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Resilient and Sustainable Development of Historic Precincts and Areas
Focus West Bengal

concepts & frameworks

legal tools & management

community participation

intangible heritage

disaster & resilience

Resilient and Sustainable Development of Historic Precincts and Areas
Focus West Bengal

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ICOMOS INDIA
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Foreword

How can heritage be an integral part of development? What can be the role of our heritage resources, both tangible and intangible, for sustainable development? How can we adapt the formal and informal cultural institutions, the built legacy, and living heritage towards a goal of sustainable and resilient future? During the unprecedented Covid 19 pandemic, members of COMOS India started exploring these questions, realizing that it was the time to rediscover the world, explore new opportunities and unearth new possibilities.

Entrepreneurship and creative pursuits were found to be uniting people globally at this time of crisis. Craftsmen, artists, and performing artists were taking recourse to social media for reaching out to people, and new modes of communication had started showing promises. When national and international trading had come to a standstill and livelihood of many were severely affected, adapting indigenous resources to cope up with local demands, sharing and caring at local level, addressing an immediate problem with a global support were showing some light. Though tourism, a major player in the economy that supports so many people, had come to a total halt, natural environment, biodiversity, and global warming were indicating a turn to a positive direction. This is not the first time that our world has witnessed wars, pandemic, and disasters of severe magnitude, and we know from history that these have always helped us to rise to the occasion and scale a greater height, by introspecting and revising our goals. The pandemic offered us an opportunity to find out how local communities, as valuable custodians, were more responsible in taking care of natural and cultural heritage, and community based governance of heritage areas and precincts were emerging as effective mechanism for managing the crisis.

With a realization that there is a need for a discussion and convergence between stakeholders in light of the emerging issues, a few members of East Zone and National Scientific Committee on Historic Towns and Villages, COMOS India, started discussing and brainstorming through virtual meetings and digital communications. We had identified certain focus areas like sustainable development goals, water and climate change, disaster mitigation, pandemic and resilience, democracy and people's participation, and revitalization of our neighbourhood and community-based governance mechanism. In the context of West Bengal, we identified some recent developments: two towns, Cooch Behar and Nabadwip, were declared as heritage towns, and preparation of Heritage Management Plan and Development Plan for both towns were half way through; a review and revision of West Bengal Heritage Commission Act and State Town Planning Act were in the process; Kolkata Municipal Corporation formed a special committee to evolve a rational approach for grading of heritage properties and for identifying heritage precincts. Still, much more needed to be done. We felt the need to introspect on these crucial developments.

We decided to organize a series of webinars on resilient and sustainable development of heritage precincts and areas, and formed a core organizing team. The team identified suitable subthemes as Concepts, Frameworks, Needs and Experiences of Historic Precincts and Areas; Heritage Economics, Legal Tools, and Management Mechanisms for Historic Precincts and Areas; Engaging Communities for Sustainability and Resilience; Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage; Resilience to Disaster, Pandemic, and Climate Change. Accordingly, the relevant resource persons were identified, and with support from the young volunteers from Emerging Professionals Working Group (EPWG) of COMOS India, we set forth on hosting seven webinar sessions, spanning over a period of almost five months in 2020 (Series A: August 27 & 28, Series B: October 1& 3, Series C: November 21; Series D: November 25; Series E: December 5). Experts from varied fields were invited from West Bengal as well as other parts of India and abroad, including conservation professionals, representatives of NGOs, government officials, authors, representatives of leading real estate groups, and they shared experiences and deliberated on the chosen subthemes. Each of these sessions was structured to have a

keynote address, followed by two case studies, a panel discussion, and an open-house Q & A session. Participants and viewers posed interesting and important questions during the open-house.

It was felt that a wider dissemination of the content was desirable, and we formed an editorial team to work on this publication. Since then, it has been a long journey of preparing this compilation based on transcripts of digital video recordings of key note address and panel discussions, along with the case studies and articles submitted by the invited experts. With theoretical deliberations, relevant case studies, sharing of experiences from praxis, and focussed discussions, this compilation, we believe, shall be a helpful and a valuable document that is expected to contribute towards various policies, programmes, and activities that need to be formulated and adopted to enable historic precincts and areas of West Bengal to become resilient and sustainable. We hope that it will be a useful reference not only for West Bengal but also for other places and people. However, the experience of listening to the presentations with the rich visuals, and the engaging discussions that ensued, cannot be replicated in the print media. Accordingly, links to the recorded sessions are also being provided to supplement this compilation.

The members of the core organizing and the editorial team were Ananya Bhattacharya, Arjun Mukerji, Kamalika Bose, Puja Bhowmik, Sanghamitra Basu, Sukanya Mitra, and Sukrit Sen. This compilation is a labour of love by the editorial team led by Sanghamitra Basu.

February, 2023

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photo courtesy Kamalika Bose

Resilient and Sustainable Development of Historic Precincts and Areas *Focus West Bengal*

Concepts, Frameworks, Needs, and Experiences of Historic Precincts and Areas

There are several legal instruments in West Bengal, in respect of heritage resources. However, there remains a lacuna in terms of proper definitions for heritage precincts and areas, and a rational approach for heritage grading and its implications. This often leads to ambiguity and complications. Also, in view of several initiatives by public bodies, NGOs, and local organizations in West Bengal, some important concerns are emerging in relation to heritage precincts and areas, such as inclusive, participatory approaches, heritage economics and development alternatives, and resilience. The inaugural sessions of the webinar series presented and discussed the relevant concepts, frameworks, needs and experiences in order to addressed these issues and arrive at new directives for historic areas and precincts. The first day focussed on West Bengal, while the second day focused specifically on Kolkata.

Participants:

AGK. Menon | Amit Chaudhury | Anindya Karforma | Anjan Mitra
Arjun Mukerji | GM Kapur | Kamalika Bose | KT Ravindran
Manish Chakraborti | Mukul Agarwal | Partha Ranjan Das
Sanghamitra Basu | Saptarshi Sanyal | Soumen Mitra

August 27, 2020

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August 28, 2020

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Recordings of webinars

A.1.

Understanding Indian urbanism – A way forward for conserving Indian cities

AGK Menon

Architect, urban planner and conservation consultant
Founding member, INTACH Delhi Chapter

Indian, or indigenous urbanism, refers to the social and spatial ecology of pre-colonial cities. The morphology of these historic settlements evolved organically over the centuries by responding to cultural, environmental and physical characteristics of local societies and sites. This process created a harmonious relationship between nature and culture that we have come to value as the defining attribute of historic cultural landscapes. The organic nature of the morphology of historic settlements, contrary to modern perceptions, is not irrational, because its structure, which evolved naturally over time, efficiently satisfies the context-specific demands of the site and indigenous ways of living. The logic of this context-specific process of historic settlements has been internalized in our society, and even today it mediates how informal, or unplanned, settlements are built within the interstices of contemporary planned cities. But the nature of this rationality, and its positive attributes, are incomprehensible to contemporary urban planners, who in fact abhor and denigrate it, whether in historic settlements or in slums. This negativity towards a cultural legacy is as much a reaction to their present decrepit state, as the fact that the bias is deeply rooted in the colonial origins of the urban planning profession; in our modernizing society, it also aligns with the aspirational expectations of a large section of the general public for 'modern' and 'world class' habitats. The logic of historical settlements is now virtually *terra incognita*, which is tragic, because embedded in the attributes of indigenous urbanism are qualities of spatial planning that could well serve contemporary needs of our rapidly urbanizing society.

The antipathy towards indigenous urbanism is paradoxical, considering that our postcolonial society is otherwise proud of the civilizational continuity of historic cities. Many regard them as significant expressions of cultural heritage, as compelling as traditional art, architecture and music. However, there is more tangible evidence backing the pride in traditional art, architecture and music heritage, but not indigenous urbanism, because there is a yawning gap between the cultural imagination and the reality of the decrepit conditions of historic settlements. This manifestation of cultural dyslexia needs to be purposefully analysed, and exorcised, if professionals want to understand how the positive attributes of indigenous urbanism could create more satisfying modern cities.

Engaging positively with indigenous urbanism would be a timely and an important agenda for contemporary professionals in India both from a cultural and pragmatic perspective. The ideology of modern urban planning has not come to grips with the problems of either historic settlements or modern urban development. We need to develop new paradigms of urban planning to tackle both the existing and emerging complexities of cities. To respond to this challenge, several international agencies, including ICOMOS for example, have begun to focus on the systemic connections of culture, heritage and climate change to formulate new strategies. This is why we need to engage with indigenous urbanism. While the papers being presented in this conference show that many professionals have already begun to turn their gaze towards studying historic precincts, to achieve greater credibility however, there is need to build multi-disciplinary scaffoldings to these initiatives. For example, the sibling disciplines of urban conservation, urban planning and urban design are not working in unison. In fact, the current strategies of urban planning and urban design even discount the positive contributions that indigenous urbanism could make to the contemporary habitat. To begin, therefore, the silo-

mentality of professional engagement with the built environment needs to change if we hope to acquire credibility, which *prima facie,* this conference would want to achieve. However, before we discuss strategies for the way forward, there is need to take a step back, in order to critically, and self-reflexively, examine why our post-colonial society in general, but professionals in particular, ignore the significance of indigenous urbanism.

To discuss the way forward, we however need to take a step back to understand the epistemology of our professions. The professions dealing with the built environment were established by the colonial government to serve its objectives. Colonialism was a profoundly transformative experience and among other aspects of our society that it transformed was the built environment. The practices of the past were completely abandoned, though certain buildings of the past that were valued as historical evidence, were objectified as heritage. It decisively transformed both the spatial and temporal imagination of our society by casting them into the mould of the colonist's civilizational values and aspirations. With the institution of the Public Works Department (PWD) in 1853, for example, the symbiotic relationship that existed between the living culture of building practices and the development of new habitats was severed, and with the establishment of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) in 1861, a similar rupture was created in how our society related to its past. Thus the 'modern' did not evolve from the indigenous past but was transplanted into our society, ready-made from another country and another culture, to construct local habitats, and its further evolution there, not here, provided the benchmarks and models of progress and modernity. This is the epistemology of contemporary urban planning and conservation that we need to come to terms with as we consider our present professional predicaments. It would begin to explain why post-colonial scholars and professionals were not inclined to engage with the characteristics of indigenous urbanism but, more importantly, are unable to fathom the complexities of the processes of urbanization that are vitiating the objectives of their Master Plans. In the face of this reality, they continue to mimic the biases and 'civilizing mission' of colonial scholars and administrators while engaging with contemporary urban problems.

Therefore, to chart the way forward, and credibly discuss rational strategies to make historic precincts resilient and sustainable, we need to formulate different pedagogic strategies than the ones we have inherited. For example, we could begin by evaluating the compelling research conducted by Christopher Alexander on the 'patterns' of organic urban developments and thereafter theorise those processes. Our cities are complex, heterogeneous entities, so exploring the characteristics of indigenous urbanism does not imply that the current objectives of research should be abandoned, but to develop new paradigms of settlement planning, need to explore as systematically as Alexander conducted his research, the 'patterns' of indigenous urbanism. We need to adopt not only his vision, but his conviction as well.

The opportunities for undertaking such research have improved in the last four decades. Earlier the ideology of conservation had been dominated by the principles of preservation advocated by the ASI, but at least since 1984, with the establishment of the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH), the interest in conserving cultural heritage broadened to include historic settlements. Several academic institutions have also initiated urban conservation studies, and as a consequence, many historic towns and urban precincts are now being documented as part of their pedagogic agenda. INTACH also undertook several urban conservation projects all over the country and developed strategies to pursue heritage oriented development to upgrade historic precincts. These initiatives sensitized both policy-makers in the government and practitioners in the field to the imperatives of engaging with urban heritage in the Indian context. However, such sensitization was primarily limited to the conservationists. A holistic broad-based narrative could not be constructed that would provide a compelling rationale to engage other professions and stakeholders, like the public and decision-makers, for conserving indigenous urbanism and its potential beneficiary links to modern urban planning. The failure was due to the growing hegemony of international urban planning and conservation dogma as well as the inability of local scholars to develop conclusive evidence on the positive attributes of indigenous urbanism.

The challenges facing the profession are therefore considerable and complex. It is further compounded because in a developing society it is intertwined with the allure of the models of modernity that architects, urban planners and urban designers consider progressive. Thus participants in this conference, and other interlocutors, need to understand these complexities even as they routinely engage with historic sites and the theme of this conference. It is with this background that I present the following four propositions to chart the way forward. First, is the objectives of such conferences and the pedagogic contents of the presentations;

second, the disciplinary issues that arise from the first proposition; third, the agenda that scholars and professionals need to formulate to address the issues raised by the second proposition; and finally, the way forward.

The first proposition derives from the fact that professional conferences largely regurgitate familiar issues. Conferences are expected to be opportunities for professionals to present critical disciplinary issues, but in most conferences this seldom happens and the empirical works presented are restricted to merely documenting and describing the characteristics of buildings and sites. Moreover, the pedagogy is derived from the empirical work described in iconic texts by international scholars that are used for teaching in the classroom which refer to sites that have no relation to the local cultural contexts. Thus typically, what Kevin Lynch postulated about the cognitive structure of a historic Boston precinct becomes the template to study temple towns or equally particular local cultural and historic sites, and the invariable pedagogic objective is to demonstrate the congruence between the two disparate sites. Therefore, as far as new disciplinary knowledge of indigenous urbanism is concerned such 'research' does not venture outside the boundaries of the universal constructs of urbanism that have been taught in the classroom. Consequently, in the field, strategies to conserve historic precincts also follow the universal models, and not surprisingly an honest prognosis of urban conservation projects that are undertaken is that they do not satisfy local needs or expectations.

This process has been reiterated over the years. For example, about 30 years ago, I attended an international workshop at IIT, Kharagpur, which was called the 'International Workshop on Integrated Urban Conservation and Approach towards Development'. Those were the early attempts at engaging with conservation issues in a public forum, and at that workshop, mentors of the Indian conservation profession like Sir Bernard Feilden and Derek Linstrum were among the participants. The agenda and many of the presentations were aligned with 'universal' conservation issues, perhaps to demonstrate to the mentors how faithfully their wards had absorbed what they were taught. The same aspiration to demonstrate ideological fidelity to international dogma is regurgitated over and over again in most professional conferences, and therefore, one needs to critically question why we conduct such conferences, where each is cast in the same mould.

So, perhaps, the issue we should be discussing as conservation professionals is why we are mindlessly advocating models of conserving our historic cities based on 'universal' models instead of formulating and discussing context-specific solutions to local problems? Of course, we should learn from anywhere, but does it suffice to merely 'Indianize' what we learn from elsewhere? Formulating context-specific solutions is the domain of critical professional practice, which leads me to my second proposition, which is that we need to engage with historic sites with a vision to contribute to domain knowledge not merely formulate a conservation scheme. Professional practice should inform academic pedagogy as much as the other way around. Both professional practice and academic pedagogy need to operate in tandem to focus on constructing context-specific strategies for transforming historic precincts, and assist each other in implementing received knowledge faithfully and efficiently.

The consequence of propagating received knowledge is that it can be convincingly dismissed as irrelevant by motivated project proponents who have different agendas for the future of historic precincts. This is the contentious narrative that is currently being played out in the field in three, very high profile projects to redevelop historic precincts. First, the reconstruction of the Vishwanath Dham Heritage Corridor project in Varanasi; second the Pedestrianization of Chandni Chowk in Shahjahanabad, or Old Delhi; and third, the Redevelopment of Central Vista in New Delhi.

At Vishwanath Dham project the Prime Minister himself is involved and a very famous architect, Bimal Patel, is conceptualizing its transformation. Both talk about modernizing one of the most iconic historic cities in the country in order to reify the heritage significance of the 'soul' of the city. Ironically, both the patron and his factotum are repulsed by the 'chaotic', 'confusing' and 'filthy' conditions of the temple precinct, echoing the colonial opinions of indigenous urbanism, and not surprisingly, both have similar solutions to the problem. About 80 acres of the heart of the city is proposed to be gutted to construct a new plaza, based on Vitruvian principles of urban design – according to one of the presentations made by Patel on the proposal that I attended – and thereby recasting Varanasi as a 'world class' city! I state these facts with the most profound sense of bewilderment, because one of the first projects that I worked on for INTACH in 1985 was a proposal to upgrade, redevelop, and modernize Varanasi, without destroying the characteristic of indigenous urbanism.

So, as conservation professionals, should such regressive strategies not be the subject of pedagogic research in academies and in conferences such as this one? Should we not be discussing why politicians, architects and, perhaps, even people like the morphological structure and aesthetics of 'global modernism' and see no merit in upgrading in situ, the morphology and aesthetics of indigenous urbanism, which is, moreover, proudly proclaimed to be 'our ancient heritage'?

The Pedestrianization of Chandni Chowk in Old Delhi is another case in point. Chandni Chowk is the central avenue of Shahjahanabad, the pre-eminent Mughal city in Delhi. In 2013, INTACH Delhi Chapter drafted the document to nominate the Imperial cities of Shahjahanabad and Colonial New Delhi to the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites. The application was subsequently withdrawn by the newly elected central government because they were apprehensive that it would inhibit the redevelopment of the heritage precincts in the city. The meaning of these apprehensions became evident at Chandni Chowk, where the sidewalks were proposed to be widened and beautified by a well-regarded architect, by blithely dismissing the significance of the heritage of the precinct and locating public toilets and electric transformers along its central verge to provide public amenities, because as he told me, "there was no alternative". This officially sanctioned desecration had to be bitterly contested in the High Court in order to prevail on the civic authorities to relocate the toilets and some of the transformers and thereby restore some semblance of respecting conservation protocols.

The redevelopment of Lutyens Central Vista is the Prime Minister's 'dream', and once again Bimal Patel, is the professional agent to fulfil it. The objective is to redevelop, redesign and re-inscribe its heritage significance and make it 'world class'. All heritage conservation protocols, administrative probity and prudent fiscal practices, and norms of regulatory oversight are being upended to ensure that this 'life-style' project of the Prime Minister is expeditiously implemented to symbolize 'New India'. So obviously decision-makers, including the professionals who enable the project are not listening to us. They think heritage is something that can be developed in accordance to their respective 'dreams' and imagined functional imperatives. It will be beautified to make it visually attractive to the visitor and thus justify the project to redevelop this iconic site.

The three projects, Varanasi, Shahjahanabad and the Central Vista, together demonstrate the complete impotency of our professional agency and ideology. This realization should temper the self-satisfaction we display at conferences such as this, and perhaps motivate us to reform academic pedagogy in the discipline of urban conservation.

That brings me to my third point, which is to reform academic pedagogy. This can begin by focussing on developing solutions to our urban problems by understanding its context and not by selecting an appropriate solution from the tool kit of universal solutions to fit the problem. This paradigm of urban planning has been perpetuated by the system of professional education we are imparting in our academic institutions. Perceptive critics of this system have observed that the objectives of teaching the tool kit of solutions approach to solving local urban problems is primarily based on the premise that the West theorizes, and we practice. In other words, urban planners are taught the generic principles of urban planning in the classroom, and in the field they seek validation to what they were taught. This blinkered strategy ignores the existence of the immense wisdom embedded in indigenous urbanism. Such myopic approach can be seen as the root of many problems related to habitat that professionals have to deal with. Its consequences are increasing and becoming stronger with the growing impact of globalization. This paradigm must change and studying the characteristics of indigenous urbanism is an effective strategy to consider.

This leads to my fourth point, which is to examine the characteristics of indigenous urbanism. This has become an urgent imperative not only to squarely confront the constraints to our professional imagination on account of the epistemology of the discipline, but also because the circumstances that mediate our current predicaments are perhaps unique. We could examine several facets of our cultural and historical singularity, but consider for example, the land-man ratio, which is an important contributory factor. Currently in India it is 0.25 hectares per capita, while in the USA it is 10 times that amount, about 2.5 to 3 hectares per capita. The cultural assumptions and values of people living in a society which has 3 hectares per capita, will be different to those living in a country which has 0.25 hectares of land per capita, one will be profligate while the other frugal. And yet many of the theories of urbanization that are taught in Indian educational institutions are based on the studies of urbanization that took place in the USA. Obviously there is need to rethink these theories, and

studying and theorizing indigenous urbanism is potentially a promising strategy to theorize our urban condition.

Therefore, we need to relook at our historic cities with a positive and inquisitive state of mind to learn from them. The shift in professional gaze that it requires is possible to accomplish, as the many papers being presented at this conference show, but it needs to be a critically self-reflexive gaze in order to learn from it. The challenge is to sustain the gaze in order to build systemic knowledge. This is not going to be easy as I will explain by giving two examples from my personal experience.

First, while working on conserving historic precincts for INTACH, I realised that the Venice Charter, and many of the other international charters did not reflect the aspirations of the stakeholders with whom we interacted. The Charters offered an outsider's strategy to conserve historic precincts, but there was need to develop strategies of conservation from the inside. So, over time I postulated the need for an INTACH Charter for conservation. This was discussed and debated in many fora, and finally, it was collectively drafted and adopted by INTACH in 2004.

In hindsight, that was the easy part. What was more difficult was to make the INTACH Charter an operational blueprint to engage with the conservation of unprotected built heritage and build upon the multiple vistas it opened up. For example, it enabled the pursuit of the objectives of development oriented conservation and encouraging traditional craftspeople to determine the future of historic buildings. It had exciting possibilities, but the INTACH Charter found no traction in the profession or educational curriculum, because the hegemony of global conservation ideology was overwhelming. Ironically, the INTACH Charter had foreseen these challenges and had very painstakingly accommodated multiple strategies of conservation, including what it advocated, by carefully identifying where each could operate, but it was inadequate to convince the mainstream conservation professionals to adopt it. Nevertheless, I was able to demonstrate its potential in several INTACH projects such as the conservation projects at Chanderi, Varanasi, Ujjain and Old Bhubaneswar. So, this is the way forward but we need to be more persuasive.

The second example is the attempt to draft appropriate building byelaws to upgrade and modernise historic precincts like Varanasi and Shahjahanabad which are a part of a larger modern settlement. At INTACH, we attempted to formulate special bylaws for Shahjahanabad. Currently, urban planners in India have the same template for all kinds of settlements, historic or modern, small town or metropolis, with just minor variations in details. So, to upgrade Shahjahanabad while at the same time retaining its heritage significance, we drafted context-specific bylaws and presented it to the municipality. Again, this initiative found no traction because the inertia of conventional practice prevailed and the familiar Unified Building Byelaws of Delhi continues to determine how this historic precinct will evolve in future. Already, massive malls and multi-storeyed buildings are being inserted into the historic urban fabric of the city.

Thus, the long-term vision of the conference and the profession should be to build consensus for bringing a holistic change in the state of the built environment. Towards that end, I view the present conference as a step in the right direction because it will be focusing on the specific needs of West Bengal. Others should focus on conserving the heritage precincts in Tamil Nadu, or Maharashtra, or other culturally discrete regions of the country. I hope that such initiatives will be agents of the much needed reform in the ideology of conservation in our country.

A.2.

Integrating heritage conservation with urban planning: Experiences from Cooch Behar

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Introduction

Cooch Behar Town is located in the north of the State of West Bengal, India, and is presently the administrative headquarters of the Cooch Behar District. It is a small, historic town – only about eight square kilometres in area, and does not feature prominently in popular imagination as a place of heritage. Nationally, a majority of the people who do know about it know it solely for the Cooch Behar Royal Palace, which is designated as a monument of national importance and protected by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI). And, of course, some would recognize it by name because of the late Rajmata Gayatri Devi of Jaipur, who was a princess of Cooch Behar. Regionally, it is also somewhat known because of the Madan Mohan temple, and the Raas mela – a fair organised in conjunction with the celebrations of the Hindu festival of Raas during the Karthik Purnima (the day of the full-moon in the month of Karthik – usually around November). However, there is much more to Cooch Behar, in terms of heritage, which deserves recognition and careful conservation.

Accordingly, in 2018, the Government of West Bengal consulted the Department of Architecture and Regional Planning, Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kharagpur, in order to declare it as a 'Heritage Town',[1] and I had the good fortune of being one of the principal investigators in the team of consultants. This paper recounts some of my experiences of working for Cooch Behar Town, with the anticipation that these may benefit others who are considering similar exercises.

Though there was 'The West Bengal Heritage Commission Act, 2001' (WBHC Act), its scope was mostly limited to enlisting and protection of individual structures or sites as heritage, and it neither allowed for legally conferring the status of a 'Heritage Town', nor the conservation and management of heritage at the scale of historic precincts or areas that were essential in the context of Cooch Behar. Accordingly, the consultants were to aid in formulating legal reforms to bring about these objectives – reforms that would thenceforth aid similar exercises for other places of heritage in the State. Also, the mandate for IIT was to prepare a suitable heritage management plan specifically for Cooch Behar Town.

The following sections present two selected aspects of the project – (i) a brief outline of the reforms that were proposed for the legal instruments of the State (that are, as on date, partially implemented and under process), and (ii) a few key components of the heritage management plan that was prepared for Cooch Behar Town – indicating some methodological innovations in heritage assessment, and how the needs of historic areas and precincts were addressed by integrating heritage conservation with urban planning.

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[1] It is worthwhile to mention that Nabadwip, a town in the Nadia District of West Bengal, was the other candidate to be endowed with the 'Heritgae Town' status, and IIEST Shibpur was consulted in this connection.

Legal Reforms

At the national level, legal provisions for conservation of heritage are of course afforded by the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958, and its Amendment and Validation Act, 2010 (AMASR Act), but, in the present context, this is relevant only for the Cooch Behar Royal Palace. The WBHC Act should have been the instrument addressing the needs of State-recognized heritage. However, as already mentioned, due to the absence of suitable provisions therein, the scope of the 'West Bengal Town and Country (Planning and Development) Act, 1979' (WBTCP Act) was inspected and utilized (as would be explained in the 'Heritage Management Plan' discussed hereafter) – effectively integrating conservation with urban development. In addition, in line with the 74th Amendment of the Indian Constitution, 1993, which mandates devolution of powers to urban local bodies, there is the 'West Bengal Municipal Act, 1993', and associated 'West Bengal Municipal Rules'. These were also inspected to explore the means of accomplishing the stated objectives.[2]

Through the West Bengal Municipal (Amendment) Act, 2019, it was possible to accommodate the constitution of a Heritage Conservation Committee at the local body level, who would initiate, inspect, and forward proposals to the State Heritage Commission established under the provisions of WBHC Act. This is significant as, from being a top-down approach, it is now a bottoms-up approach – investing the local representatives with agency. Also, it provides for the constitution of a Heritage Cell within the Municipal Office, which would look into the day-to-day ground-work concerning heritage management. Most importantly, the Municipal Act now defines and recognizes various types and scales of heritage, including zones, areas, and precincts.

The amendments for the other Acts are still under process and I am not at liberty to share the exact details. However, it would be meaningful to share the objectives of the reforms, as follows. The amended Municipal Rules would provide for implementation of the provisions of the amended Municipal Act. The amended WBHC Act would define and recognize different scales and types of urban heritage like 'heritage areas' and 'heritage precincts', but to render it with a broader scope, the reforms also suggest inclusion of 'cultural landscape', 'intangible heritage', 'cultural routes', et cetera, especially because the domain of action of this act is not limited to municipal towns. In addition, the criteria for listing would be more rationalized and systematized (a methodological example of the process would be exemplified hereafter in the Heritage Management Plan for Cooch Behar), and, of course, it would provide for the statutory declaration of a 'Heritage Town' status.

Proposed Heritage Management Plan

Given the immediacy expected of the heritage management plan, and the relatively longer duration anticipated for making legal reforms actionable, we recommended the dovetailing of the heritage management proposals with a 'Land Use Development and Control Plan' (LUDCP), which is a statutory document under the WBTCP Act, and provides for earmarking 'special areas', which could be heritage zones for the present context. This was an interim mechanism to address the needs of heritage zones and historic areas and precincts in the absence of specific legal provisions for recognizing them as such. This should be eventually addressed more comprehensively through an amendment of the WBTCP Act, which would be more specific and explicit in recognizing various types and scales of built heritage (including heritage areas and precincts), thereby promoting heritage conservation as an integral part of urban planning.

Since the LUDCP is a comprehensive plan with analyses and proposals for all aspects of urban development – like housing, economy, physical and social infrastructure, this provides the scope for inspecting the development needs and goals and guiding them in tandem with conservation needs and goals. Also, the proposed Development Control Rules (an integral part of the LUDCP) provides for essential tools like Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) – to protect the property rights and compensate the opportunity costs of private owners of properties facing development restrictions in view of heritage conservation.

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[2] Several other national and state legislation, guidelines and schemes were reviewed as reference – notably, The Karnataka Town & Country Planning Act, 1961, Greater Bombay Development Control Regulation No. 67, 1995, Punjab Regional & Town Planning & Development Act, 1995, Kolkata Municipal Corporation (Amendment) Act, 1997, Model Heritage Regulations, MoUD, 2011, and National Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana, 2015.

In addition, a Tourism Development Plan was formulated to especially capitalize on heritage resources as a driver for urban development. This included strategies for linking the town to the tourism circuit of the region, and recommended a variety of tourist itineraries to attract a diverse set of tourists, as well as specific interventions such as heritage branding, heritage accommodation, arts and crafts *haat* (fair/market)*,* a town museum, development of places for a vibrant nightlife, food and performing arts festivals, children's competitions, heritage cricket trophy, and heritage walks and drives. All of these can be effectively projectized by the urban local bodies or the district administration, thereby integrating heritage concerns with the very process of urban development.

It is important to note that the entire heritage management plan was built-up on the foundational processes of heritage assessment, and it would be worthwhile to take a closer look at that. To understand the heritage significance of Cooch Behar, the geo-political and social history of both the region and the town were studied in detail, as also the evolution of the present town form – which was systematically planned and developed under the patronage of the Koch Dynasty, and, of course, the extant resources that could potentially qualify as heritage. The study involved archival research, focus group discussions and interviews of local experts, and extensive field surveys.

Assessment of Heritage Significance

For the listing and grading of the individual heritage elements identified (through the existing provisions of the WBHC Act), detailed inventories were prepared for each element or property, based on guidelines of INTACH (1996) and the Council of Europe (2009). The heritage assessment looked at values, authenticity and integrity, which, in turn, indicated the significance and grade of these heritage elements. Four domains were considered for the values, namely (i) Historic, (ii) Aesthetic, (iii) Socio-cultural, and (iv) Scientific.[3] Contextual, 4-point criteria scales were designed for each of these domains, as well as 3-point criteria scales for authenticity and integrity (Table.1).

Table.1: Examples of Criteria Scales

Historic Value	★★★ $Vh = 3$	★★☆ $Vh = 2$	★☆☆ $Vh = 1$	☆☆☆ $Vh = 0$
Criteria	Belonging to the princely era, or earlier, and having known associations with historic events or personalities important at the regional or national level	Belonging to the princely era, or earlier, and having known associations with historic events or personalities important at the local level *and/or* Representing the town planning and development by the princely state	Belonging to the princely era, or earlier, but without known associations with historic events or personalities of importance	Not belonging to the princely or earlier era
Integrity	★★★ $Ix = 1$	★★☆ $Ix = 0.75$	★☆☆ $Ix = 0.5$	
Criteria	Elements/ attributes contributing to value, their relationship with each other, and the relationship with the site and surroundings (if it contributes to value) remain almost intact *and* Original or similar use continues	Some elements/ attributes contributing to value are missing, or their relationship with each other changed, or the relationship with the site and surroundings (if it contributes to value) noticeably changed, but not hampering overall value *and/or* Original use discontinued, and presently not used/abandoned or put to a use that is compatible with/ sympathetic to the value	Most elements/ attributes contributing to value are missing, or their relationship with each other considerably changed, or the relationship with the site and surroundings (if it contributes to value) considerably changed, hampering/ disturbing the overall value *and/or* Original use discontinued, and presently put to a use that is not compatible with/ sympathetic to the value	

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[3] Initially, we were considering a domain called 'architectural value', as is usually done for many Indian exercises (Town and Country Planning Organisation, 2011, p.6), but we soon realised the fallacy it would create due to overlapping of aesthetic, historic, socio-cultural, and scientific values that an element of architecture may embody. Accordingly, the values were adopted from the Burra Charter of ICOMOS Australia (1979/2013).

Significance is conceived as a function of value, authenticity, and integrity; given the nature of the parameters, it is of course not an additive function, but a product.[4] Assigning objective values to the various criteria scales, we have an objective measure of significance in any particular domain (eq.1).

$$Sx = Vx.Ax.Ix \qquad \qquad \dots [eq.1]$$

> Where,
>
> Vx = Value in domain x (x = h/a/c/s) having range [0, 1, 2, 3]
>
> Ax = Authenticity of elements and attributes with respect to V_x, having range [0.5, 0.75, 1]
>
> Ix = Integrity of elements and attributes with respect to V_x, having range [0.5, 0.75, 1]
>
> Sx = Significance in domain X, having range [0, 1, 2, 3], corrected to the nearest integer

For grading, these domain significances cannot be added up, as that may equate an element with high significance in only one domain with another element with low significances in many domains – an outcome that is not logically justified. Therefore, performance in one or more of the domains was individually considered, and the elements were grouped under four grades (Table.2), having different implications in relation to the amount of preservation required, interventions allowed, and permissions necessary.[5] As an outcome of this methodology of value assessment, 155 heritage properties have been statutorily listed by the West Bengal Heritage Commission on July 5, 2019.

