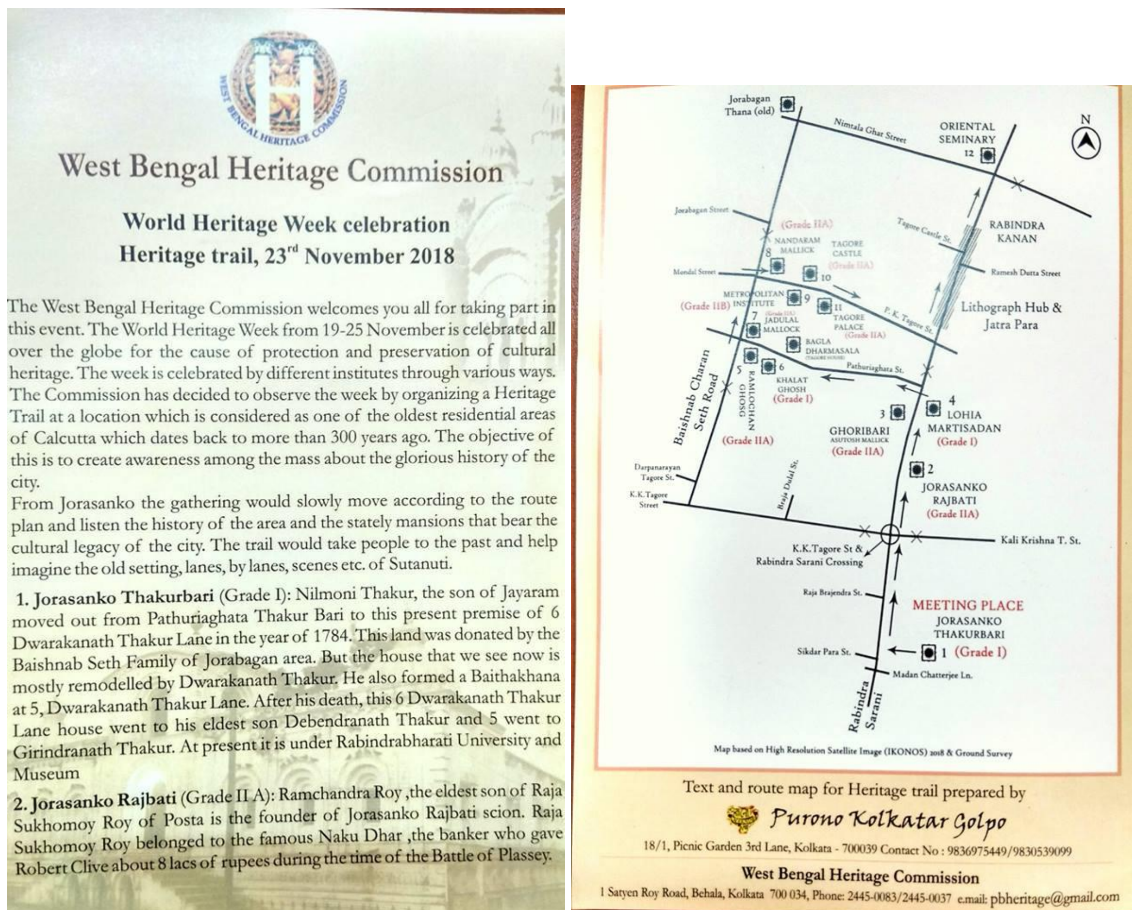
[189] Heritage Walk Calcutta was originated through an international partnership between University of Exeter and one of its PhD graduates in 2017. It offers locals and tourists research led heritage tour of the city and is considered as a pioneering business model of ethical social enterprise. Its collaboration with the University continues through various masterclasses, by leading international sustainable urban tourism projects, and developing employability skills for undergraduates. More about this collaboration can be found here: https://www.exeter.ac.uk/research/heritage/newsandevents/kolkata-heritage-exeter/, Offering training for the University's Global Leader program: https://www.exeter.ac.uk/studyabroad/outbound/studying/gle/kolkata/ and a GCRF funded 'Walking Heritage into Future Cities' project where HWC led the collaboration and worked with organisations from Sri Lanka and Pakistan https://walkingheritage.blog/ (links last accessed 24 August 2021).



West Bengal Heritage Commission

World Heritage Week celebration
Heritage trail, 23rd November 2018

The West Bengal Heritage Commission welcomes you all for taking part in this event. The World Heritage Week from 19-25 November is celebrated all over the globe for the cause of protection and preservation of cultural heritage. The week is celebrated by different institutes through various ways. The Commission has decided to observe the week by organizing a Heritage Trail at a location which is considered as one of the oldest residential areas of Calcutta which dates back to more than 300 years ago. The objective of this is to create awareness among the mass about the glorious history of the city.
From Jorasanko the gathering would slowly move according to the route plan and listen the history of the area and the stately mansions that bear the cultural legacy of the city. The trail would take people to the past and help imagine the old setting, lanes, by lanes, scenes etc. of Sutanuti.

1. **Jorasanko Thakurbari** (Grade I): Nilmoni Thakur, the son of Jayaram moved out from Pathuriaghata Thakur Bari to this present premise of 6 Dwarakanath Thakur Lane in the year of 1784. This land was donated by the Baishnab Seth Family of Jorabagan area. But the house that we see now is mostly remodelled by Dwarakanath Thakur. He also formed a Baithakhana at 5, Dwarakanath Thakur Lane. After his death, this 6 Dwarakanath Thakur Lane house went to his eldest son Debendranath Thakur and 5 went to Girindranath Thakur. At present it is under Rabindrabharati University and Museum
2. **Jorasanko Rajbati** (Grade II A): Ramchandra Roy ,the eldest son of Raja Sukhomoy Roy of Posta is the founder of Jorasanko Rajbati scion. Raja Sukhomoy Roy belonged to the famous Naku Dhar ,the banker who gave Robert Clive about 8 lacs of rupees during the time of the Battle of Plassey.

Figure 8.5: Brochure of the heritage walk by PKG (source: author)

PKG was also invited when UNESCO organised a sub-regional workshop on 'World Heritage Global Strategy in South Asia' in April 2019. They intend to make 'Action-Oriented Plans for 2019' which involves making a heritage atlas for the city and holding the government accountable for its role in heritage conservation.

This partnership works in two ways. First, it enables the state government to showcase on an international platform that they are involving and working with community partners. What constitutes a community partner in a city of fourteen million inhabitants remains a question (Burkett 2001). Thus, the state is actively producing and supporting a 'newly minted subject position of "local practitioner"' (Coombe 2013, 378) no matter how fuzzy that construction might be. The subject construction does not lead to a complete withdrawal of state power. Second, these local interlocutors are not passively working with the state, but their manifesto clearly mentions they are demanding answers from the state regarding its role in heritage conservation. Whereas the state is decentralising its power as part of neoliberal governmentality, the citizen group is considering heritage as an issue of governance. Their values and claims which emerge

from universalising principles of political modernity, is using the heritage conservation rhetoric to claim its citizenship rights (Jørgensen 2017). The tension between these two powers is being diluted and reconstituted by transnational networks.

8.3.2. Networked heritage: beyond tangibility

Officials from the State Heritage Commission are aware of the limitation of its heritage regime. The secretary of the commission, an artist by training, acknowledges its limitation in recognising a holistic definition of heritage. He says,

> ‘আমাদের দুর্ভাগ্য heritage বলতে যে বৃহত্তর অর্থ বোঝা যায়, সেটা কিন্তু আমাদের দায়িত্বে নেই। বা আমাদের heritage ভাবনায় নেই। আমরা ভাবিত কিন্তু আমাদের এটা দায়িত্ব না।
>
> It is our misfortune that we do not work with the larger meaning of heritage. We are worried about it but it is not our responsibility (Interview with secretary of WB Heritage Commission, 23 May 2019).

Hence, outside the purview of the State heritage commission’s framework, heritage is reconceptualised through transnational networks. West Bengal has witnessed rising interest in the field of heritage from a ‘coalition of agencies, joint partnership, public-private alliances, global-local or multi-scaler assemblages of NGOs, international authorities and transnational agencies’ (Coombe 2013, 378). It has been long identified that theories and ideas travel from one place to another (Said 1983). Through this journeying, the concept of intangible cultural heritage has manifested in its present form, as a cultural resource of India. The journey is enabled by the ‘intermediary individuals and organisations’ whom Rico (2016) has called ‘knowledge brokers…that channel the information and play a role at adapting global concepts to local conditions, working on local, regional, national, and global systems of meaning’ (Rico 2016, 100). Hamdasti’s work in Chitpur itself is a culmination of such networked intermingling with the Harvard innovation lab initiating the project and India Foundation for Art (IFA; a non-profit headquartered in Bangalore), as well as the West Bengal tourism department supporting it for years. I found more obvious contributions of foreign investments in identifying West Bengal’s cultural and human resources as potential heritage throughout my fieldwork. These are clear examples of devolution of state power and the reallocation of its functions to transnational institutional networks.

Figure 8.6: Participating in the Silk River Walk during Pilot field in Kolkata, December 2017 (source: Ashish Adhikary)

Some heritage related initiatives that took place because of joint collaborations between UK universities/ cultural institutions and their Indian counterparts are noted here. The main focus of these collaborations and initiatives are not architectural conservation but they provide a platform for inclusive heritage making. These transnational initiatives are key in West Bengal in rearticulating and making visible, arts and crafts as intangible heritage. I will briefly flag some initiatives to develop my point regarding the complex nature of the devolution of state power within the structure of neoliberal heritage governance. In 2019 the British Council, UK's international cultural relations organisation opened a call for 'Crafting future India', part of its global initiative.[190] UK and Indian partner organisations would co-develop and collaborate on projects to strengthen the future of crafts in India through contemporary design and enterprise. In 2020 I got a call from an Indian design and innovation consultancy firm, UnBox, regarding Chitpur's living craft heritage. They are one of the partner organisations from India that were selected in the Crafting Future India initiative. Going back to 2017 when I was visiting Kolkata for my pilot fieldwork, I learnt about a Hooghly

[190] https://www.britishcouncil.in/programmes/arts/craftingfutures?fbclid=IwAR3pKzijDRAyH5vQxoYu1Q2Q_OUVaNcKnJCX7i2ZcoNwkj3NwmUlqynveDo (accessed 30 July 2021).

(alternatively spelt Hugly) river walk and participated in one walk to realise it was an artistic exchange between communities along Thames Estuary and India's Hooghly River (figure 8.6). The project Silk River walk initiated by UK's Kinetika was designed to focus on hand-painted Murshidabad silk scrolls.[191] I also learnt about AHRC funded projects in West Bengal, Hugli River of Culture Project with a focus on adaptive heritage management to strengthen grassroots volunteer groups.[192] Another British Academy project, Heritage Sensitive Intellectual Property and Marketing strategies (HIPAMS - INDIA) based on the partnership between a UK university and an Indian NGO focuses on performative arts and scroll painting.[193]

The official language of these engagements has a growing emphasis on civic engagements, capacity building, design intervention, tourism route development and overall sustainable economic development by promoting local culture. Over 10 years, an absence in the field of ICH has been overturned and replaced by saturation with the help of international finance. The political economy of the heritage sector here shows an interpenetration of transnational modalities of power. From international co-financing to citizen's group to social enterprises a 'horizontal and transversal relation between state and other organisations' can be noticed in Kolkata and West Bengal (Coombe 2013, 379).

This interpenetration can also be explained as a discursive field of a new heritage regime where from utter negligence, local cultures have suddenly become sites of inventory, documentation, intervention and are treated as resources to yield economic returns. The next section explores how the intermingling of global patrimony with neoliberal governance is manifested through various state and non-state actors working together

[191] https://kinetika.co.uk/about-murshidabad-silk and http://www.silkriver.co.uk/ (last accessed 30 July 2021)

[192] https://www.archiam.co.uk/the-hugli-river-of-cultures-pilot-project-from-bandel-to-barrackpore/ (last accessed 30 July 2021). I'm using the phase adaptive heritage management to indicate that according to the project brief, it advocates for a strategy of not preservation 'but to work with the people in these places to adapt and use them (three identified areas of the project are domestic architecture, cultural practices and memory) for their own purposes'.

[193] https://hipamsindia.org/ (last accessed 30 July 2021). Further see a UKRI funded project led by University of Nottingham, 'Digital urbanism & diasporas: walking the cultural heritage of Calcutta's riverfront'. https://gtr.ukri.org/projects?ref=AH%2FT005009%2F1 (last accessed 13 December 2021).

to create, document, evaluate, save, and reinvent the cultural heritage of the state which adheres to universal standardisation.

8.3.3. Local history-global design: heritage and UNESCO[194]

Talking to different actors in the heritage conservation and management field in Kolkata revealed that the economic potential of living (with some curation process) cultural heritage, has been discovered as a result of these projects. Now the effort is to remake and reorganise subaltern history under sanctioned models.[195] The process has begun to bring regional practices and everyday life under an institutionalised cultural heritage management strategy. Now, the word 'heritage' is being assigned to places, practices, and people, to utilise the full potential of places by scaling up the local against particular universal standards and values set by the intergovernmental agency, UNESCO. It is well established that within the organisational field of heritage, 'power flows [emanate] not only from national governments but also from intergovernmental entities' (Barthel-Bouchier 2015, 152). I will look at two interactions during my fieldwork to understand how the future language of the heritage governmentality of the city is being shaped by UNESCO. The first scenario focuses on Chitpur Road and Kolkata specifically. The second one expands the scope to West Bengal before I go into the analysis.

An interview with one of the conservation architects from the city who now runs an independent heritage consultation firm in Mumbai, revealed that prioritising intangible over tangible heritage in Kolkata, especially in terms of Chitpur Road, is now under scrutiny amongst the experts (interviewed on 23 February 2019). From 'scientistic materialism,' the focus is now on 'community based cultural tourism' (Winter 2013b, 536–39). She revealed that the dream is to re-imagine Chitpur, refurbish shops fronts and 'facelift its sections' (A. Basu 2018), keeping in mind a heritage corridor or heritage

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[194] Title inspired by (Mignolo 2000).

[195] Scholars have argued of appropriations where 'local stakeholders tactically approach the international heritage regime' (De Cesari 2013, 406). There is a potential to work back on these models and reshape them from bottom up and enquire how power materialises in a diffused manner. Drawing on Sally Engle Merry (2006), similar to Rico (2016), notion of 'vernacularisation' has been used to understand how local percolates the global and how it is not a one way process of imposition. Theoretically, I fully support this strand and value the political implications of locally reconfigured heritage regime, but in the course of my fieldwork, expert voices were too keen to adopt global models to garner cultural recognition. Further, attention towards the language used by the collaborative network projects mentioned above suggests there is an 'international standard' where local heritage activists needs to be 'upskilled' (see AHRC funded Hugli River of Culture Project website for instance).Hence, I present the hegemonic narrative of heritage bureaucracy in this section and in the consequent section present how this framework can be ruptured.

landscape idea with close similarity to UNESCO's Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) criteria. However, she said, UNESCO doesn't have the authority to enforce the law at a national level. It can only give 'guidelines' and 'examples' whereas the state government as the statutory body will have to do most of the work, demanding governance from the state, similar to PKG mentioned above. Further, Kolkata's civic authority can learn from successful examples of Ahmedabad, Mumbai, Jaipur, and Hyderabad. She further stresses that the Jaipur 'model' will be ideal for Kolkata to follow (notes from the unrecorded interview with a conservation architect, 23 February 2019).

The heritage commission of the State government is also buying into the idea of a UNESCO tag. I attended a seminar organised by the WB heritage commission on the occasion of World Heritage Day. An excerpt from the field note is presented here.