Table.2: Criteria for Categories of Grades

Grade	1	2A	2B	3
Criteria	Sx = 3 in any domain Or Sx = 2 in any three domains	Sx = 2 in any two domains	Sx = 2 in any domain Or Sx = 1 in any three domains	Sx = 1 in any domain

Statement of Significance

Based on the research, the heritage significance of the town was articulated under four criteria, as follows:

1. *Typology of built heritage:* With a significant number of high or good quality buildings and structures, both secular and ecclesiastical, from periods ranging from the late Middle Ages to the twentieth century, and bearing testimony to several phases of architectural stylistic practices, Cooch Behar is of much significance in a regional context.
2. *Testimony to a cultural tradition:* Cooch Behar played a crucial role in the meeting between indigenous and non-indigenous Indian cultures and ideologies, as also between Indian and European cultures, resulting in a meeting point of several cultural traits, from various parts of India, as well as outside India.
3. *Association with ideas and traditions:* Cooch Behar is noteworthy for its associations with the Bengal Renaissance and its progressive religious movements and arts, in conjunction with vernacular and folk cultures.
4. *Land Use, representation of a culture or human interaction with the environment:* Cooch Behar is an important example of an Indian secular city-state, focused on the wellbeing of its people, and their all-round development. With well-laid out streets, vistas, social and physical infrastructure, a city-wide system of water reservoirs, and noticeable architectural instances, no other substantial example of this type of planned development may be witnessed in eastern part of India, and it has survived quite well, clearly reflecting its urban pattern, and having a significant number of its landmarks, water-bodies, individual buildings, and infrastructure, to a moderately good degree of preservation.

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[4] Both authenticity and integrity relate to how the heritage element is received by us, but they do not constitute any value by themselves (see for example UNESCO WHC, 2003, p.68) – rather, they are 'modifiers' of the value. Without any heritage value, there can be no significance, but an additive function might indicate some residual significance due to the contribution of 'authenticity' or 'integrity' scales. A product function is suitable for 'modifier' parameters.

[5] I am not free to share the exact implications of the grades at the moment, as it is yet to be statutorily approved.

The articulation of the heritage significance prominently indicated Cooch Behar's rightful claim as a 'Heritage Town'. Of course, declaration of 'Heritage Town' status, or even heritage precincts, is not possible until the amendment is processed. However, with the provisions of the LUDCP, we delineated heritage zones (Fig.1). The delineation of the zones itself involved a systematic methodology, the explanation of which is beyond the scope of this paper. In addition, two heritage precincts were identified and delineated, namely (i) Sagar Dighi Precinct, and (ii) Bairagi Dighi Precinct, which may be declared as such after amendment of the WBHC Act. In the meanwhile, comprehensive conservation efforts for these two precincts have been incorporated through 'Action Area Plans', as discussed hereafter.
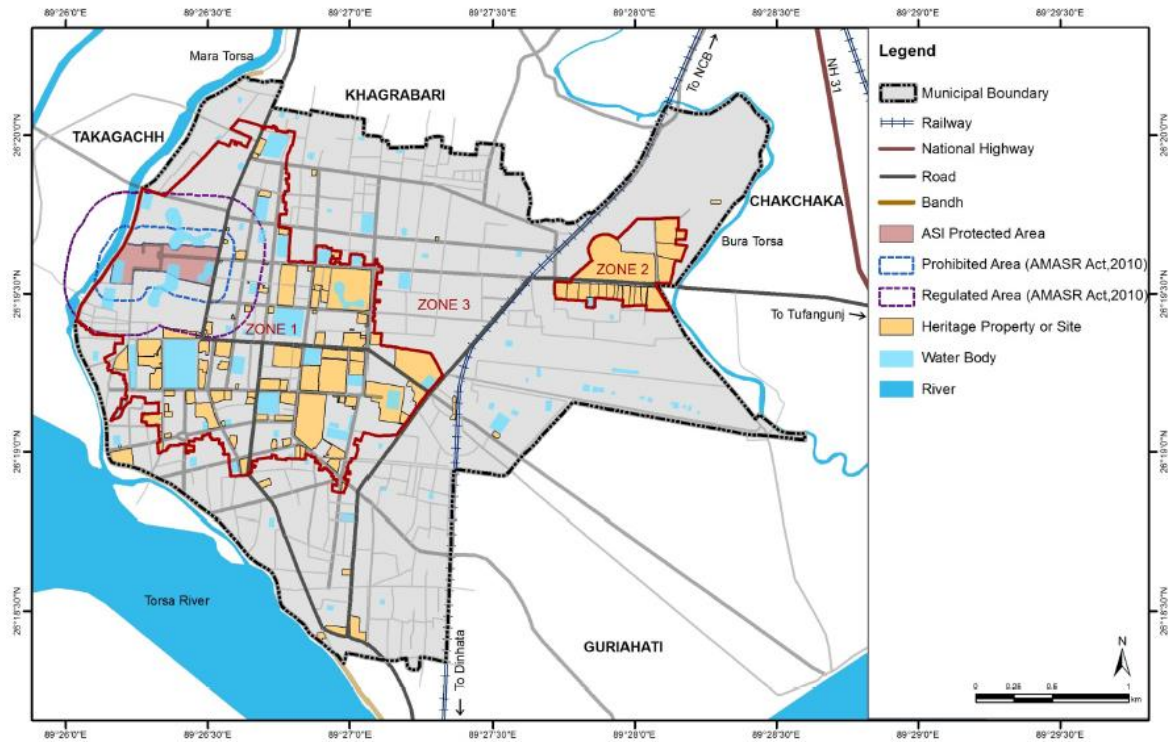
Fig.1: The division of the entire town into three zones – the large chunk on the left is the historic core, the smaller chunk on the right is the later development during the colonial era (both of these have a large concentration of heritage properties), while the rest of the town is zone 3, with scattered presence of heritage elements. Of course, there are further subzones for development control.

Action Area Plans

The objective of these plans was to create exciting and inclusive public places that highlight and communicate the heritage significance while generating revenues for sustainability. Of course, there was also the challenge of exemplifying the introduction of new design elements in a historic setting – which would be sensitive to the heritage fabric, but without a pretence of historicism that might corrupt the authenticity of the experience. So, a contemporary, but contextual vocabulary was required.

The Sagar Dighi Precinct is at the heart of the old town, with the largest tank (*dighi,* in Bengali) as its focus, surrounded by many heritage buildings which were, and are, public offices. Some basic interventions were proposed for the heritage properties, like removal of accretion, maintenance, signage, and façade lighting, whereas the major intervention was at the street level, through proper design of the public spaces, organizing and ordering activities already present and upgrading infrastructure (Fig.2).

The Bairagi Dighi is right across the Madan Mohan temple, and south of the tank is the derelict Sadharan Brahmo Samaj structure. For this precinct, the proposed interventions were more at the property level, where we combined the *dighi* and the Brahmo Samaj property through a unified design, and the derelict structure became a heritage gallery and café through adaptive reuse (Fig.3).
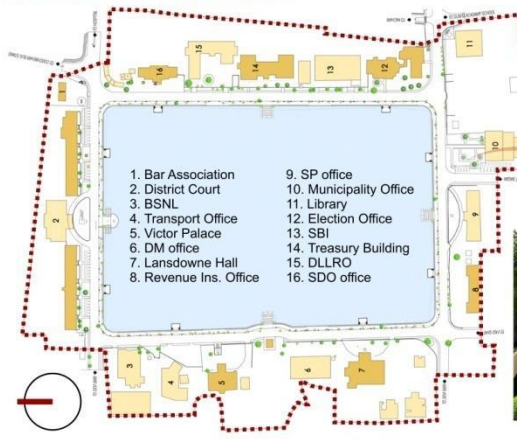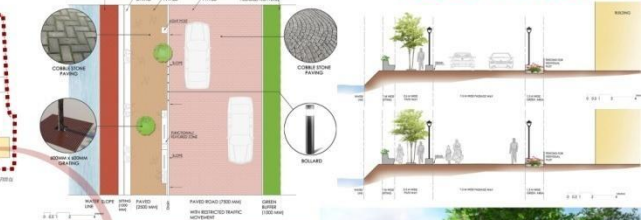
Fig.2: Snapshot of Sagar Dighi Action Area Plan

Fig.3: Snapshot of Bairagi Dighi Action Area Plan

Conclusion

As I sit here writing this paper, a lot more has happened at the Cooch Behar front. Comments and objections regarding the proposed heritage listing have been heard from the public, and some private property owners are considering applying for the second round of listing; the land use plan has been submitted and is going up for public review, and the state authorities have already begun the processes for implementation of the action area

plans. The impetus of the project had suffered due to the pandemic, but, if it continues to regain steam (as I see it is), Cooch Behar Heritage Town could prove to be a model exercise in promoting conservation of heritage through its integration with urban planning and development.

Acknowledgements

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A.3.

Bishnupur: Indigenous development practices, traditional wisdom Conservation framework for resilience and sustainability

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Sustained Actions for Value and Environment (S A V E)

Our present development patterns and practices have been found to be quite inadequate to address post-pandemic realizations. There is a disconnect between our approach to the built environment and our social values and cultural norms. In fact, we are furthering this disconnect by our continued alliance to technology driven, inhumane, consumer culture and corporate approach. Despite the fact that we try hard to build a flat homogenous world and adopt global standardization, the local specifics like, human values and cultural identities, cannot be totally disregarded in the process. A closer look at the present era reveals unprecedented helplessness, mass suffering and distress, uprooting of human values, agony, social distancing in every sense. This is a critical time to reflect, introspect, and question our practice and our roles as stewards of the built environment. Urban practitioners, designers and decision makers no longer have the liberty of satisfying dreams and personal gains, rather they must become responsible and accountable for their actions. We need to choose carefully, essentially working to bring positive changes in the way of life for the majority through collective actions, collaborations and negotiations.

In our search for precedents of a more holistic approach to development, we decided to refer to indigenous systems - our building traditions, planning philosophies and practices that helped the society negotiate natural, environmental and human acts. In these historic experiences and examples, traditional wisdom often foregrounds a more practical, comprehensive understanding of local context and a holistic approach to development. In such an approach, both tangible and intangible heritage form the basis for building up a process of development, charting out a way of life that results in collective betterment. To impress on this point further, we would like to discuss our experience of working with and within Bishnupur in Bankura District of West Bengal. Bishnupur is a medieval Hindu town in the *rahr* terrain of Bengal (a predominantly undulating laterite terrain), the town locates itself in a dry, drought prone locale (Fig.1). Even within this difficult geography, the town has been able to thrive and survive for more than eight centuries. Furthermore, it is important to note that in all this time, Bishnupur has never been subjected to any external rule. This makes it unique, and probably the sole example of urban Bengali town independent of direct external influences. Through the ages, the town has refined and sedimented a unique culture - culture that promotes love, tolerance and has a very high happiness quotient. This cultural evolution reflected in a number of beautiful temples of national importance and a highly developed culture of arts, crafts, festivals and living traditions.

Fig.1: Terrain of Bishnupur

How did a small town achieve such a high degree of evolution, not just spatially and in terms of the built environment, but also in relevant social, economic, cultural and religious aspects? We would argue that this is not an ad-hoc phenomenon, rather it has been achieved through meticulous indigenous planning practices affecting people-centred development, with the help of traditional wisdom and a clear understanding of the physical and cultural contexts.

Bishnupur was the capital of the Mallabhum (the land of the Malla) kingdom - the Malla's being a sect of wrestlers who had close connections with local tribes and specially fishermen - the Bagdi community. They were devout followers of the Vaishnava faith, and the kingdom itself adopted and followed the Vaishnava religion. Though the records of the dynasty go as far back as 675 AD, historically they came to the limelight around 1586 AD by virtue of their pivotal role in the military conflict between the Pathans and the Mughals. During their independent rule over ten centuries, Bishnupur managed to accumulate considerable resources, military power and presence. Through a mix of diplomacy and military supremacy - Bishnupur and the Mallabhum region was able to enjoy relative political stability from its founding. This helped the Malla dynasty put together an excellent administrative system imbued with high ethical and spiritual standard, a necessary precondition for holistic development. Having never been conquered, Bishnupur retains most of its planning and design footprints even today.

In the development of Bishnupur town one can identify a plethora of endogenous urban development concepts. The location itself, slightly off the crossing of two ancient trade routes, including those from Tamralipta to Pataliputra, and Nilachal to Nabadwipam, is a strategic decision. This facilitated trade, as well as provided relative security to the town. The Malla Kings had extensive knowledge about terrain, water conservation and soil characteristics. They devised ecologically sensitive strategies of rainwater harvesting, which included workable waterworks and embankments (*bandhs*) for storing and channelizing sufficient water for the settlement (Fig.2). With ample food reserves, this made Bishnupur adequately self-sufficient and resistant to adverse climatic and/or military events. Their planning wisdom helped them survive a ten year siege by the Burgee - Maratha invaders. This again provided dividends at the time of Mughal invasion when they flushed the Mughal army by flooding the Dwarakeshwar River, thereby defeating Raja Man Singh.
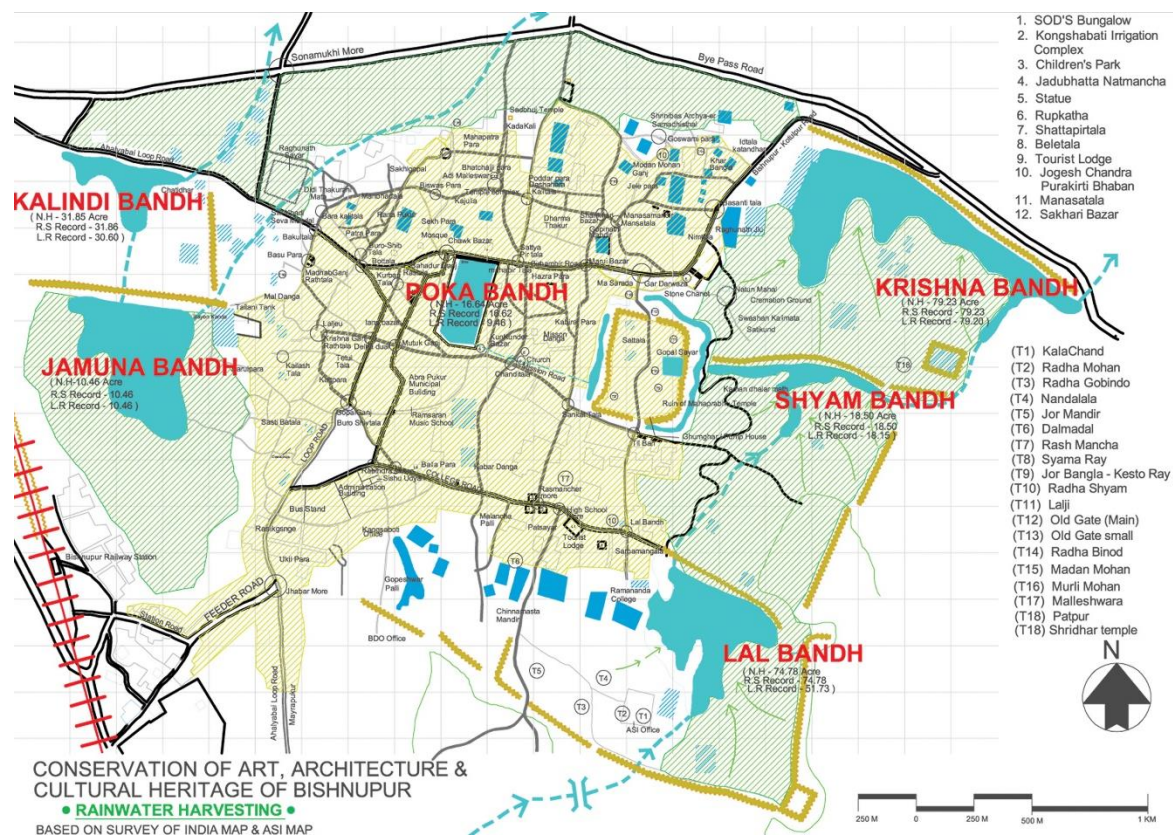
Fig.2: Rainwater harvesting features of Bishnupur

The town was mainly a trading town that was carefully cultivated to support and facilitate trade activities. The Malla Kings realized that prosperity to the town necessitated the development of a centre for craft excellence, good safety and security. There was a high quality of urban life, ruled by a king and sustained with the help of various ministries. There were military, revenue, judicial, agricultural, commercial and sacred departments. The departments and a plethora of administrative officers ensured that the kingdom achieved high levels of quality of life for all citizens. Various communities with traditional skills and craftsmanship were invited to settle here to make the town self-sustaining and profitable. In other words, the skilled craftsmen created unique products and a thriving economy. The kingdom devised a distinctive strategy to make this town popular and thereby attracting investors. It was reported that any traveller could get free boarding and lodging for three days for setting up business opportunities in town. It promoted a safe, secure thriving environment where the concept of circular economy could be practised.

Describing this, Mr. Holwell (Circa 1760), Governor of Kolkata says:

> Here the property as well as liberty of people are inviolate, here no robbers are heard of either private or public; the traveller […] upon entering the district, becomes the immediate care of the Government, which allots him guards without any expense, to conduct him from stage to stage, and these are accountable for the safety and accommodation of his person and effects […] (Chatterjee, 1954)

Moreover, there was a strong social and religious aspect to life in Bishnupur, ideas that supported the shared values of Vaishnavism, for instance propagating humanity, human values, concern and respect for nature. The philosophy was more about sharing and collaborating rather than competing. Instead of the physical form, Bishnupur's architecture concentrates on facilitating the relationships that are important in life. There is a strong sense of ethos, values and respect for traditions. Architecture, urban strategies, planning choices were all made to support this understanding. They were resilient and flexible, able to adjust and accommodate shift that might occur at a later date. The only permanent inserts were the institutions of value – be it temples, king's palaces, city protection and administrative and security infrastructure.

The town is divided into several local markets, which is subdivided into several *paras*. These *paras* are mixed-use localities that incorporate residences as well as workshops. They were mostly organized and named by occupation, for example Tanti Para being populated predominantly by weavers, or Jele Para populated by fisher folk. The image structure of the town had several important nodes, usually with religious significance, such as Manasa-tala. This structuring helped to create characteristic zones with distinct activity patterns and a high degree of legibility. Bishnupur was able to maintain an easy pace of lifestyle by stressing on public spaces, public life and adequate support infrastructure. Most of the nodes were multifunctional spaces, because they were able to sustain a plethora of urban functions necessary to catalyze vibrant and productive public life. These spaces could assume different roles, like a daily market in the morning, a resting place at noon, a popular community social space in the evening.

The Kings paid special attention to the temples, making them beautiful and ornamental as they were symbols of high refinement of craft traditions, aesthetic awareness and material richness of the region (Fig.3). Bishnupur town thus became a symbol of Bengal's heritage manifesting as exquisite tangible examples of art, architecture, crafts. Simultaneously, it also helped to anchor these expressions through a rich and diverse inventory of intangible heritage and cultural practices. These were represented in the rich living traditions, the culture of festivals, events, folklore, *kathakata* (a religious recital, a traditional form of rural entertainment, based on folklore), and music. The tangible and the intangible elements continuously enriched each other, evolving over time to encode layers of complex symbolism and cultural meaning.

This was also a place where a local tribal culture established a dialogue with Hindu cultural traditions, which helped it to get evolved. In the town, we could thus trace Jain and Buddhist influences along with prominent tribal deities like Manasha (snake goddess) and the major festival of Jhapan as well as other local festivals like Gajon, Raban Katha, et cetera. They coexist within the cultural milieu of the town, finding expression in major cultural festivals like Vaishnava Raas, Rathayatra, or the ever-popular Durga Puja (Fig.4). It is a socially rich and culturally loaded ensemble. Importantly, we can trace spatial manifestations of this rich cultural tradition reflected back in the way space and typology of the town is structured. Architecture sediments these traces - in artefacts, in typological diversity, varied scales of public spaces, and unique paras for communities.

Legend:
1. SOD'S Bungalow
2. Kongshabati Irrigation Complex
3. Children's Park
4. Jadubhatta Natmancha
5. Statue
6. Rupkatha
7. Shattapirtala
8. Beletala
9. Tourist Lodge
10. Jogesh Chandra Purakirti Bhaban
11. Manasatala
12. Sakhari Bazar

(T1) KalaChand
(T2) Radha Mohan
(T3) Radha Gobindo
(T4) Nandalala
(T5) Jor Mandir
(T6) Dalmadal
(T7) Rash Mancha
(T8) Syama Ray
(T9) Jor Bangla - Kesto Ray
(T10) Radha Shyam
(T11) Lalji
(T12) Old Gate (Main)
(T13) Old Gate small
(T14) Radha Madhab
(T15) Madan Mohan
(T16) Murli Mohan
(T17) Malleshwara
(T18) Patpur

CONSERVATION OF ART, ARCHITECTURE & CULTURAL HERITAGE OF BISHNUPUR

INTACH
INDIAN NATIONAL TRUST FOR ART AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

Fig.3: Map showing location of temples in Bishnupur (top); Temple forms and structures (bottom)
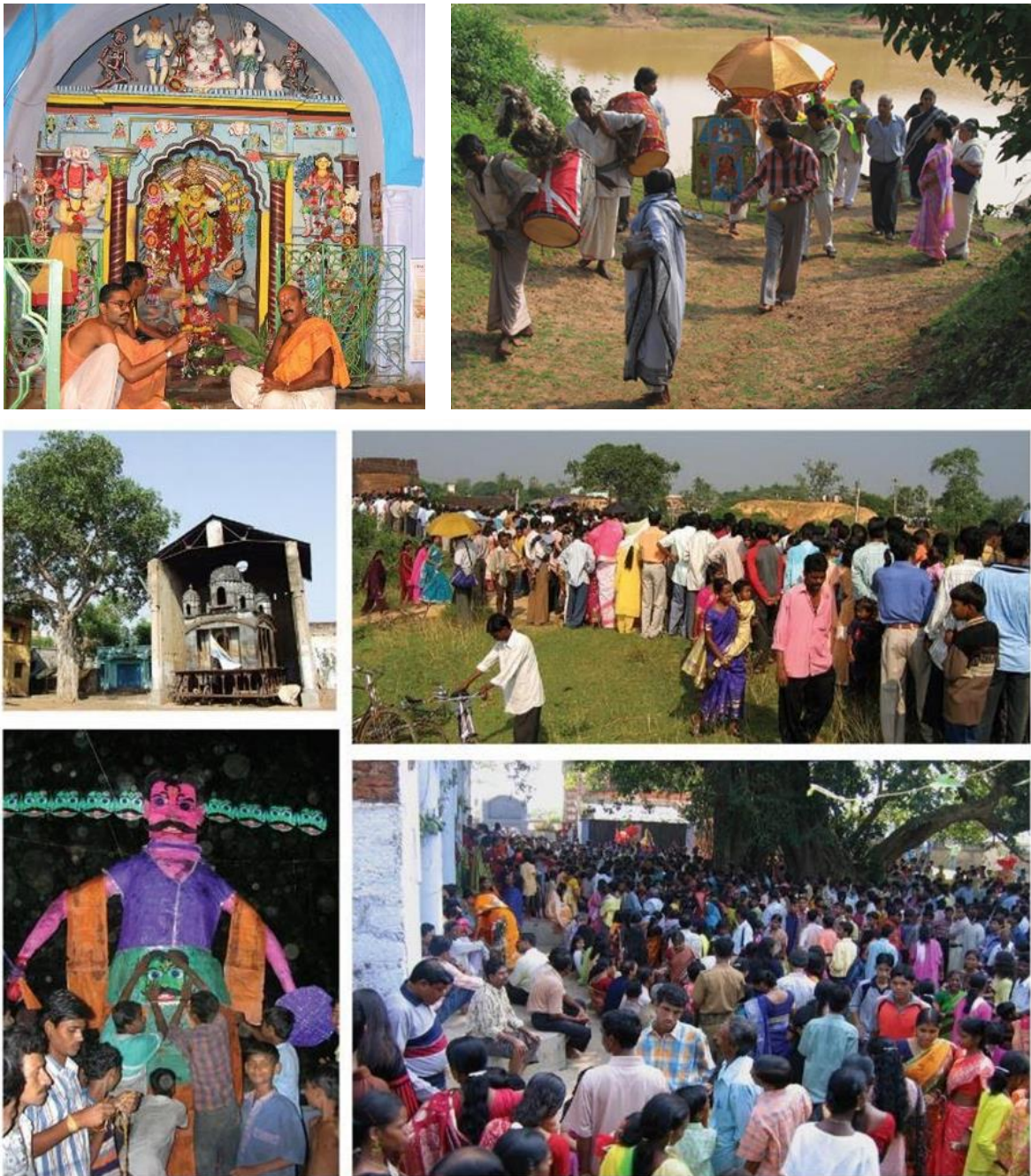
Fig.4: Various festivals of Bishnupur

The town boasts of some of the most exquisite examples of terracotta temples, laterite stone temples, fortifications, water-management structures, gates and chariots, public squares, et cetera. There is cross fertilisation and exchange - terracotta embellishments and motifs of temples (Fig.5). It can also be traced into the borders and margins of the silk saree, in conch shell carvings and wooden sculptures (Fig.5). Tribal totems and representations get incorporated into these products, further increasing the richness and diversity.

The town has been designed through a unique process of development that kept at its core the interest of people, the ecosystem and resources. This matured over a long period of time, adjusting continuously and adapting to the local circumstances to create the Bishnupur of today - a place steeped in history, traditions and nostalgia, a timeless experience. This is in stark contrast to the modern development process. Such development is and has been evaluated from the perspective of a single parameter - that of financial gains. The prerequisite for financial profitability has pushed development into a trajectory that has increased inequality and further highlighted difference in society. Somewhere along our recent history, there was a critical turning point - a point where the meaning and goals of development transformed from a view that worked towards collective

betterment to a view that privileged individual gains. In this paradigm, growth became the most direct marker of development - achieved through a series of resource intensive, exploitative projects with a narrow focus that is carried out by and with the significant resources of a handful of powerful stakeholders. The older, more nuanced and complex understandings and engagements of the urban planning process were discarded in favour of faster, more immediate projects. There was thus a focus on quantity over quality, and projectization of development into components that failed to look beyond their immediate gains. At the core of these projects were buzzwords like 'sustainable', 'resilient', 'eco-friendly', 'green', 'smart' - words that talked about ethics and philosophies of sensitivity, inclusivity and responsibility and tried to impart credibility to harmful processes if measured from their ability to create impact and result in collective good.

Fig. 5: Traditional motifs used in and around the town (top); Craft traditions of Bishnupur (bottom)

In spite of its many criticisms mainly from academia and outlier disciplines of urban practice, such as conservation and informal urbanism, this practice of development is largely adopted as standard practice. The pandemic and its associated sea-changes have helped foreground the implications of an unquestioned adoption of this development paradigm. We have been forced to confront the all-pervading approach to development based on exploitation of inequalities and power structures, extraction, degradation and negligence of existing built and natural, tangible and resources. This is an existential crisis which has exposed the necessity for a

paradigmatic shift. In this period, we, as human beings have experienced chaos, vulnerability and fragility, and the very foundations of our societal systems, conventions, philosophies and beliefs have been shaken. We again find ourselves asking - where do we go from here? How do we move forward, how do we rebuild in a way that acknowledges our shortcomings and reframes our future actions?

The answer lies in a series of paradigmatic shifts: in looking at development not as re-building, but as strengthening, in understanding value, and not just economy, in understanding processes, not projects, comprehending long-term benefits, not short-term profits, and focussing on collective good and not individual gains. In order to do that, there are ample lessons from history. The case of Bishnupur, its conceptualization and its development through the ages as elaborated earlier highlight the positive catalytic benefits of a people-centred, holistic urban development process. The continuous, consistent efforts undertaken in Bishnupur are a valuable lesson that understanding and recognition of multiple values leads to multiple benefits that are accrued across society, and leads to collective betterment. Thus, it also provides us with clues about the evolution of a new paradigm for development - one that is rooted in the ethics of conservation, aimed at creating continuity rather than disjunction. Such conservation focuses heavily on understanding of the various assets and values of a place, both in its tangible and intangible manifestations. The framework then moves onto identification and implementation of several catalytic processes that plug in and strengthen the existing matrix of assets, making it relevant and viable in the present situation. Conservation thus employed becomes a process of retrofitting, by restoring, adapting, reusing and upscaling the existing structures. Depending on the area addressed, the process takes on multiple forms. At places, it could be spatial interventions. At others, it could be cultural events. At its root, all these processes must learn from history, from traditional practices and wisdom - folding and building on the same to address the challenge of development with a toolkit of intervention measures that are multi-pronged yet rooted to the context. Thus, similarly one can initiate collective betterment by prioritizing the essence of life in a place and its people, while simultaneously retaining unique experiences, and sedimentation of memories through design interventions.

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A.4.

Panel Discussion: Day 1

AGK Menon, Anjan Mitra, Arjun Mukerji, Partha Ranjan Das, Saptarshi Sanyal, Soumen Mitra

Moderator: *Kamalika Bose*

The speakers in the inaugural session focussed on the theme of concepts, frameworks, needs and experiences of historic areas and precincts with a focus on West Bengal. The discussion took a close look at the legal, administrative and financial mechanisms that would enable economically viable and sustainable conservation of heritage properties, precincts and areas. Experiences were shared and specific examples were cited.

Moderator

In the panel discussion of this inaugural session, we are privileged to have Mr Partha Ranjan Das, Mr Saptarshi Sanyal and Mr Soumen Mitra, who will be joining the speakers of this session, as discussants. We welcome all of you.

We will start with Mr Partha Ranjan Das. Mr Das, in your past experience of working in different regions and towns of Bengal as a member of the West Bengal Heritage Commission, what have been some of the key obstacles that have much delayed the creation of heritage precincts in Bengal? How do you think this can be rectified and what measures need to be urgently taken?

Partha Ranjan Das

Declaring a heritage precinct is not very difficult. However, in West Bengal, we face several problems with regard to the existing laws of the Heritage Commission. Though enacting a law is easy, implementation of the same is difficult. The pertaining problems can be discussed in two segments on heritage precincts in Kolkata and outside Kolkata. In Kolkata, most of the heritage precincts include 100 to 200 year-old buildings, of which 70 to 80 percent are tenanted. So, it is very difficult to identify the owner. Even if we impose certain restrictions, we cannot talk to the owner on a one to one basis or make him aware of what are his duties and responsibilities. In most cases, the tenants are disinterested in the upkeep of the building, and their level of awareness of heritage buildings is low, as most of them are not from Kolkata and thereby do not have a sense of belonging to the city. Contrarily, we have noticed that sense of belonging or sense of ownership is much better in places outside Kolkata, like Chandannagore, Sreerampur, Jalpaiguri, and Bardhaman. Even in towns like Bishnupur and Medinipur, it is better. So, I think we have to start with making people aware of what does it mean to live in a heritage building, and what do we mean as a heritage precinct? When a heritage precinct is declared, what does it mean? What are the restrictions? What are the incentives? Also, we have to be aware of overlapping laws in our country with regard to restoration and renovation of old buildings. If it is declared that something cannot be pulled down in a heritage building, or in a heritage precinct, legally it is very difficult to implement it. If an owner is going through financial difficulty, he has all the right to pull down his building. Unless we provide sufficient incentive, it is very difficult to implement laws like that. It is always possible to declare heritage areas and precincts from the West Bengal Heritage Commission but how do we conserve that is a different question altogether. What we also realized when I moved through different cities in West Bengal, is there are varying levels of awareness existing amongst the general public. Our first drive should be making the people aware of their own heritage. I completely agree with AGK Menon that it has to start with architects and designers. The architects should understand what is meant by heritage conservation and what is our heritage? It is not, making something touristy and making something visually attractive; there is something

more to it. So, it has to start with making these people aware of what is our own heritage and inculcating a sense of pride. The same goes with our politicians and our bureaucrats.

In India we notice that most of our heritage buildings especially in urban areas are owned by the government and most government departments deface their buildings on a regular basis. They think that they have the right to do so because they own it. We face other problems also. In some states there are buildings owned by the Central Government where the Central Government feels that the heritage laws are not applicable to them. So where do we go unless we make these people aware? I mean what is the benefit of going to the public? Hence, I think we have to start from there.

Moderator

Mr Mitra, in light of your pivotal role in a holistic restoration of heritage buildings, open spaces and water bodies especially in the context of Barrackpore, one of the earliest and most prominent cantonment in British India, how do you view the role of public authorities who are often the largest users and custodians of built heritage, in preserving these ? Could you also, using your experience and process in Barrackpore, throw some light how the other agencies and public bodies could also become responsible in the heritage that they own?

Soumen Mitra

I shall answer the second part of the question first. I shall explain what Barrackpore is all about and will share a small presentation.

The Government and the big corporate houses are in possession of most heritage buildings and thus it is our responsibility to conserve them and continue to use them with minimum changes. It is also our duty to restore the unused heritage structures for adaptive use. Moreover, we must try to unravel the history of such structures to arouse a sense of pride and ownership in the users. I am lucky to be working in the Police Department which has a substantial share of old structures in its possession and along with my colleagues have been able to develop a sense of pride in its protection, conservation and restoration.

Barrackpore is the oldest British cantonment, but I shall be talking about Barrackpore Park or Lat Bagan which in 1800, Governor-General Wellesley developed as the official weekend retreat with a grand Government House. The property was about two hundred and fifty acres on the River Hooghly about 19 miles north of Calcutta.

For me, it started as a quest to unearth the Lotus Fountain. It was buried under a pile of debris in an abandoned state and overrun by weeds and creepers. I read somewhere that it was brought from Agra Fort by Marquis of Hastings in 1813-14. As I further researched a whole new world opened up about Barrackpore Park and the Lotus Fountain. We have restored the fountain and made it functional in 2018. It is placed in the backyard of the old Government House known as the Lady Canning's Terrace. We restored the West Gate House, the North Gate House as well as the South Gate House during 2017-18. The garden bridge built in 1802 on the Moti Jheel, later named the Lady Hardinge Bridge was also restored during this period. The Minto Fountain of 1910 was also made functional and the Lady Canning's Corner which has her tomb was spruced up.

Barrackpore Park is dotted with Nissen huts of World War II vintage where US Air Force personnel lived. Some of these have been restored and are being used. The one on the bank of the Aviary Pond has been made into a Lounge with World War II pictures.

The 350-year old Grand Banyan Tree - the icon of the park was first photographed by Samuel Bourne in the early 1860s and then sketched by Edward Lear in 1873. There are a few photographs of the Governors General entertaining their guests under this banyan tree, and even King George V and Queen Mary had Christmas lunch there. Last year the same banyan tree featured in the documentary entitled 'Portillo's Empire Journey'.

There are several sketches of the old Government House and subsequently photographs taken since 1864. After Independence, the whole campus was divided and a portion remained with the Governor of West Bengal as his retreat while the rest was handed over to the Police Department for its Training College and Armed Police Brigade Headquarters. The old Government House was converted into a police hospital. This building was actually the temporary residence while the grand Government House was being built by Lord Wellesley. However when the construction of the grand Government House was discontinued due to the disapproval of the Board of Directors of the East India Company the subsequent Governors General added on to the temporary

building till it became a full-fledged mansion. However due to poor maintenance and decades of neglect it started crumbling down. Large portions of the roof caved in and the northern and western facades collapsed.

Fortunately, the building which at one point was thought to be declared condemned and demolished has been restored to a great extent and work is still continuing with the financial assistance of West Bengal Heritage Commission. A portion of the restored ground floor which was earlier meant for the servants has been converted into the Westside Gallery consisting of 'Wellesley' – historical gallery, 'Buchanan'- the audio-visual centre, the 'Arms Gallery' and the main Lounge with a Memorabilia store. The northern portico has also been rebuilt.

The whole process of restoration of the old Government House and conservation of the biodiversity of the park is documented in two books namely, 'Woodland Pleasure: The bio-diversity of Barrackpore Park' and 'Under the Banyan Tree: The forgotten story of Barrackpore Park'.

Several buildings of heritage value belonging to the Police have been restored in Kolkata. A mental asylum called Dalanda House converted in 1914 into the Calcutta Police Training School, was restored and beautified by removing the ugly structures that were in the front. Another old building on Ripon Street that belonged to the Maharajah of Nadia and Bhawal at one point would have been demolished had it not been for our timely intervention. It has been restored and called 'Limelight' and is used as a Museum cum Library and a centre for police-community connect. Another building called 'The Almond' which houses the Sealdah Traffic Guard on Canal Street belonged to the *zamindar* (landlord) of Mymensingh, Sir Abdul Hamid Ghaznavi, who was also the Sheriff of Calcutta. A lot of Swaraj Party meetings used to be held here at one point. But it was crumbling till it was restored in 2014-15 and is used as the office of the Sealdah Traffic Guard. Further, another building, a small townhouse in Bhawanipore on Townshend Road has been restored by us and used as a Police Guest House. We were particularly keen to restore this house so that people in the locality could also do the same with their houses. Again the heritage building of Special Branch of Kolkata Police has been conserved. And finally, Jorabagan Traffic Guard housed in an old building earlier owned by Janakinath Roy, a businessman, industrialist and banker was restored and it has become an attraction in Jorabagan. Here a room has been converted into a 'Legacy Centre'.

These are some of the buildings that the Police Department has prevented from being demolished, and instead restored and put them to good use. Additionally, there are a large number of heritage buildings which are constantly being conserved and used, like the various Police Stations, divisional offices and Police Headquarters at Lalbazar. Thank you.

Moderator

Mr Saptarshi Sanayal , your long association with conservation and planning issues of Santiniketan, both as a student and professional, must have revealed several complexities of the site – its built heritage, ecological aspects, intangible qualities and management processes. Could you elaborate on some of the salient aspects which can enable effective conservation and management of Santiniketan's heritage areas and values?

Saptarshi Sanyal

I would like to start my discussion with a recent news clipping about Santiniketan's historic gate being inadvertently, or deliberately, demolished, seemingly in the process of a political feud. When we talk about heritage precincts, we are not just talking about a physical geography, or a physical space, but also a social space. If we take a cue from history, and rifle through the numerous evocative images, we can learn how Visva-Bharati was co-produced by its teachers, its students as well as various collaborators of Rabindranath Tagore who were drawn to Santiniketan. These images narrate a very important dimension to the history of Santiniketan, that it was really as much of a social space as it was a physical one. In certain ways, it was also kind of an anti-establishment social space. It was a meeting point of people across cultures. Located far away from major imperial centres, it had a certain amount of freedom and sovereignty from the then colonial state. However, the staid and sterile photographs of Santiniketan taken by famous photographers in the colonial period fail to capture this subtle spatial translation of freedom. This is because Santiniketan cannot be pictured as a space without people, who were an integral part of its physical geography as well as its essence. Moreover, there are other dimensions that must be taken into account: how the landscape changes with weather, how the ambience transforms with music, festivals and theatre. Even the gate of Sriniketan was not only an object of

dry utilitarianism, rather a creative response to the formal architecture of the colonial period, exemplified by the elegant buildings of Barrackpore. So, we see that there was a wide departure from Santiniketan and the State's spaces in the contemporary age. The most important point that I would like to make in this section of my argument is that these were self-built spaces. Santiniketan was not built by the so-called professionals, or military engineers, or PWD engineers of the contemporary period, but by the very students and the teachers who lived there. This is something that I discovered while I worked as a heritage management professional in Santiniketan. I drafted its initial management plan when it was being considered for nomination of heritage sites for UNESCO. I was in charge of implementing the same management plan when I was with the ASI in 2010-11. Presently, as a historian researching on the genesis of Santiniketan, I understand that the entire protracted, lived in, and embodied historical experience is a fundamental part of Santiniketan's genesis. Further, viewing it as a heritage site from multiple vantage points, has convinced me that any top-down endeavour will not be effective, just as Partha Ranjan Das said earlier, that it is easy to enact legislation but difficult to implement it. Though Santiniketan has West Bengal Town and Country Planning legislation that protects it as a site, but what happens on the ground is something completely different. The case of breaking of its historic gate is a glaring example of the effects of top-down interventions. In reality, there are several overlapping and intersecting stakes.

Moreover, as Partha Ranjan Das explained earlier, there are several overlapping conservation laws. In the case of Santiniketan, different parts of the land are with the forest department, Visva Bharati, and Bolpur town. In addition, the space that we are discussing includes five gram panchayats under the jurisdiction of Santiniketan-Sriniketan Development Authority, constituted in 1989. Therefore, unless we actually build a consensus at the ground level about what Santiniketan is as a space, its heritage management interventions will not be effective. This is because it is a multi scaler space, including the Ashram, the original spot where Maharshi Debendranath meditated, Visva-Bharati campus, and the setting of Prantik and Bolpur. So then, what is our idea of what Santiniketan is? We do not seem to yet have a consensus on that. Due to the unfortunate theft of the Nobel Prize in 2005, Visva-Bharati started erecting these walls, and henceforth people are not allowed to photograph its spaces. This, in a way, is contradictory to the very ideals and values that it stood for—that of being without any boundaries. Tagore himself said in "Chitto jetha bhoyeshunno", 'where the world has not been broken up into narrow domestic walls'. Paradoxically, in Visva-Bharati, those disconnect the site from the people and the setting around it.

Interestingly, the boundary walls also have other ecological impacts. I would like to refer to a satellite image showing Santiniketan which is situated between the winding Kopai Rive to the north, the straight Shyambati Canal (on a contour) and the Ajay River to the south, a very flood prone area. Tagore's eldest son, Rathindranath, who was an agricultural scientist, carried out the landscape development of Santiniketan. The site is located on an interfluve, or a bulging area between two rivers, with a difference of 15 metres of elevation between the grade of the river and the grade where Santinketan is sited. At the moment there are constructions all over around the interfluve. The water that actually should drain away towards the river, does not have a chance to actually flow back into the rivers. It does not have a chance to recharge because Santiniketan has very short but intense monsoon, as referred in many of songs and poems by Tagore. Thus, it is impossible to ignore these ecological details, and it is imperative to have a multiscalar approach involving professionals as well as local schoolchildren. For example, we can think about practical ideas where schoolchildren can be given an exercise to go around, map and explore the landscape and the geography of Santiniketan. In this way, we can have a better understanding of historical precincts, and think about it in more inclusive terms, especially because the historical precinct of Santiniketan has been completely dynamic. When I visited last year, I was delighted to see that several artefacts and buildings, including Shyamoli, have been restored by the ASI. But does that bring the value back into the historic precinct? Does that make the historic precinct connect with the people as it should in the 21st century when we are living in a democracy? These are some of the ways in which the idea of space gets complicated by the empirics of the site itself. And unless as professionals, we are acutely aware of it and understand what we can do in terms of direct top down intervention—and also what we cannot , and perhaps, should not—do as professionals top down, the values of Santiniketan are going to be compromised. These are some of the issues that we cannot ignore as heritage professionals.

Moderator

For the second round of questions I will reach out to the presenters who have already shown us case studies, and I would begin with Anjan Mitra. Mr Mitra, it was evident from your presentation on Bishnupur that our understanding of Bengal's historic towns and precincts is really limited in the way we look at it. And I think that what Mr Menon spoke about, the very crux of indigenous urbanism, is really what is governing the evolution, history and present day form of Bishnupur. So there is a need to expand to integrate tangible and intangible heritage while determining heritage significance, tangible, intangible, heritage precincts and historic areas.

So what needs to happen in terms of planning paradigms, policies and strategies, which we might not even exist at the moment, to make this heritage conservation integrated and holistic?

Anjan Mitra

I believe, the first and foremost thing is the realization that it is not a single-point agenda. Government, its rules and policies are to guide certain kind of developments. However, heritage conservation and development should have a much decentralized and localized approach. So, what that means is that, we should value the local assets, instead of considering them to be wasted, as generally a broken palace, or a discarded temple is considered as wasted space. If we can bring the community back into the system, then we can figure out a much localized way of solving and appreciating this problem, which can have long-lasting impressions. We have done that for the Garh Panchakot Ratna Mandir in Purulia when we restored it. The Dhara Panchayat villagers were told to install a *bigraha* (deity) in the Mandir, and start making the pujas, because that completely changes the ethos of that building for which it came into being in the very first place. They did not indulge in any kind of activity that can disturb the sacred space. So it is a kind of a change that first appreciates the local aspiration, ethos and craftsmanship. They understood that if they can maintain the structure that would be helpful for themselves. That kind of approach has to be taken through private and local small scale initiatives, which can further have a clustering effect. In addition, we can seek support from government agencies for some catalytic projects. For instance, recently, the Director of archaeological sites and museums initiated a conservation project involving the local community itself. Moreover, in the context of the present pandemic, it would be more relevant if we could find local resources, as it further strengthens the local economy. Hence, in the Mogulmari site in West Midnapur, we were able to continue with the conservation work in the lockdown period, owing to the local workforce.

The moment the economy survives, people start taking more interest. So, this is one way of introducing change while not depending on public support merely, rather banking on local initiatives and pride, and linking it with already existing traditional wisdom and practices. In this way, we can revitalize the living heritage, which in actuality is an asset, without formalizing the process and instead engaging in a more meaningful exercise.

Moderator

I pose my next question is to Arjun Mukerji. In your presentation on Coochbehar, you have demonstrated that a precinct will only begin to work in the top-down sort of paradigm, only if conservation becomes an important part of the urban development and planning process. So for that to happen, what are the steps that need to be made actionable and find wider application across cities and towns of Bengal? Because as we know, just a mere amendment in an act is not the be all and end all of actually coming into effect and have a trickledown effect. So what would you think of that?

Arjun Mukerji

Well, I would say you hit the nail on the head. The proposed amendments, if and when they are accepted, would technically allow you to declare a heritage precinct, which you cannot do presently. However, declaring it as such is not the end objective. So, you would have to have your plan to have some conservation interventions in place. Part of it would involve some kind of development restrictions, and until and unless you make that into a statutory requirement in terms of development control regulations or bylaws, you won't be able to implement it. Therefore, the integration with the planning agency is important. Hence, in the proposed amendment, in the Heritage Committee as well as in the Heritage Cell, we have proposed to include conservation architects as well as town planners. This is also important because, at the end of the day,

conservation has to be people centric. Especially for precincts, you would have some properties which are by themselves not heritage properties. And, even for heritage properties, the moment you are restricting development, you are actually curbing property rights of an owner, which is a fundamental right. So, how do you go about that? One of the mechanisms would be to have a system of transferring their development right where they do not develop on the property, but encash it through transfer of the right to somebody else. But then, how would that work unless you work out where that right would be received, who would be developing that much extra, somewhere else, without disturbing the rest of the city? Hence, it is essential to integrate the individual conservation initiatives with the holistic plan of the city. And, even though we have recommended these committees to have a bottom-up approach from the urban local bodies, there has to be a lot of capacity enhancement, and probably even hand-holding, by consultants and experts. Thus, the way forward would be through capacity building and awareness building, together with the legal provisions for them, and looking at it very holistically, which has come out in all the presentations. In my presentation, I did not focus much on the fact that heritage conservation has to be from the people, for the people, but it is essential. Otherwise, you cannot impose it on them.

Moderator

My next question is to Professor Menon. Having opened the dialogue and now having gone through this conversation and the presentations, Professor, I would like to ask you that, based on your experience of heritage precincts, both in Delhi as well as other parts of India, and your struggle to embed this idea within our country, are there benefits, gaps, and perceived negatives of all of these? What would be your advice for West Bengal, which is currently lacking the provision of heritage precincts, which is much delayed, almost 30, or 40 years behind other places which have already notified heritage precincts in different ways? And, what would be your advice for the various organizations and activists who are pursuing this idea for a way forward at different levels of governance structures, as well as heritage planning mechanisms that really need to see people out there and understand, engage in dialogue and set the ball in motion for this?

AGK Menon

I think what I heard was very hopeful, so I would only like to correct one thing you said, about being 30, 40 years behind. Instead of always saying that we are behind, I think we need to focus on how and where we are ahead. So, whether it is Bishnupur, or Cooch Behar, valuable projects are being undertaken that need to be collated and presented in a positive light to formulate productive and compelling context-specific conservation guidelines. We need to constantly look ahead and not back. In this manner the hegemony of international or national templates can be credibly questioned to suit local purposes. What are the variety of contexts in West Bengal that we have to look at? That said, I would also like to identify one or two troublesome issues that we must also confront. For one, as an ancient country, we have an abundance of heritage to deal with. So, can we begin to look at what we can let go and what we should keep? Now, that is something that we, as heritage professionals find difficult to consider. We want everything to remain, and that is what makes more enemies who will contest conservation. People want to exercise development rights, and if some insignificant heritage building comes in the way can we let it go? We faced this problem in Shahjahanabad when we proposed to make it a World Heritage City. The local people said that though they were very proud of their historic neighbourhoods, they did not want the World Heritage City tag because once it becomes World Heritage, then all kinds of laws and regulations will come into force which would restrict what they could do to their buildings. So, can we look at the issue the people apprehended, and tried to formulate byelaws which would permit what could be done, instead of what could not? Only the most iconic buildings had specific restrictions to development, but the majority had the right to develop. So, in West Bengal heritage law, can you define what can be done in Santiniketan, and what can be done in Bishnupur, and the other heritage precincts? These byelaws should not be based on the criteria advocated by ICOMOS or ASI, but evolved by understanding what the locality needs and the local people want. We say that conservation should be people-centric, but what if people say that they do not want the heritage tag, as in Shahjahanabad. How would you respond? What can we propose to conserve so that its heritage significance is retained? These are some of the issues and experiences arising out of the local context that I would like to bring to the table.

The profession is just beginning to confront such issues and find solutions. So far we have been content to follow what others have been doing and trying to catch up with them. However, I think, it is time we said that

we do not have to catch up, rather move forward by making sense of the present situation. In other words, we may even want to develop differently. Perhaps, given the 'living' nature of our traditional knowledge and skills, we may want to create 'new' heritage rather than preserve the heritage that exists. How can this 'living' tradition survive if we did not allow them to create new buildings? So far we are only using traditional crafts and knowledge to preserve, but is it possible to develop something new so that one hundred years from now, our grandchildren will conserve the heritage we created, just like we are conserving what was created 500 years ago. Our issues and our potentials to deal with them are different, so we should get out of this mind-set that we will catch up with others. We have to formulate other guidelines for conservation based on what we have and what we need. We are a poor country, we want to develop. We are a diverse, not a homogenous country, but the conservation guidelines we follow have evolved from uniquely Eurocentric cultural values and assumptions. They have also been promoted most compellingly as a 'civilizing mission'. We need to question this transference of conservation ideology. As a country with diverse cultures we may need to develop several systems of conservation, each addressing local imperatives and satisfying local aspirations. Maybe, sometime in the future, we may come to similar conclusions and develop related strategies, but that will emerge in the future and cannot be imposed today by trying to catch up. So, these are some of thoughts I would like to share with you.

Moderator

We will just do a final round of common questions for our three invited discussants. Also, we want to allocate at least a couple of questions from the audience that has been coming in. So, my final question is that we often see and talk about the fact that heritage precincts are created and sustained only when there is a high level of community engagement and public awareness at multiple levels. So, how do you think this can be done, through your organizations that each of you are attached with, be initiated and implemented, starting with public servants and administrators, industry and even non-profit organizations, as well as local communities, educational institutions and residents within heritage areas?

Partha Ranjan Das

I think that the media has a very proactive role to play here, in making people aware of what is happening in India and abroad regarding heritage conservation. As conservationists, we have to keep writing about them in newspapers and raise the right questions. Professor Menon stressed on making people aware that development is a continuous process. By saying that we want to conserve something, we cannot stop development, and it cannot be imposed on people, rather it has to be a natural process. So, the level of awareness is very important.

Moderator

Mr Mitra, would you like to comment on that as well?

Soumen Mitra

Every single building has a story to tell that may not be found in the history books. We must unearth document, and reveal it to the people who use these buildings. It is only then that the people will develop ownership and pride and would like to protect it. I have seen this amongst my colleagues and it really works.

Moderator

Saptarshi Sanyal, do you have some final thoughts on this?

Saptarshi Sanyal

Perhaps, we need to even go a step beyond awareness, because as we all know that partial knowledge can be more dangerous than not knowing something. So, when we talk about awareness and consciousness, I think it is important to target this at primary school levels of education. Although I consider myself an educator, I am in the sphere of higher education institution. I have a lot of colleagues doing fantastic work with school children because they (the children) are the ones who are going to take over as the future custodians. The average age of the experts is such that we are not going to be around when things start becoming more urgent. So, that is really something we have to keep in mind if we want to think about sustainability. National Education Policy has been revised to a considerable extent, and is flexible at the secondary level. What are we doing to embed an understanding of heritage which is very nuanced and crucial, because it goes beyond the formal fabric alone,

and creates a sense of attachment amongst the generation that is going to take over the heritage from us? Maybe we need to dovetail some of these ideas that we have, the professional perspective with the school perspective, because they are going to be the real stakeholders of the future.

Question Answer Session

Moderator

We are going to quickly take a couple of questions, and I am going to prioritize questions from students and young professionals who are really going to be the flag bearers and the torch-bearers of our heritage. So the first question is from Harsh Pathak, who is a student of architecture: "How do we, as fresh students of architecture or young, the youth in general, can start thinking about conservation of these cities without disturbing the actual values and glimpse of the past? And how should we start thinking about this? Because, our course, may or may not cover it in architectural education, how can they kind of sensitize themselves right from a young, early years of their education in architecture?"

AGK Menon

I think he has got the right question. We try to teach the students of architecture that the past is not important, it is the future that is important. So, right from the beginning, they have been inculcated to believe that a heritage precinct is something that you do not have to learn from, and that you should learn from Shanghai and Singapore which are the symbols of the future city.

Arjun Mukerji

You are already on the right track. This webinar is not part of your curriculum, but you are an audience here. You are discussing and thinking about these things. So, yes, while curriculums should consider including conservation education, I would give credit to students like you as well. And you are self-learners. Expose yourself as much as you can. That is the way forward.

Partha Ranjan Das

We can introduce courses on ethics of conservation at the undergraduate level, we do not have to teach conservation. It is a very vast subject. But at least architects and civil engineers have to be aware of the issues because they are also involved in construction, design, and, even at times, in decision making. If you can teach a basic orientation course on the ethics of urban conservation at the undergraduate level in colleges, in governmental departments involved in urban administration, like the municipal corporations, developmental authorities and in small municipalities and panchayats, I think they will be more aware when they perform these jobs.

Moderator

The second question I am going to prioritize is from an owner and resident of a heritage property: "Please advise on ways of conservation of *debottar* properties in Kolkata. These properties form a large mass of our heritage neighbourhoods and precincts". So, if you have some thoughts on that, Partha Ranjan Das, you may just like to introduce a little bit to our audience who might not be aware what the *debottar* property is and then talk about it.

Partha Ranjan Das

The *debottar* is almost like a trust, there may be a temple or a deity and the property actually belongs to the deity. So, any future development has to take care of that. In most cases, the trust deed mentions what can or cannot be done with the property, and that may vary from one property to another. There is no definite guideline, or, law as to how a *debottar* property can be developed. I have handled assignments where it just says that the temple has to remain, or, the temple can be relocated at a place where it is publicly visible and the rest of the property can be developed. So it varies from place to place.

Moderator

The third question is for Soumen Mitra from Mukul Agarwal, who is also the founder trustee of Calcutta Heritage Committee: "Talking about precincts and historic areas, there is a huge issue of what we understand as the removal of encroachments, or, the difficulty in the removal of encroachments. She thinks that Kolkata

Police may do it easily. But what about a layman or a heritage enthusiast or heritage organizations? How would they go about it? Will the KMC or the Kolkata Police help in making arrangements in this aspect?"

Soumen Mitra

Yes, of course. It is important to develop a good understanding of the issue, and, here the role of the heritage enthusiasts are very crucial in convincing the civic or police authorities, and, even the encroachers may be taken on board. I am sure it is possible with a bit of convincing and adjustment. Even if we are not successful in all the cases there will be an overwhelming majority of cases where we will be successful and that is good enough to encourage future moves.

Moderator

We conclude the panel discussion. Thank you.

Concluding Remarks

Discussants talked about a decentralized, localized approach in identifying and managing precincts. They emphasized the importance of local pride and valorisation while appreciating local aspirations in mobilising precinct designation. There is a need to integrate local economy into way of living by giving impetus to small-scale, self-sustaining initiatives as well as public-private ventures that encourage local craftsmanship and enhance capacity building at multiple levels. The discussion also focussed on the importance of a people-centric approach, by including heritage education as a part of primary school curriculums, and integrating heritage conservation with formal planning process. The final remarks focussed on conservation as a continuous process in a country with diverse traditions with a need to recognize traditional systems. Arriving at a rational method for delineation of precincts and context specific bye-laws which could be adopted as Bengal model emerged as key pointers for way forward.

A.5.

Designating Chitpur Road: Before heritage precincts become forgotten realms

Kamalika Bose

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Introduction

Chitpur Road provides an alternative reading and interpretation of Indian quarters in cities of colonial origin in the Presidency towns. Lying in the northern sector of the city, it formed the heart of indigenous Calcutta (now known as Kolkata) developed entirely by the native mercantile elite and working classes. In locating Chitpur in a Calcutta discourse, we find that it has long captured the imagination of writers, artists, poets and photographers - through seminal works, such as Rabindra Nath Tagore's 'My Boyhood Days' and Sunil Gangopadhyay's 'Those Days', and also finds a salient place in Ghalib's writings, Satyajit Ray's films and Raghu Rai's photos - each representing a rich socio-cultural milieu and slice of life. This paper captures the essence of the "Chitpur Road Heritage Corridor," an ongoing, self-initiated project by the author that documents, advocates and builds community awareness to valorize Chitpur and its historic neighbourhoods, leading towards eventual yet urgent designation – through legal and administrative instruments – as heritage precincts.

Significance of Chitpur Road Neighbourhoods

In 1860 through the writings of a noted traveller, it was observed that "the real Chandni Chowk was perhaps not in mid-19th century Delhi but on Chitpur Road in Calcutta." (Bose, 2014). Yet, architects and urbanists have somehow failed to engage with Chitpur's rich and layered urban history. This can be attributed to the colonial gaze narratives on Indian cities tinged with contempt and disdain carefully positioned against beautiful and well-planned European neighbourhoods. A British resident, Mrs. Kindersly, described Chitpur's neighbourhoods in the late 18th century as:

> It looks as if all the houses had been thrown up in the air, and fallen down again by accident as they stand now. People keep constantly building… without any regard to the beauty or regularity of the town. Besides, the appearance of the best house is spoiled by the little straw huts, and such sort of encumbrances […] (Dutta, 2003).

Another British resident, William Higgins, in early 19th century wrote, "Approaching the abodes of its native population … some rich natives dwell in elegant mansions, built after the English style… with their internal construction the old abbeys or castles we read of in romances." (Nair, 1989). And hence, caught between the exotic and the unsanitary, much has been lost in translation while reading Chitpur's urbanity and architecture.

Phases of Evolution and Growth

Pre-colonial Chitpur: Intersection of Faith and Commerce

The first phase connects Chitpur to the broader rural Bengal landscape that predates the formation and founding of Calcutta by the British. The rural environment comprised lakes and ponds dotted by clusters of *kutchha* houses in mud and thatch, and temples in brick and terracotta. Early references in the 16th century mention Chitpur Road as a historic pilgrim route that connected the Chitteshwari Durga temple in the north with the famed Kalighat temple to the south. Even today a number of temples in the traditional Chala and Ratna style

associated with regional architecture in Bengal remain present along this route especially near Kumartuli. They sustain local livelihoods based on a religious economy through associated ritualistic and cultural practices.

Early urbanization accounts in the 18th century attribute Chitpur Road's proximity to the river Hooghly for trade and transportation, creating a traditional *bazaar* (street market) economy - the Burrabazar - still one of the largest wholesale markets in Asia. A slow transformation of Chitpur Road, once the British Raj takes root in 1757, where new neighbourhoods are created and delineated along caste or professional hierarchies with waves of migration from the countryside. Chitpur now emerged as a trading hub, akin to Chandni Chowk in Delhi and Tripolia Bazaar in Jaipur but with a unique cosmopolitanism that also brought in the Armenians, Jews, Chinese, Portuguese, Muslims and Greeks to trade and settle in close proximity around Chitpur Road for economic gains.

Mercantile Chitpur: Urban Elite and Residential Development

The second phase of Chitpur's urban development is linked to the Permanent Settlement Act of 1793 which resulted in the meteoric rise of the Bengali merchant community, from status of trade agent or intermediary with the East India Company to that of landlord or *zamindar*. Chitpur neighbourhoods now rapidly grew into the fabled neoclassical 'City of Palaces' where typical *paras* (neighbourhoods) constituted of the landlord's monumental mansions, the *bazaars* he owned, the temples he patronized, smaller town houses of middle class families constructed on land rented from the *zamindar*, along with informal settlements, or *bastis* (overcrowded areas, slums) of artisans – forming a heterogeneous community.

Neighbourhoods of Jorasanko and Pathuriaghata witnessed the material expressions of this galactic rise - giving shape to the famed yet controversial 'babu culture' of mid-19th century Bengal. They were

> the product of Western influence while remaining steeped in tradition. Their associated lifestyle of conspicuous consumption where the display of abundance was not conducted in individual anonymity of the private but was grandly performed every day in the public life of the city (Bhattacharya, 2001)

akin to the bourgeoisie in Victorian England. Further, while these same families were single-handedly responsible for patronizing civic institutions, charitable organizations and building essential urban infrastructure in North Calcutta, the negative connotations owing to their 'babu culture' continue to haunt contemporary perceptions of Chitpur Road.

Renaissance Chitpur: Modernity and Industrialization

The third phase, wafting in winds of change and a new awakening to Chitpur Road arrived in the wake of the Industrial Revolution, with the printing press in the Battala, Garanhata, Ahiritola and Beniatola neighbourhoods. Formal education and birth of a professional class led to a different *para* structure with townhouses belonging to doctors, lawyers and next generation scions of mercantile families choosing to shed their former opulence for more humane domestic architecture, set amidst close-knit neighbourhoods, in the by-lanes of Chitpur.

Electrification and tramways created new mobility networks while the proliferation of the printed word sowed a literary culture that questioned the traditional mores of the past and paved the way for social change. Religious reform through the founding of the Brahmo Samaj, social reform through female education and widow remarriage, and cultural reform through impetus to modern theatre, satirical literature, woodcut and lithography art - were all initiated along the corridors of Chitpur Road - now heralded as the birthplace of the Bengal Renaissance. This awakening eventually seeded the 'Swadeshi Andolan' (a self-sufficiency movement that was part of the Indian independence movement) following the failed attempt at partitioning Bengal in 1905. The same *zamindari* (related to landlords or *zamindars*) culture which once symbolised decadence and subservience now facilitated clandestine revolutionary activities with high nationalistic fervour sowing the seeds for India's struggle for independence.

The 4.5 km long Chitpur Road therefore becomes a microcosm of the city, with each area around it representing a distinct slice of Calcutta's indigenous urban culture and urban history. New communities from across India migrated to Chitpur in the early 20th century, notably the Marwaris, Jains and Gujaratis, weaving their own narratives of survival and enterprise. Today, as one navigates the length and breadth of Chitpur Road, each

neighbourhood has a unique story to tell. Thus, this rich tapestry of diverse communities, cultures and social practices makes Chitpur and its architecture and living heritage an incomparable urban laboratory.

Identifying Chitpur Precincts: Character and Attributes

As a scientific and technical process, the accurate delineation of boundaries and character zones that identify each precinct is an absolute pre-condition before any designation process can start.

For this, detailed mapping and zone-wise documentation of each precinct is essential. However, it is critical to understand that while documenting dynamic, living heritage precincts like Chitpur, a 'historic urban landscapes' approach is perhaps more suitable than merely considering architectural integrity and visual coherence within its urban clusters. UNESCO's Historic Urban Landscapes approach would also do justice to the social fabric and ethnic diversity of Chitpur that closely corresponds to its built and cultural heritage assets. Based on this approach, five broad districts have been identified by this project. Within each district lie multiple precincts which have individual attributes but thematically align to the district characteristics (Fig.1).
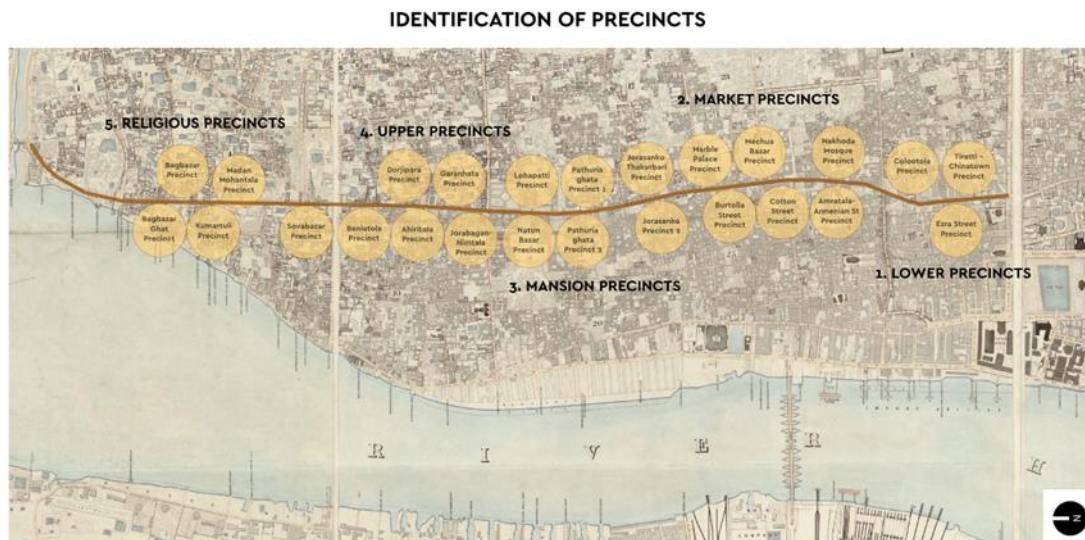
Fig.1: Project identification and mapping of 25 heritage precincts clustered under 5 typological zones. Courtesy: Kamalika Bose, using open source Library of Congress: Map of Calcutta from actual survey in the years 1847-1849

1. Lower Precincts

These neighbourhoods form the cosmopolitan epicentre of the city revealing a dense ethnic diversity that is differentiated by traditional trades and expertise. In the 18th and 19th centuries, it was populated by opportunity-seeking foreign migrant communities who naturally aligned themselves along Chitpur's economic prospects. Ethnic enclaves of Kolkata's former 'grey town,' included Armenians, Jews, Anglo-Indians, and Greeks. Many of these enclaves no longer retain the ethnic communities, though they are ripe with their cultural artefacts and built assets, integrating new narratives of change, with the exception of the Chinese neighbourhood which continues to be inhabited by the Chinese community. The Ezra Street market areas, pivoted around the first neoclassical Parsi Fire Temple and Jewish quarters around the iconic Bethel Synagogue, are key repositories of the city's early waves of migration and architectural plurality.

2. Market Precincts

Dominated by Burrabazar, these precincts reflect a traditional mercantile urbanism encompassing the heart of the wholesale market economy with areas delineated on the basis of goods traded. Over the last century it has been dominated by Marwaris, Jains and Gujaratis who have created an ecosystem of business, residential, social and cultural networks. The precincts showcase an evolution of architectural typologies ranging from tenements, shophouses, *dharamshala*s (buildings devoted to religious or charitable purpose, especially as rest houses for travellers and pilgrims), *gaadis* (trading offices), warehouses, private mansions, and temples among

others. Prominent here is the Mechuabazar Phalpatty (fruit market) set up in 1825 in Chitpur which is dominated by Jain merchants and employs 1.5 lakh informal workers. Burtolla's Sonapatti (goldsmiths' area), Amratala's tobacconists, Zakaria Street's perfumers and dyers, and Cotton Street's *gaddi* (mattress) makers are some of the key market areas which have created unique typologies for live-work-trade within each precinct.

3. Mansion Precincts

Encompassing the neighbourhoods of Jorasanko, Pathuriaghata, mansions here positioned themselves in competition to colonial public buildings of the city, in scale and neoclassical design language, choosing to disregard any idea of subservience to the ruling authority. Ensconced in a dense neighbourhood fabric, these multi-courtyard houses fulfilled several roles in society, beyond dwelling. Set within narrow streets, they provided interiorised, controlled environments, used flexibly for public and private activities. Mansions of Khelat Chandra Ghosh along with several Tagore and Mullick mansions in Pathuriaghata, all located in close proximity, truly represented the adopted hybrid architectural language as a collective response.