> Vasudeb Mullick is an official from the government and works with the heritage commission. He gave a brief account of the sub-regional workshop by UNESCO which was focused on South Asia and titled 'World Heritage Global Strategy in South Asia'.[196] It was attended by 75 delegates. Interestingly, I heard some new heritage vocabulary from the officials this time. Such as 'cultural landscape', 'historic town', 'heritage routes', 'industrial heritage'. Umapada Chatterjee presented the intangible heritage of Bengal in that meeting. These were surprising because before this event I had never heard this understanding of heritage in a government official's presentation. They said UNESCO is giving more stress on preserving natural assets. They seemed quite desperate to get some endorsement from UNESCO. He said, they asked the officials why West Bengal despite having vast resources isn't able to get much approval. The reason stated by him is that, though Bengal has 'OUV' (Outstanding Universal Value), it is the poor management that deters its success. They are thinking to promote Nabadwip and Kuchbihar as two heritage towns. IIT Kharagpur and BE Shibpur are two well-reputed 'technical' institutes that are given the responsibility to 'evaluate' the potential for these two towns. When asked they told me these institutes have proposed for a complete amendment of the West Bengal Heritage Act. (Field note, 18 April 2019)

Three issues become apparent from the conversation with the conservation architect and observation of the World Heritage Day conference organised by the WB Heritage Commission. First, heritage frameworks introduced by the colonial administration in India are being replaced by international/intergovernmental organisations like UNESCO

[196] https://whc.unesco.org/en/news/1930 (last accessed 15 January 2021).

in the postcolonial era. From the discussion, a sense has emerged that only UNESCO can give universal legitimacy to local heritage. Second, the conference briefing indicated that under the rubric of cultural diversity, an international standard is being set by UNESCO and South Asia's state parties are aiming to fit their existing natural and cultural resources into that set operational guidelines. Rather than framing its ground-up heritage policy, the Indian heritage sector in the professional sphere is essentially 'catching up' with the international frameworks as and when they are being introduced by UNESCO. Third, local culture is now under the techno-political governmentality of the nation-state and non-state actors to be surveyed, mapped, documented, categorised, and evaluated as an object of knowledge and site of intervention; so that it can prove itself worthy enough by the global experts to fit within UNESCO's world heritage list. All these ensure that the 'local culture' is now ready to be transacted in the neoliberal heritage market. It is now part of the process which ensures 'universalising commodification of heritage' (Herzfeld 2004, 8) rather than learning from the local practice. I am going to discuss these three issues in detail now.

8.3.3.1. Legitimising heritage through UNESCO

ASI (Archaeological Survey of India) who acted as the sole guardian of monumental heritage conservation in India since its establishment under the British Raj in 1861 is losing its sole authority on deciding what is heritage. As part of the global network of neoliberal governmentality, the West Bengal government's heritage commission which comprises experts from different fields is now regarding UNESCO as the legitimate institution for designating Heritage. ASI's Ancient Monuments and Archeological Sites and Remains Act of 1904 was modelled after the British Monuments Act of 1882. Now in postcolonial India, the West Bengal government's heritage commission and its experts attend to and replicate the directives of UNESCO at the local level. Therefore, urgency and desperation to get some sort of 'tag' or 'recognition' from UNESCO, was evident in the conference I mentioned above. I keep in mind that UNESCO is an intergovernmental organization where state parties have their say in decision making and recent years, BRICS countries are showing considerable influence over the nomination process as the world heritage committee member (Meskell 2014; Bertacchini, Liuzza, and Meskell

2017).[197] However, they work within the established epistemological framework and the imbalance in power between countries in the global south and north is worth noting (Labadi 2007; Anita Smith 2015; Frey and Steiner 2011). Also, International Nongovernmental Organisations (INGOs) like ICOMOS and IUCN perform major roles as expert-driven, legitimate authorities in drafting laws, lobbying, selecting, and evaluating (Schmutz and Elliott 2017).

Similarly, a focus on expert documentation and evaluation was palpable in the field note. Technical experts remain an important pillar in this discourse of legitimising local heritage through the UNESCO framework. Two technical institutes IIT (Indian Institute of Technology) Kharagpur and erstwhile BE (Bengal Engineering), now (IIEST) Indian Institute of Engineering Science and Technology, Shibpur has been given the responsibility to evaluate the heritage value of two old towns of Bengal, Kuchbihar and Nabadwip. Their technical expertise would enable them to make a dossier to be submitted to the heritage commission. Heritage still operates under 'scientistic materialism' (Winter 2013) much like the ASI era. Scientific control by autonomous expert committees under international surveillance has percolated into neoliberal governmentality (Coombe 2013). It provides new forms of legitimacy to local cultures. This extensive 'practices of mapping territories and inventorying their cultural properties, qualities and attributes of significance while making these legible through new forms of documentation, archiving and publication' is part of UNESCO's 'auditing, standardization, certification, and accreditation' process (Coombe 2013, 318).

8.3.3.2. Standardisation of heritage value

I acknowledge UNESCO has already incorporated an intangible aspect of heritage due to some of the Asian countries' intervention, but as Winter (2014) has pointed out, Asian countries tended to follow a global trend rather than introducing distinctive values on conservation. The State heritage commission completely surrenders in front of the abstract normative criteria such as OUV (Outstanding Universal Value), which warrants for the formalization of an evaluation process based on scientific rationality, standardization of value, a technique of preservation and site management (Schmutz

[197] BRICS constitutes five developing economies Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. The first summit of these countries took place in 2009 and from 2010 it was formally recognised as a political-economic block.

and Elliott 2017; Musitelli 2002; Barthel-Bouchier 2015). It does not question the concept of universality, even though it is 'deeply rooted in the European cultural tradition, combining historical and aesthetic parameters derived from classical philosophy' (L. Smith 2006:101). Universal criteria will make it possible to rank and judge historic and religious sites (Kuchbihar and Nabadweep) to be selected or rejected by a committee. The nomination procedure of any national site or intangible practices in UNESCO's WHS list or ICH list is subjected to rigid documentation and evaluation procedure. While the colonial powers initiated 'cultural governance' (Cohn 1996) by teaching the local population how to appreciate their history, UNESCO's heritage framework is a form of universal 'epistemic governance' (Alasuutari and Qadir 2014).[198]

The field note above suggests West Bengal Heritage Commission quite willingly wants its cultural assets to go through this process. It wants to yield its heritage legislation according to UNESCO's directives and criteria of 'OUV'. Heritage discourse in cities across India is succumbing to UNESCO's 'bureaucratic universalisation of single morality' (Herzfeld 2004, 24). It is identifying historic routes and landscapes, and it wants to focus more on the natural landscape of the state and put its bid forward so that some of their natural/cultural resources can be inscribed in the 'World Heritage List'. Following Bourdieu (1984), Schmutz and Elliott (2017, 141) thus identify inclusion in the 'List' as a form of 'consecration' which ascertain a nation state's cultural wealth as its symbolic capital not to mention the monetary gain associated with the tag. Hence postcolonial nation-states often seek UNESCO's validation because it is a key for global commercialization of heritage; as the local site achieves a lucrative status which brings tourism (Caust and Vecco 2017).

This standardisation of value makes it imperative that the national and state heritage sector actively looks for a 'model' which is based on a 'homogeneous set of cultural, moral, aesthetic and political values' emerging from western modernist discourse (Herzfeld 2004, 2). Therefore, the conservation architect referred to 'examples' of HUL on the UNESCO site. Also, 'successful' Indian case studies; walled cities of Jaipur and

[198] While it can be argued that local negotiations take place and myriad heritage values are considered, (see Orange 2011) but I observe that it takes place only *after* a site or practice has received the designation. My focus here is the process through which sites and practices get the designation. The process involves a statement justifying the outstanding universal value and statement on authenticity and/or integrity.

Ahmedabad (both made it to the World Heritage List in 2019 and 2017) were cited as models for Chitpur to follow.[199] A process of replication is actively encouraged and adapted by the professionals which might eliminate features that do not fit the criteria required to be considered as a Heritage landscape. What happens to Chitpur if Kolkata follows Jaipur or Ahmedabad model? Some immediate suggestions which came from the conservation architect were facelift, refurbishing and regeneration of old urban core and making 'Chitpur hip is the rallying call' (A. Basu 2018, n.p). It is not hard to imagine what a 'hip' old neighbourhood might look like in the age of neoliberal land appropriation. More often than usual a heritage-led urban redevelopment leads to gentrification and displacement of the socio-economically marginal population who are the core of Chitpur's subaltern cultural production. Meskell's (2020) study on the neoliberal heritage governance in India has pointed out how privatization of monuments in India is related to gentrification and tourism development. Similar work in Thailand has established how neoliberal 'hijacking of history' and historic preservation leads to 'spatial cleansing' in urban areas to conform to the hegemonic ideas of rational town planning, aesthetics, and order (Herzfeld 2006; 2010; De Cesari and Dimova 2019), see (Costa 2015) for Ahmedabad's heritage-led urban redevelopment which violently dispossessed marginalised population).[200] These examples demonstrate how the elimination of 'disorder' and nonconformist elements brings regional historic and religious centres under the global purview of Heritage. In other words, the standardised heritage aesthetics allows mostly a sanitised landscape to gain the recognition of the World Heritage.

8.3.3.3. From local to global

Lastly, the interview excerpt and field note suggests, under this scheme, global processes are leveraging the uniqueness of the local culture yet trying to bring them under the rubric of 'global designs' (Mignolo 2000). 'Diverse and particular' is giving way to 'homogenous and universal'. It might be a product of globalisation where two

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[199] https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1551/ for Ahmedabad and https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1605/ for Jaipur (last accessed on 15 January 2021).

[200] See a report on another demolition drive to build a temple corridor in the city of Varanasi https://thewire.in/politics/kashi-vishwanath-corridor-up-bjp. The Ahmedabad project and Varanasi project has been done by the same design and planning consultancy. The riverfront of the city has been submitted to UNESCO to be included in WHL by India in 2021 https://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/6526/ (last accessed on 31 July 2021).

contradicting and divergent forces, homogenisation at the global level try to bring order in the diversification at the local level (Mozaffari and Jones 2020, 3). I have already mentioned in the previous section, since 2013 when Chitpur Local started, heritage experts and professionals have ‘discovered’ there is more to Chitpur than the aristocratic houses. An effort has started to bring its ‘marginal’ and subaltern cultural landscape under the mainstream heritage conservation paradigm. While these efforts do widen the scope and imagination of heritage in the city, finally the ‘local’ cultural form, in Chitpur the artisanal trade and craft, comes under the purview of the ‘global’ framework. For its aristocratic houses, the word ‘adaptive reuse’ has been floated and its urban craft and artisanal trade sector has been meticulously documented to utilise the full potential of its ‘cultural economy’ (K. Bose 2015; A. Basu 2018).

There is a lack of understanding and learning from local values when the UNESCO framework has always already gained unquestioned legitimacy and sanction. The West Bengal heritage commission, therefore, learns under the tutelage of international experts of UNESCO. The South Asia workshop teaches the delegates from countries like Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka, new lexicon of heritage governance such as ‘heritage routes’, ‘cultural landscape’, ‘historic town’ and ‘industrial heritage’.[201] The workshop had dedicated sessions where experts delineated the main features of these terms and the technical consideration while applying under these categories in the world heritage list. The main reason for this exercise is said to be the under-representation of these countries in these particular categories of the World Heritage Site. As I have pointed out above, BRICS countries are showing geopolitical bargaining power and lobbying as part of international diplomacy in the world heritage committee. Nevertheless, they are working within the institutional guidelines and epistemologies while exercising their soft power as ‘developing’ countries. This is a unidirectional imposition/translation of concepts from the global onto the local landscape. Following Mignolo (2000) we can see the risk of this ‘mimicry, exportation of theories and the internal (cultural) colonialism rather than promoting new forms of cultural critique and intellectual and political emancipations’ (Mignolo 2000, 5).

[201] A good point of consultation is Julie Channer’s (2013) PhD work on state’s cultural governance of creative industries in South West England. She relies on the idea of governance as a ‘networked multiscaler’ system and enquires how power operates.

In this section, Heritage as Neoliberal Governmentality, I argued instead of vernacularizing, the local authority and the experts are exporting the global heritage framework from Europe to the 'developing' countries by relying on UNESCO frameworks.[202] The networked cosmopolitan elites and transnational institutions, the 'knowledge brokers', are often playing a crucial role in recognizing intangible cultural aspects outside a rigid and unimaginative institutional heritage sector. Often unintentionally, they bring these places and practices under the purview of a bureaucratic heritage management scheme that follows a normative structure. The emphasis quickly shifts from the cultural producers themselves to inclusion in a 'list' and replication of 'models'. Economic exploitation and exoticisation of the local culture follow suit rather than shifting the power relation between the cultural producers and consumers. The list has been critiqued as a 'metacultural production' that reorients the heritage discussion around protection rather than creation (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004). It navigates the discussion towards managerial and technological mechanisms rather than learning from and with the creative practitioners. The list rematerializes the immateriality and fluidity which is central to living practices, which I am going to discuss below. A major paradigm shift is needed which needs to question the overarching emphasis on conservation of cultural practices whereas change and continuity are inherent for its survival.

8.4. Heritage of change and impermanence

I discuss the idea of change and impermanence in this section taking into account the processual nature of cultural heritage. I present a counter-hegemonic narrative of heritage sensibility which stands in sharp contrast with the conservation centric global Heritage agenda that has been discussed above. The processual nature of heritage also expressed as living heritage discourse has been a much-discussed topic in critical heritage studies and landscape studies (Poulios 2010; Miura 2005; D.C. Harvey 2015; also see section 2.3.2 for a detailed discussion on the term 'living heritage'). Archaeologist Siân Jones suggested 'that we need to shift our approach to conserving

[202] A nuanced discussion around global cosmopolitan heritage sensibility, aspiration and its contestation with its local counterpart can be found in the issue *Heritage Gone Global* (Daugbjerg and Fibiger 2011). The articles in this issue critically enquire the process through which these contesting categories are produced with a focussed attention on cosmopolitanism and exclusion under globalism. Particular attention has been be paid to the process of cultural and institutional translation from Europe to the cosmopolitan elite of Arab world and ex-colonies.

cultural heritage away from the current emphasis on the material fossilisation of heritage as ''product'' towards a focus on heritage as ''process''' (Jones 2006, 120–121). I stay with Chitpur and its craft practices in this section to point out how without control mechanisms and imposed order of legal heritage frameworks; without being managed and listed; and without administrative and bureaucratic interventions, the craft traditions evolved, adapted, transformed, and reinvented themselves. Moreover, I argue for a radical change in these crafts' continuity through the democratisation of knowledge transfer for dignity and respect of craft communities. The caste-based structural inequalities associated with craft communities in India, makes it imperative that beyond genealogical continuity of craft practice, craft knowledge should be distributed across caste boundary.

The discussion of change is addressed around three issues: experimentation with form (section 8.4.1); experimentation with material (section 8.4.2); and continuity of making through repair (section 8.4.3). The concluding part (section 8.4.4) argues for an ontological shift in heritage studies by exploring the othered epistemic world. I explain the process of annual religious idol making and its immersion to understand the values of immateriality, impermanence, letting go and forgetting. The universal modernist discourse of statutory heritage regime has enshrined materiality, permanence, holding on and memorialising of heritage. In the public imagination, these are the ontological bedrock of heritage that critical heritage scholars are questioning since the turn of the century. I advance this scholarship with the tools from decolonial thinking and practice. I put forward a politics of pluriversality to displace the universal conservationist agenda of the professional heritage sector.[203]

8.4.1. Fluidity in the form

The site of Chitpur Road gives the crafts creative liberty to function dynamically. For example, if we talk to wooden *sandesh* Mould makers on this Road and trace their genealogical history, it emerges that they have used their skill of wood engraving to make different kinds of products. Though at present they are identified for their wooden

[203] Monika Stobiecka's work on 'transheritage' proposes a similar heritage future. Drawing on Karen Barad's notion of intra-action (2007) she argues for constantly transformative heritage and puts forward seven radical forms of reconceptualised heritage. They are transmaterial, translocal, transnational, transcultural, transracial, transcorporeal, transtemporal heritage (presented in the Poznań workshop on the Heritage in the Anthropocene 2019 and paper shared in private communication).

sandesh mould making skill, it would be incorrect to think that they have solely produced wooden *sandesh* mould since they entered the trade.

Murari Das recalls his grandfather was a carpenter and initially his father too was in the profession of making furniture in the aristocratic family houses of Chitpur. His father Baidyanath Das opened the present shop, Devi Art and Co in Chitpur Road and arguably he is the first to make wooden *sandesh* blocks from Chitpur. *Sandesh* mould was only one of many blocks he made. Murari Das said his father and even he made blocks for diverse purposes:

> 'প্রিন্টিং ব্লক যেটা আগে প্রেসে করে ছাপা হত, ক্যালেন্ডারের হোডিং হত, নাম হত দোকানের··· আমি ছাঁচের কাজ করেছি। কিছুদিন মডেল করেছি, খেলনা হাতি ঘোড়া করেছি, সন্দেশ ঘাঁটার তারু বানিয়েছি।'
>
> My father made printing block, which was used in the press for printing, calendar fonts and headings, wooden shop sign…I have done moulds for toy animals such as elephant, horse [these animal models are made with coloured sugars during some festivities] and *taru* [a huge wooden spoon used for making *sandesh*, especially stirring the *chana* or cottage cheese] (Murari Das, mould maker interview, 18 November 2018)

Figure 8.7: A wood block print design for a women's blouse (garment) made by Sunil Das (source: author)

The excerpt suggests a variety of products that the mould maker and his father made essentially using wood as a material. The story of printing blocks in Chitpur is popular because Chitpur was the hub of popular printing and publishing from the mid-nineteenth century to the early twentieth century. This story sometimes obscures other

forms of production which were essential for the block makers' survival.[204] After its decline due to new technological innovation in printmaking, the demand for printing blocks has completely stopped for the last twenty years. Sunil Das another mould maker along the Road said,

> ‘প্রিন্তিং ব্লক প্রচুর করেছি। ব্লাউজ এর ডিজাইন কএরছি। মেহেন্ধি ব্লক, মিস্ত্রির ছাঁচ। যা কাজ পাই তাই করেছি।’
>
> I have made a lot of printing blocks, designs of blouses [figure 8.7], *mehendi* block, *sandesh* mould. I am ready to do anything if I get the order. (Sunil Das, mould maker interview, 17 February 2019)

Though Sunil Das's narrative indicates that he can make anything from wood, which is commercially viable for him, he can use his expertise in wood engraving to make art pieces in the style of nineteenth-century wood-cut print art. Figure 8.8 shows one of his works in that genre which he agreed to do at the request of a senior contemporary artist.

Figure 8.8: A reproduction of nineteenth century woodcut print by Sunil Das; the picture depicts a mythological scene from Indian epic Ramayana (source: author)

[204] Curation of landscape in English countryside has seen similar erasure of meanings. It has given overwhelming emphasis on aesthetics of hedgerows whereas their functional use and other elements of the landscape has been rarely addressed. Oral historical approach has been used by Riley and D.C. Harvey (2005) to unravel narratives of the agricultural producers who are often not heard due to the privilege of expert knowledge.

Sunil Das's father also made some wooden sculptures of gods and he showed some of the samples that he has kept as a memento. Bishnu Roy, the craftsman who supplies moulds to Chitpur and works from his village home, revealed his father used to make wooden wheels for bullock carts in their ancestral home in East Bengal (now Bangladesh) and later started to make moulds after migrating to West Bengal after partition.[205]

Their narrative can be interpreted as a strategy of economic survival for a dwindling craft. It was necessary to secure their livelihood using existing craft skills in an era of rapid technological transformation. Only those who learnt other wood engraving works, *sandesh* mould among others mentioned above, survived in Chitpur, according to Sunil Das. At present, only six shops in this area are involved in making or selling wooden *sandesh* moulds and some source it from rural craftspeople. The emergence of this craft heritage in Chitpur became possible, therefore, when people who were professional carpenters ventured into making printing blocks. Its continuation to the present day's sandesh mould making demonstrates these craftspeople are skilled in adapting their craft to the changing times. They have diversified their products as part of their practice much before the contemporary artists and designers showed interest in creating new products with them.[206]

This narrative of diversification can also be interpreted from a social perspective. They might not have any intention to make only one set of wooden products; furniture, or wooden wheels, or printing blocks, or moulds for the rest of their life. This applies to every artisanal cluster I worked with. Change is often a sign of upward social mobility for people belonging to the lower caste who are the artisan class in India (see section 6.2.2.3 for a discussion on caste and mobility). Murari Das did not remain a maker like his father and became a supplier because that has opened up new opportunities for him

[205] Sen (2016) traces change in method, tools and material of crafts since 16th century which shows craft practices transcended strict guidelines imposed by religious scriptures in colonial and postcolonial India.

[206] See Sofya Shahab's (2021) work on how conflict creates fluid heritage which gets adapted with changing circumstances and makes artisanal communities resilient. Focusing on refugee artisans (wood engravers) of Damascus, Syria who are now based in Amman, Jordan her observation deeply resembles my argument of change and continuity of practices. She also observes 'conceptions of authenticity and tradition may come into conflict with processes of evolution and change occurring through displacement that see artisans employing different materials, tools, techniques and designs in the production of their work, as they negotiate changing markets'. (Source: https://creid.ac/heritage-beyond-monuments-how-syrian-artisans-adapted-to-conflict/ last accessed on 3 August 2021).

and the future generation. Similarly, the elderly goldsmith wanted his son to manage and expand the business by opening new showrooms rather than continuing the making of the jewellery itself. I want to reconnect this with section 8.2.2 where I mentioned how Murari Das's 'endangerment sensibility' does not allow him to design a mechanism for preservation. Loss does not necessarily lead them towards holding onto the craft, rather it is an opportunity to create a new identity. A rigid structure of conservation insinuates craftspeople should be entrapped in these professions, whereas they might not want to stay in that social stratum. Conservation of craft for the sake of maintaining tradition fails to question the structural violence of caste, which is the material condition of the craft production. I argue for a heritage sensibility where socio-economic recognition of craft skills will animate transformation in the relationship of production, rather than conservation of the status quo.

8.4.2. Changing material

The mould makers, the idol makers, and the musical instrument makers all experimented with making their products with different materials. Changing materials show the living and evolving nature of crafts and the craftspeople's agility and efforts to transcend the structural conditions endured by traditional craft communities. It considers a continuation of craft skill through the pragmatic use of materials for two reasons: out of necessity to survive and the desire for social mobility. Though wood is the main material for the mould makers, some of them tried aluminium moulds, but recommend wood as their main material. The musical instrument makers have also changed materials, changing from clay to wood or metal. The percussion drums such as *tabla* (especially the left one known as *baya*) and *khol* used to be in clay, now wood, brass, copper, aluminium, and steel have taken over.

Figure 8.9: Inside a Kumartuli sculptor's studio (source: author)

I will centre the discussion around the idol makers in this section. In Guha-Thakurta's (2015) book 'In the name of the Goddess' it is noted that the transformation in the nature and iconography of clay images of the main deity Durga, can be traced back from the late sixteenth to the early seventeenth century. From the mid-eighteenth century, a shift from worshipping decorated clay pots or *patachitra* to anthropomorphic clay idols started taking place. The clay idol makers always showed a certain ingenuity by experimenting and changing the style of the deity keeping with their cultural exposure and political atmosphere of the state. From an Orientalist style during the colonial era, to a realist style in the twentieth century, to a contemporary art/modern style from the second half of the century, the idol makers are dynamic in creating an image of the goddess. Famous clay modellers Gopeshwar Pal, Ramesh Chandra Pal started to bring in their aesthetic sensibilities and training as sculptors in depicting a more humanised form of deity and experimented with style of eyes, face, hairstyle, and skin colour (Agnihotri 2001).[207] In the 1930s, the idols became more realistic in terms of representation and resembled life-like features (Guha-Thakurta 2015, 162). Hereditary idol makers from

[207] Colonial encounter and art education played a significant part in bringing this change. For a detailed discussion on colonial patronage towards this craft see (M. Sen 2016).

Krishnanagar and Shantipur traditions were known for making clay models not only religious idols, but also for making figurine or ethnographic models.

Figure 8.10: A sculptor at work (source: author)

Institutional training in sculpture made them shift their medium of expression. Ramesh Pal was acclaimed for his bronze sculptures of nationalist personalities which replaced the statue of colonial administrators in the post-colonial cityscape of Kolkata. I have interviewed a septuagenarian sculptor in Kumartuli, who belongs to the Krishnanagar-Shantipur tradition of clay figurine making and was trained under his maternal uncles, but completely shifted his specialisation to sculpting (figure 8.10). He uses plaster of Paris, stone, and bronze as his medium (interview with Kamalesh Pal, 3 October 2018). Bimal Pal straddles between two identities, artist/sculptor, and idol maker (figure 8.9; also discussed in 6.2.1.3). He told me, for the last twenty-five years, the use of fibreglass has become most common, but before that stone, cement and bronze were used as the medium (interview with Bimal Pal, 19 November 2018). As new generation artists coming from hereditary idol-making families joined prestigious Government Art College, Kolkata for formal training in sculpting, they have used diverse materials apart from clay. These 'artist' idol makers easily adopted and contributed to the trend of 'theme puja' which emerged prominently at the turn of the century.[208] A trend of diaspora puja

[208] Though there are examples of *art thakur* (artistic deity) from 1970s (Guha-Thakurta 2015: 120).

started in the 1990s and Kumartuli quickly picked up fibreglass as a light material to send Durga idols abroad.

Kumartuli Artist Organisation’s joint secretary also mentioned that in recent years, Kumartuli has diversified its area of work (Interview with Bikash Pal, 14 February 2019) and now works year-round on a number of different types of sculpture: public statues, mythological figures, decorative sculptors, television set design, street beautification models, busts, interior decoration, and wedding hall embellishments. These commissions demand that the artisans use diverse materials as their medium of work. Therefore, clay is not their sole medium. Diversification is not a recent phenomenon in Kumartuli. An interview with artist Amitabha Paul revealed that architectural motifs in the palatial mansions of wealthy colonial elites were also done by Kumartuli artisans (Interview with Amitabha Paul, 7 May 2019). Guha-Thakurta (2015, 158) affirms this claim and says, ‘earlier histories too of the *kumors* of Kumortuli working with lime plaster, taking on orders for sculpting architectural ornamentation and European-style statuary for the wealthy residences of north and central Kolkata homes’ are documented. Kumartuli might be a quintessential representation of the hereditary tradition of unfired clay idol making for religious purposes in Kolkata but there are groups within the *Pal* community who broke away from the tradition and made their mark in other fields of creative artistry. Moumita Sen (2016) has noted how the Pal community has shifted their identity from *kumbhakar* to *mritshilpi* to sculptor/artist over the centuries in the pursuit of a '*bhadrolok* artisthood'.[209] The desire of the 'subaltern artisan' of the *kumbhakar* caste to be recognised as 'gentleman artist' is intrinsically linked to changing material, as it permits reformulation of craft object's value and this value gets translated to uplift the craftspeople’s identity. Similar to the wooden mould makers, one can say Kumartuli adapted to the demands of the present age, changed, and refashioned its creative output continuously. Moreover, it also helped in their upward mobility from artisan to artist and the pursuit of change also created foundations for breaking gender boundaries in idol making.

8.4.3. Repair

Examples of repair, replacement, and continuous renewal are well documented in

[209] A draft version of Sen’s 2016 book chapter is accessed where the book’s page numbers are missing. The phrases are available in page 17 and 22 of the draft.

heritage literature as part of Asian heritage practice (Ndoro and Wijesuriya 2014; Tom 2013; Byrne 2014; Peleggi 2012). This scholarship gives examples of tangible heritage such as shrines, temples, and buildings and how they have been continuously renovated, replicated, repainted, replaced, restored, and rebuilt for a long time, much before colonial intervention introduced the idea of 'authentic' conservation of material fabric and form. In Sri Lanka, the Buddhist tooth relic temple (Ndoro and Wijesuriya 2014), in Mayanmar Swedagon Pagoda (Tunprawat 2009), Japan's Ise Jinge Shrine (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004), are a few examples, all having a similar tale to tell. The Nara Declaration in 1994, which is regarded as the foremost critique of the universal validity of heritage conservation principles, also focuses on the repair and restoration of building materials and their fabric. I am extending that line of argument in the field of craft. Similar to the continuous process of creation in these religious sites, some crafts are 'continuously re-born, and constantly growing and going through a process of ever new creative transformations' (Holtorf 2015, 417)

> Ashutosh da was repairing the broken Sri khol [a two headed drum made of clay and mostly used for religious prayers and songs like 'kirtan']. The khol had a logo of Star Harmonium on it. The elder brother told me they sold it four or five years back. Somehow the customer damaged it badly but they are confident that they can repair it…I learnt more than selling they have these repair jobs nowadays. I decided to follow this process and asked them what else do they repair? (Field note, 29 December 2018)

Figure 8.11: Ashutosh *da* repairing a broken Sri Khol (source: author)

In the musical instrument making cluster, the instruments are not made in Chitpur from scratch. The outer structures of the instruments are ordered from villages and some large-scale production workshops in Kolkata. Among the two brothers who inherited their grandfather's shop, the 115-year-old Star Harmonium, only one knows how to make instruments. Ashutosh Ruidas from Howrah Udaysekharpur is a daily wage worker, trained under his father and elder brother, and makes, assembles, and repairs the instruments (figure 8.11). More than making, they repair broken percussion instruments or tune key-board instruments. A variety of instruments, harmonium, *tabla*, guitar, sitar, tanpura and dhak gets repaired here and the brothers are confident they can return them as good as new. In the goldsmith shop, I noticed a very common trend of customers coming in with the request of melting old jewellery to make a new one with a new design. The broken or old objects get a new lease of life and their value is reproduced through these care-ful acts of mending. Repair and renewal should be viewed as a continuity of the material process of making and remaking (Martínez and Laviolette 2019). For the musical instruments, the form persists but the material is changed/replaced, for the gold jewellery, the material remains the same but the form changes. The practice of repair questions the notion of authenticity and considers the fluid and dynamic nature of both the form and the material of making. Only the knowledge and skill of making/repairing gets transmitted from one generation to another. The knowledge transmission is genealogical to a large extent in all the crafts clusters I worked with, which asserts the processual nature of heritage. Nevertheless, given that the continuity of the genealogical knowledge transfer ensures the craftspeople are tied to their caste identity, I argue for a more radical transformation within the structure of knowledge and skill transmission. In this context, heritage studies should argue for a democratised knowledge transfer and should question the established power structures.

These three sections demonstrate that rather than material authenticity and conservation of fabric and forms, the craftspeople practice a continuous reinvention of making. In the context of these urban crafts, the practitioners do not express this form of reproduction as heritage. Nevertheless, I read them from a perspective of heritage sensibility that is embedded in creative transformation and adaptation. The approach of changing material while advancing the craft of idol making or changing the wooden

product itself while continuing the wood engraving technique is the story of the heritage of change.

8.4.4. Impermanence: religious idol making

An ontology of stasis and permanence is the guiding principle of Eurocentric modernist heritage discourse as it is rooted in secular scientific rationality. That the physical artefact of heritage value needs to be saved for posterity has gained certain validity in the circle of heritage professionals. I echo the voices of critical heritage scholars who have consistently argued against this materialist narrative (see section 2.3.2). I have discussed in section 8.2.1 how listing, ordering, conserving, and managing have been the epistemic basis of the discipline. When this universalist conservation discourse was exported to India via colonial governance, it committed certain forms of epistemicide (Santos 2016). The empire attempted to deny its subjects diverse ways of being, knowing and thinking about the world. Drawing on Santos' work on Epistemologies of the South, Escobar explains the mechanism of this effacement, 'what does not exist is actively produced as non-existent or as a noncredible alternative to what exists' (Escobar 2020, 69). The absence of material conservation was designated as a lack of historical consciousness and an inferior form of knowledge rather than a different relationship with the past. In that process of devaluation, immateriality, impermanence, letting go and forgetting were deviant forms of experiencing the past, whereas material accumulation, stasis, holding on and remembering became the norm of valuing one's heritage. I highlight the craft practice of religious idol making to illustrate how an artefact of extreme value might go through a cyclical process of construction, destruction, renewal, and rebirth to decolonise the epistemology of heritage studies.