4. Upper Precincts

These areas continue to display an, albeit dwindling, mix of traditional artistry along with a range of urban crafts that responded to an industrialising, enterprising colonial metropolis. The 1840s introduced the printing press and development of a distinct vernacular print culture. Launch of paper mills and type foundries, ably supported a thriving neighbourhood of publishing, typographic businesses and ancillary trades in Battala. Nearby in Ahiritola, traditional goldsmiths up scaled and diversified traditional practices by integrating mechanization and training skilled artisans. These humane neighbourhoods with tightly packed townhouses defined by *roaks* (raised platforms used as outdoor sit outs), slatted windows and louvered fretwork balconies in cast iron and wood are in stark contrast to the monumental *zamindari* mansions, and represent the emergence of the professional class in late 19th century (Fig.2).
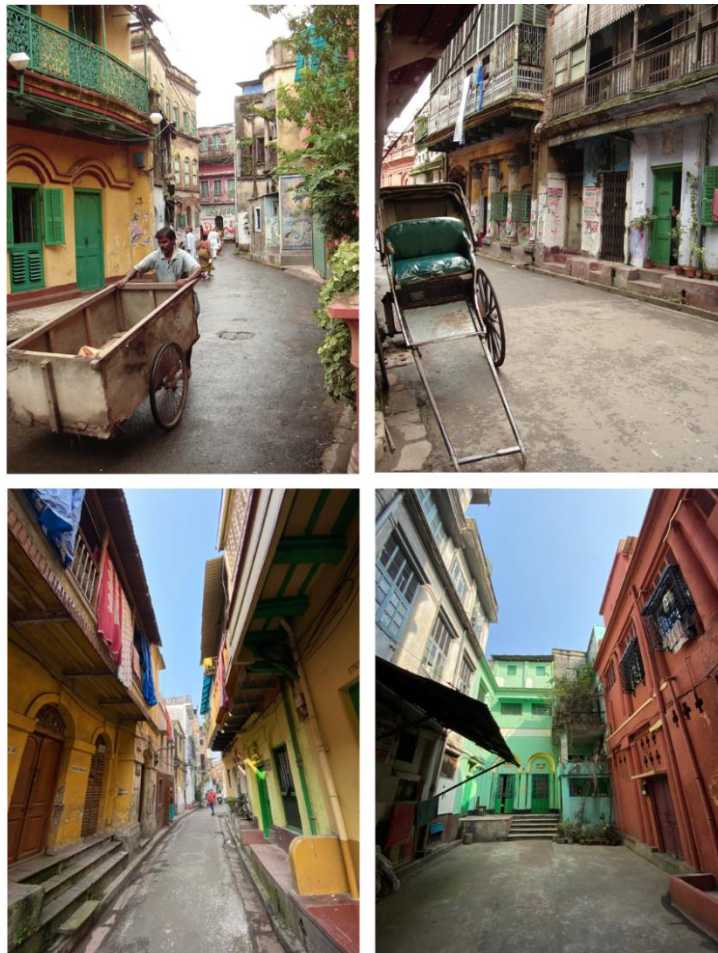
Fig.2: *Para* character around Ahiritola, Beniatola and Garanhata in the upper precincts

5. Religious Precincts

This cluster of precincts signifies a historic pilgrim corridor that pre-dates the formation of Kolkata as a city. Even today, we can find a number of temples in the traditional 'Chala-style' associated with Hindu architecture in Bengal. They sustain local livelihoods based on this religious economy through ritualistic practices and associated cultural products. However, the lopsided spotlight upon Kumartuli, the potters' neighbourhood creating Durga Puja idols, has deflected from a holistic and inclusive mapping and projection of the religious precincts and its pivotal connection to the river Hooghly. The proximity of these precincts to the river marks an interdependency between religious activities, transport and sourcing of raw materials for ritualistic activities and a strong riverfront architecture and edge along the *ghats* (broad flight of steps that are situated on a river bank or tank).

The Urgency of Precinct Designation

Chitpur is often perceived and discussed only as individual neighbourhoods, or *paras.* However, it is rarely imagined as an 'integrated heritage corridor', an important physical linkage that connects diverse *paras* and communities. Ranging from cultural, recreational, artistic, and religious, a broad range of economic activities unfold in a sequential manner along this heritage corridor. An integrated approach would ensure an equitable conservation agenda across the Chitpur corridor. Imposing *rajbaris* (royal mansions) and stately public buildings are naturally associated with the grandeur of Chitpur's architecture and several are included in Kolkata Municipal Corporation's heritage listing of 2009. Yet, the key lies in also acknowledging the smaller townhouses, tenements, shop-houses - which contribute to the character of Chitpur's streetscapes and the 'para' identity. Architecture in Chitpur is not merely the spectacle but the backdrop against which culture, trades and livelihoods, comprising intangible cultural heritage sustains itself. Hence, an urban conservation approach by designating precincts needs to be considered over cherry-picking grand edifices alone.

Objectives of precinct designation do not belie continuity of use, or area regeneration goals. Both adaptive reuse and new development can very well be addressed through strict policy and design guidelines for such areas that spell out sensitive or sympathetic responses. Apart from periodic maintenance, additions, extensions, modifications are a natural part of a building's life cycle - but for historic areas and precincts their form and materials also become important (Fig.3).

Hence under current circumstances, precinct designation gains greater urgency in view of:

1. Large scale demolitions and rapid, irreversible change in streetscape character in the absence of protective measures and viable economic incentives that act as a detriment to demolition.

2. Incremental loss of neighbourhood character over time due to lack of architectural design guidelines and regulations for compatible new infills (Fig.4).

3. Need for improved liveability, basic services and infrastructure, and not just cosmetic beautification through painting and facade upliftments.

To act upon the above urgencies, a systematic approach to designation - which includes delineating boundaries, detailed technical mapping and architectural documentation using a scientific rationale over emotion or nostalgia is the need of the hour. Provisions for Local Area Planning, integration with urban planning, protection, guidelines and appropriate financial incentives need to be taken up by the KMC and urban development authorities, to lend agency and make positive on-ground change. Precinct designation for Chitpur Road neighbourhoods is a critical step in charting an inclusive, participatory and people-oriented process, something that authorities in Kolkata have been dragging their feet over, even after Mumbai implemented legislation for the same 25 years ago!

Fig.3: Gradual loss of neighbourhood character through demolition and insensitive new construction that irreversibly damages Chitpur heritage precincts. .

Fig.4: With layers of history in simultaneous co-existence, the imperative for architectural design guidelines would ensure compatible continuity and not ugly eyesores in the name of development

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A.6.

Panel Discussion: Day 2

Amit Chaudhuri, Anindya Karforma, GM Kapur, Kamalika Bose, KT Ravindran

Moderator: *Mukul Agarwal*

Kolkata was the agenda of Day 2. Discussants shared experiences and talked about Historic Precincts and Areas with reference to Kolkata followed by a discussion session by eminent persons.

Moderator

In the panel discussion, we are privileged to have Mr Amit Chaudhuri, Mr Anindya Karforma, Mr GM Kapur, Ms Kamalika Bose and Mr KT Ravindran. We welcome all of you.

Mr KT Ravindran, as an urban designer, especially with your experience of Delhi Urban Art Commission, what, according to you, is the conceptual framework required for developing an urban precinct particularly heritage precincts in Kolkata?

KT Ravindran

I have been playing multiple roles in the area of conservation and urban design, mostly not distinguishing between one and the other but looking at them as an integrated way of seeing the city, of understanding or reading the city. It is a combination of urban design informed by conservation that actually is the key to protecting, conserving and allowing changes in historic precincts. So, that is the platform I would like to take, where the two disciplines which are taught in schools of architecture as two separate disciplines, as two silos. Actually we need a more integrated world view about how cities function and how building conservation needs to be a place within that function.

If we consider the example of Delhi Urban Art Commission (DUAC), the Commission was set up in 1972. Urban art is urban design. So, it is essentially a Commission that was set up to guide the city in three significant areas; one is new built form, the other is conservation of the built form and the third is the issue of natural and manmade environments. All these three things are in the mandate of the Commission and it was set up by an Act of Parliament. As a result it has a statutory position where the clearance from the Commission is required for a project to be actualized in the city of Delhi. It was set up in Delhi first. It had also a form of existence in the city of Bangalore, and it still continues to have a very important role in the way Delhi takes care of its developments, because it actually has a say in how heritage, environment and built form are dealt within the city.

Another very significant thing that happened in the 90's was that the Supreme Court of India asked the Union Government to set up a Heritage Conservation Committee and this is also embedded inside the Urban Art Commission. The Secretary of the Urban Art Commission is the Secretary of the Heritage Conservation Committee and it has a kind of designated structure with 14 members, some of them are from the government, from PWD, CPWD, various local bodies, et cetera, and there are also experts in the fields of conservation, historians and experts in the field of urban design. The Heritage Conservation Committee is still a functioning unit, all changes in the Listed Heritage buildings in the city, and any details of related developments must be notified to the Heritage Conservation Committee, for its consideration from the heritage conservation perspective. Subsequently, recommendations are sent to the Delhi Urban Art Commission, which can approve or reject it. This is the background of how the Delhi Urban Art Commission and heritage have been interfaced through a legal framework that was formed by the Supreme Court. I have had the privilege of being in that

place, and Prof AGK Menon was also part of that and we fought many battles together from inside, some ugly ones as well. But with people of great power, sometimes you have to confront them from the HCC, which we did at that time. Prof Menon was actually leading as he was the Convener of the Delhi Chapter of INTACH and he was actively leading that part from the INTACH's perspective. The DUAC was actually working along with them to make sure that we bring out a unified approach.

My involvement has been very direct and hands-on, and it was supported by the listing that is gazetted by the Delhi Government after a lot of pressure from various sources. After six years of preparing the list, it was actually gazetted and became a law and then it had to be part of our interactions with the Heritage Conservation Committee. The interesting part of its operation was the long time that a project needs to come through because both these committees have to approve them especially if these are in heritage areas. But that kind of caution is what protected much of Delhi's heritage in some way with the listing in place. Of course the whole thing is also open for legal scrutiny but DUAC's announcements are not normally open to legal scrutiny. As Chairman of DUAC I have been called twice to explain the Commission's decision, once by the Hon'ble Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of India and once by the Chief Justice of the Delhi High Court for rejecting proposals that were made in their precincts, which were in the Commission's view damaging heritage. In the case of the High Court, a six floor deep parking lot was being constructed next to a 14th/15th century monument, unnamed, unrecognized, an orphaned monument of the Lodhi era. The monument lost its integrity in the course of digging for the underground parking and we had to stop the work and we had to confront the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation which was the contractor for this. On many occasions this kind of negotiation had to take place. So, the roads that the Commission and Heritage Committee take are not a bed of roses, but often a difficult journey where you have to take a strict stand based on your principles, and commitment for betterment of the city.

The first recognition of the precinct as a unit of conservation by INTACH was in the late 1980's, it was accepted that there is the concept of a Conservation Precinct in India's traditional cities. A booklet was brought out by INTACH. Dr B K Thapar and AGK Menon were the key drivers of that concept, and I, in those times in 1988, had the opportunity to work on the Cochin urban heritage which was INTACH's first attempt at urban heritage. We had the opportunity to actually apply these concepts of heritage zones and heritage precincts to the Cochin plan that gave us a whole new insight into the way Cochin was structured. We identified different types of spaces even within a heritage zone at the Fort Cochin area which is a fortified area. Even within that, we found three distinct typologies of space-form relationships. There was a street type. There was a bungalow form too - a building surrounded by a garden. There was also the form that actually defined the streets by having high walls all around it, which were godowns in colonial period, built on the river edge, where it was used for storing and shipping goods out into the sea as Cochin is on the edge of the backwaters. For these three distinct typologies the guidelines were formulated on how to develop these places, to the extent of studying one of the streets, documenting the entire facades and notifying its distinct characteristics, including solid void ratio, roofline, built to edge conditions, entry-exits, its balconies, the architectonic elements, et cetera. These formed ten different criteria that were established for how to look at, analyze and understand a historic street, and provide guidelines that will allow for change in this historic precinct. It is not only about the facade but about other aspects. It was a prescription of what principles to apply when you are managing change in a historic street. So, it is not about freezing development, rather allowing changes to take place. However, changes should be made in a way that does not undermine the historic character of the street. This is a very crucial area of design, and I think it is not fully explored in our country, as of yet, but we do need to do this for successful insertions and infill design in historic precincts.

With this brief background, I would like to come to a few issues that actually interface with urban design and conservation where for a long time, in the urban design programme in SPA Delhi, we have been teaching a course called Units of Urban Design. Units of urban design precisely meant identifying urban design districts. How do you identify areas which have got very specific physical characteristics, not just physical but historical characteristics, spatial characteristics, community structure as well as the level of historic services that characterize the place? So from all these different perspectives being analyzed one can arrive at what is an urban design district, how that becomes a unit of intervention, and, how the rules of the game that is applied to one precinct cannot be used for another because of its distinct historic characteristics. This is an important

aspect. One of the most significant methods of identifying the characteristics is through the analysis of the historic character of the place.

In today's terms, the best and the easiest method to identify the historic character is when you see the clustering of listed buildings. We saw that in today's presentations, in the maps of the Chitpur Road and Dalhousie Square in Kolkata where a large concentration of heritage buildings were identified, listed for protection and graded. When you see a cluster like that, it is indicative of a very distinct historic fabric of the city. So, then one quickly goes out to mark the area, and study the differentiation within that district, demarcated, or generated by different communities over a period of time. The distinct character changes from one place to the other. Even within that one identified district you can find areas where distinct community structure and their value frames are expressed in the built form. So, a very important step in urban design is to be able to identify these places. To a large extent, Kamalika Bose in her presentation has done a wonderful job of identifying those five areas which of course, we can further discuss during the question and answer session.

Moderator

Mr Amit Chaudhuri, you have brought significant attention to the conservation of heritage precincts especially to south Kolkata which is perhaps not usually recognized for its architectural heritage as much as the Dalhousie square or north Kolkata. How did you become interested in neighbourhoods and precincts instead of individual buildings?

Amit Chaudhuri

If we consider some streets in south Kolkata, for example a stretch of Dover Lane, it shows all different buildings, residential houses, which came up between the 30's and the 50's, houses which are between 70 to 90 years old. And when we just move from house to house, as we would if we were going down the street, one notices that these houses have a particular kind of characteristic which cannot be pinned down to a single style. However, as I have written about it earlier, many of them have family resemblances, art deco elements, red oxide stone floors, slatted windows, particular kinds of ventilators. What is interesting is that, they were not built on neoclassical lines, unlike the mansions and smaller houses in north Kolkata, and the colonial buildings. They came up in the early 20th century, sometime in the 20's and from the 30's onwards, and they would comprise, in my view, a very compelling idea for what a heritage, or historic precinct should be, which is also a neighbourhood which contains within it purely a spatial configuration and buildings, and an idea of a way of life and a particular phase in history, which seems very important to me.

Like in the Dover Lane, the other things that we notice in comparison to any such neighbourhood in any other part of the world is that no two buildings are exactly alike, there are no identical buildings. If you look at such a residential precinct in Oxford, or, in Sydney, or, in New Orleans, the buildings on that particular street will be identical to each other. And over here (in Kolkata), each building serves as a kind of experiment in terms of what a habitation might be like, and, done with a lot of finesse and subtlety attesting to the culture of the time, and to the sophistication of that particular phase in the history of this city. It also encapsulates a kind of move from the north of the Renaissance, as in the case of the Tagore family, who had their own idea about space, interiors and relationship to the street, to the south, where people like Buddhadeb Bose located themselves in Rashbehari Avenue. So, this is the early 20th century, the time of Satyajit Ray, when a kind of efflorescence is going on. It seems to me that these buildings, neighbourhoods, and this neighbourhood like Dover Lane in particular is worth conserving.

What is my interest in them? I am not an expert like the others whose wonderful talks and presentations I have been listening to with great interest. But, I am a writer and I have my interest in neighbourhoods of Kolkata, from my first novel onwards *A Strange and Sublime Address*. In that context, I was thinking of the Pratapaditya Road and the house that my uncle had, which no longer exists, in the Bhawanipur area in the south. We often see a five story structure is coming up where a two-story structure used to stand, and this is happening all the time and it has been happening during the lockdown as well. For example, a house on Hindustan Road in the Hindustan Park area which may already have come down, had been sold to a developer. So, these are the houses which a heritage precinct would protect in other cities. There are more examples of such houses in this area, for example a house on the edge of the Hindustan Road towards Gariahat Road, which do not exist anymore. These were distinctive buildings with distinctive art deco elements and other kind of stylistic features

which attest to the playfulness of that culture, leaving neoclassicism behind and entering into a new phase of modernity. Such buildings do not exist anymore. I am afraid, unless we have heritage precincts, very few of these houses will continue to exist.

As a writer, in 1991 my first book *A Strange and Sublime Address* was published; it was a book about neighbourhoods, about what it meant to open slatted windows and look out onto the street. It was written from the point of view of a boy visiting from Bombay. I never experienced that sense of neighbourhood when I was growing up in Bombay, and had to come to my uncle's house in Kolkata to discover what it meant in terms of space, existence, vision, what one saw, and what one heard. The fact is that when you went inside the house, there was an open terrace, a rooftop and from there you could look out onto other rooftops. Interestingly, green slatted windows were common to all neighbouring houses, although no two houses were identical, and looking out of the green slatted windows, you could see the street and the house opposite. These neighbourhoods and their culture seemed unique. I have not seen anything like this in Bombay. It was certainly what to me seemed valuable and most memorable about Kolkata.

I began writing about neighbourhoods, while most of my contemporaries who wrote in English were writing about India, about the nation. What I was, or what I became, is because of my exposure of the mystery of spatial configuration of the urban Kolkata, of the city. I became a writer of the neighbourhood rather than the nation. The nation, the idea, the abstraction India was of less interest to me than what one saw outside of a window. And, it was in Kolkata that I experienced this way of imagining most powerfully through these houses. For me therefore, Kolkata means primarily both neighbourhoods, both in the south and the north. I have not underlined the neighbourhoods of the north in my various kind of writings not because I think they are less interesting. They are extremely interesting, but it seems to me that, the south is under maximum pressure from developers, there the houses have been coming down very rapidly over the years, and nothing will remain of what it is that makes Kolkata such an interesting city than the Howrah Bridge or, the Victoria Memorial.

So, it is not monuments that we are looking at when we look at a city like Kolkata. We are looking at how people lived and how they imagined space and habitation, and in Kolkata people did it quite interestingly. The idea of heritage does not only include sacred and nationalistic monuments and buildings, but also distinctive residential neighbourhoods, for instance, Sultan Ahmed in Istanbul which goes way back in history or, more recent ones in Paris or, New Orleans.

Here, in Kolkata we have a heritage list of monuments and buildings, but we have no heritage precinct as yet and this is astonishing in a city which is one of the great cities of modernity. So when we are engaging with Kolkata, we are not engaging with Kolkata as we would with a sacred architecture or something which already comes with the tag of tradition. We are being asked to imagine what makes Kolkata so important, which is only about two to three hundred years old. What makes it so important and what we see in its literature, cinema, and art and in its buildings is this phase of the modern.

As brought out by Manish Chakraborty in his presentation about the obstacles to making a place, like the Dalhousie Square, a heritage precinct, which include the recoil against the colonial past. There is also a recoil against the very middle class India that has produced most of us over here today. We do not have a proper history of that particular India. Leave aside the fact that architecture and space have not been the subject of conversation among the intelligentsia compared to other intelligentsia in other cultures. But certainly the lack of connection and the embarrassment about the modernity has also led to a disengagement with this wonderful vibrant inheritance.

Moderator

Mr Kapur, maybe you could talk to us about what is INTACH's role in conservation of Kolkata's heritage precincts.

GM Kapur

INTACH's role in heritage conservation and legislation has been at the forefront since 1996. In fact just as KT had mentioned about Cochin, we had taken up the issue of heritage legislation in Mumbai through one of our founding members Mr Shyam Chainani. INTACH was set up in 1984. The first city to introduce heritage conservation laws in India was Mumbai which amended the Maharashtra Regional and Town Planning Act of

1996 in 1995 and introduced protection to built heritage. INTACH played a very important role in this exercise. Mr Shyam Chainani known as the doughty fighter is still remembered for his service to this cause.

INTACH has also played a major role in conservation of Kolkata's built heritage. In the case of introducing legislation for the city under INTACH Kolkata, it was taken up under the guidance of Mr Asim Burman, the then Chief Commissioner and fortunately very sympathetic to the cause. The legislation to introduce protection to built heritage was drafted by INTACH Kolkata based on the Maharashtra Legislation and included in the same was protection of heritage precincts as well. Incentive for heritage building owners was also included in the draft but unfortunately they were omitted in the final act which came into force in 1997. But subsequently, in 1998, the Barun De expert committee which was set up for this purpose, gave its report on heritage buildings, precincts and/ or site, and it recommended in its report that the KMC amendment of 1997 be further amended and have a more inclusive definition and include heritage buildings, monuments, precincts and/ or sites instead of heritage buildings. Many precincts were identified in this report. In fact INTACH had provided a list of heritage buildings which were referred to the committee and was gratefully acknowledged by them. It was proposed to include the above in heritage rules which were formulated in 2000 and sent to the Government of West Bengal, Department of Urban Affairs, for acceptance. Unfortunately this did not happen. In a PIL which INTACH Kolkata has recently filed in the High Court of Kolkata, this has been highlighted and has been brought to the forefront. In the meantime INTACH has been active in the area of taking up cases by PILs for protecting listed buildings and creating awareness as well as restoration of heritage.

Unfortunately, over the years, because of lack of protection, we have really lost heritage precincts, a lot of what would be called jewels of any other city. The entire area which was called south of Park Street, Camac Street, Theatre Road, even the Pretoria Street or Wood Street, all that were in that area was called south of Park Street and it had garden houses which provided a very leafy and green environment to the city. Unfortunately all have vanished one by one. One can consider a situation where there are 22 houses, the bungalows, and probably 40 cars. One can imagine what the situation today is. The entire precinct had to go. I suppose we had to give in to so-called development, but what is most distressing is the fact that there are narrow lanes like Pretoria Street, or, Lee road, Bishop Lefroy Road yet we have been adding to the urban chaos by allowing heritage buildings to be destroyed. Those heritage buildings, they might not have been listed, but they were heritage buildings, were destroyed and high-rises coming up, adding to urban chaos, putting so much pressure on the urban infrastructure that leads to traffic jams, waterlogging et cetera. This is the price of development. I suppose there is nothing that can be done if somebody owns the property and he wants to develop it. What can we do unless this legislation comes through?

I live in an area which is known as Hastings. It was originally called Coolie Bazaar because the *coolies* (unskilled labourers) who came to build Fort William would all stayed there and they provided the manpower for the construction of the fort. This whole area was like cantonment, or, like an English village with bungalows. The one building that is still standing there has a plaque which says 1846. So generally the bungalows were of that period. Today, unfortunately, maybe one can count four or five, ten maybe at the most, of that typology that are available; all the rest have gone. The street names are also very British. So, a precinct which should have been pride of the city has vanished. There are so many such areas which are now not visible at all in spite of the fact that we had included precincts from day one, but unfortunately, maybe because they could not identify, or maybe there were other factors at play, it was not taken into consideration.

We may take the case of Alipur Jail premises which is a large precinct. It should not be put up for development. Adaptive reuse can be considered but without further concretization. We have, in fact, similarly prepared a plan for the Salt Gola, which is about 27 acres of land near Howrah Bridge which was the premises where the salt warehouses were. INTACH Kolkata had prepared a plan which we have given to the railways. I do not know what will happen to it, but it is basically a case of adaptive reuse rather than destroying and developing it. I think development is a word which needs to be developed in its own right.

Moderator

Mr Karforma, could you please share with us the role and processes of the Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) Heritage Committee and its approach to address heritage places?

Anindya Karforma

We have to understand the background how we have received the list of heritage buildings including precincts. That includes an expert committee formed by the Government of West Bengal and it was headed by Professor Barun De. A list was presented to the government. At that time there was no act or heritage regulations to protect heritage buildings in our act. As soon as we received that list and with the advice afterwards, the act was amended and one act was introduced for dealing with heritage matters. And, in the definition there were two aspects, of which one was to adopt the list prepared by the expert committee. The list was exhaustive, but it lacked information required for KMC to manage the properties. For example, there is no exact number for tenants, or there may be a fragmentation of the property where one part was recorded in the list, rest of the part was not recorded. Likewise, there are many other defects that we have to rectify. We engaged a few of our architect members who provided their service for documentation of the buildings. And at that time, conservation architects like Manish Chakraborty, Shivashish Bose and Anjan Mitra were engaged by KMC for documentation work. But the documentation process was very slow and it required lots of time. Maybe we have documented around two hundred buildings in three years' time but at that time there were lots of pressure from the media and the persons who are involved in protecting heritage buildings, and they wanted a graded list. And there was no grading in the list prepared by the committee at that time. Mr Kapur, Mr Barun De and many other dignitaries were involved in documentation and grading of those buildings. We have graded most of the buildings and we also have a separate list that we could not grade at that time. Those buildings are kept in a separate list as not graded/ grade pending listed buildings.

We introduced a computer system. In that system, if anybody wants to apply for a building plan, anybody or any officer of KMC cannot move forward those application unless there is a proper recommendation from the Heritage Conservation Committee. Only after the recommendation of Heritage Conservation Committee, one can go forward with that building. We introduced that system long back. We also did good work in BBD Bag area. We spent large amounts of money from the Government of India funds, and introduced street furniture, and footpath matching with that precinct. Further, efforts were made to declare the entire Jawaharlal Nehru road as a precinct.

Nevertheless, I feel, protection of heritage buildings in Kolkata is a complicated issue. Even if we want, a listed heritage property cannot be protected unless the owner wants to protect it. In some cases, the buildings are occupied by tenants, and ownership may be fragmented. There may be hundred owners, and there is a litigation between tenants, and owners, and then there is a stay order. The other day a building collapsed. It was a very old building, maybe one hundred fifty years old. It is not a heritage building, it is simply an old building. We repeatedly give notices to just repair those buildings, but we could not save the building. It collapsed killing one person, and injured two or three members of the family. Let us take the example of a very well-known property, a heritage building in Wellington area. It is owned by Kolkata University, but there is a dispute with regard to its ownership, and that building is on the verge of collapse. It is covered with big trees grown all over the building. Being a Director General (Buildings) of KMC, I have to secure the safety of the building and inmates and the passer by, and thereby declare the building unsafe and order to demolish it, but it is a grade I heritage property.

Can we not take one case to progress on that line so that the building can be preserved, only a single case to understand how complicated it is? I wish the members would include experts from all backgrounds. I think we should fix each case, one by one, to restore the buildings that are already listed. We cannot keep on adding buildings, although without proper maintenance the place will be ruined.

Question Answer Session

Audience

How does one map the boundary overlap of the precincts?

Kamalika Bose

I suppose this not only involves a very detailed sort of building by building mapping exercise but also a sort of understanding of documentation itself of neighbourhoods. Trying to determine precincts really follows a kind of land use approach. That also sometimes becomes problematic in delineating boundaries because most

of the buildings especially in a place like north Kolkata, the indigenous city, there are mixed use buildings. So the approach that we have to adopt to map precincts is to architecturally first document them. Then we really begin to understand how do boundaries move or shift, based on the socio cultural aspects that have impacted neighbourhoods. For example when we were working on the project in old Chinatown, what really fall within our sort of current imagination as well of old Chinatown are not really old Chinatown as it used to be, because much of that might have been lost. So, we may or may not be able to recreate original precincts, so to say, but we can study them from what they are today in reality from a very thorough mapping and documentation process. Then assess the layers of social, cultural, political, economic aspects of each of these precincts to rationalize the boundaries.

Moderator

We want to know from Mr Amit Chaudhuri about the PIL that has been filed by CAL and INTACH recently and what is its present status.

Amit Chaudhuri

Before I answer that, can I say that Kolkata cannot be seen just as a colonial city; it has its completely unique architectural character, especially in what it became. One would not find a counterpart to it in the United Kingdom. Let us not make the mistake of reducing its uniqueness because a whole set of cultural parameters has made it what it is and it is not just the colonial presence. If Kolkata had been nothing but a capital city, we would not be celebrating it in the way we have over the twentieth century. It is because what happened in terms of the culture over here was very interesting. And that was not the British presence here alone, which culturally speaking, was only a small part of it.

The PIL was in the context of our attempts to be in dialogue with the government and KMC about the fact that, over decades, rather than increasing, the heritage list was dwindling. So, we had certain questions and we came to this over the years. I started writing about this in 2013-2014 and the movement CAL was launched in 2015. I tried to speak to some of the topmost bureaucrats who I thought were sympathetic to this whole business of heritage and heritage precincts. However, they merely showed sympathy, and their hands seemed to be tied. I spoke with KMC as well. And then, as a last resort, attempts were made to raise awareness. We had a rally, a procession leading up to KMC, handing in a signed letter with the signature of eminent people. The earlier letter that I had written had a letter of support from Amartya Sen, and I sent it to many people for signature. We were not allowed to hand in the letter to the Mayor. I am glad that Mr Karforma is here, because I know that he is sympathetic to what we are doing. But, I also feel his pain in terms of the complexity of the situation. That is when I thought we need to go to the Court, and I turned to INTACH and GM Kapur for supporting me on this, because CAL was a very new trust at that time. We went to the Court and we raised four questions:

Why is the heritage list seemingly vulnerable to arbitrary downgrading, which led to a grade I heritage building suddenly becoming non graded buildings or graded at a level where they can be destroyed by developers?

Why do we not have heritage precincts? This great city of modern modernity in India has no heritage precincts unlike, Bombay, or, Pondicherry, or other cities.

What is the composition of the Heritage Committee? Why don't we know about it? Till very recently we knew nothing about the composition. We know about it now as it is there up on the website.

What are the proceedings of the Heritage Committee? Again, we know nothing about these things which decide the fate of the public inheritance, the inheritance of a culture. Now of course, the proceedings are there.

That there is a PIL, I think Mr Karforma wants to work with us. They invited me to form a small kind of group, a committee with them. They want us to go forward. He even committed to the idea of Partha Ranjan Das beginning to work on delineating the heritage precincts, their composition and boundaries. And then, we ran into this kind of impasse that heritage precincts are not part of the Heritage Act. So, until they are part of the Heritage Act, we cannot make any progress down this road. In the end we need the KMC to support us on this. Everywhere such movements have succeeded with the help of the Court, as in New York, or with the help of the municipal corporation and the government. So, it is imperative that both sides have faith in this, that heritage precincts are a necessity. Complexities are there everywhere in the world. Where is any city in the world which does not have a complex history?

Anindya Karforma

I only wish that the buildings which are listed are taken care of with utmost diligence. That is my request. Then after that we can add to the list. But, we are including buildings, and adding more neglected buildings.

Amit Chaudhuri

The KMC Heritage Committee has not performed its duty over decades not to add buildings and to introduce heritage sites. It is its duty to do so. If buildings that are on the list are in a state of dereliction that too is KMC's Heritage Committee's responsibility.

Moderator

There is one question to Mr KT Ravindran. Can you please explain the idea of historic urban landscape? How is it different from historic precinct?

KT Ravindran

The idea of the historic landscape is a broader idea than historic precinct. The historic precinct may have just one character zone on which it is identified through various methods which includes architectural character, building typologies and traditional community structures. There could be many such things but they are stitched together by a set of spaces, by a set of movement lines. And they create, they bring together not just one historic precinct, they bring in multiple historic precincts which are cohesively held together by what can be called the historic landscape. So they may have a shared history, they may have an inter-connected livelihood systems or they may be united in performance of certain rituals in the city. There could be many social and economic roots to which one can identify the component and that is the larger historic landscape that includes not just buildings and groups of buildings or clusters of buildings but spaces, the vegetation and the community structure. Once you bring in the structure as a component, it becomes a larger historic landscape.

Audience

Can we have an example of such kind of a historic landscape in India, a city, or a precinct, or a space, which has been labelled as a historic urban landscape?

KT Ravindran

Though I do not live in the old city of Delhi, yet it is a graphic example of how many communities engaged in various different types of trades and other activities, and how they are knit together by a set of spaces. And, what you can call a traditional old city culture, in which even the patterns of behaviour, manner of trading, interests and the rituals they perform in public spaces, were all distinct from each other, and yet they were simultaneously part of a larger cultural landscape. So, those do not become places which divide communities, but they become seams when communities come together. Thus, as a historic landscape, the spaces play a very critical role in bringing together diverse characters.

Audience

Historic landscape is the concept. But if we want to preserve it, we have to legally go about it. So is it not necessary for historic precinct to be defined? What type of legality is required?

KT Ravindran

First, the identity has to be established and then one needs to recognize it in the listing. Because the list, once it is drawn up, is put up by the municipality for public reaction. Once the public reaction comes, they are taken into consideration in whatever negotiated form that it is possible. And, then, once it is published and gazetted, it becomes a legally binding requirement for all those people who live in those buildings, and, they cannot demolish those buildings at their own will. Similarly, to convert a historic landscape into a legally viable entity, they need to be recognized in the municipal byelaws and be a part of the heritage list which is gazetted by the government. So, the gazette notification is the critical factor, otherwise to do the same requires a very strong appellate body, like the Heritage Conservation Committee in Delhi, which was set up on the recommendation of the Supreme Court. Thus, it became a powerful, appellate body which could facilitate a dialogue between the developer and the people who want to protect them. And, some negotiations can be done, and they can

make recommendations not based on byelaws, rather on principles of conservation. Hence, it is very critical to have this appellate body, as otherwise no meaningful enforcement is possible. Similarly, you also need to have watchdog communities, which are actually organized on site by people, like INTACH, or other interested parties who would organize people together to form similar committees, who also play a critical role in ensuring that their own backyard is protected. Therefore, there are many levels at which one needs to ensure that implementation is possible and these are very physically possible things. It is also happening in Kochi.