The craft of religious idol-making follows a continuous process of creation and destruction of the physical form of a deity which is repeated every year. The idols are usually made with natural material which one can find in abundance in the lower Gangetic plains of India; riverine clay, straw and bamboo and adorned with detailed embellishments.

Figure 8.12: Durga Immersion

(source: https://www.flickr.com/photos/56819064@N05/8131364419 last accessed 30 July 2021)

> 'The artists work night and day to finish the unfinished clay idols as the city gears up to celebrate its biggest festival –Durga Puja…each year colourful processions with trumpeting sound of dhak and dhol (drums) take the idol to their *puja mandap* (place of worship), there is a melancholy behind this welcoming note. The city knows that after five days there will be another procession to take the deity back to the banks of the river for immersion, where it will meet its end [figure 8.12]. During the initial days of festivity, the lifeless clay idol is invoked with life through chants and hymns. The process transforms an idol into a deity, despite knowing the ephemeral nature of its existence. Invocation and immersion, two seemingly divergent yet rhythmic process, are not only rituals of Hindu worship but signifies the transient nature of life itself. Life, where permanence is an anomaly and where each creation comes with the precondition of destruction' (cited in Mukhopadhyay 2020, 60–61, drawing from fieldwork in 2014-15).

The quote explains the process of immersion and one of the underlying meanings of immersion as explained by my father; impermanence and transient nature of life (interview with parents 17 December 2017).[210] Following decolonial writers, I

[210] My mother however presented a social commentary of Durga idol immersion from a feminist perspective. She also equated immersion with death. However, for her death symbolises horror of marriage that women endurerd in India even a century ago and possibly still do in many parts of the country. She quoted a poem by a nineteenth century poet, Michel Madhusudan Dutt titled 'Bijoya Dashami'. The poem is titled after the day when the idol immersion takes place. In the poem Durga

acknowledge the ancestral knowledge that has been passed down to me which informed this interpretation of the ritual of idol immersion that I am going to present.[211] It is believed immersion in the form of destruction initiates new dawn of creation and the beginning of life itself. In other words, the seed of creation is bestowed in destruction. He observes a similarity between post-death cremation practice and idol immersion. One of the strands of Indian philosophy proposes that the material body is made up of five natural elements; ক্ষিতি (earth or clay), অপ্ (water), তেজঃ (light or fire), মরুৎ (wind) and ব্যোম (sky or ether). The body is only a material bearer of the indestructible spirit which resides temporarily within the body during the short lifespan. People believe even with the cremation of the body, the spirit lives on in the cosmos. For idol worship and immersion a similar philosophy has been extended.

During the five days of ritual worship, it is believed that the clay idol imbues the spiritual power of a goddess.[212] The material comes alive (J. Bennett 2004) when the idol is consecrated and becomes an incarnation of the goddess. People believe in the material agency of the deity rather than the material itself during the five days. Once the ritual worship is over, the deity becomes a lifeless clay idol again, and returned to nature in its material form. The immersion process symbolises the end of materiality in the perceptible reality, but the spiritual agency transcends the material form, and remains in the metaphysical world to be returned again in future. The material form attains utmost value and is considered with having agency when the spiritual power resides within the form. The same material becomes dispensable and destroyed when the

(alternatively known as Uma as used in the poem), who is believed to be the daughter of Himalaya, is about to go back to her husband's house after spending time in earth which is her parental home. Mother of Uma, in the poem, is seen to be griefsticken about the prospect of her dauther leaving at the nightfall of the last day of the festival. Here start of the festival symbolises invocation of life by welcoming the daughter to her parental home and immersion marks the loss of the daughter to cruel customs of marriage which she compared with death.

[211] Also see Alexis Pauline Gumbs's (2018), M Archive where she questions individual scholarly authority and presents her work, previous work as ancestrally cowritten text.

[212] Forthcoming book Shaping Worlds: Clay Sculpture in South Asia by Susan Bean claims unfired clay has an auspicious meaning. She says, 'The need to make images anew for each festival allows both for the recreation of traditional forms and for innovations responding to altered circumstance'. Quoted from http://www.susanbean.com/modeling-modernity-unfired-clay-sculpture-in-south-asia/ (last accessed 8 August 2021).

matter is separated from the agency.[213] The separation between mind and matter doesn't exist yet exist depending on the cyclical nature of creation and destruction. Accordingly, the heritage value of the idol extends beyond the immediate teleology of past-present-future.

Through an extensive ethnographic study in South East Asian countries, Denis Byrne (2014) has argued how popular religion has become a heritage studies blind spot. Religion and its multifarious expressions in the form of agency of numinous objects, myths, epics, rituals that remained essential in the life of millions are carefully avoided in the pursuit of creating a secular domain for heritage studies.[214] Instead, categories of folk, tradition, architecture, crafts are used while addressing heritage with a religious undertone. He points out we need to think beyond Cartesian duality to understand materials might not be passive and inert in some contexts.

In the realm of practice, the clay artists know none of their creations is eternal. As creators of idols (colloquially they refer to the structure of the deity as *putul* or doll), a temporary incarnation of God, they are aware of transient and the abstract nature of the spiritual power. Economically as well, the community thrive because of the annual cyclic nature of idol making. After immersion, some materials like clay go back to the river, some, like bamboo and the embellishments were retrieved immediately to reuse for another idol.

The secularised domain of heritage studies would have considered the material form as a statue, and argued for its conservation purely based on its artistic and aesthetic quality. It does not have the tools to address the convergence of material with metaphysical where destruction and recreation is the guiding principle. As a

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[213] In Puri Odisha, the deity of Jagannath and his siblings, carved of a special wood, known as *darubhamha* goes through a periodical ritual of renewal known as *Nava Kalebara* ; (which can roughly be translated as the new physical body). For a detailed insight on this ritual see 'Nugteren Albertina, 2005. Gods of wood, gods of stone: The ritual renewal of the wooden statues at Purī In *Belief, Bounty and Beauty- Rituals around Sacred Trees in India*. Brill. 242-279.)

[214] It is imperative to stress, following (Chakrabarty 2000), this discussion must be seen separately from the calculative, neo-nationalist use of religion in the political sphere of India. Historicity of immersion practices hasn't been researched by me. This interpretation also extends to only one strand of Hindu philosophy which accommodates quite vast and contradictory schools of thinking. Hence, I am not generalising this practice with the entire Hindu philosophy. The construction of 'Hinduism' as a religion from a 'medley of Hindu practices' (Chakrabarty 2000, 14) is itself a colonial construction. Hinduism has multiple ways of seeking and knowing the truth and reality. There are non-immersive idol worship traditions in temples and homes.

methodological tool, it talks about community engagement and local value because of its inability to construct a theoretical position that is radically opposite to the scientific conservation paradigm. My argument is inspired by the emerging scholarship in heritage studies that has questioned the conservationist approach and addressed the issue of loss and destruction as generative of new forms of heritage (DeSilvey and Harrison 2020; Rico 2016; Holtorf 2015). Echoing Holtorf (2015) I argue that conscious destruction itself can constitute heritage value to reframe the ontological underpinning of heritage studies. It gives legitimacy to multiple forms of knowledge and ways of being and understanding the world which was denied under universalist discourse.

I refuse to frame impermanence, cyclic renewal and destructions within heritage studies as 'other' knowledge which can be put aside from mainstream and bracketed within 'the subjective, the irrational, the emotive, the unverifiable, the non-universal' (Winter 2014a, 131). The argument is consciously not advancing the cause of 'other ways' to reverse the relationship between 'othered' and hegemonic knowledge and perception of reality. To strengthen this agenda, I join emerging scholarship (Ugwuanyi 2021; Bialostocka 2020) and I bring in the concept of pluriversality to displace the dominant position of structured conservation as the universal project, which has enjoyed centrality for over two centuries. The pluriversal politics decentres this knowledge from its hegemonic position and gives voice to 'multiplicity of worlds and ways of worlding life' (Escobar 2020, 131). It also opens up the possibility to have a dialogue between and within diverse ethical and cosmological worlds. The case of the cyclical nature of idol immersion and recreation is not a 'case study' seeking universal validity but embodies one system of 'being in the world' among many. There are similar spiritual traditions and philosophies of life which has questioned the permanent realities of life. For example, Theravada Buddhism teaches impermanence in life and leads to the acceptance of material change (Fong et al. 2012; Peleggi 2012) which has a close resonance with the process of immersion. I do not intend to deny conservation as a tool for heritage studies, what I am suggesting is, it is not the 'only' tool and only truth. This is an invitation to build an 'ecology of knowledge' (de Sousa Santos 2009, 103) from within the western academy (post-humanism, indigenous geographies, etc.) and across the global south to displace neo-colonial and capitalist power relations from heritage studies.

8.5. Conclusion

To conclude, I return to the beginning where Chitpur's everyday life became heritage for the rest of us because they seemed to have dwelled in the past. The chapter argued quite the opposite and demonstrated how the urban crafts of Chitpur have constantly reinvented themselves. It argued for decolonising the ontologies of heritage studies through a pluriversal worldview. It pointed out that the existing heritage conceptualisation in the professional domain is inadequate to seriously engage with the heritage sensibility of people who practice the crafts. Heritage frameworks are being actively shaped by international agencies who are replacing the colonial model of regulated, managed, and bureaucratised heritage. Yet they are producing another set of technocratic, replicable, standardised, and universalised forms of heritage regime that is eagerly adopted by the local experts and institutions. Rather than learning from existing ways of knowing and being in the world, neoliberal forms of heritage governance are finding scopes to cleanse disorders from landscapes and fix them in an imagined past to get included in a sacrosanct list. Examining the way craftspeople approach their practice, however, we witness an inherent understanding of creation, evolution, fluidity, adaptation, dynamism in their method. Finally, I use the example of religious idol making and the cyclic process of creation and destruction to put forward an ontological shift in heritage understanding. I explain how impermanence and immateriality can open up dialogue in understanding multiple realities and ways of worlding. My argument is that we need to be attending towards the 'Epistemologies of the South' (Santos 2016) to value diverse ways of living with the past and think of a way how to accommodate them by reinvigorating the heritage discourse for India.

Chapter Nine: Conclusion

9.1. Introduction

The significance of the research can be mapped out in four domains of critical scholarship: (1) postcolonial urban heritage, (2) postcolonial craft economy and (3) critical heritage studies in relation to (4) decolonial thinking and practice. By aligning my critical enquiry with the epistemological position of thinking with the South, the thesis contributes by providing the existing spatial-economic practices and heritage sensibilities of the craftspeople with a grammar and language of its own.

First, the thesis paves the way to learn from Chitpur's ordinary urbanism, disavowing the centrality usually given to architectural typologies of the elite mansions and bungalows.[215] To investigate the relationality between urban crafts and their inherited (as well as produced) peripheral urbanism, the thesis follows the line of enquiry pioneered by the intellectual apparatus of Southern urbanism (Caldeira 2017; S. Benjamin 2007). Moreover, it enriches this scholarship by unpacking the dimension of urban heritage politics led by craftspeople. Additionally, it has made methodological contributions to empirical research by reconstructing a previously uncharted socio-spatial microhistory of craft practices in Chitpur Road. These two ambitions are achieved by weaving archival research and oral historical accounts of the craft making and through collaborative ethnographic research with an artist collective.

Second, the thesis develops a theorisation of the postcolonial craft economy by offering a diverse economic reading of craft practices. The constructive critiques put forward by the thesis in regard to existing non-capitalist alternatives, the performativity of intentional economic actions and development rhetoric of the state, advance the conceptual repertoire of postcapitalist politics while reconfiguring it under postcolonial conditions.

The third key contribution of the thesis, within the field of critical heritage studies, is the identification of a two-fold selective heritagisation process taking place in the Road. Colonial historicity, southern urban conditions, and the diverse economic organisation of these crafts converge with the material and discursive production of heritage capital.

[215] See Robinson (2006) for an understanding of the 'ordinary city' thesis.

Subsequently, heritage is manifested through internationally networked and cosmopolitan civil society groups as well as the state's interest (Jørgensen 2017, Hancock 2008). Attention is paid towards a socially engaged art project through which it explores how artists participate, intervene, and curate a vision of craft heritage for Chitpur. The thesis argues that the artists' vision, at times, aligns with the capitalist institutional goals, and yet sometimes distances itself from bureaucratic normative heritage constructs with radical aspirations of democratised and affective heritage. Conflicting versions of heritage discourse are therefore created.

Fourth, the thesis seeks to decolonise heritage ontologies by listening to the unspoken and absent murmur of the field, through discussions of fluidity, change and impermanence. This move dislocates the modernist universal paradigms of colonial and neoliberal frameworks through which heritage has been done professionally and introduces pluriversality in heritage studies. Further, it advances the voice of the craftspeople themselves, foregrounding the concept of 'intimate activism' (Tironi 2018) and micro-politics to establish how craftspeople mobilise to enact a rights-based and socially-just heritage politics. The thesis provides a provocation to unshackle the traditional status quo of caste-based and gendered craft heritage and ushers a justice driven heritage futurity.

This final chapter is divided into five sections that offer critical insight and reflection on the main research question: how heritage as a construct emerges in Chitpur Road (Kolkata), specifically about four craft sectors that are based on this Road and its surrounding area. The first four sections explicate the theoretical and conceptual developments where the thesis has contributed by connecting the arguments presented across its five empirical chapters. First, the concept of peripherality has been engaged with to make intelligible a transgressive and subjective ground-up practice that can replace a narrative of inadequacy. The next section develops the concept of 'heritage capital' by bringing together five analytical registers (temporal, aesthetic, strategic, political, and commercial), which displace a solely economy-centric heritage sensibility.[216] The following section explores how a new language of heritage can be

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[216] In 2021 the UK government has launched a Cultural and Heritage Capital portal. The project to assess the economic value of heritage assets is headed by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. https://www.gov.uk/guidance/culture-and-heritage-capital-portal (last accessed 19 August 2021).

constructed, drawing from the perspective of socio-spatial justice and pluriversal thinking. Following this, I call attention to the framing of alternatives and argue how the thesis made a formative contribution to wider research on postcolonial urban craft economy and heritage studies by marshalling the idea of the 'ecology of knowledge' (de Sousa Santos 2009, 103). Finally, I reflect upon the lingering questions and offer ways to take the research forward.

9.2. Crafting peripherality and postcolonial subjectivity

To understand the materiality of the crafts, the first strand of the thesis asserts that the crafts of Chitpur inhabit and produce a space of peripherality and nonconformity in terms of urban infrastructural grammar, capitalist economic regimes and modernist heritage ontologies. These three issues are discussed consecutively in Chapters 5, 6 and 8. Following Simone (2007), I am proposing to look at the term 'periphery' as an effect of positionality rather than a geographically fixed location. I argue that it needs to be looked at as a means to challenge the hegemonic constructs and unsettle normative understandings rather than being a position of lack and insufficiency.

9.2.1. Unspectacular transgressions and other economies

Chapter 6 shed light onto the craft economy as a space outside of capitalism, which occasionally shows signs of incursion into the capitalist space. I chose the craft of clay idol-making for this analysis, given its rapid transformation through state sanction and corporate funding since the year 2000. While scholars have mostly associated this exposure with capitalism (Heierstad 2017), I take an unconventional route by dissecting the seemingly capitalist modes of production in the idol-making craft sector to make visible the differences (Gibson-Graham 2020) within the economy that have otherwise been elided within the scholarly discussion. Moreover, it is also an attempt to transcend the binary between capitalist and non-capitalist systems.