Manish Chakraborty

Talking about taking forward the idea of precinct, Mr Karforma just now mentioned that precinct cannot be gazetted, or, notified under the Heritage Act of Kolkata Municipal Corporation, which is a news to me. May I ask Mr Karforma to discuss this? Earlier at one point of time, we created a society under the governorship of Gopal Krishna Gandhi, for the Dalhousie Square Regeneration Society. Is that a possible way forward to influence working towards a concerted plan for an area which, I strongly feel, can be really showcased? That can somewhat restore the image of Kolkata.

Anindya Karforma

I also agree with what Manish is saying, that Dalhousie Square is a good example of precinct listing, and that there is lot of things that can be done because you do see some buildings, like GPO, where there are lots of spaces but those are vacant. Nowadays, postal service is working differently, and there is no need for that big space. Similarly, there are National Insurance Building, and other buildings around Dalhousie Square, where the spaces can be reutilized and reinvented. There will be multiple stakeholders, including State Governments, many public and private sectors, and that could be a good example for them.

Audience

Cities all over the world have found out creative ways of dealing with the government inertia, and one way of perhaps doing it is assisting the government from outside rather than confronting the government.

Anindya Karforma

If I may add, in case such talks can be arranged where the owner of the heritage buildings are invited, then that would be really beneficial. If you do not hear the other side, the discussion is futile.

Moderator

The discussion is not complete. There is a lot more to it. We will have another webinar very soon where we can continue this conversation and invite a couple of owners.

Concluding Remarks

Few rounds of discussion focused on enabling a more holistic dialogue to develop a deeper understanding of concepts and framework as well as shared experience related to historic areas and precincts. It focused on building knowledge systems that address the processes and challenges faced with grading and listing heritage properties, refining methods of delineating historic precinct, learning from the legislative actions undertaken by other national level heritage organizations in the past, recognizing the multiple architectural and communal identities of Kolkata, and to foster a better appreciation for the intangible attributes that make historic urban spaces a living heritage. During the moderated Question and Answer session, issues pertaining to the concept of historic landscape, arbitrary downgrading of listed properties, need for an appellate body to have a dialogue, setting up of committees to act as watchdogs, and need for implementation, were raised.

Heritage Economics, Legal Tools, and Management Mechanisms

Resilient and Sustainable Development of Historic Precincts and Areas *Focus West Bengal*

Heritage Economics, Legal Tools, and Management Mechanisms

The second series of webinars took a close look at the legal, administrative, and financial mechanisms that would enable economically viable and sustainable conservation of heritage precincts and areas. The first day was earmarked for global and national experiences of initiating a dialogue between the local stakeholders. The keynote address of the second day elaborated on various financial tools for conservation of heritage precincts and areas. The case studies showcased management and financial mechanisms as well as possibilities of reactivation of local pride and economy.

Participants:

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Bikramjit Chakraborty | Darshan Dudhoria | Debashish Nayak
Donovan Rypkema | Haimanti Banerji | Kakoli Banerjee
Kamalika Bose | Kiran Kalamdani | Kirtida Unwalla | Nikhil Joshi
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B.1.

Managing change in historic Southeast Asian cities – Investing in heritage and people

Dr Nikhil Joshi

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Graduate Programmes in Architectural Conservation
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Namashkar (Greetings) everyone and good evening from Singapore. Thank you very much for the introduction and thank you ICOMOS India, East Zone for inviting me for this very relevant and timely talk. Tomorrow I will be discussing a similar project that the Prime Minister of India, Mr Narendra Modi is initiating on the occasion of Gandhi Jayanti, and will deliberate on this topic which I feel is quite important. The history and heritage of India can be a very important aspect for the economy in the recent future. What we have to do is we have to manage it and that is very important. In my talk today I am going to give examples of some case studies from this part of the world, the Southeast Asian countries, and talk about how people have invested in heritage and the local communities and the local people. So that is why I call this talk, 'investing in heritage and people: managing change in historic Southeast Asian cities'.

Significantly, in the session on Sustainable Development Goals at the recent UN General Assembly meeting on 18th, September 2020, a document was released on the importance of culture and economy in the contemporary pandemic scenario. Interestingly, it reveals how cultural artefacts can serve as important tools for reviving economy as culture and creative industries contribute around 2,250 billion US dollars, which is almost three percent of the world GDP and gives 29.5 million jobs worldwide. It is quite pertinent here, as India is especially rich with historical places and cultural heritage, and almost all of its 17 SDGs are culture-related. Particularly, the eighth SDG goal is important in the present context of urban renewals and built heritage conservations and revival of economy. It deals with job opportunities created by culture and creative industries adapted to local realities and needs. Further, the ninth SDG goal is also significant here as it deals with cultural infrastructure, creative professionals, driving innovation and diversifying economies. In the present pandemic context it is imperative to understand that for diversification of economies one should think beyond tourism. We have seen in the last six or seven months, especially in the developing Southeast Asian countries and Asian countries, that if we just rely on tourism and if something like this pandemic happens, where people are not allowed to travel, it is a complete disaster for cities, for towns or countries which rely only on tourism. I shall elaborate on few aspects on built heritage sites, tourism and economy in four cities in three South Asian countries: Vigan a World Heritage site in Philippines, Malacca, a UNESCO World Heritage site and its sister city George Town in Penang, and Singapore which is suffering a lot because we in Singapore rely a lot on foreign business. These four different cities, which are in three different countries, have different economic backgrounds and their sizes and, population are also quite different. We are going to look at how they are managing their heritage.

Vigan is a very small historic Spanish colonial town with urban streets and different typologies of buildings. The plus point is its tourism which started quite late, and so the buildings are still intact. In the central part of Vigan is the core area with a surrounding buffer zone. It is not a very big area, from east to west, one can actually walk at a leisurely pace in 20 minutes; from north to south along the river, maybe 10 -15 minutes or so. Some of the buildings are in timber, some in brick, mostly brick, lime mortar and lime plaster. It looks quite neat, clean and well-preserved. However, I feel it is overly done mostly for tourism's sake as it relies

heavily on tourism. Some of the buildings are used for typical souvenirs. It can be quite hot and humid. There is a public park there which they started but never finished; there is no grass there in the park. The local rickshaw pullers just sit and take rest in the afternoon near the gates of the public park. The point I want to make is that a lot of emphasis is on tourism and the rich foreign tourists instead of the locals; who seem to be secondary citizens in their own cities. The core area consists of the town hall, and the beautiful Saint Paul's Cathedral with a freestanding white bell tower. The locals regularly visit the Cathedral on Sunday for the mass. There are other buildings in the vicinity which are overly restored. I am not sure if they have used the right materials for restoration. There is McDonald's nearby and in the adjacent tower there is an M, and McDonald's is written at the entrance of the building (Fig.1). The square is surrounded by 7-Eleven cafe and similar food chains. Important government buildings, including the Mayor's office surround this important main square.

Fig.1: The main square of Vigan

Thus, the sole emphasis is on tourism and the compatibility of the original use is a secondary purpose. In nearby areas, there are buildings which are mostly ancestral houses and are in poor condition. Most of such buildings in the core area are either converted, or in the process of being converted into hotels, the typical boutique hotels, or abandoned. This is because these ancestral houses have joint owners who live in Manila or other places. Therefore, they have two options, to rent it for the souvenir shops (Fig.2) to people who take least care of it, they are just interested in the space and sell the souvenirs, or they will sell it to a developer who will do whatever they want to do with the building and try to maximize the space and convert it into a hotel.

So what is happening there is that the maximum buildings are converted into common hotels or cafes. However I was quite happy to meet and spend three days with the young local Mayor. When I inquired about his plan for dealing with the problem of abandoned buildings, and demolition of buildings, he said he is helpless as most of the buildings belong to private owners. Some of the properties have been acquired by the city government of Vigan through negotiated sale of property under expropriation proceedings; the developers have bought some of these old abandoned buildings and then they are doing something that is just not going to enhance the OUV or Outstanding Universal Value of the place. He added that they first advise them, and further use other discretionary powers to buy the property. However, when I asked him about a particular big

abandoned building, he had no idea about its future use, but was content to stop that huge, ugly construction at the end of the core of the buffer zone. He said they were unhappy with it, but the developer did not listen to them. Thus, presently, most of these ancestral Spanish colonial houses are bought over by developers who are converting them into hotels. He said that they are still thinking of the right way of using these buildings. What I was impressed with is his idea of investing in people. According to him, Vigan is a small city where people are not very rich, and the city authority does not have money to buy all these buildings and use it for public purposes. However, he is trying to educate the youngsters about their historical importance. Commonly, in developing nations youngsters leaving their own historic home towns are ignorant about its historical significance and culture. The heritage value of such abandoned buildings are further lost as they are being bought by outsiders who have no attachment to the place. Hence, the mayor started funding training centres for hospitality management, butchery, baking, and carpentry to both simultaneously cater to the tourist town as well as to employ the youth effectively, thereby controlling migration.

Fig.2: Many of the old houses in Vigan are in poor condition and are rented out for souvenir shops

Vigan became a World Heritage Site in 1999, and Georgetown and Malacca together became World Heritage Sites in 2008. In the historic square of Malacca, one can find Dutch and Portuguese influence as well as British influence in a lot of shop houses. The Straits of Malacca is basically a port city, where Dutch, Portuguese and British people trade. The most important street called Jonker Street is right at the core area of World Heritage across the river. Most of the buildings here which were earlier used by the locals are converted into typical shops serving the tourists, the visitors, local visitors or the foreign visitors. Malacca being near to Singapore, many Singaporeans bought property there at a good price. On Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays, one can hardly walk on Jonker Street as it is full of tourists. The property prices, rentals, and even the food prices have gone up. The locals have completely deserted the place, and can hardly recognize it. Someone told me "I was born and brought up here and I used to play with my friends but everything has become so expensive that we cannot really afford the rental; even a chicken rice or something like that has become so expensive." The State Government offices too have moved out of the place. We had our Research Centre in Malacca and I used to go there quite often. The last time I went there, I have seen that it is becoming worse. I have no idea how is the situation now with the Covid-19 when all these foreign tourists are not going and spending money there; how the people are actually surviving because the rentals are quite high. Another pertinent problem remains -

the recent project plan of building a Malacca Gateway, man-made islands, high rises and ferry centre. Actually, when you think of increasing tourists, you plan artificial, manmade islands with five-star hotels and similar things there. The local villagers, in a nearby Portuguese village, who were associated with fishing and crab catching too have been heavily affected due to the reclamation and silting of the sea, the skyscrapers and hotel business. Earlier it was a beautiful area with fishing, a lot of freshly cooked food, fishes, crab et cetera. Slowly it is all dying. Due to silting of the sea they can hardly take out the boats. This is what happens when you focus only on tourism, extracting more and more money from the tourists and not think about the locals and their businesses.

Fortunately, there is a sister city, Georgetown, in Malaysia. They started on a different track. Like India, they are ruled by two different governments. Whereas the Malacca state government was ruling the federal centre, George Town was ruled by a non-central government, which I felt was more people-centric. They started with the shop houses which were rented by long- term tenants. After the WHS recognition in 2008, the rents have gone up, and the local businesses which were paying only about three to five hundred dollars, have shot up almost 10, or even 50 times. The old rent control act was repealed in 1999. So, the owners could increase the rent and as a result, the traditional business people who were working here, like the barbers or the cycle owners or the rattan weaver, had to move out.

There was an interesting development in 2011 as a federal funded organization 'Think City' collaborated with Bangkok-based Asian Coalition of Housing Rights ACHR which dealt with affordable housing in urban cities. There were a lot of consultation to find a solution where the owners, the local people and the tenants can work together, so that the tenants can stay, and the traditional businesses can still survive in this historic World Heritage Site. Ten shop houses were selected belonging to local Chinese clan association, eight of them were rented and the two were part of the temple itself. They agreed to give a grant to the property owners for physical upgrading of the buildings. The owners have to sign an agreement that they will keep the long-term tenants for another ten years, and will not increase the rent. These property owners themselves are not very rich, and renovation work of these historic buildings costs a lot of money and is not an easy task. However, when you do all these repairs and everything, then you want the rental to automatically go higher. So how do we help these property owners through this meagre grant, so that the owners can get the grant, and then the owners and tenants together can work a way out? This long process requiring a lot of stakeholder's involvement started in 2010. They have to build up a trust with the property owners and tenants, and then the tenants and owners also have to build up a trust. So, it is not an exercise which can be done in one meeting, it goes on for years. In this case, it went on for three to four years. Ultimately, they were able to repair some of the houses and the tenants got a long term of rental agreement so that they can stay for a longer time but then after a few years, three or four years, fewer houses were done and then it kind of fizzled out.

It started again, and there were many premises there, around four thousand four hundred forty-three in the core area. In a survey in 2017-2018 it was found out that the rentals are still quite high. So, the government decided that there might be a possibility that a very selective Rent Control Act, will be back. Importantly, in the first step of the survey they found out that Kongsi - a clan of associations, have around twelve thousand five hundred thirty premises, local and the private individuals have almost seventy-five percent, 3352 out of total 4453 premises. And these are the ones which, for high rentals, will be given to be used as café or art galleries. This was happening in George Town for many years and it is still happening. So, in the survey they found how it is affecting, how many people are being affected and what can be done. Further, after that grant for two years, and after the survey, based on their earlier experience of ACHR and the Think City, in 2018 they came up with this idea of heritage habitat seed fund which will be a public contribution, a matching fund that government will fund. And this time it was a state run organization called GCWHI or George Town World Heritage Incorporated, which initiated this. I had a good discussion with a person who worked on this. She said that it is still not very much a success and is at a very initial stage. They are learning because it is a long process. Working with so many stakeholders and different organizations takes a lot of time and trust. In terms of business, trust building is the most important thing. One can give the money straight away but how to select whom to give money, because the funding is limited. This time it was a matching fund where the owners will contribute and then they will get a matching fund from GCWHI. Through this Habitat Seed Fund, they can restore the premises and work for the long-term tenancy as well. Having learnt from their previous experience, they are trying to cut the red tape by not giving money to the owner, but directly to the contractor. So, there is

no chance of corruption or bribery or whatever. It is part of the learning process for them as well. Although it is on paper, now it is almost like nine or ten years. So, this way they can repair the buildings and also make sure that the traditional businesses and old local residents can stay in the precincts in the heritage zone. We know that these are important for the OUVs, which is what we call a new lease of the site, because most of what we see is we are only concentrating on buildings; buildings done, the people move out because the rentals are quite high. This aspect has been highlighted in a film 'Moved out' by Victor Chin, a film about Malacca and Singapore (Chin, 2018).

I now come to the last city, which is Singapore. It is a comparatively young small state with a population of around 5.6 million and area is around 522 sq. km. It got full independence in 1965, and since then the government started thinking about rehabilitation of state-owned shop houses. URA, the Urban Redevelopment Authority, is the authority which takes care of the land, almost like Delhi Development Authority in Delhi which takes care of the building plans and everything else. Singapore was a part of the Port Cities, Straits of Malacca. It was first Malacca and then Georgetown and then the port came to Singapore. It has a similar kind of building typology of shop houses but mostly British era shop houses, the traditional shop houses in Chinatown area which is a historic precinct. The M&A minister said in early 70s, that "we need to maintain a certain character for Singapore, if we knock down all old buildings what will come in its place is very modern buildings, no different from modern buildings in New York or Hong Kong or Shanghai." They were talking about identity. They understood that heritage is a very important part. Initially they made some wrong decisions, as in the 80's, they demolished some of the old houses and other buildings for development, though they soon realized the importance of keeping them. So, they bought rows of shop houses and restored them. Without focusing on restoration done, whether it is good or bad or whatever, I would like to highlight how it set an example, like a pilot study. What was done in Georgetown in a project done in 1985 for a row of shop houses, and how is it a very good instance for both economic and rental benefits? So, how to make sure that people understand that it is not expensive, and they can still keep the building, and earn good money?

We have different types of conservation areas and historic districts (Fig.3); historic districts are again divided into residential districts (Fig.4) and the secondary settlements, which have different types of bylaws, for example, whether or not you can build something new. It is not like a blanket law, but depending on the significance of the area, they are categorized and there are around hundred conservation areas, and over 7,200 conserved buildings in Singapore. They sit side by side with the new development as well. Property prices are very high, especially for the main district. So, it is the economy and finances coming into play. So, we have to make sure that if somebody is paying 32 million Singapore dollars for two houses then they cannot have a traditional business there. So how do we do it? Most of these buildings are privately owned. Private buildings are not owned by the government, so developers can do whatever they want. Hence, one needs to decide for oneself whether it is good or bad conservation. For example, there is an iconic building from 1974, which has recently been demolished just last year and a new building is coming up in the nearby area.

So, we need some important tools for assessing heritage conservation policies, like the ones developed by a MIT professor in 1997 published in the book 'Preserving the Built Heritage Tools for Implementation' (Schuster, 1997). They talked about ownership and operation. One of the tools is you acquire the building, like Singapore did, and then you operate it. It is a very expensive thing; you cannot buy and operate all the buildings. It is also very difficult as we have seen in the Singapore case. Though the regulations are quite good, their limited implementation makes it difficult for people associated with conservation. Moreover, these regulations cannot work solely without incentives. Thus, education advocacy, property rights and incentives are all equally important. For instance, Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) is quite significant in this regard, and Hong Kong is using it aptly for selective conservation, because the property prices are very high there similar to that in Singapore. Here, you transfer the development rights so the conserved building is kept as it is, and the transfer rights going to the other side. So, it is a perfect instance of heritage conservation and development. Finally, I would like to conclude by citing another example. The building that is owned by our department, the Department of Architecture in Singapore, where I have been working, is a conserved building. And how do we use it for different purposes? For teaching, training and experimentation. Thank you.

Fig.3: Conservation areas and historic districts of Singapore

Fig.4: A Residential Historic District of Singapore

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B.2.

Heritage management mechanism for private houses at Ahmedabad World Heritage walled city

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Overview

Ahmedabad, the largest city of Gujarat, was founded by one of the early Sultanate rulers of Gujarat, Ahmed Shah in 1411 A.D along the banks of river Sabarmati on the ancient site of Ashaval and Karnavati. It was established as a bigger stronger walled city and envisaged to be the new capital of Gujarat Kingdom under Sultanate rule from then onwards. The new capital had new patronage yet the influences of the past traditions travelled to Ahmedabad from Patan, the old capital during the Chalukyan/Solanki period. This interchange of ideas and blend of two cultures defined the New Islamic Architecture in western India, which in turn also inspired Mughal Architectural Development. Mughals, Marathas and British also ruled the city after Sultanate kings. All these regimes have produced magnificent monuments both in timber and stone exemplified by the numerous Hindu and Jain Temples, mosques, tombs, gateways, step wells and palaces in the city.

Apart from the monumental architecture, what distinguishes Ahmedabad is the plan of the old city, comprising numerous *pols* (housing clusters which comprise many families of a particular group, linked by caste, profession, or religion), unique in terms of town planning, community living and multi-cultural traditions (Fig.1). The attitude to embellish the wooden architecture with intricate carvings and symbolism akin to the religious buildings gave rise to a very important expression of domestic architecture in western India. The small scale and varied form of private buildings showcase the local patronage to building crafts and architecture which is uncommonly rich in work skills and functional as well as sustainable efficiency.

Heritage Significance

The historic city of Ahmedabad was inscribed in the UNESCO world heritage list in 2017. The main criteria of inscription are criteria (ii) and (v) (WHC) while the proposed criteria (vi) associational values, has not yet been ascribed the world heritage status. Justification of criterion (ii) is the important exchange of cultural values expressed in the new Indo-Islamic architectural style. This architectural style was not only important for its beautiful blend of two cultures but also as a remarkable specimen to a continuity in transformation from erstwhile Solanki period; traditional building crafts into this new Ahmedabad based school of Indo-Islamic architecture (Fig.2) which spread all across the Sultanate kingdom. Later, some of the idioms were also carried forward in Mughal Architecture giving it a unique global identity as found in some of the narratives (Sikandari, Mirat I., 1611/1914/2006).

While the traditional human settlement criterion (v) is visible in its high-density narrow cul-de-sac footprints of the quarters termed as *Pur* and residential neighbourhoods termed as *Pol.* The city was founded in the early 15th century as a new capital city of the Gujarat Empire that had recently been taken over by the Sultanate King Ahmed Shah. The earlier capital was Patan that had a traditional settlement pattern, encompassed by fortified walls and gates. Learning from this, the new capital city was built following the traditional settlement pattern which even after transformation of times and lifestyles, have retained its footprint in the *Pur* and *Pol*s of the city.

Fig.1: Traditional footprint which houses the Gujarati Lifestyles in *Purs* and *Pols* of Ahmedabad

Fig.2: Indo-Islamic Architecture reflected in the Rani Sipri (Sabrai) Mosque and Tombs, Ahmedabad

Understanding Resilience in the Context of the Past History of Ahmedabad

It is mentioned that the Sultan Ahmed Shah invited people of all religions, casts and guilds to migrate to his new capital city from Patan (Jote, 1929). With this cultural agglomeration, the exchange of building craft resulted in the new architectural styles and cultural practices. This is seen in the remnants of architecture of that period. It is worth noting that several parts of the newly established capital city were directly adapted from its original context to keep similarities between the cities. The earlier capital city Patan had a traditional settlement pattern encompassed by fortified brick walls and sandstone gates. The inner urban structure of Patan with high-density neighbourhoods was an ideal fit to ensure optimum size of fortified town with warmth of introverted planning of sectors. Most neighbourhoods did not have thoroughfare streets but cul-de-sac. Places like Bhadra (central citadel), Teen Darwaja (Ceremonial Gateway between the Royal Complex and the Settlement), and city fortification among others were incorporated, not just in name but also in their respective purposes, positioning and architecture. So, this adaptation of the local traditional practices of town planning and settlement layout contributed to the resilience building of the city.

Administrative upheavals are the most consistent feature in post medieval history of Indian regions. Ahmedabad was no exception. Due to constant wars and battles in the regional borders, the city also lacked stable governance. But amidst such trying times, three interesting incidents from Ahmedabad, present a contrasting perspective of resilience in the nature of its citizens.

A local jeweller Shantidas Jhaveri (16th -17th Cent.) made a fortune and became a retailer to the Mughals and other rich families of the country then. During an unfortunate event of destruction and acquisition of a local cultural site in Ahmedabad by the *Subedar* (Chief) appointed by Mughal ruler, Jhaveri had intervened by approaching the Emperor at Delhi to reverse the acquisition. The *Subedar* then was none other but son of the same Mughal ruler who ordered to reverse the same on request of stronger local resilience (Shah, 1987).

Another such incident in 18th century was avoidance of a plunder of the city planned by Marathas negotiated by monetary exchange by local businessmen group led by Khushalchand. Similar contemporary event was the plundering of Surat by Marathas. Moreover, a manifesto written by British General Godard, dated 11th February 1780, also mentions 'Nagarsheth Nathusha and other businessmen of Ahmedabad' as saviours of the city, which ensured safety for the locals in the early 19th century and a foreseen battle was eschewed (Jote, 1929; Shah, 1987).

These events in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries are all pertaining to issues of imposed administration, or rule, discretely tackled by people without any administrative role on behalf of the citizens of Ahmedabad. Later, the Sabarmati Ashram in the 20th century became the pivot of Indian History of Administration. Thus, such incidents exemplify resilience in the context of the past history of Ahmedabad.

Urban Management Initiatives

Ahmedabad has taken a number of initiatives for heritage management with an approach, way different from being only monument- centric; generally understood in the legislative framework in the country. The scales of housing may have varied but the quality of timber workmanship and ornate carving is uniformly exquisite. The first census study was followed by a chain of events, which spread mass awareness about the significance of the house typology of "common" which was remarkable to many researchers, photographers, furniture designers, cultural organizations and even people at large (WHC, n.d.). The Ahmedabad Wood Carving Company (Kumar, 2017) was one such inspired initiative by Forest Di Lockwood as early as 1881AD. The city was the first to find place in a National Census of wood carved houses in 1961 AD which included mostly homes of common citizens ranging from as small as 25 sq.m of plot to large townhouses. The Government of Gujarat had sponsored the relocation of a house belonging to Zaveri family, Doshiwada ni Pol, to public park-Sanskrutikunj in the capital city of Gandhinagar, earlier in 2004 AD when there was no regulatory framework for protection of such houses.

Identification and Listing

For the first time, the state announced heritage regulations specially crafted for private, residential and living heritage in 2007. These regulations enabled the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) to protect and restore the residential houses and private heritage structures. The regulations have various aspects of protection and incentivizing heritage conservation by providing incentives for sustenance. The regulations define the two important aspects named 'Listed Heritage Structures' and 'Heritage Precincts'. Under these regulations, all the identified heritage structures and precincts can be deemed for protection and a multi stakeholder committee named Heritage Conservation Committee can recommend the authority for identification of heritage structures which was done through the process of Listing. The municipal corporation of Ahmedabad had done extensive work earlier between 1997 to 2005 for mapping and identifying buildings of heritage interest. These structures were provided grading and consolidated in a list with legislative support after the same were notified in 2014. The tentative list was published and made available for viewing before finally being notified for receiving objections and suggestions.

Pride of Listing

After the inscription of Historic City in the World Heritage List in July 2017, the listed buildings received more attention than before. The monuments protected by National Act or State Act too have good presence in the inscribed area. However, the presence of more than two thousand privately owned properties have truly

made the living character a matter of pride as a part of the World Heritage Site. Presently, other problems surfaced. The private ownership and usage is very dynamic. With transfer of properties or change of tenants, the attachment and information about listed status may not pass on to the new owners and thus, the declining attachment which was a pertinent issue. The authorities felt a need for a body which can work with people and provide necessary hand-holding. The Ahmedabad World Heritage City Trust (AWHCT) was formulated on 17th November 2018 with an intent to carefully conserve the outstanding universal values reflected in the intricately decorated Indo-Islamic architecture, and the unique habitational settlement pattern known as *pols* with brick/stone and timber buildings with equally intricate wood carved structural and architectural elements and also various expressions of intangible heritage. The trust is a non-profit making organization.

Formal Approach Towards Working with Privately Owned Heritage

After the formulation of this Trust, initiatives were taken to increase the awareness in people and bring out the potentials for community led conservation and maintenance. Following step-by-step approach is taken by the AWHCT which is under implementation.

1. Community meetings and consultation for homeowners: The trust officials initiated dialogue with people by organizing informal meetings, group discussions and also been there for in person consultation as and when needed by the homeowners.

2. Installation of Plaques on listed heritage buildings: A project was begun to install the heritage plaque on the listed heritage buildings displaying the grade and plot number to make people aware. This also ensured that the information about listed status is passed on to the consecutive users/owners. Earlier a pertinent issue was the lack of knowledge about listed heritage buildings.

3. UNESCO had recommended AMC to carry out measured drawings for listed heritage buildings with timber architecture. Accordingly, a large-scale project was initiated in 2018 for Building Documentation by inviting multiple teams of architects/architectural institutions to empanel with AWHCT and carry out the work. This long-term project is being implemented by 14 empanelled teams and results into, a one of its kind database generation for each listed heritage house. Multiple stakeholders make this work very challenging, as it is not possible without the consent of each stakeholders to complete the work as per required formats. The documentation begins with checklist formats, photographic records, and site sketches and concludes with digital record of measured drawings and details.

4. Single Window clearance for Restoration Permissions facility is started by AWHCT with two deputed town development officers at its office. The homeowners who wish to restore their houses are provided copies of measured drawings and all relevant information and guidance about the restoration procedures. Various formalities as per rules and regulations required from different departments of Municipal Corporation are also done at a single window so that the home owners can get all the necessary supporting documents without the effort of going to various departments.

5. It is also important to recognize and provide a platform for skilled craftsmen for a living heritage city to ensure the continuity of skills and crafts both. The AWHCT has created a platform by opening an ongoing Registration of Artisans. This registration is open ended and has avoided having financial turnover or formal licensing as work contractors but is open on the basis of experience and expertise which are applicable in the historic city. There are 8 types of categories of skills including traditional woodcarving and also contemporary preservative treatments skills. This register has potential to be a platform for filling up the gap on both ends- procurement of skills and provision of livelihood for niche crafts and skills which otherwise get replaced by typical mass production works.

Resilience During the COVID-19 Pandemic and Unity in Pols

It was seen in the past that the resilience towards disaster is developed in the historic city of Ahmedabad. The recent COVID-19 pandemic showed it again to be comparably better than the other areas. Though the historic core of the city got affected by the pandemic, however, other impacts of lockdown, like scarcity of food and medical supplies was seen much lesser in these areas. The residential neighbourhoods supported infected households with assistance of municipal staff and elected members. The social integrity was helpful to cope

with the lockdown period and people in the containment zones also felt comfortable. In fact, the major wave of pandemic which considerably affected other areas of the city, the historic areas saw much lesser impact (Fig.3).
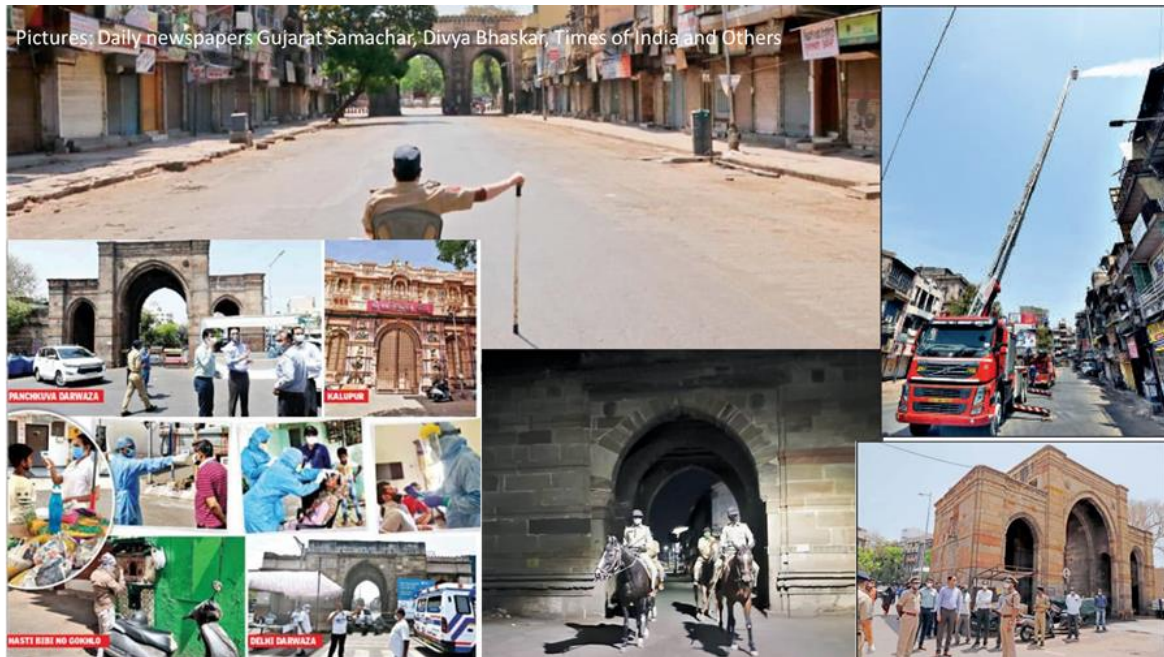
Fig.3: Ahmedabad during COVID-19

The walled city gateways were convenient as health staff camps for testing and movement restrictions. The Pol Gates and Cul-de-sac neighbourhoods helped implement containment restriction in infected areas quite effectively. The lifestyle in the *Pol* houses also ensured the semi-open spaces were a convenient barrier between interaction and exchange, while private spaces inside homes were kept safe. The central courtyard ensured the needed sunlight and natural air which were not possible in many apartments in other areas of the city.

Conclusion

The historic areas in the Walled city of Ahmedabad are dotted with privately owned heritage houses and structures. The management of such private heritage has remained an issue in the developing economies where multistoried constructions are taking place in the low-rise high-density heritage rich areas. Ahmedabad with its decades long efforts have provided some examples of building resilience towards development pressures and also as a unified cultural context taking clues from the history about community led resilient behavior towards risks. Though, the idea of urban heritage still needs more integrated approach, the city of Ahmedabad can be seen as a melting pot for people-led initiatives where local authority has also played an important role as a catalyst for their heritage management.

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B.3.

Why Pondicherry's heritage matters: Where are we today?

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Introduction

Sunaina and I, Kakoli, represent People for Pondicherry's Heritage (PPH), a Collective formed to create awareness and celebrate all aspects of Pondicherry's heritage; we are Life Members of INTACH and members of PondyCAN, an NGO whose objective is to preserve our natural heritage and make Pondicherry a better place to live. Much has been done in the last few years, and thanks to the Pondicherry chapter of INTACH and other collaborative efforts, we have designated heritage precincts, yet we are far from where we want to be due to the absence of appropriate management mechanisms.

We present here a brief introduction to Pondicherry's city structure, giving the historical context which forms the basis of our designated precincts; some details about the work done so far which has almost doubled tourism in 5 years; the turning point in December 2014, and the subsequent activities; what has worked and what has not in terms of heritage economics and why; the current status and what needs to be done.

A Brief History and the Two Distinct Precincts

The French settled in Pondicherry in 1674. Though it fell to the Dutch once and the British thrice, it was a French colony for 242 years till it became a part of independent India in 1954. Its colonial past gives Pondicherry an interesting cross-cultural history and its built form lends a unique identity to the town. The old part of Pondicherry is known as the Boulevard Town since it is bounded by four boulevards that once constituted the outer limits of the city's fortification. This presents two distinct architectural styles in the Tamil and French quarters, which are separated by a canal and unified by a rectilinear grid plan (Fig.1). In the French quarter the buildings are in European style adapted to a tropical climate, whereas in the Tamil quarter they are in the local vernacular. While maintaining their individual identities, the two styles have influenced one another, evolving into a synthesis: Franco-Tamil architecture.
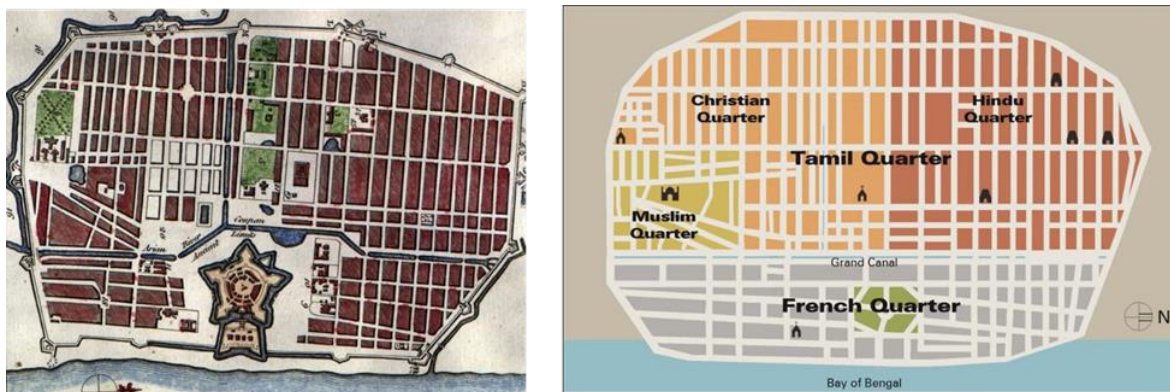
Fig.1: Maps showing the Boulevard Town – on the left, the old French colony, and on the right, the two distinct precincts – the French and Tamil quarters. Courtesy: INTACH, Pondicherry chapter, and PONDYCAN

Work Done So Far

The Pondicherry INTACH Chapter was started in 1985. Its Conservation Cell was set up in 1998 with an initial grant-in-aid from the Town and Country Planning Department, Govt. of Puducherry (GOP) and has since been working with the government and the public to conserve the heritage and townscape of Puducherry. In the early years INTACH Pondicherry collaborated with Institut Francais de Pondicherry (IFP) and Ecole francaise d'Extreme Orient (EFEO) on various projects. It was the late Francoise l'Hernault (1937-1999) of EFEO who initiated the movement to protect the architectural heritage of Pondicherry. The local people formed an organization called Les Amis du Patrimoine Pondicherien and supported this movement. The Golden Age of Pondicherry's heritage restoration was led by the Late Ajit Koujalgi, Architect and INTACH Convenor from 1985 to 2014, supported by the IFP, EFEO and various old and new owners of properties. Individuals in the French precinct started restoring their houses and the value of heritage buildings started rising. The government started projects like the restoration of the Central Park, the Promenade, the Aayi Mandapam and the Museum Project.

This work is being continued by a team of dedicated architects, engineers and other interested persons. INTACH has continued with detailed classification and record keeping of all heritage buildings and the list is updated regularly. A streetwise listing of all the heritage buildings within the zone was done by INTACH and EFEO in 1995. In 2003, the list was updated and the buildings were classified into grades I, IIA, IIB and III as per the MoEF guidelines (Fig.2). It includes the name of the building; grade; location; age; name of owner; whether private or public; type of usage – single, multiple, residential, school, hotel et cetera; historic and present; currently in use or not; its architectural significance. Most of the buildings in the French quarter are either owned by the Sri Aurobindo Ashram; the GOP; the French Government, organizations/institutions, private owners, commercial establishments or are used as places of worship. In the Tamil quarter they are privately or publicly owned by individuals, families, schools, commercial establishments, the Grand Bazaar or are used as places of worship.

Fig.2: A streetwise listing of all the heritage buildings. Courtesy: INTACH, Pondicherry chapter, and PONDYCAN

The Asia-Urbs Programme whose main aim was 'Achieving Economic & Environmental Goals through Heritage Preservation Initiatives' was implemented between February 2002 and July 2004 in partnership with two European cities, Urbino (a UNESCO World Heritage City) and Villeneuvesur-Lot which excels in urban environment management.

The objectives of the programme were:

1. To address urban and environmental issues and enhance residents' quality of life.

2. To develop global networking and introduce a participative process through decentralized planning and management.
3. To encourage the exchange of information between partner cities.

The European Commission co-financed the programme, allocating about 700,000 Euros. In 2008 INTACH received the UNESCO Asia Pacific Heritage Award for culture heritage conservation for restoration of Vysial Street. The project included a Historic City Signage System; Non-polluting Traffic and Transportation; Matching Grant for heritage buildings; Solid Waste Management; plans for Grand Bazaar Revitalisation; Model Street and Façade Restoration; Heritage Walks which continue to this day. Façade control became acceptable after many received grants during Vysial Street Façade Restoration project (Fig.3).

Fig.3: Façade Control became acceptable after many received grants during Vysial Street Façade Restoration project. Courtesy: INTACH, Pondicherry chapter, and PONDYCAN

The Turning Point and Subsequent Activities

In 2014 we lost Ajit Koujalgi who was leading our heritage movement; in November 2014 the Mairie (Town Hall), our most iconic building collapsed due to years of negligence just as restoration work had started. Citing safety issues, the government immediately vacated and abandoned three of the oldest school buildings. Dr Arun Menon, who is a professor in the Department of Civil Engineering in Indian Institute of Technology Madras, and his team were called to evaluate the cause of the Mairie's collapse and assess the condition of the other three buildings. His report suggested all the buildings could be restored and that maintenance was the main issue to be addressed in preservation of these buildings.

PPH was formed in December 2014 as a collective and we demanded that the Mairie be restored as funding was already available. The GOP refused to rebuild using traditional materials and we had no option but to accept their plan to retain the look and plan of the original building. The building is almost ready (Fig.4).

In 2015, a state level Heritage Conservation and Advisory Committee was formed and 21 public buildings were notified as Heritage Buildings. A listed building may not be demolished, extended, or altered without special permission from the local planning authority, which typically consults the relevant government agency. However, some of these are much endangered, yet nothing has been done about restoring or maintaining them. The SLHCAC is supposed to be the body that manages all heritage matters but in reality, of its 14 members, 8 are from the GOP and the rest are their selected nominees. Hence, it barely functions and is ineffectual. It should consist of stakeholders who really care for heritage conservation and not just government nominees.

Fig.4: Mairie (Town Hall) before and after restoration. Courtesy: INTACH, Pondicherry chapter, and PONDYCAN

The 2018 amendment to the Building Bye-laws was seen as a great step forward to help preserve Pondicherry's built heritage. However, in reality, it has not been implemented. Private owners cannot be forced due to economic constraints as no incentives or funds are available and the government themselves do not follow the rules and find ways to circumvent by citing safety issues.

Along with having various infrastructure improvements as part of its agenda in order to improve the urban quality of life, Pondicherry Smart City Mission does realize the value of tourism which depends heavily on retaining the character of our built heritage. However, there is a move towards constructing new structures with a 'heritage look' rather than restoring the original old buildings. But if part of the funds are used to restore the 3 schools that will be a great step forward to impress the value of heritage architecture on young minds.

During an interaction with the city and citizen engagement for the Pondy Smart City Mission, main issues and the corresponding goals were identified. Termed as Unexplored Heritage, it was reported that in Puducherry, 1200 buildings (300 in the French Quarter and 900 in the Tamil Quarter) have been identified as "heritage buildings" by INTACH. Unfortunately, the city has been fast losing its unique Franco-Tamil character over the last few years because of development pressures and unchecked demolition of heritage buildings. As tourism development and employment opportunities are notably linked to this historic asset of the city, saving heritage buildings in Puducherry emerged as a major issue.

Heritage Economics & Cultural Capital – Pondicherry's Value

Among the economic concepts relevant to heritage that have emerged, the most important is cultural capital, defined as any capital asset that embodies or gives rise to cultural value in addition to whatever economic value it possesses. Asset, in the case of heritage, may exist in tangible form as, a building or a painting, or may be intangible, like a traditional craft skill or a classical dance form. In common parlance, the concept of an asset connotes worth, frequently thought of simply in financial terms.

Cultural capital is no different – it generates economic value, and does so both in its stock form (a historic building can be sold) and as a flow (tourists pay to visit a site).

The stakeholders of the French Precinct have realized that heritage is our biggest capital and therefore have enumerated these specific points:

1. Local builders are happily adhering to the Façade Control policy on their own.
2. Small private owners are converting their homes to Heritage B&Bs with modified facades.
3. Indian investors from other parts of the country are investing in old houses to restore and live in.
4. Pondicherry has become a film shoot destination because of its picturesque streets.
5. Tourism has been increasing at the rate of 10% every year.

However, most of this is happening in the French quarter and not in the Tamil quarter because it has better infrastructure, less congestion and less trading activity. The residents of the Tamil quarter have either part of a family property or a small property. They do not see sufficient value in restoring an old Tamil house as opposed to building an inexpensive multi-storey RCC structure in its place. Unless trading activities are relocated from this area, the heritage value of the Tamil quarter will keep diminishing. The Smart City Mission

plans to convert Nehru Street (the most commercial area) into a pedestrian only zone and the Sunday Market has already been closed.

What Has Worked and What Has Not

From Pondicherry's perspective, we need a body which has adequate powers and funding to do the following:

1. Assess and record heritage resource -survey, investigation, record keeping.
2. Community education and consultation.
3. Consultation and interface with relevant government authorities.
4. Technical support facilities for restoration and maintenance for private and public buildings.
5. Ensure the specific plan activities are aligned with project health and safety standards.
6. Conduct regular audits/reviews of plan implementation and reporting.
7. Site inspections and seeking expert opinion when required.
8. Making long term plans for improving infrastructure to support the precinct.
9. Preparing proposals and applying for funds for projects based on a well-prepared plan.

At present, the only organization involved in above activities to a large extent is INTACH. However, they cannot function to their full capacity unless they have the complete support of an active SLHCAC and the willingness of local politicians and the administration. INTACH is supported in their work by other NGOs like PondyCAN and local groups like PPH and Les Amis du Patrimoine Pondicherien. It is these local groups who are now educating, creating awareness and demanding that our heritage be preserved and we are also actively helping in the process.

The Pondicherry Heritage Festival has been playing an increasingly significant role in this since 2015. Over a duration of almost a month, we organize and participate in activities which celebrate and showcase Pondicherry's heritage. This is not so much for tourists as it is meant for residents who contribute to, participate and take pride in what Pondicherry heritage is.

The Festival has limited support and funding from the GOP, so we invite owners of heritage properties and businesses to open up their homes and spaces and contribute in any way they can. Events for school children and college students, introduced 3 years back are becoming very popular: the Inter-School Heritage Quiz competition; photography exhibition along the theme of each year's festival; a walk through Pondicherry's streetscapes; dance and music, book events (either books about Pondicherry or by Pondicherry authors); open house (opening places and institutions in heritage buildings to the public during the festival); seminars with experts, conversations, food trail, heritage walk. The festival celebrates the natural heritage of the region, the system tanks and channels created during the Chola period, our beach and mangrove forests, our urban forest, all add to Pondicherry's value and is an asset which, combined with our tangible and cultural heritage, increases the net worth.

Renaissance of Pondicherry Project was initially introduced to GOI as well as GOP in 2009/2010 as a new model of how Indian heritage towns like Pondicherry ought to be preserved and developed: with a focus on decentralized development and environmental sustainability, built on a dynamic partnership between experts, government, civic organizations, and individuals with the overall goal of making Pondicherry clean, safe, beautiful and peaceful, both for citizens and tourists.

Current Status

1. Clearly demarcated precincts and well recorded data, therefore easier to manage.
2. INTACH and other institutions and NGOs have been very active.
3. Residents and business owners of the French quarter are fully invested.
4. People's movement is an inclusive pro-active involvement.
5. Pondicherry's inclusion in the 4th Smart City Mission selection, which will improve existing infrastructure of the Boulevard town without destroying its character.

What Needs to Be Done

1. Political will is a matter of understanding and appreciation. Dialogue with members in key positions is a necessary and a continuous process.

2. Government/PWD participation requires fair and open dialogue. The need is to find equitable solutions rather than take an obstructive stance.
3. SLHCAC and Bye-laws need to be strengthened and strictly adhered to.
4. The Tamil quarter needs to be decongested and infrastructure improved. (This quarter is being highlighted in the 2021 festival.)
5. Incentives and Grants need to be given for preserving old houses.
6. A Heritage Management Cell is required for restoring public buildings and their maintenance.

Acknowledgements

B.4.

Panel Discussion: Day 1

Ashish Trambadia, Benny Kuriakose, Debashish Nayak, Kakoli Banerjee, Kiran Kalamdani, Kirtida Unwalla, Sunaina Mandeen

Moderator: *Bikramjit Chakraborty*

The discussion on day 1 took a close look at the legal, administrative and financial mechanisms that would enable economically viable and sustainable conservation of heritage precincts and areas. Experiences were shared and specific examples were cited to demonstrate how a dialogue may be initiated between the local stakeholders and the policy makers.

Moderator

In this session we have four discussants, Dr Benny Kuriakose, Mr Debashish Nayek, Ms Kirtida Unwalla and Mr Kiran Kalamdani along with Mr Ashish Trambadia, Ms Kakoli Banerjee and Ms Sunaina Mandeen, speakers of this session.

We will start with Dr Kuriakose with a small discussion and presentation about his experience. I would like to request Dr Kuriakose to share with us changes and transformations which he brought through his projects.

Benny Kuriakose

I am talking about the Allepey Heritage Project, which we have been doing for the last three years. Allepey is locally known as Alappuzha, like Mumbai and Bombay. This is a 100 percent government project. We have been involved with the preparation of its conservation development plan, neither do we call it management plan in the typical school language, nor a master plan because we want to ensure that it is for conservation development plan, to tell the community that conservation and development can go together.

Now, coming to the legal aspects, we are not planning to bring in any legislation because most of our laws are negative: you should not do that, you should take permission, this and that cannot be done. I would like to talk about the model that we are following in our Allepey work, about seventy crores of work is going on after the preparation of the draft master plan. We always called it draft because we want changes to be incorporated as we go along the project, and the master plan is constantly evolving. And, as I said, no legislation is being planned because we have the example of Fort Kochi, which was the first area where heritage laws were brought for the first time in Kerala. As a result, many of the buildings were demolished when the laws were introduced. When you do not have an efficient mechanism to implement the laws, or, when there is a mechanism which is corrupt, then what is the point in having it? So that is why we decided to adopt this model where the community is made aware of the projects and owns up the project. However, today, I am instead talking about the economics of the project: a convergence of funds from various departments, like the Department of Tourism, because they are the major funding agency, and the Department of Coir as there are a lot of old coir factories, and the Department of Irrigation that is cleaning up the canals, which is also part of the project. Nevertheless, the bulk of the funding, that is about two thirds of the funding, is coming from an investment agency set up by the Government of Kerala. They are not dependent on government funds. They raised funds from the market, including masala bonds and similar things from the London Stock Exchange, et cetera. It is for Kerala Infrastructure Development Board. We take funds as we have to give the cost benefit ratio, which is very difficult in a heritage project to talk about, as they have stated standards. It is not the Kerala Government by which I mean, government engineers are not at all involved in the analysis of these projects. There are consultants who have their own yardstick and who analyse each project. It is very difficult to look at the cost

benefit because they are very particular that the project should be beneficial. So, what we try to do is, we talk about the social parts and the social benefits and we try to argue with them. In some projects they do not give and ask many questions. And, this is going on and on for a long period.

Finally, with regard to the management aspect of the project the government has set up a company for managing heritage projects. Allepey Heritage project is the third project of the Government of Kerala. After that, three other heritage projects have been announced, and another two are in the pipeline. However, Muziris Heritage project is the pilot project of the Government of Kerala. Government has established a 100 percent government owned company- Muziris Projects Limited, which is in charge of most of the heritage projects, except Kannur. All the MLAs of the area are there and the tourism minister is the chairman. The director of Archaeology and the director of Tourism are board members. Though it is a hundred percent government controlled company, it has been established because they do not have to go through all the government procedures. In the company we have to follow the three quotation system of doing business, but the delay which happens in government owing to slow transfer of files from one department to the other does not happen here. In addition, there is a huge research component, or academic content in this project. As a part of this, we have a research centre which is established with a former professor of history from the Department of History from Delhi, Professor Kesavan Veluthat, who is the director of this Research Institute. They support the research component of it. Moreover, we have so many researchers working on the project for each component, each aspect, because different kinds of expertise are required. My role is mainly as a consultant, I am overall consultant of the project. One of the successes in the Muziris Heritage Project and Allepey Heritage Project, is that the consultants are given tremendous freedom in these projects because we do not have to look at many other things as part of the project. We have powers to look at the quality of the implementation, and I am part of all the committees which are formed as part of the project, which helps. I have a say in the kind of movies or documentaries made, in the documentation, in the research, in the way the government does the projects, the works that are being carried out by various departments, including PWD and various other agencies. We have a project manager for a major part of the project, which is a project management company that has been selected. This is the overall structure of the project. Thus, in terms of decision making the Board makes the decisions, and we decide about most of the things, except financing aspects as the government is funding part of the project. We have nothing to do with the government. The company is able to take decisions on a day-to-day basis. Mr Naushad is the managing director of the company and has tremendous freedom to do things. That was precisely the way we worked. This was the answer by the Kerala Government in trying to make sure that the typical bureaucracy, which is part of the government, does not affect the project because the company has a lot of freedom. Thank you.

Moderator

Thank you. Our next discussant Mr Debashish Nayek is a leading person related to the heritage movement of Ahmedabad for several decades. And I would like to share a small film, a five-minute video which he has asked us to share with all of you.

(In the Film)

> Debashish Nayek: We wanted to look at and review the heritage status of three Indian cities Hyderabad, Jaipur and Ahmedabad, and they had sent officials from the city municipality to Rome, ICCROM, to study and set up the whole system. In that process, there are some awareness about the heritage issues in those three cities. Interestingly, in Ahmedabad, an architect named Mr Majumdar was sent to Rome to study heritage and the set up. So, there was an awareness. In 1996, a very progressive Municipal Commissioner named Keshav Verma, through Mr P.K Ghosh who is currently the chairman of the Heritage Committee, invited me to Ahmedabad and requested me to do something with the heritage of the city. When I came over and spent some time, I realized that the residents hardly know their city.

> So, the whole process started with a heritage walk, which we thought would be a very important tool to make people of Ahmedabad appreciate their city. India has nearly 7000 historic towns and cities, and almost every city is eligible to become a World Heritage town or city, and Ahmedabad is one of them. Interestingly, very few people knew that Ahmedabad was the biggest city in India before the British came and it is actually living for the last 600 years very actively, which makes Ahmedabad very unique. In terms of history, it is one of the most highly documented cities, for instance all the mosques of Ahmedabad which evolved from the Jain architecture and its unique typology are

documented. The process took nearly 20 years of journey, during which, people of Ahmedabad really have gone through the whole process, understanding various initiatives which were done through visible cooperation. Thus, a lot of respect has been built between the citizens, the political power, and the city administration.

However, we still have a long way to go because of the sheer number. If you look at other heritage cities in the world, there may be one small neighbourhood, which may be one thirtieth part of the walled city of Ahmedabad. In Ahmedabad, sheer size and number of buildings is so huge that it is a big challenge. In other words, I think the challenge is about how you take everybody along and manage to create a situation where thousands of houses are managed and preserved. It is a long road ahead. Theoretically, you may start work with the initiative of a NGO, or a local history group, who can restore maybe 10, 15, and 100 buildings.

Nevertheless, if you have to restore the whole city, it needs a policy change. Hence, the role of municipal cooperation is extremely important. When the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation called me to help the municipality to set up a Heritage Department and create a heritage initiative or awareness program, it was a big positive thing and that was how the success story began. If you want to do something similar with any other city, then the process has to happen through the municipal cooperation or the local government. Only then the policy could be changed. The municipal administration should be part of the process. That is why everywhere we work, we always initiate with the Heritage Walk because the people who govern the municipal cooperation are the municipal councillors who are elected by the citizens. So, if you want to bring in citizens participation, you have to bring in the municipal councillors and political support. Thus, citizens' knowledge about their own city is very fundamental where the municipality plays a very important role.

Moderator

Thank you so much. Now I will move on to Kirtida Unwala who is involved in a lot of projects in Mumbai, has a long association with Mumbai Metropolitan Region Heritage Conservation Society and INTACH and especially the projects related to Fort Mumbai. I request Madam Kirtida Unwalla to talk about Fort Mumbai.

Kirtida Unwalla

Thank you. Mumbai, as we all know, has been a pioneer in the setting up of the recognition of heritage conservation policy. Mumbai, being a very highly commercial and the biggest economical centre of the country, very aptly took the lead in recognition of heritage conservation, and inverted that necessity into the first policy that came about in the year 1991. Here, one cannot forget the contribution of Mr Shyam Chainani, who has been at the helm of this prerogative to have the heritage listing, as well as guidelines and the heritage law inserted into the city, which then transferred onto the rest of the country. So, what we call a DCR 67 was initiated as a draft in 1991, the journey continued in 1995 and it became a final list. Furthermore, as Debashish Nayak stated in the previous discussion, it is important that there is a contribution from the government and like-minded government officials. If they become active, there can be many activities happening in the scenario of contribution of the built and the intangible heritage and that is exactly what happened in the case of Mumbai. A very positive response was given to Mr Chainani's request and all this happened very fast for the case of Mumbai. In 1997, once again, the MMR Heritage Conservation Society came forward and gave a very handsome seed funding to identify more heritage assets and heritage lists. Today the list covers the entire MMR region. I was fortunate to have worked in one or two of these projects of listing at early stages.

The first precinct to be identified was the Fort Precinct. It is an amalgamation of many character zones: different character zones got identified within the larger Fort Precinct to constitute sub precincts of the principal Fort Precinct. It is a very large area, governed very well and has a fair amount of success stories of conservation efforts. The rest of the smaller precincts which were strewn all over the city, or at least up to the Bandra and the Dadar area, are much smaller in size. Here, the issue was that the heritage regulations which were set up for the precincts as well as other buildings, did not do so well for the simple reason that there was a huge overlap between the ownership patterns and the land use patterns and the legal rights that the people had over development and the overarching policies.

The funding was allocated at the behest of the Mumbai Metropolitan Region – Heritage Conservation Society (MMR-HCS) which enabled identification of heritage buildings and precincts in the MMR region widely and successfully. I have been fortunate to have worked on one of these precincts.

However, the issues pertaining to tackling the economic aspects of making these regulations work, were not enabled in a planned manner and thus did not have enough applicability. Eventually, when the listing process was successfully completed for the whole MMR region, the opportunity of looking at the typical aspect of the overlapping and the overarching policies was missed out. The lacuna prevails till date. Hence, despite being the first city in the country with a large positive participation from citizens at initial stages in 1991 through 1999, Mumbai has been unable to control aspects of conservation using economics as a guiding tool. Thereby, only the Fort Precinct remains the only success story.

Many of these stories of successful conservation efforts within the Fort Heritage Precinct have bagged almost 16 UNESCO Heritage Awards, though it does not trickle down to an optimum level, or percolate into the rest of the MMR as well.

Cumbala Hill Precinct is an illustration of a smaller precinct indicating attempts at understanding of the overarching nature of the Rent Control Act that governs the development and change in the context of heritage conservation. The only tool that was brought in favour of heritage conservation was TDR, or Transfer of Development Rights. Owing to these overlapping and overarching nature of policies, TDR merely did not work and will not work in the city of Mumbai, which needs to be explored in more detail by looking at managing heritage conservation sites.

As far as the other funding agencies are concerned, those restricted only to the Fort Precinct, were private enterprise, CSR, INTACH. Some more heritage conscious NGOs working and MMR HCS has also started providing funds towards active conservation, being incentivized with various economic means since almost a decade. The story continues as illustrated by various projects in the city.

If we look at the boundaries of Fort Precinct and sub precincts, Mumbai within its core, within its Fort Precinct has two principal World Heritage sites. The specific case of the Esplanade Mansion underwent a huge turmoil based on the overlapping aspects of the Rent Control Act and various other overarching policies. From another perspective, the Rent Control Act and the aspect of overarching policies, Mumbai has allowed many of these nominal built forms, and the character of the city to survive- simply based on the inherent inertia that it sustains, providing the boon of time gap, for enabling hopeful actions towards conservation in future. We are not sure about the future course of action, but a lot of it is still existing today simply because of the Rent Control Act and the resulting inertia.

There is a different narrative associated with my experience of the Matheran Hill Station Eco Sensitive Zone. Matheran being a hill station is of a very specific landscape setting and character. The case of Matheran listing project, initiated by MMR-HCS and guided by INTACH Mumbai Chapter was unique from the onset – stake-holding being steered by local residents having approached INTACH GMC to carry out a comprehensive listing with a guidance program. The program met with great success to culminate into a Notification in 2013 and continued to identify the region as an Eco– Sensitive Zone (MoEF- GOI). And yet, at the end of the day, when the draft heritage regulations were finalized, the entire list of natural heritage assets, which we had identified and governed as such by the Heritage Committee and the Monitoring Committee, was completely deleted. Once again, we are thrown back into the threshold of knocking the doors of the court, a cycle that already had its turn at the behest of BEAG (Bombay Environmental Action Group), an initiative of Shyam Chainani. With a continued BEAG follow up, it is yet a sad story.

Ismail Building, Fort Precinct is another interesting case. It is about a piece of a private property in the heart of the Fort Precinct where a conducive owner chose to invest into a prime heritage asset and incentivize a profitable real estate venture, the adaptive reuse as a flagship store of the brand ZARA. So, here the economics worked in a very different way and because of and despite the Rent Control Act.

Thus, the people of Mumbai in their individual capacity do have the means and wherewithal to carry out actions in a manner so as to accrue economic benefits, though it is only limited to miniscule application. Overall, some private buildings with a vision and some public buildings with local government funding sources have been largely a success story.

Moderator

Thank you so much. Now I would like to welcome our next discussant Mr. Kiran Kalamdani.

Kiran Kalamdani

There are a few projects that I would discuss as a background for the whole subject of economics, the legislation and the management tools for conservation. I begin with Mayavati Advaita Ashram situated in the hills of Uttarakhand in the Kumaon hills, where we recently did a project. Here, there was the building where Vivekananda visited, which was set up as an ashram and as an international place for research on the Vedanta. In December 2017, we first reached there, and after one hundred and twenty years, it has now been conserved. People in Kolkata might know more about it because they are closer to the Belur Math and the Ramakrishna Mission. Interestingly, there was no legislation for conservation that I could find in the Uttarakhand area, and we had to go by instinct and by the sanction of the Ramakrishna Math in this area.

Our first project after returning from York in 1991 was the Shaniwarwada, an INTACH project for which we had made a presentation. It took about 10 years for this to come to the present stage, and it was largely because of bureaucrats, like Mr. B.G. Deshmukh, who was the ex- Cabinet Secretary, who could actually have that change come about. The foreground of Shaniwarwada was given over to the people over there. This project has been going on for the last thirty years, and still is not complete. Nevertheless, it was an effective working collaboration involving ASI and INTACH. The Pune Municipal Corporation which owned the land, implemented it. This has been followed by a lot of heritage walks, and the beginning of some of the heritage walks that have been taken around the Old City was from the Shaniwarwada gate. On the right is Tulsi Bagh, and the Mayor himself got involved in such activities like heritage walks. So, as Debashish Nayek said, it is very important that the local legislature leaders and the strongmen get around and stand behind your project, which is a very important management ethic that we have learned the hard way over the years.

Incidentally, in another project dealing with the architectural illumination of the CST at Mumbai, we made a scheme and asked the Chief Secretary, who had asked us to make this lighting scheme, as to whether we should take permission from the Heritage Committee. The Chief Engineer of the railway said that we do not need that. When I insisted that it is there in our agreement and we are supposed to do that by law, he explained that then it would take at least three years, and assured that they would take care of any pertaining eventualities. We went ahead and did the scheme, which is now five years old. To get it off the board it took six years, but five years later, this was implemented and is an UNESCO Asia-Pacific award-winning scheme, an award of merit that came in 2014.

Another project was in rural Satara in the Satara District, which is south of Pune and a small village that is about 20 kilometres east of the district town of Satara, where we worked on a completely unprotected site. It got a UNESCO Award of Merit in that year. Ganesh Khind is a similar little temple, right in the middle of Pune city, and we asked the person who was paying for it whether we should go for the heritage approval, because there is a committee, though not a statutory one. Pune was far behind Mumbai, and I agree with what Benny Kuriakose said in the beginning, that if you do not have a mechanism to actually implement it, and as later repeated by Kirtida, there is no point in having a law and a statutory sort of background in India. Of course, this project was wonderfully implemented, and hailed by everyone.

Moreover, the project of Council Hall, which is where the Divisional Commissioner sits, and he despite being the head of the establishment said that let us not go to the Heritage Committee again, because that is just a nuisance. Nevertheless, we went there, took the permission, and got the work done in the best method and using the best of materials, stained glass, and gold leaf. It was restored, and presently it is from here the district administration of five districts works.

Finally, there is a very large intangible heritage conservation project, the Pandharpur Ghats. During a particular week, about 17 lakh people travel from Pune district to Solapur district, a distance of about two hundred and fifty kilometres. They all assemble at this place where earlier there were no proper *ghats* (a flight of steps leading down to a river). The middle stretch, a little stretch is still without people where there are no *ghats*. About five, or six years ago, the whole project was started to make the *ghats*. Views were made up by our office and some of the implementation has already started. This is a thousand crore project that has been launched by the Government of Maharashtra, which showed its commitment towards this intangible heritage, and the teachings of Saint Tukaram.

Thus, it is necessary to know what actually works in a particular situation. Last year, when we met in Bhopal trying to talk about the conservation architects' community, Professor AGK Menon, who is our teacher and who is now the chairman of this conservation architects' community, said to us that it is like cricket and the IPL. You know, the Indians made that IPL work as a wonderful success story. So, in our state, you cannot make our towns look like European towns, they have to become like Indian towns, and you have to find our own solutions that actually work in our context. As far as the economics, the management and the regulations are concerned, the heritage regulations are concerned, I think we should evolve to a state where we find what is actually possible and try to do that. So, I leave you with those thoughts. Thank you.

Moderator

Thank you. I would now like to ask the next question to Mr Debashish Nayek. Do you think that heritage values are perpetual, a constant entity? Do you suggest any specific method which helps us to identify those values very tangibly? Does it honestly play an important role to make the precinct resilient in case of any critical situation, as right now we are facing the pandemic situation? So, what are your views in terms of those heritage values and from where we inculcate those values, identify those values and how they play an important role in a heritage precinct? If you can share your thoughts and specifically as you have the experience of north Kolkata as well as Ahmedabad, very briefly if you can share.

Debashish Nayek

I think this is a very interesting question. I also look at Benny's work and Kiran's work, because we know each other for many years and have shared situations. In fact, my work in Kolkata was actually documented by Kiran, and he presented me with a small book about this process in Kolkata, which he thought was very interesting. But looking back thirty-five years of work, what we have seen in Ahmedabad, I have been working with four generations and over the four generations, the value changes, but there is a connection. In the case of Ahmedabad, the original family, the community strength was different. Then it got into re-inventing or redefining the values, and now the new generation looks at it in a very different way. However, there are four points which run through the whole process. One is the sense of appreciation and sense of pride. Second, is that using the sense of appreciation and sense of pride to create an enabling situation, which then is quietly converted into the legal format. Moreover, from the beginning, one has to be very creative about finance. For instance, when I first landed up in Ahmedabad, I realized that MP, MLA and councillors have quite a good amount of budget, which is never utilized. So what we did, before every 31st March, we did the entire estimate to make smaller projects and got the budget approved. And so the councillors, MP, MLA's budget is utilized properly otherwise at the end of the day, it would be simply wasted on redoing the footpaths, or doing lamp posts, or benches. Furthermore, we did a lot of planning on a street name plate, because every street has a history, every nameplate has a history. Today, if you come to Ahmedabad you see that every street has a nameplate, which was done in very small amounts, maybe thousand rupees per plate from the councillor's budget. The councillor was more than happy to support that because it has to be approved by the item, and the Collector could approve that item. Initially the restoration was not part of the item which has been approved by the Collector to be spent by MP, MLAs. For example, we have around hundred and twenty bird feeders. Initially we made some of these councillors, MPs, MLAs give their budget for restoration of these bird feeders and eventually it was approved. That, I think is creative financing and Ahmedabad's success, besides getting support from the people, is what Ashish showed you like Kavi Dalpatram, a lot of poets have used it as a creative public space. I feel that when you are looking at it for some time, the law becomes a part of your life. You cannot pull down the building implies that you simply cannot do it. However, it has to be supported also by the people. Here, the media plays a very important role. We have to be successful like Pondicherry. I have been working with late Ajit Koujalgi, Chief Architect and Co-convener of the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) Puducherry, for many years. We really miss him but whatever we learnt, I always kept on replicating that in various cities in India so that you keep on learning from each other and sharing the things. Coming back to the original question of values, values will always change. Nevertheless, one has to establish a connection and then translate them into some kind of integral process. That acceptance has to be there, and it has to be translated into some kind of financial mechanism, which is like using many of the funds that are underutilized or not utilized, so one has to be very creative. It is a holistic process and we all need to be cautious. What is interesting is that you have to hand over and create a new generation of people. So there is a continuity, but the ownership is taken by the new generation.

Finally, I would like to highlight the legal aspect, as the court plays a very important role here. In Kolkata, the High Court order was very important. Similarly in Ahmedabad, there were many court cases which actually made the legislation possible. So, understanding the law and court is also very important.

Moderator

Thank you. So my next question is to Dr Benny Kuriakose, how have you handled the change and transformation needed in your master plan? When you have done the conservation plan how have you addressed the change and transformation, the need for change, within the community and its reflection in the built heritage?

Benny Kuriakose

What happens with most of the master plans is that it takes two to three years minimum to get it prepared. As a result, people who have initiated the process lose interest in it. Either it is the bureaucrat or a politician, everybody, and normally bureaucrats are in their position for three years, politicians are there for five years in that position. That is why we call it a conservation development plan, and name it a draft plan. Even the conservation development plan prepared for Muziris 12 years ago is still a draft plan, because it gives that flexibility to make changes to it, where one can add further monuments. When you do something in a short time, then it is not easy, you would have omitted some monuments, would have included something wrongly. So, all these flexibilities are very important. Master Plan does not have that flexibility. The stand that we have taken was that as far as the monuments are concerned. However, with regards to heritage, the community can have a say in what is to be conserved, but how it is to be conserved has to be decided by the experts. If the community starts enquiring, or questioning how conservation is done, then the experts can find effective solutions.