Three analytical tropes – enterprise, labour, and transaction – are used to bring out the complexity and heterogeneity of the economic practices that cohabit this sector. A transition from communal and independent non-capitalist firms, to family-run quasi capitalist firms, is undoubtedly taking place. The most striking feature of this craft sector,

Together with AHRC, a call for research proposal has been announced. See Clark (2021) for a critical take on the project

however, is the multiple class processes performed by the master artisans and the artisanal labourers, which makes them participate in a non-capitalist class process and work independently for a significant amount of time in a year.[217] The idol-making market's nature of transaction does not always follow the rules of a free market. Interpersonal trust and obligations towards old patron-client relations are at play during exchanges. They often elude government regulations, receiving tax exemption or relaxation from state direction, which makes the craft economies both inside and outside the informal economic structure. The labour relations are fraught with a mix of traditional and non-capitalist (yet still exploitative) labour roles, and more formal capitalist wage labour arrangements. To challenge these socio-economic norms, I tease out significant acts of care by the female artisans and assertions of labour autonomy and subjectivity as markers of intimate and everyday activism (Tironi 2018; Chatterton and Pickerill 2010). Beyond the enactment of revolutionary political intention and showcasing of performative agendas, I argue that a space for unspectacular ways of challenging norms may exist (Bayat 1997). I question the emphasis on intention in postcapitalist futures and through the example of the recycling of the earthen materials of making, I show they can simply exist as ordinary practice. This is an attempt to queer ideas of intention and performativity, and which pays attention to non-conforming, passive, subdued acts. Hence, my reading of radicality in postcapitalist politics takes an anti-essentialist route as I see political subjectivities born out of mundane subversions and transgressions of norms.

9.2.2. Mobilising heritage for spatial politics from the margins

In Chapter 5, I put forward the case of how these crafts historically inhabited the peripheral spaces of urbanity in the so-called 'native town' of a colonial city. The chapter then turns to reformulate this peripherality, explaining how the craftspeople came to 'own' this peripherality that was imposed on them by 'imperial urbanism' (S. Sen 2017), producing their own forms of urbanism to stake claims on the land. Finally, I argue that heritage capital has been used as one of the strongest means for crafts to retain

[217] Here the focus is shifted from the enterprise as a whole to a key player in that particular economy. The individual actor, for instance the owner, performs multiple and hybrid class identities at a given time. Rather than fixed class identity and its resultant antagonism, the owner himself moves in between two identities (Adrian Smith et al. 2008).

peripheral rights, practices, and forms in the urban core, which is one of the central contributions of the thesis.

Through archival and oral historical research, I explored how, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the craftspeople lived at the edge of the colonial elite's palatial mansions: they served them but remained outside of the colonial urban planning apparatus. The space they occupied remained in opposition to sanitary and infrastructural systems. Despite being considered the oldest section of the city with sprawling mansions of colonial elites and a series of economically productive wholesale market centres, Chitpur Road never fulfilled the infrastructural promises of the urban core. The Road itself escaped moral codes and norms of righteousness as it became one of the main hubs of prostitution. Indeed, in Chapter 4, I noted one of the reasons for the emergence of jewellery making and musical instrument making in the Road can be attributed to the proximity of this prostitution quarter. Therefore, I develop the notion that Chitpur Road also grew to be considered at the periphery of the city's moral and civic governance.

Following that temporal legacy, I argue that in contemporary times the craft sector of Chitpur articulates, exercises, claims and produces various modes of peripheral urban placemaking through three modes of urban practice. I identify (1) the mutability of infrastructure, (2) the ownership claims of tenants, and (3) the diverse land regimes, as three modes of urban practice and spatial politics. Through these subversive ways and assertion-based agencies, craft economies survive and craftspeople express their political subjectivity. The incremental processes of building and structuring their homes and workshops also sustain their livelihood. I imagine these variously; as strategies to confront precarity; as modes of organisation for tenure security; and, as expressions of desire for ownership rights.[218] These non-conforming ways of being and functioning interact transversally with the 'official' logics of capital, property, law, and economy. Following other scholars, I argue that in postcolonial urbanism, what is official remains to be questioned as the state itself operationalises through enacting and enforcing informality (A. Roy 2009, Bhan 2016). Chapter 5 asserts that urban crafts in

[218] R. Ray has called similar interventions by marginal communities in Kolkata, 'interconnected trajectories of spatial adhocism' (2020, 250).

Chitpur tread between a judicial/legal or 'formal' set of land practices, and multiple interpretations, appropriations, and subversions of such legal provisions.

In the last two decades, these forms of peripheral urbanism have come under constant threat by real estate developers and land sharks, who seek to extract market value by assimilating these lands into the neo-liberal land redevelopment paradigm. I examine how heritage is often materialised through these entanglements in a highly volatile land market, and used as a trope by both the craftspeople and the local state administration to initiate, as well as resist, urban redevelopment schemes. I present two contrasting examples of the *mritshilpi*s and the musical instrument makers, to demonstrate how the meaning of heritage is constructed and harnessed differently depending on how these crafts are valued. For the religious idol-makers, a state-initiated urban renewal scheme was proposed that inadvertently recognised the art of clay idol making as a valued heritage in the absence of monumental heritage. Their claims on land were validated as the proposal supported the construction of flats and workshops, the upgrade of infrastructure and the rehabilitation of craftspeople in the same locality. In section 5.6.1.2, I merge analysis of spatial politics with the discussion of belonging and affective ties with the land, to explain why this project failed. A different heritage imaginary was constructed by the community, which I will discuss in the next section. On the other hand, the musical instrument makers got evicted by private developers from an old building because they did not have the heritage capital that the idol-makers possess. The state machinery came to the aid of the musical instrument makers and bestowed a heritage tag on the old building, but the legal battle was eventually lost. In both cases, the politicisation of resistance, manipulation of state machinery by the craftspeople, and a rights-based assertion was evident, a state of affairs that is not unusual in postcolonial urbanism. The analysis of how heritage capital is operationalised and utilised within the mix of the spatial politics of urban peripherality is the crucial contribution of the thesis.

9.3. Crafting heritage capital

This section turns to another central question of the thesis, that is, how heritage is being constructed in Chitpur Road, and how heritage capital is being produced and determined. In this section, I bring together the threads discussed in several chapters and argue that in Chitpur, mundane spaces (Atkinson 2008) and everyday livelihood practices are being selectively reframed and reworked as heritage, by multiple groups

with different interests. These entities attach and assign temporal, aesthetic, strategic, political, and commercial value both to the craft practices themselves as well as the spaces they inhabit. I am proposing to call these diffused acts of value attachment (to heritage sites, practices, and knowledge) *heritage capital*. Heritage capital is a symbolic value assigned to material sites and non-material experiences. The value is not inherent within an object or practice because of its historicity, and is produced through interventions, interpretations, and activations. The heritagisation process (D.C. Harvey 2001) emerges from within and outside Chitpur Road. In other words, heritage capital is being produced when practices, things and spaces are being acted upon with specific motivations. Multifarious meanings are inscribed onto them, not only by the craftspeople but by various state agencies and civil society groups, often with conflicting interests and different commitments. I take a scalar approach and delve deeper into this process of heritage creation through various socio-temporal moorings.

9.3.1. Strategic capital

As I elucidate in Chapter 8, some craftspeople deploy the term heritage strategically, to express ideas of loss and to display their heritage sensibility in relation to the uniqueness of their craft (section 8.2.2). They also situate their crafts within a more generic and sanctioned imagination of the Road's heritage and use it to reconcile with, as they put it, the *soon to be extinct heritage*. Thus, two factors – the risk that the crafts might perish, and the apparent distinctiveness as crafts of Chitpur – act as capital. In other words, a sense of loss and uniqueness engenders and legitimises heritage production for the crafts (Rico 2016; Holtorf, 2015).

Some of the craftspeople directly acknowledge 'outsiders', such as artists and designers, as producing heritage capital for them. Yet they resist being co-opted by them, by not actively participating in the craft diversification initiatives (section 7.4.3). I have also established that for the same craft, depending on whether the location of the craftspeople is rural or urban, heritage value gets assigned differentially. The Chitpur-based wooden mould makers have increasingly received recognition, yet the same value has not been granted to the rural craftspeople doing the same craft (section 8.2.3). In contradiction, while one NGO has told me that in their experience, crafts are usually more recognised in rural areas as intangible heritage, I find that in the case of the wooden mould makers, their location, and temporal ties with Chitpur and the craft

collective's intervention endows them a heritage value. Heritage value and meaning, therefore, is not stable nor a given facet for the crafts in the field. Some craftspeople such as the *mritshilpi*s are deemed to enter the heritage imaginary because of their association with the iconography of the deity. In my examination, however, I recognised that beyond the perceived sacredness of their craft and the dexterity of their skill, a place-based affective heritage sensibility is mobilised by the craftspeople to resist an urban regeneration process (section 5.6.1.2). The neighbourhood of Kumartuli itself has been lovingly manifested as a lived space by the craftspeople. The generational ties with the craftspeople's makeshift workshops and serpentine lanes of the neighbourhood are fused with the more recognised intangible heritage of idol making. Together, the space and the making produce a relational idea of heritage beyond the binaries of tangible and intangible.

9.3.2. Historic capital

The production of heritage capital is intrinsically linked to the craft's socio-temporal ties, as addressed in Chapter 4. The historicity of the crafts should be understood in the context of their caste background, nature of patronage and association with stigmatised society or subaltern popular culture, which create distinction and hierarchy. Depending on their status within this context, some crafts such as the idol making already have an implicit heritage capital. They are a caste group that can associate themselves with purity, and practice a faith-based ritual craft that produces 'images of power' (M. Sen 2016, 2019). In contrast, musical instrument making, where animal hide is used as a material, gets associated with the pollutant caste, and so has historically been devalued. Similarly, the nature of patronage also creates a distinction. The *mritshilpi*s have had a series of patrons, from the *zamindars* and the aristocracy to colonial patronage in terms of exhibitions, institutional education and postcolonial state's support in secular statue making. In comparison, jewellery making, *sandesh* mould making and musical instrument making crafts have less powerful clientele. For jewellery making and musical instrument making, one of the reasons for their initial growth was due to the patronage of prostitutes, a socially outcast population. Consequently, they were not able to draw heritage capital because of their apparent tarnished historic status. Dark histories intersect with the production of heritage value; therefore, we can hear a discursive silence around some crafts, which gets reinforced by institutional denial.

9.3.3. Commemorations and erasure of capital

The thesis examines the state's role in producing (as well as erasing) heritage capital for the crafts. Different arms of the state, such as the Tourism and the MSME department concern, themselves with the Road's heritage in different and sometimes contradictory ways. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 allude to the postcolonial state as a disintegrated entity, deploying heterogeneous methods to interact, confront, facilitate, negotiate, and withdraw itself, depending on whom it is responding to. Apart from establishing a heritage commission to categorise and identify heritage houses, it does not directly concern itself with the heritage question in Kolkata. Nevertheless, it expresses its interest in Chitpur's heritage through somewhat covert means.

The state and the central government together proposed to redevelop Kumartuli's artist quarter without displacing the artisans who don't have legal land rights, thereby granting the making practice itself a heritage status. Heritage status is reaffirmed when idol-makers got included in the dossier prepared for Durga *puja* as India's official nomination to UNESCO's intangible cultural heritage in 2020. Chapter 5 provides a detailed account of an incident where the heritage value of a building is wielded by the Mayor's office to block a redevelopment plan that threatened over a dozen musical instrument making shops. Further, state support is quite evidently expressed through the tourism department, which consistently supports the Chitpur Art Festival by financially sponsoring the event. The tourism department's interest in visually sanitising the Road by instrumentalising art's ability to create urban aesthetics and nostalgia is clear. Chapter 6 foregrounds a trend of reverse capital transfer from the domain of the accumulation economy (formal financial sector) to the need economy (here the craft sector). Drawing from Sanyal's (2007) work, the chapter examined the state's exemptions and provisions towards idol-making craft, in particular, critically analysing the signs of state benevolence through development schemes, such as provisioning micro-credits and tax-related exemptions to the craft sector. I suggest that this state initiative selectively reinvigorates the economic conditions of some crafts, who are deemed to have greater heritage capital according to their institutional standards. When some crafts don't meet their heritage model, therefore, economic supports are not extended. For example, the State Emporium, Biswa Bangla, introduces a rather misinterpreted version of Chitpur's product range, naming them 'The Chitpore Series'.

The Anglicised place name indicates their effort to evoke a heritage imaginary of the Road that is tied to its colonial past, which only allows the colonial elites to be part of it. The emporium rejects the products made by the artists who were inspired by the popular theatre's visual art as it does not comply with the elitist heritage project they are trying to generate and promote. Thus, the MSME department selectively appropriates crafts from Chitpur as heritage, actively animating and manufacturing a future making of heritage on its terms. Quite evidently, they are producing heritage capital for certain crafts with distinguished cultural value and deriving economic value from them, while discrediting others.

9.3.4. Governance of capital

Chapter 8 draws attention to the transnational networks through which heritage ideas are reconceptualised. In particular, the chapter critically examines the artist collective's seed funding from Harvard and Bangalore, together with a series of investments by the UK institutions that are stirring up inclusive heritage making agendas across West Bengal. Their overwhelming support for arts and crafts have decidedly changed the landscape of ICH. Local culture has been capitalised through international finance, as they have become a site of inventory, documentation and safeguarding. Technical experts in the field of heritage conservation and the West Bengal Heritage Commission are invested in following a UNESCO sanctioned heritage framework in seeking inclusion in the world heritage list, which can bring universal legitimacy to local sites and practices. I have argued that the implementation of this locally adopted global design (following Mignolo 2000), produces a discernible heritage capital that is a harbinger of neoliberal governmentality in heritage management (Coombe 2013). UNESCO's sub-regional workshop, 'World Heritage Global Strategy in South Asia', held at Kolkata in 2018 is my reference point. A new set of taxonomies and language, such as 'heritage routes', 'cultural landscape', 'historic town' and 'industrial heritage', were introduced to the state parties in this workshop. When set in motion, these managerial and technological mechanisms acted to reinscribe another set of heritage values. Heritage capital is, therefore, not a singular construct as it reveals itself and unfolds through a complex network of national/international, state/non-state, craft practitioner/expert ecosystems.

9.3.5. Aesthetic and economic capital

In Chapter 7, I examine the role of the artists in creating heritage capital for the precarious crafts and for the Road itself. They do it in two ways; first, by reframing everyday practices as 'crafts', they alter the semiotic signifier of the work. They elevate the status of these crafts by introducing them as significant cultural markers of the Road to the wider public beyond the neighbourhood. This is done by engaging the school children in the material culture of the Road, through workshops, pop-up museums, games, and performances; thus, enhancing the living cultural value of the crafts. A further layer of aesthetic value is added to these crafts, as well as the craft's habitat (the everyday streetscape), by creating immersive experiences around them through art trails. Finally, an effort to generate economic value for popular visual art, bookbinding, jewellery, and wooden mould making is made by introducing designers to the scene and creating a new product line. Through their intervention, we see the emergence of a heritage capital that amalgamates the cultural, aesthetic, experiential and economic value of the crafts. In many ways, we can also see how the artist's intervention has redeemed the crafts from neglect and oblivion, while also collapsing variegated making and trading categories under a singular category of 'craft'. This heritage production is manifested through the aesthetic and cultural differences between the cosmopolitan artists and vernacular craftspeople. I have argued that this distance between two genres of creativity produces and sustains the aura of Chitpur's craft. In other words, by reconfiguring the livelihoods as craft, a semiotic and cultural weight is added which is also predicated on their vernacular identity.