Moderator

I think this is a wonderful point that you have shared, what can be guided, and how, and further how to enable and empower them.

Benny Kuriakose

This keeps on coming. For example, in one of the protected monuments that I am doing conservation now, we are doing a compound wall, which is the first of the basic measures, was damaged. The government objected to the compound wall construction explaining that the road width is not enough, and so one has to put the wall inside. What will you do in such a place? So, we are trying to negotiate it with the community. What we are trying to say to them is that - as you are concerned about the road width, let the road be there, but let the pedestrian path be inside, let it pass through the monument precinct as in many cases, but we cannot take the compound wall inside. So, all such issues have to be negotiated with the community. The primary objective is to make sure that the heritage values and all related things are conserved and the character is maintained. So, these issues have to be negotiated by the professional. However, if the professional happens to be not having a say and instead a bureaucrat, or a politician, then that is a problem. Much of the heritage is destroyed despite the fact that a professional is involved in the project, because some others came and tried to dictate terms, which is very difficult for them to implement. Fortunately, in Kerala the advantage is that the awareness has grown. Although the legislation is not in place in many of the heritage sites, people know, just like as mentioned in one of the talks for Pondicherry, that everything is heritage. We started with Muziris Heritage Project 12 years ago. Now, at least seven - eight heritage projects are there, which consist of most of the cities. Now that heritage has become a buzzword, which is good, it has to be conserved in the right manner, and that is for the professionals to take care of.

Moderator

My next question is to Ashish Trambadia, a very specific question regarding Ahmedabad World Heritage City Trust. They have taken some strategy regarding the unlisted property. Earlier Debashish sir has also mentioned that initially, many properties were identified, and then slowly it has come down to a specific number based on certain quality and criteria. Now, what about those unlisted properties? Is there any demolition happening? In my two years of experience in Ahmedabad, I witnessed a lot of demolitions going on in the city. Are you setting a strategy on behalf of the trust, for future, and do you know if some sort of process is going on? In that

case, what sort of specific grant have you allocated, or are there any guidelines you have adopted, or you are going to adopt? Please share your view on that.

Ashish Trambadia

The question that you have asked is more like a legal one. The trust is not really a decision making authority. It is more like a public dealing, or public dialogue organization. However, we make our recommendations to the concerned, competent authority. A look at the map of Ahmedabad with its 28 monuments and the prohibited areas and the regulated areas shows that ASI has control over almost 70 percent of the area. So, illegal demolition, whenever it is done, new construction will not be permitted by default. Second, in 2019 our administration came up with the new General Development Control Regulation, with a specific chapter on Ahmedabad World City. For non-listed buildings your General Development Control Regulations (GDCR) will be eased out if you are retaining your footprint. So, there will be less taxes, and it will be very easy to get permission to repair and restore. Additionally, you can also enjoy the existing built up because in due course of time, most of the buildings are at least three stories, G+2. The listed buildings have entirely different regulations. In case, you want to propose a new construction, demolish it fully, bring it down to ground zero and build new, it is much more difficult, taxes are more, the building construction costs are more, then there are more taxes after the construction, less built up is allowed, the FSI for the core old city is reduced. So, you cannot build more than G+2, this is precisely the kind of regulation that we are introducing.

Moderator

So, is this one major tool for you?

Ashish Trambadia

For non-listed buildings, it is very difficult to have incentives because those buildings will be like in million, 70000, or something like that, for the old city itself. In the buffer area, if you count, there will be more than a lakh of buildings. Incentives are not there, though, there are interesting regulations. For instance, you cannot have a cellar parking, hence you cannot have a building elevated and get the parking below so that the typology of built up does not change, central courtyard is mandatory, which is in proportion to your plot area. It is not just for the sake of it. So, these are general building regulations, but it does not have facade control, it does not have a stylistic control, but it enforces you to adhere to what is compatible in the old city context. Obviously, as we understand, the builder lobby is very powerful and not everything, not all the regulations are possible to implement at one go. It was introduced in the 90's, and we have started implementing it. Furthermore, one needs to understand this lacuna, and identify places where development can happen. As it is a living city, we cannot freeze the development. We are working with the National Institute for Urban Affairs for a new heritage conservation plan, an exercise which is looking for a possible regulatory framework. So, we are hoping to refine it further.

Moderator

Thank you. We got your answer and it would be enriching for us to know, actually, how the World Heritage City is handling this situation because it is also a living city.

Ashish Trambadia

I would also like to say that Debashish can never be out. Debashish is a part of the Heritage Conservation Committee and definitely also informs us, the trust and we, the junior team, when we are wrong. So, Ahmedabad has this legacy.

Moderator

Yes, absolutely. We all are cooperating with each other. My next question to Kakoli Banerjee and Sunaina Madam. We had seen that there are a lot of funding, because Pondicherry is one example, probably where we have seen a lot of successful interventions, and it is a pretty long process. Now while allocating the funds for specific activities except the conservation of built heritage, how have you selected such activities, if I may ask you that question? What are the criteria?

Sunaina Mandeen

First, I would really like to say that what comes across in all the examples, and all things that we have seen is that you need a Debashish, a Benny, a Kiran, Ashish, and we needed Ajit who is no more. These individuals are ending up driving all the efforts in a sustained manner which allows this to happen. To answer your question, I would like to break up the players in these four categories.

So first, there are the government departments. So, among the government departments, there is the Town & Country Planning, Tourism, PWD, and Forest and Environment. Now, I bring in this because whatever we talk about, has always been a heritage across the board, not just built heritage. So, from nature all the way down to built heritage. Thus, how they do their planning and their allocation of funds? They take advice from INTACH, and this has been the reason that Pondicherry is a great success. Pondicherry's success story owes to the fact that INTACH and the government have been working together on a lot of these issues, and they take decisions in a joint manner. Now, of course, that does not include people like us, but hopefully it should include people like the Heritage Conservation Committee, where these kinds of decisions and allocation of funds should go through another body rather than directly the departments themselves, so that a more holistic picture is taken into account. Because what happens not just in States and Union Territories, but as well as in the Centre, everything is in silos. You have this ministry, this department, that department. When things go across different departments, no one takes responsibility. You either have to go to the Chief Minister, or you have to go to the PMO, which is ridiculous because another body can come along, and can make all the different groups work together.

The second aspect is the experts, like, conservation experts. There is not enough of this happening in architecture and civil engineering colleges. How to make that happen? I would make sure that every civil engineering college teaches how to repair and conserve heritage buildings because every city of ours has them, be it ancient temples to modern heritage. This is very important because we are going to lose our great heritage due to lack of its proper understanding, be it on the part of the PWD engineers, or ASI officers, or normal contractors. Pertinently, Ashish made a good point about maintenance. The famous example of what has happened, or what is happening to the beautiful, gorgeous, and ancient Kala Hasti Temple is relevant here. I came to know from Arun Menon that they were plastering it, and putting water resistant paint.

The third is the people as it is a people's movement. Where does the funding come from, when is it government funding? We do not have a role in that when it is private funding. A very interesting example of this is what our Governor Kiran Bedi has done with the Tank Users Association, and with a whole group of NGOs and collectives that work on the water bodies. She tried to bring in the community, local companies and corporations. Though, it only works with her persuasion. So, the challenge is how to make it into a kind of a partnership where they also feel that they have things to gain. The allocation of funds has to be a collective decision that has to be taken by everyone who is going to be affected by the actual work, which is going to be carried out with the funds that are coming in and capacity building. I want to stress that capacity building has to essentially start from the children. We are seeing that happen in Pondicherry whether it is the colouring book, the heritage quiz, arts, media, and every year there are more and more people who want to be a part of it. Thereby, there are multiple ideas they come up with, the videos they make, the short clips of films, the dance, the singing, the music, everything, expressing heritage through all these different media. So, it is the children who have to be taken into consideration.

Moderator

Thank you for sharing this interesting insight about the Pondicherry project. Next, I have questions to two discussants, Kirtida and Kiran. The question to Kirtida is, do you think while making heritage strategies, it must be strictly correlated with the economic interest of the people who own the properties instead of the everyday users of the city? So, are we going to focus more towards the property owner, or the everyday users of the city, and how this aspect has been considered in your particular project, during documentation and delineation of boundaries, the precinct division? How did you negotiate the boundary definition for keeping that difference in precinct because it is deeply connected with the management mechanism?

Kirtida Unwalla

Coming to the first question, yes, the participation and strict initiation into identification of the economic interests of the landowners and the property owners has to be taken care of. Nonetheless, I am not implying that at the initial stage of the listing that was carried out in the case of Mumbai, I suppose it was done for the need of the hour, and it was at that point of time, a very speedy expedition of the process. However, the rest of the processes which followed on from 1997 till date, till 2012, were not included. During this phase, I did only one precinct identification, which was the Cumballa Hill, and there what we did was to at least identify because we did not have much say in the change of the policies, which were overlapping, and legally impossible. Hence, one had to take care to keep the character of the precinct intact. So, we identified that these properties, which were cessed, which have been inflicted with Rent Control Act, which since 1991 were taken out of the list actually, and preference given to them to redevelop. Thereby, we tried to keep this character at least under control by setting up guidelines. As far as the owners were concerned in this particular precinct, they were of a richer class, they stayed in properties, the bungalows, and most of them were leased out from the government itself to all the Municipal Commissioners, BPT Chairman and at the high posts of Mumbai city, who are in the governance themselves. They are located there and these properties have been on lease to the BMC. So, they were very well protected and we did not have to do anything much there. Even today they are well protected. The Mumbai Corporation has now set up a Heritage Cell. The Heritage Cell has its own finances, and so it is within these finances that these properties are looked after. However, as far as the other private properties are concerned, they have already consumed their FSI and hence cannot avail of the TDR. I wanted to ask Ashish, how you deal with TDR. In the case of Mumbai, we are not able to deal with it simply because the FSI of the heritage buildings, which are listed under Grade 3, fall into cess category, have already consumed the FSI, and therefore there is no point in taking a TDR on something that they do not have as an entity already existing with them. It is a tricky process, but I would just like to say that each of the cities and contexts are separate. So, when we are looking at Ahmedabad that is a separate game of issues than in Mumbai. When I was looking at Matheran, it was quite different. And then, in the precincts in Virar which was an area action plan, it was a different scenario. And in all these cases, we tried to look at these aspects of how to delineate and how to manage change. We are not able to do much with the economics of a city like Mumbai for sure. It is a very difficult situation as far as the rest of the precincts are concerned. For instance, the Fort Precinct, having its central core location, because it has maximum number of government buildings which are already in Grade 1, they have a funding corpus which has been initiated by MMR HCS, partly by private players and by the government themselves, so they are all safe and healthy. It is only the private buildings, even within the Fort Precinct, which have no chance of survival, because they fall into that category which has an overarching policy.

Moderator

In fact, it is interesting that the meta-typical approach has a lot of limitations, but positives also. Also, its thirty forty thousand Indian cities and Indian precincts have heterogeneous character, and it is not of homogenous character, and very complex cities. From that perspective, my last question to Kiran Kalamdani. From your experience of practice perspective, how do you differentiate the methodological management framework with the real situation on the ground, the way you handle, you negotiate? You have faith in the case of Pune. What do you think are the key components that we need to adopt in an existing methodical approach, which is already on board? And, how do you enhance them? Is it more about the indigenous approach than a borrowed approach? How do you respond to that? What should we do in terms of creating something?

Kiran Kalamdani

I repeat what AGK Menon said that one must look at our situation in the proper context, as to what works and what does not work here. INTACH made about a hundred projects of documenting and trying to tell people that they should do that, or they should do this. And, many of the people did not do that. For example, the Mathura Vrindavan Ghats project where I worked with KT Ravindran, never materialized because the whole implementation mechanism, including the economics, the legislation, and the management was not in place. We took a kind of inheritance from the British, and from that education we are speaking this language today. We went to places where they thought we should look at how they have done things, and that is how we all ended up at York. However, after coming back, we realized that we are in a completely different time capsule

with a diverse economic management and legislative situation, and we should find our own means to actually get things implemented. For example, the earlier question that you had asked Kirtida about how much the owners were taken into confidence, and we are presently dealing with one owner whose heritage property has been listed. Now, they want to keep that property. They belong to the family who introduced Bhimsen Joshi to India and his singing, and they have been able to collect 50 lakh rupees, and they need three crores. Further, the city establishment could not help them financially, but they had to keep the building intact. Now, this is a draconian legislation, though we are conservation architects, we understand that it is very important. But what if the people who are going to enjoy that heritage do not pay for it? Take Kirtida's example. She said that Mumbai is the most financially vibrant city in India, and if that cannot set aside funds for conservation, what are we talking about here? The Pune Municipal Corporation passed the legislation in 2017, just three years ago, saying that two percent of the development charges that are collected for new developments should be diverted towards conservation. Just about a week ago, I gave them an entire procedure of how to do it from the MMR Heritage Conservation Society document. So, currently, we are beginning to realize that all our thoughts and aspirations that came from wonderful reports and fabulous documentation are of no use if we cannot actually convert them into action plans. So, I think we should just pull our socks, see what is possible and see where the sun is rising, as in the saying "*Hum ugte hue suraj ko namaskar karne vale hain*", whoever has got the means, who has got the muscle power, the legislation, that is where probably we should be investing our energies. And, it will take some time before we come to terms with that, before we find an equivalent of IPL in conservation that is which simultaneously works and is popular with the people, without violating the values.

Moderator

You have actually triggered further discussion about where we can continue in future. We need an indigenous system of management and handle our versatile, heterogeneous and very complex nature of heritage precincts. It is good to stir up the conversation. In future, we shall start negotiating, and discussing such stories and experiences. Thank you so much.

Concluding Remarks

Some of the important points that came up were related to, how can culture contribute to the economy and be a transformative force for sustainable development? How can heritage conservation go beyond tourism? The discussion included the role of heritage values in heritage precincts, need of flexibility in conservation development plan and specific roles of heritage conservation professionals with regard to community participation, and the pertaining challenges owing to Tenancy and Rent Control Acts and the issue of TDR, or Transfer of Development Rights. Lessons that emerged from the discussion included the importance of collective decision making and the roles of local community, bureaucrats and politicians in heritage management, and the need to be creative enough to get funds allocated for conservation projects, to enable convergence of funds from various departments. It was also emphasized that the process of redevelopment of the precincts plays an important role in conservation and a localized system of heritage management is the need of the hour. Importance of the people and the local community in preserving heritage emerged as a common focus. Some of the discussions also put forth the important point about the role played by the media, the judiciary as well as the new generations, particularly school and college children, and consensus was there to start with children for capacity building.

B.5.

Heritage economics, legal tools, and management mechanisms

Donovan Rypkema

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I am so pleased to be with you. I wish I could be with you in West Bengal in person. But I am so happy to be here among you today. Thank you all for joining this great symposium.

I am going to be blunt and direct in this presentation – If we want to have heritage, if we want to have the heritage maintained, we have to have money to do that. There is just no other way around it. We have to have money, and so, the basic question is where is it going to come from? How are we going to attract money for heritage?

From Where Does Money for Heritage Come?

There are really only three places where the money can come from: the public sector, the private sector, or, the third sector, that might be NGOs or community-based organizations, institutions, universities, hospitals and so forth. There is no other place, and we have to get our money from one of those three places. The form in which that money might flow into heritage is from three directions: it can come from Debt, it can come from Equity, or, it can come from, what I call, Intervention Funds; it has to be one of those three. In fact, what is interesting is that, over recent years, around the world, all three of those sources of money have periodically come from all three of the sectors. So, we have lots of opportunities to structure a transaction, to find our resources, thinking in those three sectors and these three sources of money. But what exactly does that mean?

You all probably have a basic understanding of these, but just so that we are thinking in the same line – debt is the money that we borrow; it is a loan, and the loan has to be repaid, and whoever gives us the loan, and that might be a bank, or a government, or might even be an NGO, but that lender is going to be expecting repayment of both the amount that they lent us – the principal, and any interest that we have agreed to pay on that loan.

The second source is equity, and for our purposes today, we are just going to say that equity is really a synonym for ownership, and so people make an investment in a heritage property, they have equity in that property, and their expectation is going to be that they will get a return both *of* the money that they invested, and a return *on* the money that they invested; equity will want both of these.

Finally, the third category, the intervention funds. I use that phrase because that money is usually put into a project to intervene – to make the project go forward when there is insufficient money in some combination of debt and equity for the project to work. So, intervention funds are anything that neither represents a loan that has to be repaid or equity that represents ownership. And, often there is an expectation of return, but the expectation from intervention funds is to look for a non-monetary return. The non-monetary returns might be (i) to advance public policies – say, we have a state policy to encourage heritage conservation, so we are going to put some money into heritage conservation projects because that is our policy. Or, it might be (ii) an expression of values – it might be the values of an NGO, might be the values of a government, or even a political party, or even it could be the values of a company, a private sector corporation, whose values are represented by their putting money for non-monetary returns into heritage. The non-monetary return might be (iii) the advancement of the mission of the organization, and that is often true with NGOs whose mission is to encourage heritage conservation. Or, it might be just for (iv) PR benefits – there are corporations like American Express who puts money into heritage realising that they get some PR benefits from doing that.

But when we think, there is really only three sources of money, where it is going to come from. Well, we can certainly get some from the public sector. But the public sector has a whole range of obligations – they have to fund health care, food services, national defence, transportation, and education – a whole range of issues. So, likely the heritage contribution is going to be a limited amount. We can think about the third sector – the third sector has great commitment, manpower and womanpower, but rarely has money. I would expect that the ICOMOS Chapter in India's account is not millions of dollars. Which then leaves, almost by default, that we are going to have to look for money in the private sector for much of the heritage financing. This is particularly true for countries like India, who has expanded the definition of heritage beyond just the Taj Mahal or grand monuments, and more of the ordinary buildings ought to be preserved, and often those buildings are already in the hands of the private sector.

Incentives

If we are going to get private sector money, that often means we have to figure out incentives. Incentives are particularly important in the circumstances that it is a market economy as is the US and India, and when heritage buildings are in private hands. I have no idea about the share of heritage buildings in private hands in India, but my best guess would be that, here in the US, 85 to 90 per cent of all the buildings that have somehow been designated as heritage buildings are in the hands of private owners. I would argue that incentives are often, in fact, good public policy. They can be about (i) closing the gap, and I will get back to what that means, in a minute; they might be a (ii) compensation for public good that heritage conservation generates. We might want incentives so we can (iii) influence the timing, scale, use, or character of a heritage project, or sometimes investments in heritage are made to (iv) catalyse other economic activities around it.

I am sorry to be kind of an economic geek here, but, if we think about investments, and, in the world there are zillions of things we can invest in, every one of which will have some balance between the risk that debt represents and the reward return we expect. We can think about the bonds issued by the nation of India – they are low-risk, where the government is insuring those bonds so investors can buy an Indian bond with great confidence that they are getting the money back and get a return on their money. So, in the relative sense the reward i.e. the return is going to be relatively low because the risk is relatively low. At the other end, we can have a very speculative investment where we have a big risk of not getting our money back at all, but if it goes – it might be true of a start-up, high-tech firm in Mumbai – we do not know if it is going to work, but we might make a lot of money if it does. So high-risk, but high reward. Every investment in the world is going to have some balance between risk and reward. Here is our problem with many heritage buildings – it is not that they are too risky; it is that they are simply not on the line at all, and that there is no relationship (Fig.1). The risk we are taking with that building is totally insufficient for the reward it is generating. So, particularly when we will ask the private sector to make the investment, we have to figure out a way to reduce the risk or increase the return, or some combination of those things.
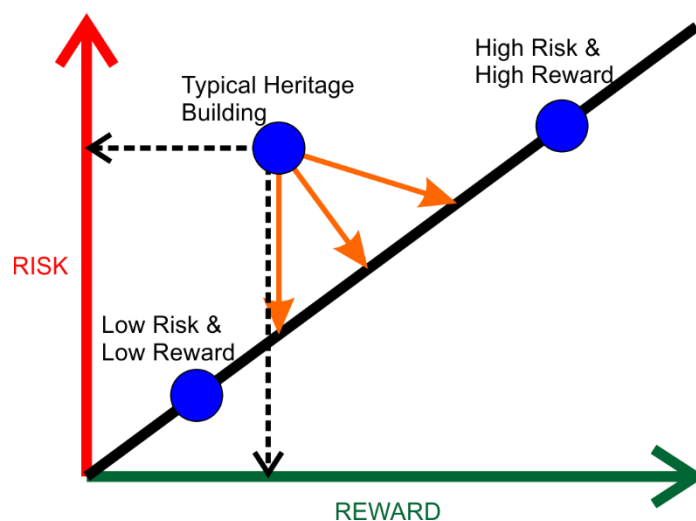
Fig.1: The Risk/Reward Relationship

The other way to think about this relationship is the Cost/Value, and those are often used as synonym by architects, by builders, by heritage conservation advocates, but they are totally different concepts. Cost is the total amount of money I have to put out between the times I get an idea and until I have a finished product; that is the cost – how much I am going to have to spend. The value is what it is worth to somebody else when I am done – what somebody else is willing to pay me to buy or rent that asset. When the value exceeds the cost, we do not have to do anything – capital is smart, it will flow to these opportunities where value is greater than cost. But often with heritage conservation projects, this is the issue. We have a cost 'x' and the value – and by value, I mean the economic value in the marketplace – is less than that. The difference between those two is called the 'gap'. If we are going to expect the private sector to make that investment, we have to figure out a way to close that gap. And that is the purpose of development incentives. Development incentives are not to make rich developers richer; development incentives are a way to encourage investments that otherwise would not take place – because it is an irrational economic act to spend a million dollars on an asset that, when you are done, only has an economic value of 800 thousand dollars. So, no rational person would do that. Hence, the need for development incentives.

Situations that Call for Incentives

The development incentives may be necessary in a variety of situations. The top two are when private sector either (i) cannot or (ii) will not act, and I shall come back to the reasons why that might be true, in a minute. Sometimes, (iii) it is an extension of public benefit or public purpose; sometimes, (iv) as a catalyst for additional activity; sometimes, (v) the need to influence the character, the use, scale, and timing of the development; or sometimes, (vi) when infrastructure is required – all these might be cases where we need to have incentives.

But the top two are – why the private sector either cannot, or will not, act by itself. And why might that be the case? Well, it might be (i) when simply nobody would lend us any money – no financing available, or (ii) the conditions under which we can borrow the money are just simply not acceptable – that the interest rate is too high, or the repayment time is too short, or other terms and conditions of the loan, or (iii) because of the risk, that is, either a high risk or high *perceived* risk – and while developers both in the US and in India like to portray themselves as the big merchant princes of the 21st century, they are in fact very risk-averse, and if they think it is risky, it becomes risky, whether or not that actually is the case. Then, sometimes, (iv) we cannot acquire the property; sometimes, (v) the scale of the project is either too big or too small; sometimes, (vi) because the risk and reward are out of balance; sometimes, (vii) when there are such significant 'public benefits' that there is not enough money coming out to make the mortgage payment; sometimes, (viii) because it is not net revenue producing, or (ix) people cannot borrow money today for lots of kinds of projects, like, at least, in the US now – in general, in the present economic condition, or (x) high transaction cost in just putting the deal together, or (xi) other investments – and again we have an almost limitless number of investments if we have money to invest, and then there is this last issue – that, simply, (xii) cost is greater than value.

The 3 W's of Incentives

So, we need to think about incentives in terms of the three 'W's': *What* does it accomplish, *who* provides it, and *when* do they affect the project?

In fact, incentives around the world have been developed to intervene to affect the project really at almost every scale. It might be at the (i) predevelopment stage when we are just trying to figure out what we might do; you could use incentives for (ii) acquisition, for (iii) the rehabilitation, or construction or restoration; sometimes, we use incentives (iv) to raise investment capital, we can use incentives in the (v) operation stage of the building, and we can even develop an incentive at the (vi) disposition stage when we sell the property down the road.

And then, who provides it? Well, it might be (i) the government, directly. I do not know if it is true in India but for lots of cases in the United States there are (ii) quasi-government entities that are not private corporations in that they do not distribute dividends, do not have shareholders, but they are free of the political side of the government – things like a convention centre authority, or an airport authority, who operate independent of the political realm of the government. Incentives might be provided by (iii) the non-profit sector and institutions, and sometimes even (vi) the private sector will provide incentives.

What can incentives do? There are basically only eight things incentives can do. They can: (i) reduce the cost of the project, (ii) reduce the cash that we have to put into a project, (iii) increase the income, (iv) reduce the expenses, (v) improve the financing – bringing borrowed money to the transaction, (vi) reduce the risk, (vii) improve the investment environment, or (viii) improve the information environment. And we need look at incentives, for which of these, in fact, will this particular incentive do.

Costs and Values: Justification for Incentives

I now briefly discuss about economic costs and economic values. If we think of the economic costs, if I am a property owner or developer, I have to acquire the property – I am going to have an acquisition cost and a construction cost. Once I get the building completed, I am going to have operating costs – the insurance, and the taxes, and the utilities, and the management. In some cases, I am going to have land lease payments I have to pay. I have financing costs – the interest I have to pay to the bank. I might, over time, have to make additional capital improvements. And, when it comes time to sell, I have cost of sale. All of those are economic costs.

On the other side, as the owner of that building, I have the use of the property. I have the occupancy, if I choose, of the property. I can get rents from the property. I might be able to get a non-rent revenue – something like a cell tower on top of the building. The property might appreciate over time, go up in value. And then I get the proceeds at sale.

So that is what a developer is thinking about when he or she looks at a project – what are the economic costs and what are the anticipated economic values? When only economic values are considered, the owner/developer has to bear those costs and also receives the benefits (economic values).

However, heritage buildings also have a lot of non-economic values. For a heritage building, there may be (i) environmental values, (ii) associative values with people or events in history, (iii) political values, (iv) symbolic values, (v) aesthetic values, (vi) educational values, (vii) social values, and (viii) cultural values. All of these are stacked on top of, and in addition to, the economic values. Importantly, if you think about those, the owner of the property gets the economic values, but it is the rest of us, not the property owner, who are the beneficiaries of those other kinds of values.

And if you look at the economic side, certainly the owner is the one who is expected to pick up the economic cost in exchange for his or her economic values. Additionally, there are maintenance costs, efficiency costs, and compliance cost, and particularly opportunity costs that the owner has to pay for, but the rest of us are the beneficiaries. Here, I want to take a quick look at the last one – opportunity cost. For example, let us consider a case in Dubai, a small building, a five or six storey hotel built in the late 1950s or early 1960s, an important urban development stage in the history of the United Arab Emirates. The heritage conservation people say that this is a part of our history, and we will want to maintain it. But, when we ask that property owner, you will have to leave that building there unlike your neighbours on other side, what we are really asking them to give up is the opportunity cost. In fact, they are forgoing the opportunity to build at a much higher density.

Now, if we think about the beneficiaries of heritage conservation, it all starts with (i) a property owner, but also (ii) the tenants in that building, also (iii) workers on the building and in the building, (iv) buildings that are nearby and businesses that are nearby often benefit from that heritage building, (vii) taxing entities who collect property taxes, sales taxes from the building, maybe income taxes from the owner, (ix) the tourism industry particularly benefits, and then (x) public at large. In fact, people who are not even born yet are beneficiaries of heritage conservation.

Thus, what is the policy justification for having incentives? Well, the economic value in the market place is only one of the values of the heritage and the property owner is not the only beneficiary of the conservation. And yet, often, we are expecting the property owner to bear all the cost of conservation. If the cost is fully covered by the value reflected in the market place, we might not have to intervene, but often that is not the case. Often there is this gap between cost and value, and incentive is a legitimate way of saying here is our way to pay for part of the values that, in fact, not the property owner, but the rest of us receive.

Types of Incentives

Many but not all incentives are monetary, and I want to discuss some kinds of incentives.

(i) There is a kind of straight forward one – direct financial assistance. So, a government simply gives a grant, gives money and says here take this money and go restore the building.

(ii) Then there are all kinds of tax-based incentives. I do not know the taxing system in India, but here in the States and in most of Europe there are taxes on property. There are taxes on income, and in various tax structures, you might have either a tax deduction or a tax credit that encourage investment. Sales Tax, that in Europe is called the Value Added Tax. Our fee waivers are all tax-based incentives.

(iii) We can have debt-based incentives. That might be low interest loans, or subordinate loans, or forgivable loans, or loans of unusually long term.

(iv) We can have incentives in the transaction itself. We might donate a property to a group that is going to redevelop it, or have a low sales tax, over have, what is here called a subordinate equity.

(v) We can have regulatory incentives. We might have waivers on the zoning ordinances. We can have a fast-track approval process for heritage buildings. We can grant existing use permits for the use that is currently in the building but not acceptable under current zoning laws. We can issue variances.

(vi) They can have technical assistance incentives, like design assistances, or assistance in the real estate or transaction, or regulatory assistance.

(vii) We can have public investment around the heritage building. That might be in infrastructure. That might be in creating targeted investment zones that encourages people to invest in that area. It could be in the improvements of the public space, or parking, or priorities to lease properties by the government in heritage buildings.

Incentives and the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL)

I am aware that, in India, you are struggling on how to wrap in 'Historic Urban Landscape' (HUL) in all of this. And the HUL is really a landmark change in heritage conservation – how people think about heritage, and vastly more complex than earlier pieces. And as mentioned earlier, it includes economic processes. In fact, there are these tools of historic urban landscape: (i) civic engagement, (ii) knowledge and planning tools, (iv) regulatory systems and (v) financial tools.

Much of what my little firm does is to make policy recommendations to governments on how to create tools, strategies, incentives, and policies to encourage the investment in heritage buildings. And, we have started using those sets of tools from the HUL protocol in our recommendations. What we have done – in addition to the four tools spelt out, we have added a category called 'direct action' for the kind of recommendations that do not easily fit into any those four categories. Finally, we use the HUL framework, and we look at those five tools: civic engagement, knowledge and planning, regulatory systems, financial, and our added category – direct tools, and then think what are the incentives that can fit into these categories. So, we literally use the types of incentives as a matrix against the historic urban landscape (Table. 1) to really conceptualize our recommendations to the government.

Table.1: Using the HUL for Recommendations

Types of Incentives	Civic Engagement	Knowledge & Planning Tools	Regulatory Systems	Financial Tools	Direct Action Tools
Direct				✓	✓
Tax-based			✓	✓	
Debt-based				✓	✓
Transaction				✓	✓
Regulatory		✓	✓		
Technical Assistance	✓	✓			
Public Investment	✓	✓		✓	✓

Conclusion

Finally, I guess the conclusion to all of this is: financing needs to be a part of the heritage equation. I have been in the economic side of heritage for a long time. When I first began, there was great resistance from heritage conservation people – that even to talk about money and heritage is just too *déclassé*, that heritage is too

important even to taint it with the discussion of money. Well, go that way if you want, but that is going to lead to a lot of heritage buildings just being lost. Second, not even the richest governments in the world have the financial resources to conserve all the heritage buildings that merit conserving. So, we have to look at sources beyond just the government. And, third because the only other two sources are the non-profit sector – the third sector, or the private sector, it means we have to consider private capital. And fourth, to attract that capital often means we need to have incentives, and the historic urban landscape is a very useful framework to put this all together.

I am looking forward very much to further questions and discussions, and to learning from all of you about what is happening in your part of the world. Thank you very much for inviting me.

B.6.

Serampore: A shared vision for sustainable heritage conservation and management

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Introduction

The Serampore Initiative founded by the National Museum of Denmark initiated an elementary documentation and survey of the region with an aim to research, spread awareness and revitalize the memory of Serampore, the Indian-Danish trading town on the banks of river Hooghly. The Serampore Initiative with its body of architects, historians, anthropologists and students traced the topography and recorded the narrative of this European settlement in present day West Bengal.

Serampore is a town north of Kolkata at banks of the river Bhagirathi or Hooghly. Over the last few decades it has become increasingly integrated in the conurbation of greater Kolkata. Around two hundred thousand residents live in Serampore Town which also serves as the administrative and court centre for around 1.5 million inhabitants of Serampore Sub-division. The plurality of multi-storeyed buildings, rise in traffic congestions, evolving modern streetscapes and disappearing evidences of its history, narrate the usual phenomenon of urbanization in the region. However, in the recent past Serampore has earned itself a sobriquet, the 'Danish Settlement'. This transformation excited considerable curiosity in domestic and international tourists. The deserted riverfront now experiences the assemblage of locals and visitors. The city is also being redefined by its own people. So, what motivated and catalyzed this process that garnered prominence to its historical relevance, an outlook engulfed by urbanization and modernization? The paper describes the organization, manoeuvring mechanisms and financial strategies of the recent initiatives to restore and upgrade the historic core of Serampore.

Historical Background

In medieval times, Bengal was acclaimed for its mercantile products and attracted merchants from foreign nations to its shore. Hooghly River's west bank was a global trade centre for merchants from Asia and the Middle East. During the Mughal Era European merchants, including the Danish, also arrived to trade with Bengal. From their first settlement Tranquebar (1620-1845) in Tamil Nadu, the Danes landed in Orissa and Bengal. Dannemarksnagore, the first Danish trade post at Hooghly River was located at Chandannagore, but only existed from 1698 to 1714. The Danish Asiatic Company set up its trading post at Serampore in the year 1755 by formally seeking permission, or *firman* (a grant or permit) to trade from the Mughal Nawab, Ali Vardi Khan. In its short reign of ninety years, Serampore, with the Danish name Fredericksnagore, grew into a bustling town. The Danish population of traders and administrators was never above hundred, and often much less. But Danish-ruled Serampore served as a safe-haven for Europeans debtors and criminals from Calcutta (now Kolkata) who built luxurious mansions with lush gardens along the river front. The Danes amassed massive wealth from the abundance of Bengal, especially by smuggling British cargo to Europe. The most successful Danish traders, like Duntzfelt and de Coninck returned prosperously and built mansions to their name back in Denmark. Also, adding splendour to Serampore were the palatial houses of Bengali *zamindars*

(feudal landlords) who built their fortunes on trade with the Danes and other Europeans. Gradually, Serampore became known as the best-built and best-kept European town in India. With the arrival and acceptance of William Carey and the Baptist mission, Danish Serampore also became a centre for publishing, education and research, bringing about reforms in learning and mass communication. This escalated development resulted in the founding of the renowned Serampore Press which printed books and newspapers in around 40 Asian languages, many of which had never been typeset before. The earliest books and newspapers in Bengali were published from Serampore. It was followed by the establishment of Serampore College, and other institutions for education, including girls' schools. However, with the onset of the French-British wars, fading trading opportunities and economic recession led to the decline in Danish possession of Serampore. In 1845, the Danish settlements in India were sold to the British Company which steadily strengthened its rule over India.