9.4. Crafting new heritage language

Heritage is not a language in which the craftspeople in my study area spontaneously speak in. Rather, it emerges as a response to my question. Often that response is drawn from 'familiar images of monumental sites and established standards of practice' (Rico 2016, 100), in which global and local experts speak of, or from, an imagination that has been constructed by the colonial institutions who safeguard heritage in India. To decentre this dominance, which has captured the majority of people's cognitive thought process, as I researcher in many ways I get drawn into what Lar and Urry (2004, 390) refer to as the 'ontological politics' of knowledge creation. I have used a similar stance while arguing for the different reading of the economic world of the craft that is inspired

by Gibson-Graham's (2008) call to perform new economies. Similarly, the artists do not claim to work in the heritage sector of the city and they do not adopt the language of heritage awareness through projects of heritage activism. I am aware that I am stretching that argument and constructing a new language of heritage making that may not be articulated as 'heritage' by the participants. However, I flesh out meanings from their practices and present them as provocations to deconstruct heritage meanings and think imaginatively. The thesis does so by identifying conceptual home within the repertoire of critical heritage studies which acknowledges a processual nature (D. C. Harvey 2015b; Jones 2006) of cultural heritage where livingness, change, adaptation, and destruction are recognised as constructive of new forms of heritage (Holtorf 2015; 2018; Rico 2016; DeSilvey and Harrison 2020).

9.4.1. Justice driven heritage futurity

There are two provocations in the thesis. First a call to acknowledge peripheral homemaking in the slums as a heritage from below. Second, breaking the old status quo of caste-based, gendered, and oppressive work conditions, the thesis proposes more progressive and democratic heritage futurity of craft.

A section of idol-makers opposed the urban renewal plan of Kumartuli because there was a fear of displacement; of not getting back to the place of their ancestors. They expressed it in the language of place attachment, distrust towards the government, and the legal ambiguity of the land right. What this expression also instantiates is that a slum, a place from where the idol-makers live and work, can hold meaning. Acknowledging the intangibility of the skill, knowledge and act of making is not enough and, indeed, is limiting the potential of heritage understanding. The slum, as a product of ongoing peripheral modes of creating a home in the heart of a city with which generations of artisans have ties, can itself be imagined as heritage. While the first proposition hinges on past belonging, the second, turns to disrupt the past dogmas.

Constructive and regenerative forms of heritage making open the possibility of women claiming recognition as a master artisan, with craft knowledge being redistributed beyond caste barriers and even beyond the horizontal mobility and exchange between lower caste groups. Wooden mould maker, Sunil Das, and Mahadeb Raha of Star Harmonium, both have expressed their interest to teach the craft to the wider public

and requested the collective to organise workshops. This is a formative way of building an 'imagined future' (DeSilvey 2012) of craft heritage that also foregrounds the political possibility of social justice.

The discussion (sections 8.4.1 and 8.4.2) around dynamic changes, evolution, and fluidity in the forms and materialities of craft objects that are spontaneously adopted by the craftspeople, prompts us to think about how creativity and change are entangled with upward mobility. I observe why change and dynamism are crucial to transform the material conditions of craft-based cultural producers in India. This is a major contribution of the thesis, which acts to decentre the romanticised notion of craft as an intangible living heritage of India, and connects the structural violence of caste with the craft heritage. The thesis argues against a stringent conservationist approach, where craft practices remain tied to one's caste identity and which eventually ensures the maintenance of social hierarchy and status quo in the name of tradition and defunct ideas of heritage. Developing from the craftspeople's wish to teach the craft to the wider public, the thesis advocates for a radical transformation in craft skill and knowledge transmission beyond its immediate genealogical ambit, and thus to democratise craft heritage.

9.4.2. Heritage of living

This section turns to the issue of evoking living heritage imagination that was developed in Chapter 7, by the work of artists in Chitpur. I am interested in the unspoken evocations of the art trail, which act to construct a subaltern place and people-centric socio-spatial heritage that is largely unnoticed. From colonial times, heritage sites have gone through landscaping, curation and separation from the people's everyday use, and this frozen past is cordoned off to be admired from a distance. I identify two modalities through which the artists came closer to the past through a grounded experience of the present. First, the tattered unpainted walls, electric polls, shutters, and windows of the streetscape became absorbed into the art trail. With minimum mediation made, the existing materialities of the Road became part of the heritage narrative. Secondly, the unguided walks triggered the sensory experiences of the Road so that those immaterialities were folded into the heritage thinking and feeling. Further, the art trail itself weaved ideas of heritage from below into the public mind by inviting people to walk through an old street that was teeming with daily activities, aromatic-pungent

smells of bazaars and humming noises of life. For a visitor, the walking facilitated affective and embodied encounters with the Road while connecting them – albeit momentarily – with the everyday realities and struggles of residents and craftspeople. Affective registers are, thus, mediated through 'gendered, raced and classed experience of places' (Crang and Tolia-Kelly 2010, 2316) and cannot be universalised. Therefore, I argue that the affective geographies created by the same walking art trail had different meanings to different people. In Chitpur's messy rhythm of life, some people got lost, and I wondered whether the art trail was able to disturb the popular heritage aesthetic of sanitised spaces purged from the human and non-human footprint. In my interpretation, the artists validated an imagination of a democratic living heritage landscape, which gave ordinary people 'dignity and intellectual relevance' (Nandy 2011, 449), dislocating a heritage imagination dominated by the elite houses of Chitpur Road.

9.4.3. Heritage of impermanence

Responding to the debates of material authenticity, permanence and stasis in heritage studies, Chapter 8 presents a close reading of repairing (8.4.3) and the practice of intentional destruction (sections 8.4.3 and 8.4.4 consecutively). Questioning the notion of fabric authenticity, form, and material, it posits repairing practices of the field site (e.g., musical instrument repair) as a continuous process of replacement, renewal, restoration, and remaking. With the example of idol worship and immersion, the thesis unpacks the cyclical process of construction, destruction, renewal, and rebirth of clay statues. This process symbolises a meaning whereby the material form attains utmost value with the inherent spiritual agency over a small lifespan. The same material becomes dispensable and is destroyed when the matter is separated from the agency. The value of the material, therefore, is transient, as it goes through the process of creation and destruction. I call attention to this practice because it exemplifies a heritage value where preservation of a timeless and pure material structure or form is not essential. An absence of material conservation needs to be looked at as an immaterial relationship with past and present rather than as a lack of historical consciousness and an inferior form of knowing and understanding heritage.

This is a significant argument of the thesis that decolonises heritage thinking. In a move to critique the ontological monism of secular scientific rationality of stasis and permanence that guides Eurocentric modernist heritage discourse, I joining other

scholars in this field, suggest the pluriversalising of heritage thinking (Bialostocka 2020). Heritage sensibility is reimagined by deep listening and learning from the field to capture epistemologies of the global south. Engaging with pluriversal politics, thereby affirms and renders value to diverse ethical and cosmological worldviews. A practice is not singled out as a case study seeking universal validity, but claims its rightful place of being in the world among an 'ecology of knowledge' (de Sousa Santos 2009, 103). The pluriversal worldview is a critical tool that demands re-evaluation of naturalised conservation paradigms, especially keeping in mind Kolkata's institutionalised and popular heritage constructs, and seeks to reconfigure the positivist and normative approach of heritage practitioners in the field by introducing ideas of impermanence, transience, and immateriality.

9.5. Beyond Alternatives

Reflecting back on section 3.1, I return to what motivated me to write the thesis. The task had an intention to bring epistemic reorientation in the language of knowledge production. Throughout the thesis, I have worked with a political imagination where empirical observations can decentre the hegemony of dominant explanatory frameworks. The concepts often used, therefore, identify differences and provide alternative worldviews, giving greater prominence to worlding practices. To understand how craftspeople make claims over the urban landscape, diverse economic operations, and how their practices can be read as a heritage of change, I have used the language of difference and questioned universal categories of meaning-making. However, I have consciously avoided framing them as 'alternatives' or subservient forms of knowledge. As I have mentioned before, alternative creates a 'hierarchy of value' (Herzfeld 2004) where the deviant form constitutes the alternative, whereas the mainstream continues to enjoy a hegemonic power. Alternatives are presented not as 'Asian perspectives', but act to question and decentre the universality of meaning. Rather than locating differences within the geographies of Kolkata or India, I present my arguments in conversation with literature that discusses similar observations from across the globe, thus creating solidarity between othered worlds. For example, the politics of urban claims find overwhelming solidarity between cities of the global south, such as Sao Paulo (Holston 2009), Istanbul (Kuyucu 2014), Mexico City (Varley 2002). The diverse economies framework is inspired by a network of projects under the banner of

community and solidarity economies movements. The examples span from the Philippines (Gibson, Cahill, and McKay 2010) to the UK (Chatterton and Pickerill 2010) to New Zealand (Amoamo, Ruckstuhl, and Ruwhiu 2018). Recent scholarship in critical heritage studies is recognising 'ontological plurality' (Harrison 2018, 1378) and examples of a heritage of change and destruction can be drawn from the Jurassic Coast of the UK (Rylands 2017) to Indonesia (Rico 2016) to the ruins of US and post-war Europe (DeSilvey 2017). Therefore, the thesis recognises that difference animates the very sense of being in this world, but does not localise it within non-western worlds. Consequently, the argument is not orientalist or essentialist or nativist in nature. It is a move to decolonise knowledge production from 'monification' (Savransky 2020, 272), and give legitimacy to multiple forms and practices on a plane of equal value. The move to decolonise heritage studies or alternative forms of economic organisation, as presented in this thesis, argues against a temporal reversal to some pure and ancient pre-colonial times. Rather, it identifies the dynamic and radical possibilities for future worlding practices and political subjectivities that are rooted in justice-driven ethical politics.

9.6. Further Research

Several critical issues have been raised across the thesis that, I hope, will stimulate future research, particularly within three fields: creative research practice, postcapitalist politics and decolonial epistemologies.

The thesis has advanced the emergence of craft geographies in the intersection of urban materialities, microhistories and the economic fabric of the crafts. I am interested to excavate the relationship between the immaterial spaces of the craft workshops with their sensory landscapes. Further, how do fleeting sound-smell geographies create heritage experiences within a decaying urban infrastructure? How does the melancholy of decaying spaces produce heritage? The engagement will ask how transient sensory landscapes and decay as analytical categories can be integrated into decolonial heritage understandings? This research will propose collaborative enquiry with artists that will seek creative responses to Chitpur's contested geographies, dark histories and sensory (with particular attention to sonic and olfactory) landscapes. The third enquiry has intrigued me since the fieldwork that led me to record the soundscape of the craft

workshops and the road. However, in the limited time of the PhD research journey, this area of concern has remained to be explored fully.[219]

The second strand emerges from a political commitment towards Chitpur's craft sector and takes forward Chitpur Craft Collective's work through action research. This line of research is going to be directly related to impact, development, engagement, and outreach. Before Covid halted the momentum of work, the collective was already working towards four main working agendas; art, craft, access, and research (discussed in section 3.7).[220] The critical observations on the Collective's practice, which has been noted in the thesis, can create a constructive dialogue with artists and designers to reinform and reconstruct the vision of these projects. The mapping and signage project are linked to the first strand of future research mentioned above, in terms of creating sensory mapping and documenting practices. The insight of 'radical creativity' (Mould 2018, 131) and postcapitalist politics can help to reshape the product development initiative, while reorienting them towards economic justice. Issues of authorship, power, co-production, participation need to be discussed before venturing further with this project. Informed by this reflection, I would like to work towards a more participatory research framework, where the craftspeople will have greater say in imagining their future and organise themselves if they feel the need for it. Especially after Covid, research needs to be done to devise recovery measures and with informed craft communities as equal research partners.[221] As a researcher, I will be interested to follow

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[219] The experiential and embodied nature of the art trail is attuned towards the idea of sensory landscape but it hasn't been engaged theoretically. An opportunity has emerged which led me to collaborate with a research scholar and a sound artist who are producing a geophonic podcast. Decolonial heritage thinking is explained against the backdrop of the workshop's and Chitpur's soundscape.

[220] There is a potential to expand the collective's area of engagement and work with artisanal trades and crafts from across the 4km long stretch of the road. Building networks with other partners who believes in similar ethics and principles can be helpful.

[221] Various digital initiatives have cropped up in India as a response to Covid. https://www.thehindu.com/society/history-and-culture/social-entrepreneurs-ngos-and-collectives-who-come-together-with-innovative-solutions-for-weavers-finding-them-markets-online/article35780156.ece see the report to see how collectives are helping handloom weavers by connecting them with buyers directly through digital platform. Some of the digital platforms mentioned in the article are GoCoop https://gocoop.com/ and Amazon Karigar https://www.amazon.in/b?ie=UTF8&node=16676064031, Jaypore https://www.jaypore.com/. Through what mechanism these platforms are connecting with the artisans and what are the economies of these digital exposures are critical issues which I would like to enquire. A report on covid's impact on India's creative economy has been published by the British Council https://www.britishcouncil.in/sites/default/files/taking_the_temperature_report_2_0.pdf (last accessed on 7th August 2021).

the implications of long-term engagements of artists, designers, academics with Chitpur's craft sector as well as in shaping the heritage discourse of the city.

I am keen to understand how existing craft economies can be mobilised for sustainable futurity in developing nations. The project will ask how to bring socio-environmental change by engaging with marginalised economic practices and their material entanglements. Theoretically, this research will further develop my interest in postcolonial craft economies, critically engaging with issues of informality, governance, and labour (gendered and caste-based) transitions of the sector. Dalit critique of postcolonialism concerning craftspeople's socio-economic mobility and continuity of practice is another important consideration in this regard. This interrogation will enable me to engage with the livelihood generating craft sector as a 'locus of enunciation' (Mignolo 2000, 5) through which transformative, just, ethical worlding practices can be recognised and forged.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: List of interviews

Pseudonym	interviewee	Place	Date
Arif	Heritage walk organisation	In their office, central Kolkata	13 December 2017
Ex-President	Craft Council of West Bengal	Interviewee's home, south Kolkata	14 December 2017
Sucheta	Artist	Artist's house, central Kolkata	20 December 2017
Sanjoy	Journalist specialised in local history	Coffee house	23 December 2017
Ratna Pal	Idol-maker	Kumartuli	18 September 2018
Sandeepan Pal	Idol maker	Kumartuli	30 September
Kamalesh Pal	Idol maker	Kumartuli	3 October 2018
Subir Pal	Idol maker	Kumartuli	3 October 2018
Medha Pal	Idol maker	Kumartuli	19 September, 27 September, 5 October 2018
Debu, Hridoy, Rana, Buro, Bhelo	Artisanal labourers, Idol maker	Kumartuli	September-October 2018
Ratan Pal	Idol maker	Bagbazaar workshop	20 October 2018
Satyadeb	Wooden mould maker	Notun Bazaar	14 November 2018
Murari Das	Wooden mould maker	Notun Bazaar	18 November 2018
Bimal Pal	Idol maker	Kumartuli	19 November 2018
Jit Gayen	Goldsmith	Garanhata	20 November 2018
Tapan Jana	Goldsmith	Garanhata	21 December 2018
Bishnu Roy	Wooden mould maker	Village	23 November 2018
Deven Das	Wooden mould maker	Village	25 November 2018
Anup Mandal	Goldsmith	Garanhata	13, 16, 20, 21, 28 November 2018
Shovan Hazra	Goldsmith	Garanhata	13, 16, 20, 21, 28 November 2018
Shambhu Roy	Goldsmith	Garanhata	28 November 2018
Abhay Das	Wooden mould maker	Notun Bazar	30 November 2018
Saroj Malakar	Shola artisan,	Kumartuli	4 December 2018
Pranay Roy	Gold jewellery shop owner	Garanhata	5 December 2018
Anupam	Secretary of Goldsmith organisation	Garanhata	20 December 2018
Amit Seal	Printing press owner	Notun Bazaar	20 December 2018
Gopal Pal	Idol maker	Kumartuli	20 December 2018
Shatadru Satra	Jewellery mould making shop owner	Garanhata	21 December 2018
Prachin Basak	Wooden utensils shop owner	Notun Bazaar	21 December 2018

Mahadeb Raha	Musical instrument shop owner	Jorasanko	26 December 2018
Deb Raha	Musical instrument shop maker and owner	Jorasanko	26 and 29 December 2018
Sekhar Saha	Musical instrument shop maker and owner	Jorasanko	29 December 2018
Subrata Das	Musical Instrument maker	Maniktala	2 January 2019
Raya and Abhishek	Heritage walk organisation	Organisation office, central Kolkata	17 January 2019
PKG committee member	Civil society group	PKG office, south Kolkata	18 January 2019
Bikash Pal	Joint Secretary of idol-maker's organisation	Organisation office in Kumartuli	14 February 2019
Sunil Das	Wooden mould maker	Notun Bazar	17 February 2019
Founder member of NGO	Craft Development	NGO office, south Kolkata	18 February 2019
Nayanjyoti	Artist	Artist's house, central Kolkata	18 February 2019
K P Dasgupta	Teacher	Interviewee's house, north Kolkata	18 February 2019
Anindita	Conservation architect	Café, north Kolkata	23 February 2019
Malati Saha	Local councillor	Office, Pathuriaghata	13 March 2019
Prabhat	Artist	Tea stall, north Kolkata	19 March 2019
Rambilash	Landlord	Jorasanko	17 April 2019
Lalita	Entrepreneur working in heritage sector	Café, north Kolkata	5 May 2019
Amitabha Paul	Artist	Artist's house, south Kolkata	7 May 2019
Sulochona Ghosh	Artisan boutique owner and entrepreneur	Café, south Kolkata	15 May 2019
Subhojit	Heritage walk company	Café, north Kolkata	15 May 2019
Mandakini Pal	Craft entrepreneur , ex craft council of west Bengal secretary	Car	22 May 2019
Secretary	WB Heritage commission	Kolkata Museum of Modern Art, New Town Kolkata	23 May 2019

Appendix 2: Research field diary

Type	Place	Date
Participant Observation with Artists	Sienna Café	10 August 2018
Walk with the artists	Chitpur Road	11 August 2018
Ethnography	Garanhata	20 August 2018
Ethnography	*Sandesh* mould making shops	24 August 2018
Participant Observation forming Craft collective	Bingsho Shatabdi	28 August 2018
Reflection	On home and field	31 August 2018
Ethnography	Kumartuli	1 September 2018
Ethnography	Kumartuli	4 September 2018
Spatial Ethnography	Kumartuli	5 September 2018
Guided Walk	Government Art College and Indian Museum	15 September 2018
Observation	Hamdasti's Stereoscopic narrative at Max Mueller Bhavan	15 September 2018
Reflection / Presentation	Craft collective agenda, Max Mueller Bhavan	16 September 2018
Ethnography	Kumartuli	17 September 2018
Ethnography	Bagbazar workshop	18 September 2018
Ethnography	Kumartuli	17 September 2018
Ethnography and walk	Kumartuli	21 September 2018
Ethnography	Kumartuli	23 September 2018
Ethnography	Kumartuli	24 September 2018
Ethnography	Kumartuli	25 September 2018
Ethnography	Kumartuli	26 September 2018
Ethnography	Kumartuli	27 September 2018
Ethnography	Kumartuli	30 September 2018
Ethnography	Sen House , Beniatola	1 October 2018
Ethnography	Bagbazaar workshop	2 October 2018
Reflection on Gender role	Kumartuli	3 October 2018
Ethnography	Kumartuli	5 October 2018
Ethnography	Deb Barman house, Dumdum	6 October 2018
Ethnography	Kumartuli	7 October 2018
Ethnography	Kumartuli, Mahalaya	8 October 2018
Ethnography	Kumartuli	11 October 2018
Ethnography	Kumartuli	13 October 2018
Ethnography	Kumartuli	14 October 2018
Ethnography	Kumartuli	18 October 2018
Interview reflection	Bagbazaar Studio	20 October 2018
Ethnography	Kumartuli	21 October 2018
Walk	Kumartuli	23 October 2018
Walk	Kumartuli and riverside	31 October 2018
Participant Observation	Craft collective meeting	2 November 2018
Ethnography	Notun Bazaar	12 November 2018
Ethnography	Garanhata	13 November 2018

Interview reflection and ethnography	Notun Bazaar	14 November 2018
Ethnography	Garanhata	16 November 2018
Ethnography	Notun Bazaar	17 November 2018
Interview reflection and ethnography	Notun Bazaar	18 November 2018
Interview reflection	Kumartuli	19 November 2018
Ethnography	Garanhata	20 November 2018
Ethnography	Notun Bazaar	20 November 2018
Ethnography	Garanhata	21 November 2018
Ethnography	Birpur village	23 November 2018
Interview reflection and ethnography	Notun Bazaar	25 November 2018
Ethnography	Garanhata	27 November 2018
Interview Reflection and ethnography	Garanhata	28 November 2018
Ethnography	Notun Bazaar	28 November 2018
Ethnography	Notun Bazaar	29 November 2018
Ethnography	Notun Bazaar and Garanhata	30 November 2018
Ethnography	Garanhata	1 December 2018
Ethnography	Birpur village	3 December 2018
Shola artisan interview reflection	Kumartuli	4 December 2018
Ethnography and interview reflection	Garanhata	5 December 2018
Walk with craft collective members	Chitpur Road	12 December 2018
Participant observation with the craft collective	Oxford book store	14 December 2018
Walk	Chitpur Road	17 December 2018
Interview and walk	Vivekananda Road	19 December 2018
Interview Reflection	Kumartuli and Garanhata	20 December 2018
Interview Reflection	Garanhata and Notun Bazaar	21 December 2018
Ethnography	Jorasanko	26 December 2018
Ethnography	Jorasanko	27 December 2018
Ethnography	Jorasanko	28 December 2018
Ethnography	Jorasanko	29 December 2018
Ethnography	Manikatala musical instrument making workshop	2 January 2019
Participant observation	Pathuriaghata	13 January 2019
Participant observation and walk with The Kolkata Festival representative	Chaitanya Library, Chitpur Road	13 January 2019
Walk with The Kolkata Festival representative and Craft collective member	Chitpur Road,	16 January 2019
Walk with a heritage walk group	Chitpur Road	19 January 2019
Oriental School Archive Talk	CSSSC	24 January 2019
Walk and photography with a friend	Chitpur Road	25 January 2019

Susan Bean’s Talk reflection	CSSSC	25 January 2019
Meeting notes	IIC, Delhi	2 February 2019
Reflection on Art Trail arrangement, work with the craftspeople	Chitpur Road	4 February 2019
Reflection on Art Trail arrangement, work with the craftspeople	Chitpur Road	5 February 2019
Reflection on Art Trail arrangement, work with the craftspeople, local councillor meeting , publicity, installation and signage set up	Chitpur Road	6 February 2019
Participant Observation , Art Trail Day 1	Chitpur Road	7 February 2019
Participant Observation , Art Trail Day 2	Chitpur Road	8 February 2019
Participant Observation , Art Trail Day 3	Chitpur Road	9 February 2019
Ethnography	Notun Bazaar	14 February 2019
Interview reflection	In NGO office, Interviewee home,	18 February 2019
Archive notes	WB State archive	19 February 2019
Reflection on feedback trip	Chitpur Road	20 February 2019
Interview reflection	Interviewee’s home	20 February 2019
Archive notes	WB State archive	21 February 2019
Archive notes	WB Secretariat Library	22 February 2019
Walk and lecture reflection	Shovabazaar Rajbari	23 February 2019
Archive notes	WB Secretariat Library	25 February 2019
Archive notes	WB Secretariat Library	26 February 2019
Participant Observation Craft collective meeting	In an artist’s house	5 March 2019
Participant Observation Craft collective meeting	In an artist’s house	6 March 2019
Archive notes	WB Secretariat Library	12 March 2019
Interview reflection	Pathuriaghata	13 March 2019
Observation notes	Museum	15 March 2019
CSSSC conference feedback	CSSSC	18-19 March 2019
Archive notes	National Library	1 April 2019
Participant Observation Craft collective meeting	In an artist’s house	1 April 2019
Archive notes	National Library	2 April 2019
Archive notes	National Library	4 April 2019
Meeting notes	Calcutta University	4 April 2019
Archive notes	P M Bagchi	8 April 2019
Art exhibition notes	Kumartuli	9 April 2019
Participant Observation Craft collective meeting	In an artist’s house	12 April 2019
Archive notes	National Library	13 April 2019
Art exhibition notes	Kumartuli	14-15 April 2019
Archive notes	Town Hall library	16 April 2019

Archive notes and interview notes	Town Hall library and a landlord in Jorasanko	17 April 2019
World Heritage day seminar reflection	Nandan conference hall	18 April 2019
Archive notes	Town Hall library	30 April 2019
Archive notes	Town Hall library	2 May 2019
Walk with a craft collective member notes	Chitpur Road	2 May 2019
Walk with a craft collective member notes	Chitpur Road	5 May 2019
Reflection on Museum opening	Metcalfe Hall	5 May 2019
Archive notes	Town Hall library	6 May 2019
Interview notes	Artist's house	7 May 2019
Walk notes	Garanhata	9 May 2019
Craft collective meeting notes	Artist's house	17 May 2019
Archive notes	National Library	21 May 2019
Walk with two craft collective members notes	Chitpur Road	22 May 2019
Walk for signage	Chitpur Road	27 May 2019

Appendix 3: Participant information sheet

Participant Information sheet: in-depth interview for adult makers

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Title of Project: Heritage Spaces, Craft Economy and Ideas of Loss: Towards an alternative understanding of heritage in South Asia

Researcher name*:* Rishika Mukhopadhyay

Invitation and brief summary:
My research will look into the traditional craft practices of Chitpur road and its association with heritage and loss. As you are a skilled maker I would like to talk to you about the making process, your personal association with the craft, your experience of working in this space and history of the craft itself in this road. Please take time to consider the information carefully and to discuss it with family or friends if you wish, or to ask the researcher questions.

Purpose of the research:
The research will aim to establish the value of these crafts in understanding heritage potential of the road. It will also see how crafts can push the boundary of capitalistic production regime.

Why have I been approached?
You have experience of working in this craft for long time. Therefore it is important to take your point of view. I will also approach government officials who are involved in decision making bodies regarding heritage conservation in the city. Also experts in this field, artist organisation who are already involved in some projects around this road will be approached to talk.

What would taking part involve?
I would like to take an in-depth interview with you in your convenient time and place. It will take thirty minutes to maximum an hour. I would also like to spend a day in your workshop observing you making an object. If needed I will be in touch with you later as well for my study as you are the most knowledgeable person in this field. If you are comfortable I would like to record the interview in a voice recorder. Which will be translated in English and transcribed in a written format. Your name will not appear in any of the documents. I will use a pseudonym to protect your identity. If you are not comfortable with recording I am happy to take notes during the interview. With your permission I would also like to take some photographs of you working in the workshop. If you have some personal photographs of your workshop and work, I would like to collect them as well. The information and photographs you give me will be used to write my doctoral dissertation and will be only used in academic purposes.
At the end of my field work I will organise a workshop/exhibition in the area to make local people aware of the value of these traditional practices. I would like to invite you for this event and as a token of thank you offer you some refreshments. You will be able

to meet wider audience and see how the information collected travels far into the society and creates impact in changing people's mind set.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Your valuable comments will help to include these crafts practices in the larger discussion of heritage conservation in Indian context. Even if you don't see any tangible and immediate outcome, such research helps to push the boundary of present policy and practice. Also the event in Kolkata where the outcome of the research will be presented will make people aware of the value of such practices.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

Participating in the research does not involve any risks. All the information will be stored confidentially with me (researcher) and later in the University of Exeter server. So there don't be any misuse of information.

What will happen if I don't want to carry on with the study?

You are free to withdraw yourself from the study and stop talking at any point or refuse to answer any particular question if you feel uncomfortable.

What will happen to the results of this study?

The results will be used as part of a PhD thesis, research papers and/or academic presentations. Short quotes from your interview may be used in these, but would only be used in a way that would not disclose your identity to others in any way. Photographs collected from you or clicked during the research can be used in these contexts only if you agree.

The outcome of the research will also be displayed in an event to make local people aware. Here also some quotes from your interview may be used but your identity will be confidential. I also have plans to circulate this information to wider audience by creating a story map in the internet. The story will depict a holistic picture of the craft economy in the road. Your pictures will be used only if you agree.

Who is organising and funding this study?

The research is solely funded by University of Exeter.

Who has reviewed this study?

This project has been reviewed by the Geography Research Ethics Committee at the University of Exeter (Reference Number eCLESGeo000084 v1.0)

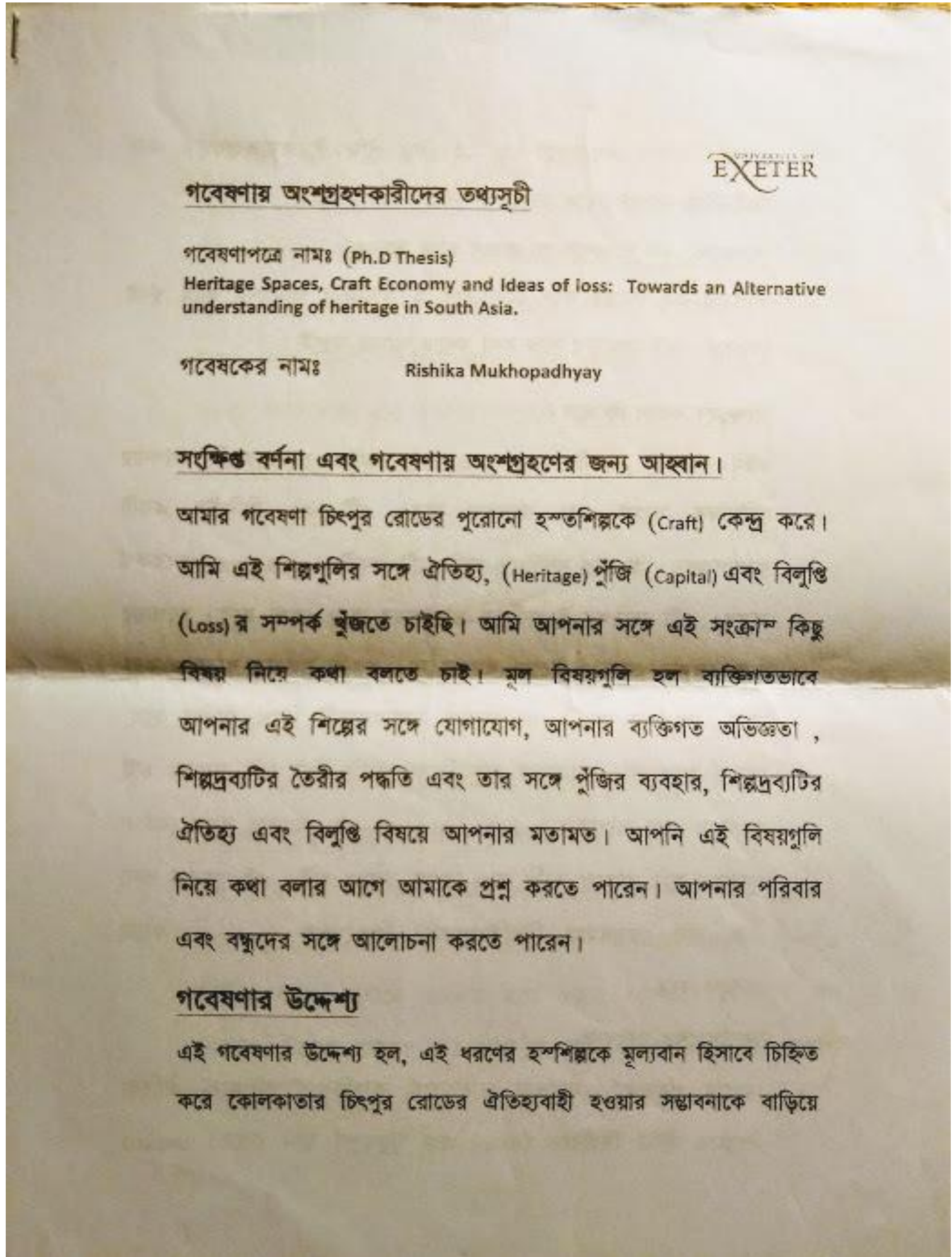
Further information and contact details

I thank you profoundly for taking part in the study and share your valuable time with me. If you have any further question at any stage please do not hesitate to contact me, Rishika Mukhopadhyay.

Email: rm621@exeter.ac.uk, Mobile: 07442896043

Address: Rishika Mukhopadhyay , Department of Geography, Room D386 University of Exeter, Amory Building, Rennes Drive, Exeter EX4 4RJ, Devon, UK

Or , my supervisors Dr. Nicola Thomas (Nicola.J.Thomas@exeter.ac.uk) and Dr. Jen Bagelman (J.Bagelman@exeter.ac.uk).



UNIVERSITY OF EXETER

গবেষণায় অংশগ্রহণকারীদের তথ্যসূচী

গবেষণাপত্রে নামঃ (Ph.D Thesis)
Heritage Spaces, Craft Economy and Ideas of loss: Towards an Alternative understanding of heritage in South Asia.

গবেষকের নামঃ Rishika Mukhopadhyay

সংক্ষিপ্ত বর্ণনা এবং গবেষণায় অংশগ্রহণের জন্য আহ্বান।

আমার গবেষণা চিৎপুর রোডের পুরোনো হস্তশিল্পকে (Craft) কেন্দ্র করে। আমি এই শিল্পগুলির সঙ্গে ঐতিহ্য, (Heritage) পুঁজি (Capital) এবং বিলুপ্তি (Loss) র সম্পর্ক খুঁজতে চাইছি। আমি আপনার সঙ্গে এই সংক্রান্ত কিছু বিষয় নিয়ে কথা বলতে চাই। মূল বিষয়গুলি হল ব্যক্তিগতভাবে আপনার এই শিল্পের সঙ্গে যোগাযোগ, আপনার ব্যক্তিগত অভিজ্ঞতা , শিল্পদ্রব্যটির তৈরীর পদ্ধতি এবং তার সঙ্গে পুঁজির ব্যবহার, শিল্পদ্রব্যটির ঐতিহ্য এবং বিলুপ্তি বিষয়ে আপনার মতামত। আপনি এই বিষয়গুলি নিয়ে কথা বলার আগে আমাকে প্রশ্ন করতে পারেন। আপনার পরিবার এবং বন্ধুদের সঙ্গে আলোচনা করতে পারেন।

গবেষণার উদ্দেশ্য

এই গবেষণার উদ্দেশ্য হল, এই ধরণের হস্শিল্পকে মূল্যবান হিসাবে চিহ্নিত করে কোলকাতার চিৎপুর রোডের ঐতিহ্যবাহী হওয়ার সম্ভাবনাকে বাড়িয়ে

তোলা। এটিও দেখা হবে যে এই শিল্প পুঁজিবাদী সমাজব্যবস্থার এবং অর্থনৈতিক ব্যবস্থার সঙ্গে কতটা সম্পৃক্ত।

আপনাকে কেন গবেষণায় অংশগ্রহণে ডাকা হচেছঃ-

আপনার এই শিল্পের সঙ্গে যোগাযোগ ও অভিজ্ঞতা আমাদের কাছে খুবই মূল্যবান। তাই আপনার সঙ্গে কথা বলতে আমরা আগ্রহী।

অংশগ্রহণ করলে কি হবে

আমি আপনার একটি সাক্ষাৎকার নিতে চাই। সাক্ষাৎকারটি আপনার সুবিধামত সময়ে এবং জায়গায় হবে। এটি ৩০ মিনিটের একটি কথোপকথন। আপনার সম্মতিতে আমি এটি একটি Voice Recorder এ রেকর্ড করব। এটি তারপর ইংরাজীতে ভাষান্তর করে লেখা হবে। আপনার নাম লেখার কোথাও উল্লেখ থাকবে না। একটি ছদ্মনাম ব্যবহার করা হবে। আপনার সম্মতি না থাকলে সাক্ষাৎকারটি লিখে নেওয়া হবে, রেকর্ড হবে না। আপনার অনুমতিসহ আমি কিছু ছবি তুলতে চাই আপনার এবং আপনার Studio/Workshop /shop র। আপার কাছে কোনো পুরোনো ছবি থাকলে আমি তাও সংগ্রহ করতে চাই। এই সমস্ত তথ্য এবং ছবি কেবলমাত্র বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের শিক্ষামূলক (Academic) কাজে ব্যবহৃত হবে।

অংশগ্রহণের তাৎপর্যঃ-

আপার গুরুত্বপূর্ণ যোগদান ভারতবর্ষে কারুশিল্প/হস্তশিল্পকে ঐতিহ্য সংক্রান্ত নীতি নির্ধারণে (Policy) এক গুরুত্বপূর্ণ স্থান দেবে। UNESCO

(রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জ) হস্তশিল্পকে (Craft) এক গুরুত্বপূর্ণ লোকসাংস্কৃতিক ঐতিহ্য হিসাবে (Intangible Cultural Heritage) চিহ্নিত করে। এর মধ্যে কোলকাতার এই সর্বপ্রাচীন রাস্তাসংলগ্ন শিল্পগুলির গুরুত্ব নির্ধারিত হওয়া শীঘ্র প্রয়োজন। এতে শিল্পগুলির অস্তিত্ব রক্ষার পথ সুপ্রশস্ত হবে। শিল্প তথা শিল্পীদের সম্মান এবং মর্যাদা বৃদ্ধি পাবে। শহরের বৃহত্তম জনসাধারণ এর তাৎপর্য সম্পর্কে অবহিত হবে।

এতে অংশগ্রহণ করার অসুবিধাগুলি কি?

এই গবেষণাতে অংশগ্রহণের কোনো বিপদ (Risk) নেই। সমস্ত তথ্য গোপনীয়তার সঙ্গে আমার কাছে এবং বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের কাছে সঞ্চিত থাকবে। এই তথ্যের কোনো অপব্যবহার হবে না।

যদি এই গবেষণায় অংশগ্রহণ না করেন তাহলে কি হবে?

আপনি যখন খুশী এই গবেষণা থেকে সরে আসতে পারেন এবং যে কোনো প্রশ্নের উত্তর দিতে অস্বীকার করতে পারেন।

এই গবেষণার Result (ফলাফল) নিয়ে কি হবে?

এই গবেষণার ফলাফল একটি Ph.D thesis/গবেষণা পত্র (research paper)/Conference এ উপস্থাপিত হতে পারে। আপনার সাক্ষাৎকার থেকে সংক্ষিপ্ত উক্তি সেখানে ব্যবহৃত হতে পারে। সেখানে আপনার নাম কোথাও উল্লেখ থাকবে না। আপনার অনুমতি থাকলেই ছবি প্রকাশ পাবে।

এই গবেষণাটিকে আর্থিক সহায়তা কে করেছে?

এই গবেষণাটি পুরোপুরিভাবে University of Exeter এর আর্থিক সহায়তায় হয়েছে।

এই গবেষণাটিকে মূল্যায়ন কে করেছে?

বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের ভূগোল বিভাগের Ethics Committee এই গবেষণাটি মূল্যায়ণ করেছে (Ref.No. eclSGeo000084V1.0)

আরও তথ্য জানতে যোগাযোগ করুনঃ-

আপনাকে এই গবেষণায় অংশগ্রহণ করার জন্য আমি আন্তরিক ভাবে ধন্যবাদ জানাচ্ছি। যদি আপনার জন্য কোনো প্রশ্ন থাকে আপনি যোগাযোগ করতে পারেন আমার সঙ্গে-

ঋষিকা মুখোপাধ্যায়
Ph: 9830928929
Email: rm621@exeter.ac.uk
Department of geography, Room D386
University of Exeter
Amory Building, Rennes Drive
Exeter Ex44RJ
Devon, UK

অথবা আমার Supervisor দের সঙ্গেও আপনি যোগাযোগ করতে পারেন।

Dr. Nicola Thomas (Nicola J.Thomas @exeter.ac.uk)
Dr. Jen Bagelman (J.Bagelman@exeter.ac.uk)

Participant information sheet: semi-structured interview for heritage practitioners

Title of Project: Heritage Spaces, Craft Economy and Ideas of Loss: Towards an alternative understanding of heritage in South Asia

Researcher name*:* Rishika Mukhopadhyay

Invitation and brief summary:
My research will look into the traditional craft practices of Chitpur road and its association with heritage and loss. As you are a heritage practitioner I would like to talk to you about your inspiration for starting this initiative, your personal association/involvement with the project, your experience of working in this sector and challenges and hopes in this work. Please take time to consider the information carefully and discuss it with family or friends if you wish, or ask me questions.

Purpose of the research:
The research will aim to establish the meaning associated with the word 'heritage' and value of making practices in understanding heritage potential of Chitpur Road.

Why have I been approached?
You have experience of working in the heritage sector. Therefore you are the expert voice for the research and it is important to take your point of view. I will also talk to makers/craftsperson who are involved in various practices along the road. I will also approach government officials who are involved in various decision making bodies regarding heritage conservation in the city. I am involved with an artist organisation who are already involved in some projects in the neighbourhood and some members from that collaborative will be approached to talk as well.

What would taking part involve?
I would like to take an interview with you in your convenient time and place. It will take thirty minutes to maximum an hour. If you are comfortable I would like to record the interview in a voice recorder. Which will be translated in English and transcribed in a written format. Your name will not appear in any of the documents. I will use a pseudonym to protect your identity. If you are not comfortable with recording I am happy to take notes during the interview. The information you give me will be used to write my doctoral dissertation and will be only used in academic purposes.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?
Your valuable comments will help to understand how heritage has been perceived and practiced in the context of south Asia. Even if you don't see any tangible and immediate outcome, such research helps to push the boundary of present policy and practice.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?
Participating in the research does not involve any risks. All the information will be stored confidentially with me (researcher) and later in the University of Exeter server. So there won't be any misuse of information.

What will happen if I don't want to carry on with the study?
You are free to withdraw yourself from the study and stop talking at any point or refuse to answer any particular question if you feel uncomfortable.

What will happen to the results of this study?
The results will be used as part of a PhD thesis, research papers and/or academic presentations. Short quotes from your interview may be used in these, but would only be used in a way that would not disclose your identity to others in any way. Photographs collected from you or clicked during the research can be used in these contexts only if you agree.

Who is organising and funding this study?
The research is solely funded by University of Exeter.

Who has reviewed this study?
This project has been reviewed by the Geography Research Ethics Committee at the University of Exeter (Reference Number eCLESGeo000084 v1.0)

Further information and contact details
I thank you profoundly for taking part in the study and share your valuable time with me. If you have any further question at any stage please do not hesitate to contact me, Rishika Mukhopadhyay.

Email: rm621@exeter.ac.uk, Mobile: +44 7442896043

Address: Rishika Mukhopadhyay,

Department of Geography, Room D386

University of Exeter

Amory Building, Rennes Drive, Exeter EX4 4RJ, Devon, UK

Or, my supervisors Dr. Nicola Thomas (Nicola.J.Thomas@exeter.ac.uk) and Dr. Jen Bagelman (J.Bagelman@exeter.ac.uk).

Appendix 4: Interview consent form

CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: Heritage Spaces, Craft Economy and Ideas of Loss: Towards an alternative understanding of heritage in South Asia

Name of Researcher: Rishika Mukhopadhyay

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read the information sheet dated.18/05/2018 (version no. 1 SIM) for the
above project. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have
had these answered satisfactorily. ☐

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time
without giving any reason and without my legal rights being affected. ☐

3. I understand that taking part involves anonymised interview transcripts/photographs/audio recordings/video recordings to be used for the purposes of

3.1. writing a PhD thesis with interview excerpts ☐

3.2. reports published in an academic publication or presentation ☐

3.3. teaching or training materials for use in University activities or public engagement activities ☐

4. I agree that my contact details can be kept securely for future use with identifying details
removed. ☐

5. I agree to take part in the above project. ☐

____________________	____________________	____________________
Name of Participant	Date	Signature of researcher as
witness		
____________________	____________________	____________________

Name of researcher   Date   Signature taking consent

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EXETER

সম্মতি পত্র

গবেষণাপত্রে নামঃ (Ph.D Thesis)
Heritage Spaces, Craft Economy and Ideas of loss: Towards an Alternative understanding of heritage in South Asia.

গবেষকের নামঃ   Rishika Mukhopadhyay

১) আমি গবেষণায় অংশগ্রহণকারীদের জন্য তথ্যসূচীটি সঠিকভাবে পড়েছি। আমি তথ্যগুলি নিয়ে ভাবার, প্রশ্ন করার সময় এবং সুযোগ পেয়েছি। সেই উত্তরে আমি সন্তুষ্ট।

২) আমি জানি এই অংশগ্রহণ সম্পূর্ণভাবে আমার স্বেচ্ছাসম্মত। আমি যে কোনো সময় এই গবেষণায় অংশগ্রহণ থেকে নিজেকে সরিয়ে নিতে পারি। ৩) আমি জানি এই অংশগ্রহণের অর্থ একটি সাক্ষাৎকারে অংশগ্রহণ করা (নামহীন) এবং ছবি তুলতে সম্মত হওয়া। সাক্ষাৎকারটি নিম্নলিখিত কাজে ব্যবহার হতে পারে।

-২-

৩.১ একটি Ph.D thesis এ সাক্ষাৎকারের অংশবিশেষ ব্যবহার হতে পারে।

৩.২ কোনো journal অথবা Conference এ প্রকাশিত হতে পারে।

৩.৩ বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের পাঠক্রমে অথবা প্রশিক্ষণের কাজে ব্যবহৃত হতে পারে।

৪) আমি জানি এই তথ্যগুলি সম্পূর্ণ গোপনীয়তার সঙ্গে সংরক্ষিত থাকবে এবং তাতে আমার সম্মতি আছে।

৫) আমি উপরোক্ত গবেষণায় অংশগ্রহণে সম্মত।

....

অংশগ্রহণকারীর নাম তারিখ সাক্ষী হিসেবে গবেষকের নাম

....

গবেষকের নাম তারিখ সাক্ষর

Appendix 5: Interview schedules

Interview schedule for an adult craftsperson

A. Basic Information (to understand the background of the participant)

1. Name (if agreed to say)
2. Age
3. Gender
4. Religion
5. Education
6. Hometown

B. Involvement with the Craft

1. How will you describe the making activity you are involved in?
2. How long have you been making this?
3. Were you involved in some other making before this?
4. How did you get introduced to this profession?
5. Is there anyone from your family involved in this making?
6. If Yes, were you influenced by them? Have you learnt any skills from them?
7. Do you have pictures of them working here?

C. Object, Capital, and its Making

1. From where does the material for making this object come from?
2. Is there any network through which these materials come?
3. Who designs the object?
4. Who else is involved in the making process apart from you?
5. Who buys this product and from where?
6. Can you tell me the cost of making and at what price you sell these?
7. How much do you get as a maker?
8. Why did you choose this profession?

D. Relationship between making and space

1. Why do you think this place was chosen for this workshop?
2. How long have you been working in this space?
3. Does it have any particular influence/ significance on your work?
4. Has this always been the place for this workshop?
5. Do you think the workshop can be shifted somewhere else?
6. Will that affect your work?

E. Heritage and Loss

1. Do you consider this practice as part of heritage of this city?
2. Please say why do you think so? (in case yes or no).
3. Where do you think the practice will stand in future? (thriving/disappearing)
4. Please give reasons for that.
5. If disappearing, do you think something needs to be done to save it?
6. If no, please explain why?

7. If thriving, please tell us why do you think this is the case? What factors contributed in that?

Interview schedule for civil society

1. How long have you been involved with the organisation?
2. What is your role in the organisation?
3. What is your inspiration/ motivation to start this venture or get involved with this organisation?
4. Can you tell be briefly about your projects? What are the crafts that you work with?
5. Who sponsored your work?
6. Is there any particular format that you follow to run the projects?
7. Do you think there are differences between urban and rural craft community?
8. What does Chitpur mean to you?
9. How did you perceive the activities of Chitpur when you first saw them?
10. What is the potential of these activities in the Road? What future plans do you have?
11. What are the main challenges that you have faced?
12. Are the people of the locality supportive?