The Serampore Initiative was conceived in 2008, under the Department of Modern History and World Cultures of the National Museum of Denmark (henceforth the NMD). It carried out extensive field work in 2008 and 2009. With an aim to enhance knowledge on the Indo-Danish history of Serampore and in the absence of a comprehensive list of heritage sites in the area, the initiative endeavoured to identify and describe the physical remains of the town. Through archival records, available photographs, paintings and maps, the project team added new insight into the Danish presence in Bengal. In the preliminary survey, heritage buildings and areas were documented (Rastén and Aalund, 2010). Seven public structures were proposed for restoration and three urban areas for upgrading. These structures were the Danish Government House from the 1770s, the two Danish gate buildings to the historic government compound, St. Olav's Church (1805), the river inn known as the Denmark Tavern (1786), a former British land registration building, and a cast iron gate and staircase at Serampore College, originally gifted by the Danish King Frederick VI in 1827. The areas proposed for upgrading were all part of the Danish-planned town core established in the 1750s, comprising the central riverfront area, the town square in front of the church and the Danish government compound which continues to serve as Serampore's Sub-divisional and Court compound. Other important European buildings, still in use, include the Catholic Church (1770s), the prison, Serampore College (1818) and several residential houses and school buildings. The Danish-planned commercial and administrative centre is surrounded by neighbourhoods with significant vernacular architecture, especially the palatial *thakurbaris* (temples) and *rajbaris* (royal mansions) of the Roy's, Goswami's and Dey's who all traded and collaborated with the Danish company. Most of these palatial houses are however in a dilapidated condition. Also to be mentioned are the first and second Radha Ballav Temple, the Mahesh Jagannath Temple, the Dol Mandir, the Madhanmohan Jiu Temple as well as several old mosques and Sufi shrines. Many of these important buildings are closely surrounded by the 5 or, 6 storey apartment blocks that dominate present day townscape.

Strategy for a Shared Vision

During the survey period, the NMD project team consulted local citizens and collaborated with local government bodies on state, district and municipal level, which led to an exchange of suggestions on the proposed restoration of the heritage buildings. It also became evident that in developing countries, which are burdened with the prospect of plentiful heritage, conserving heritage sites may often be seen as a liability, especially in a situation of rapid urban development. Even with the awareness about the benefits that may accrue due to adequate heritage management, protecting heritage sites of particular national or international importance gains momentum while others are considered auxiliary and pushed towards dereliction. Moreover, over time Serampore faced gradual transformation in its historic townscape. The municipality's Draft Development Plan for Serampore 2005 did integrate an agenda for heritage restoration and conservation, improvement of the river-front and increasing green cover with its urban regeneration policies, but these plans had not been brought to implementation. What started as simple documentation by the Serampore Initiative, soon transformed into a full-fledged long term program to re-install the lost heritage identity to the historic town of Serampore.

A Pragmatic Approach

Any heritage conservation project conventionally commences with a masterplan, highlighting the zones to be legally specified, the rules to implement the same, the heritage structures requiring legal status and a scheme for conservation. The cumbersome legal process of precinct delineation soon proved impossible to accomplish, given the general situation of rapid development of residential as well as administrative buildings in

Serampore, which has increasingly become a suburban town for daily commuters to Kolkata. The circumstances demanded instantaneous action, support from the local stakeholders and an expedient approach. The masterplan was thereby postponed to a later stage and creation of tangible results became a priority (Wolff, 2021).

Actual demonstration projects allow local stakeholders (government representatives as well as residents) to visualize in real life what the experts can demarcate in a plan proposal. Since experts are simply facilitators, assertive laws, although necessary, may not augment the value of the heritage. The mission of the project was therefore to conserve the significant heritage buildings in the historic town core in order for the locals to realize the potential of their environment and invigorate in them the sense of association with 'their' local heritage.

Creating a Success Story

The project was thereby designed to set a precedence, for the local authorities and the people to comprehend the potential of the area, not only from the perspective of Indo-Danish history, but also from the perspective of urban liveability, as an open and inclusive space for recreation, government administration and small scale businesses. To realize how attractive the crowded and dilapidated area could indeed become, the NMD team initiated its work with the restoration of St. Olav's Church (Fig.1) to serve as a demonstration project. It was chosen as the first on-site project acknowledging the fact that the church served as the focal point of the main east-west axis of the town's historic core. The church had been closed down in 2010 due to a collapsed roof, after being in continuous use since its inauguration in 1805. The restoration of St. Olav's Church was carried out on behalf of the Calcutta Diocesan Trust Association (Church of North India), led by a Kolkata-based architect and implemented by a contractor specialised in heritage work, in continuous dialogue with the Danish conservation architect advisor of the NMD. The endeavour received UNESCO's recognition through the Asia-Pacific Award of Distinction in 2016, clearly setting a benchmark for excellence in restoration and an aspiration for the locals. The principal objective of the project was soon realized with massive media attention and public appreciation. The successful restoration of the church created the contrasting impression of 'what was' and 'what could be'. This individual venture, the success story instilled pride from recognizing the historic significance of Serampore, and gave the first impression of how attractive the area could become.

Fig.1. (Left) St. Olav's Church, restored; (Right Top) Citizen's view of the restored heritage precinct; (Right Bottom) The restored riverfront is now a recreational area frequented by locals.

The Contagion Effect

In the next phase, NMD initiated the restoration of the lodge the Denmark Tavern (1786) at the riverfront (Fig.1), as well as the northern gateway and the southern gateway to the administrative compound. The work was led by a Kolkata-based architect and took place in partnership with INTACH. Government of West Bengal covered all service installations and furniture of the Denmark Tavern. Restoration of the Danish Government House (1776) was undertaken by the state government itself. The work was also led by a Kolkata-based

architect in dialogue with NMD's architect advisor. The Governor's House, the Denmark Tavern along with the gateways defines the north-south axis of the historic and present-day administrative seat. Restoration of a British administrative building on the administrative compound, known as "the Red Building" was also included in the NMD project. Different branches of the state government extended extensive support to the different conservation projects in this phase. They proactively upgraded the riverfront, shifted the old bus terminus from the church compound to eliminate traffic congestion in the historic centre and two modern storage buildings were demolished and a planned four-storey building was translocated to enable revitalization of the administrative compound. These local initiatives were a consequence of the completed restoration work, which helped the stakeholders visualize the transformation of the heritage zone and associate themselves with it.

Along with the restoration work, the academic institutions of planning and architecture (CEPT University, Ahmedabad; IIEST, Shibpur; Copenhagen School of Architecture) also used Serampore as a case for studying and teaching.

The Financial Stimulus

Retrospectively, the entire restoration enterprise progressed in phases. The crucial phase of any undertaking is capital-sourcing at the inception stage. The inceptive funds were introduced by the philanthropic partner of NMD in Denmark, Realdania, which strives to improve the built environment to eventually enhance the quality of living. With an estimated total budget of 1.5 million dollars, Realdania contributed approximately 75% of it, while the rest was received from the Danish Ministry of Culture and through various private donations from Denmark. Throughout the project period, Realdania has been deeply involved with the planning of the seven larger and smaller heritage projects in Serampore. Post restoration of the church, proceeding heritage projects were gradually garnering finances from the state government's budget. It is interesting to note, how the funds allocated to this endeavour formed a part of the local budget, but it only awaited an external stimulus and an unambiguous foresight.

The Local Budget

Government of West Bengal funded the restoration of the Danish Governor's House, a project which NMD co-advised and where currently the Sub-Divisional Culture and Information office has been shifted.

Service installations and furniture for the Denmark Tavern was financed by the Tourism Department of West Bengal up to INR 15 million, while restoration of the building was covered by Realdania.

Upgrading of the riverfront, town square and surrounding streets were financed by various departments of the state government, and implemented by the municipality.

Sustainable Economic Viability

A restored, beautiful heritage building is not the denouement of any conservation journey. To ensure that time and apathy does not consume it into its previous ruinous state is a goal that needs to be achieved over the next generations. Economically sustainable adaptive reuse of the heritage buildings is a way forward to enable adequate and compatible use and helps in earning necessary revenue to meet the maintenance expenditure. With this end in view 'museumification' of restored buildings were avoided and more effective uses were reflected on. The Danish Governor's House now serves as an official space with halls that may be purposed for revenue generating activities like events and exhibitions. The compound space is still open for public use of recreation and informal small-scale businesses. The Red Building on the administrative compound has been leased to a local restaurant entrepreneur to tap the local market and extend services to the offices on the compound. The restored Denmark Tavern has been leased out to The Park Group, providing high-end accommodation with restaurant and café run by Flury's. Serampore, is strategically located at an hour's distance from the metropolitan city of Kolkata, making it a suitable destination for day travel, weekend stays and a favourable tourist destination for foreign travellers.

Keeping in mind the aim of the project, the local vendors and tea-stall owners have not been cleansed from the area to provide a posh feel to the restored site. Rather, they have been repositioned post restoration on the riverfront which now has higher footfalls warranting higher income opportunities.

Conclusion

Through a bottoms-up approach of action on ground to building a master plan, the endeavour supported the community and the government to create a shared vision of the historic settlement. Bringing into cognizance three distinct precincts, NMD commenced restoration of the historic precinct, where the Danish first settled and developed the place as their administrative and trade hub close to the river. Instead of delineating zones through legislation, St. Olav's Church was restored as a precedence. The initiative and the completed outcome stimulated the government to actively engage in restoring the Denmark Tavern and the Danish Governor's House and to upgrade the surrounding public areas, thus revitalizing the area without compromising its historical ambiance, to the benefit of citizens as well as visitors.

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B.7.

Reactivating local economy through heritage precincts: Case of Azimganj, Murshidabad

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Introduction

The growing significance of an integrated approach to tourism and local engagement cannot be ruled out from effective heritage management practice today. Several initiatives to reactivate the local economy using heritage precincts and heritage assets as a pivot have taken root in India in the last decade. One such concerted effort, discussed in this paper, was undertaken in Azimganj — a northern suburb of Murshidabad — the former Nawabi era capital of Bengal. Murshidabad Heritage Development Society (MHDS), formed in 2010, launched this initiative with the author as consultant urban conservationist — to document and draw up a urban conservation plan — taken forward under the stewardship of its community members.

Azimganj: Historical Evolution, Significance and Community

The birth of new settlements along the Bhagirathi river began in early 18th century undivided Bengal with the shifting of the capital city to Murshidabad from Dhaka in present-day Bangladesh in 1704 AD. Bengal saw its heyday as the richest Sultanate of the Mughal Empire, as a financial and cultural epicentre — and eyed by the British in subsequent years. Claiming victory in the Battle of Plassey in 1757, by defeating Nawab Siraj-ud-Daulah through collusion and conspiracy, the British transferred the capital to Calcutta (now Kolkata).

Having migrated from Bikaner region of Rajasthan in the 18th and early 19th centuries, to capitalize on Murshidabad's booming economy under the Nawabs — and serve as financiers, merchants and bankers — the twin towns of Jiaganj-Azimganj grew as Jain strongholds for business and habitation respectively. From a humble settlement of a handful of first generation Jain migrants, along the River Bhagirathi and bordering several rustic hamlets, it rapidly yet organically evolved to form Jainpatti - an imposing neighbourhood of an influential and powerful community. Temples, originally meant to serve the community's religious and communal needs, soon developed in scale and number to transform the twin towns into a significant Jain pilgrimage centre. Azimganj thrived as the stronghold of the Jain community in Bengal much beyond the Nawabi and colonial periods.

Believed to have contributed 5% of world GDP in the early 18th century, Murshidabad's geographic limits saw 20 kilometres of ribbon-development along the river interspersed by natural and water features from north to south. The area could be broadly divided into 3 quarters (Fig.1).

1. The royal court as the nucleus and administrative epicentre of Murshidabad settled around the Lalbaug and Motijheel area.
2. Northern suburbs of Azimganj and Jiaganj were settled by the Jain community who were associated with the court.
3. Southern suburbs such as Saidabad and Cossimbazar which were settled by Armenian traders, the Dutch, the English and the French — all having trade and factories located here.
4. Today, Berhampore, which is located further south, acts as the municipal and administrative base of the district.
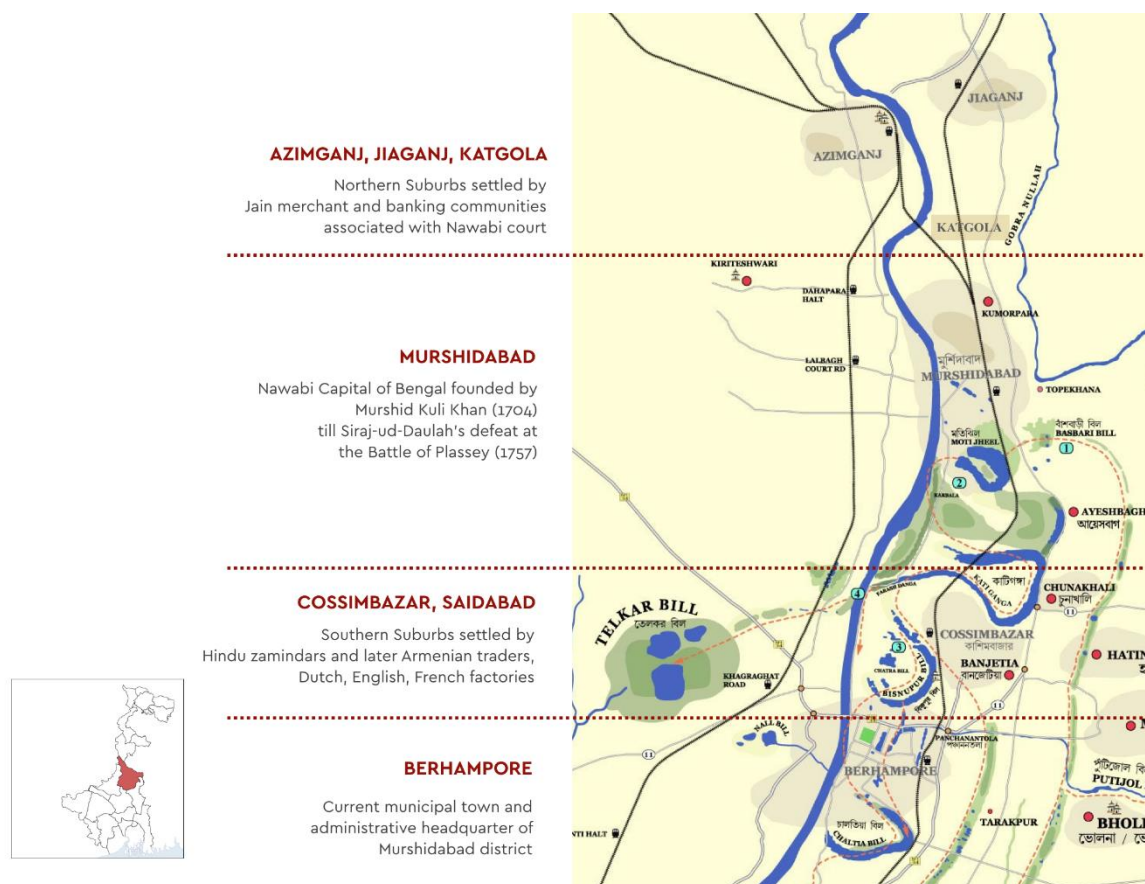
Fig. 1: Murshidabad and its suburbs today. Courtesy: Modified by Kamalika Bose based on open source Map of Murshidabad: https://murshidabad.net/news/news-id-8.htm

This birthed a diverse range of heritage assets across Murshidabad region — a shared heritage resultant of migration, communities and cultural confluence, syncretism of religious traditions and a rich cultural ecosystem. Azimganj therefore reflects a unique synthesis of Rajasthani, Nawabi and European traditions of Bengal — not only through architecture and built expressions, but also an amalgamation through cuisine, lifestyle, cultural practices that integrated diverse influences in harmonious ways (Fig.2). Azimganj's Jainpatti on the Bhagirathi's western bank emerged as the residential sector of the Sheherwali Jains, while its twin town Jiaganj on the eastern bank, remained the commercial quarter for daily business, education and institutional growth. The twin towns also formed an important Jain pilgrimage centre with 14 sprawling Jain temples concentrated within a square kilometre.

Twentieth Century Crises, Challenges, and First Actions

Descendants of the original first families of Jainpatti relocated to Calcutta over the 1970s and 80s following multiple episodes of political turmoil followed by the onset of Naxalism in Bengal. Some sprawling *kothis* (mansions) were dismantled brick-by-brick and reused as refugee rehabilitation in the surrounding villages after the 1971 Bangladesh War. Abolishment of the *zamindari* system (the system of landholding and revenue collection by feudal landlords) further reduced stately residences of Azimganj's Jainpatti to a pale reflection of their former selves. Despite diminished land-holdings and swaying fortunes their entrepreneurial acumen helped successfully diversify into other businesses and flourish in Calcutta instead.

Over time, Azimganj's residential fabric was interspersed with newer local communities, bringing in a different set of built forms and micro-economies. Not being its natural custodians, they were ambivalent to the Jain heritage of the precinct. Owing to the geographic expanse of Murshidabad today and the poor state of conservation of several Nawabi era monuments and sites — building a coherent linkage to the royal centre and southern suburbs had weakened.

Azimganj had become delinked from the contemporary narrative and economy of Murshidabad today which had shifted to the newer administrative centre of Berhampore. However, the *kothis* of the affluent Oswal Jain

families, along with educational and philanthropic institutions, had created a settlement that continued to echo a community-driven commitment and involvement with the place. With weekend visits by owners and permanently posted care-takers at ancestral properties — the remote upkeep, management and continuity of Azimganj's abundant built heritage posed a serious challenge. Temples retained their religious significance with active worship occurring on a daily basis, but limited resources and low pilgrim footfalls failed to sustain tourism for the town. Meagre pilgrim and visitor amenities clearly indicated to a struggling town that had lost its glory and place in public memory. The locals reminisce about the bygone history, lifestyle and aura of the once flourishing town. However, they seemed unclear about its future — especially that of Jainpatti's built heritage.

Dudhoria Rajbari on the riverfront

Grand feast with royal Sheherwali meal

A lavish family wedding in Azimganj
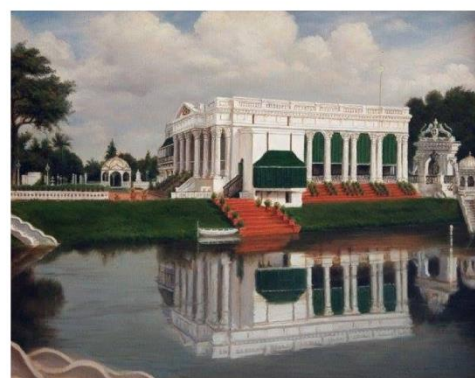
Rose Villa of Nowlakhas (now collapsed)

Fig.2: Archival photos of Azimganj in the 19th and 20th centuries. Courtesy: Collection of Kamalika Bose, received from Murshidabad Heritage Development Society (MHDS)

In the absence of formal economic tools, incentives, or returns, how and why would private property owners be enthused or motivated to save their inheritance merely on sentimental or legacy grounds? Working with the MHDS to make actionable plans for a heritage-led revival and resurgence of this region stemmed from generating a holistic conservation strategy plan. Identifying heritage values within the tangible and intangible aspects of the settlement with a key focus on viability, revenue-generation and tapping into tourism potential as a future roadmap.

Almost total absence of coherent architectural records and documentation of the Jainpatti and its significant historic buildings became the primary concern in the process. The author led a collaboration with the CEPT Winter School 2015, for the first round of detailed architectural survey and documentation, outcomes of which were exhibited at multiple places including the Indian Museum, Kolkata — as awareness and advocacy.

Identifying Heritage Precincts as Opportunities for Tourism

Five different heritage zones were identified, each with a distinct significance, salience and economic potential. Together, these clusters held great potential to trigger a holistic plan for action (Fig.3).

Fig.3: Heritage Zones of Jainpatti, Azimganj. Courtesy: Kamalika Bose, CEPT Winter School 2015 & MHDS

Zone 1: Transit Core — access, context and relationship to Azimganj and the river Bhagirathi.

Arrivals and connection to the river, the transit system; exploring existing linkages including those which may have weakened or lost but could be revived. An existing Azimganj City railway station with not enough trains scheduled. The ferry *ghat* (a broad flight of steps that is situated on riverbank / tanks and that provides access to the water) with bamboo barges as the most efficient and cost-effective facility, presence of derelict *dharamshalas* (buildings devoted to religious or charitable purposes serving as rest houses for travellers and pilgrims) and public amenities — offer an existing ecosystem for transit, along with the presence of the local *bazaar* (market).

Zone 2: Religious Core —14 historic Jain temples in the twin towns with allied local economics.

Could be viewed as independent restoration projects while tying into the existing pilgrim potential while creating necessary new amenities. The syncretism in temple architecture which borrowed freely from Rajasthani, Nawabi, European and Bengali styles gave rise to a hybrid typology which was unique to this region and also within the repertoire of Jain temple architecture nationally. This was a great potential to unlock from a tourism perspective.

Zone 3: Residential Core —7 grand *kothis* creating an ecosystem of reuse and mutual benefit.

An untapped zone and privately owned by Jain families who now lived in Kolkata. As multi-courtyard residences with climate control devices of deep *verandahs* (roofed, open-air galleries or porches), louvered windows they echoed the mansion typology of 19th century Bengal. Functionally reflecting the times through *zenana-mardana* (the zenana are the inner apartments of a house in which the women of the family live; the outer apartments for guests and men are called the mardana) delineation, *gaddis* (place of traditional business for Marwari community) and *baithaks* (lounge areas with floor based sitting) with floor-based furniture and neo-classical facades and decorative interiors — their scale, opulence the spaces were ideal for reuse as hospitality and tourism facilities.

Zone 4: Riverfront — significant historic buildings front the river to create opportunities for reuse, tourism and in turn activating the Bhagirathi river, its *ghats* and natural edge.

Zone 5: Peripheries — as the Jainpatti merges with the surrounding rural landscape.

It reveals its cultural practices, economies and habitats — so what could be a way to make this transition symbiotic and seamless and not see Jainpatti as an island within this larger context? An ecosystem with intangible values associated with weaving and silk cultivation and used the river for trade and transportation.

Stakeholder Engagement: Mobilizing Action, Resources, & Outcomes

In the complete absence of public sector involvement, it was critical for stakeholder mobilization and engagement to take place for all private property owners. There was scepticism within the community as well —viewing their former homes in Azimganj as a white elephant — it was a key step for self-organization and collective action. Valorizing and resignifying their legacy and heritage became the first priority. This entailed:

1. Community Consultation meetings based on the documentation findings and ideas — with Sheherwali Jain community members of Murshidabad Heritage Development Society.
2. Exhibitions displayed for interest and awareness building among stakeholders and general public at Indian Museum, Kolkata 2016, and Murshidabad Heritage Festival 2017—2018.
3. Two international seminars in 2017 and 2018 on recognizing the potential of "Heritage as an Asset," sharing best practices and generating discourse on the way forward. This allowed bringing in the best minds in conservation and sustainable tourism practice, create a viable feedback loop and bring back on the grid — a place that had off the radar.

Creating an Ecosystem for Heritage-led Economic Drivers

The outcome was to create an ecosystem for heritage-led economic drivers, where through a series of local actions from within the community — one could leverage heritage assets in Azimganj and its immediate surroundings. These strategies were further clustered in three buckets:

1. Heritage entrepreneurship through owners of private residence — a quality inherent to this community. Unlocking the entrepreneurial spirit and securing funding for adaptive reuse for a private *kothi* — as a pilot project that served as a role model and triggers future actions.
2. Sense of trusteeship for the restoration of 14 historic Jain temples — while building additional new amenities for extending the stay of religious pilgrims, instigating them to explore non-religious heritage sites of Murshidabad as well?
3. Craftsmanship and intangible heritage of the area that creates inclusive engagement beyond the Jain community itself — leveraging the cultural heritage of the region and using local crafts.

Local actions, over a period of time, would begin to unlock **sectoral linkages** where:

1. The nearby Nawabi era sites, colonial era sites and the other former *zamindars* and *rajbaris* (mansions or palaces built as residences for the kings) come into the integrated tourism fold for the area.
2. Create alliances for symbiotic opportunities — a network of heritage property owners — who systematically open up their properties to guests through partial conversion hospitality use.
3. Tourism circuit with 2-3 day itineraries that link these sites and activities into a holistic offering of tangible and intangible heritage of Murshidabad.

These local action were meant to have larger **regional impacts**, and trigger a wider economic benefit through inclusive and participatory community-driven conservation mechanisms:

1. Bring revenue for private homeowners, which could be ploughed back into the conservation process of more historic buildings.
2. Boost local livelihoods of current residents of Azimganj and those from neighbouring villages. Heritage tourism would link into the religious tourism circuit where employment generation to benefit the local economy while enhancing regional pride and a sense of identity.
3. Foster artistic collaborations and capacity building for Murshidabad's intangible heritage — making products and practices more globally appealing with market access (Fig.4).

Outputs and Successes

The optimistic and ambitious plan found support and resources from within the MHDS fraternity. It strongly demonstrates that when creators become the custodians, it begins to incubate an ecosystem of partners and local actors that can positively and sustainably safeguard heritage.

1. Within a year of the architectural documentation and advocacy programs — the initiative to convert Bari Kothi into Murshidabad's first heritage hotel had been undertaken by its owners — a great leap of faith.
2. This has also driven other families in the area, like the Cossimbazar Rajbari, to partly convert their ancestral mansion into a bed and breakfast.
3. In 2016, Silk River — a community-oriented arts residency project by Kinetika UK and British Council India, catalyzed artistic collaborations in Azimganj. The project connected riverine communities living along the Hooghly and the Thames to share their stories and celebrate river heritage. It gave impetus and recognition to the intangible heritage and its creators.
4. Efforts to revive culinary heritage of Sheherwali Jains — a unique royal vegetarian cuisine — through publications, pop ups, food festivals and media outreach by the MHDS further centre-staged Azimgang in all its glory.
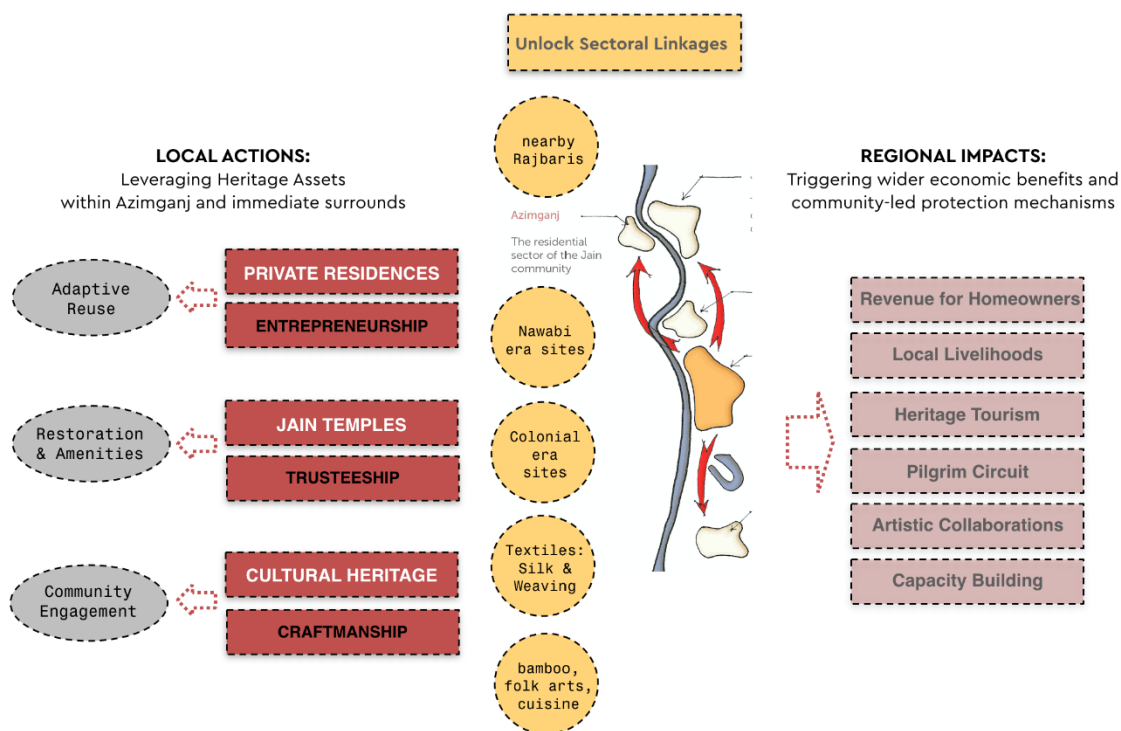
Fig.4: Creating an Ecosystem for Heritage-led Economic Drivers

In conclusion, a multi-pronged and polyvalent approach to urban conservation in Azimganj has yielded results at multiple scales and sectors across Murshidabad's heritage areas. Over the last few years more activities have also found government support, funding and recognition to be scaled up in relevant ways. When urban conservation addresses indices of liveability, yet remains rooted to the place, people and context — it can create a paradigm shift. The role of heritage professional is critical here — to work with educated and enlightened clients and community groups — to galvanize a process where a tourism-based approach becomes holistic and sustainable. It also creates an pioneering example of how an influential community's change of attitude towards their own heritage — from apathy to self-organization and pride — can create effective impact at local, sectoral and regional levels; thereby bringing forgotten places back to life.

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B.8.

Panel Discussion: Day 2

Bente Wolff, Darshan Dudhoria, Donovan Rypkema, Haimanti Banerji, Kamalika Bose, Rajesh Sen, Sushil Mohta

Moderator: Arjun Mukerji

On day 2, the focus was on local scenario in the context of Heritage Economics, Legal Tools, and Management Mechanisms for Historic Precincts and Areas. In this session, the discussants responded to various questions, often citing specific examples, which demonstrated how viable solutions and positive outcome could be achieved through sensible planning and proper management.

Moderator

For today's panel discussion, we have four eminent guests Mr Darshan Dudhoria, Dr Haimanti Banerji, Mr Rajesh Sen, and Mr Sushil Mohta. They will be joining our speakers of this session. A warm welcome to you all.

Following the case study on Azimganj presented by Kamalika, I would like to start today's discussion with Darshan who has been instrumental in preserving the Bari Kothi at Azimganj, through its reuse as a heritage hotel. Darshan, what convinced you, that this made economic sense, rather than redeveloping the property? More importantly, what are the management mechanisms that ensured the viability of Bari Kothi, the mechanisms that are being adopted by the Heritage Development Society, which may further contribute to the historic preservation in general, in the context of Azimganj? Over to you Darshan.

Darshan Dudhoria

Today, Kamalika's presentation on Azimganj, Murshidabad has helped in enhancing awareness about the place amongst those present here. However, let me address your question about what made economic sense in the project. Incidentally, I asked the same question to my 91-year-old grandmother over breakfast today, who had been living in Bari Kothi, and she replied that why are we looking at money. Moreover, the story becomes extremely relevant for us because economic sense needs to be found in a place where there is lack of economic activity. Had we done this project in Kolkata, it would be a wholly different affair. However, we are in Murshidabad, where there is almost negligible economic activity. Hence, the utter madness regarding the planning of the economic activities. Ironically, when we started the project six, or seven years back, we were unsure about it and hence named it 'Project Priceless', and now we can better comprehend the appropriateness of the name. Nevertheless, without delving into numbers, excel sheets, or spreadsheets, let me highlight that while starting the project we had a mind map about restoring the place, while making the entire process self-sustaining.

Particularly, in the place that we were in, we realized that without using tourism as one of the anchors, our project would fall flat. Why did we come with tourism? What I am trying to get at here is that with every historic structure, precinct, or area, we need to identify the assets of the location and the particular structures, while we try to convert it to a monument, or an accommodation. I shall elaborate on what Kamalika already said about Mushidabad, from a wider perspective of Bengal. I think Bengal is very promising and waiting to be discovered as a tourist destination since it has many new things to offer. Here, the old 'Rajbaris' (royal mansions, in this case it indicates royal families) are presently looking at their heritage as an asset rather than a liability. Nevertheless, it is also important to look at the numbers, and we were pretty sure that if we had to invest money towards restoring the place, we would have to sell our rooms at a particular price.

When you figure that these are the price points at which you need to sell, you can calculate through a general standard assumption of what your occupancy needs to be. And, once you figure that out, what you try to get at is, what experience? How do you value the amount that you would be charging your guests? And that's where the role of the intangible and tangible heritage comes in. Kamalika was kind enough to show what we have done. I would like to highlight the second point. You used very big keywords like, management mechanics. So when you talk about management mechanics, all of the intangibles, where does the revenue come from? It actually comes from tapping into that intangible heritage. The revenue streams get created from there. Presently, we are the only ones in the region. We have to do everything from the marketing, attend festivals across the world, build travel circuits in Bengal, and organizing spiritual tours in Bengal linking Shantiniketan, Mayapur, and Murshidabad. The end goal is to make it into a destination, so that people like Mr. Mohta would come in, and say, "Hey, this is a fantastic destination. Let us take this heritage asset, convert it into a beautiful hotel, or a museum." And, that is the economic sense in tapping into the heritage space. For us, it made absolutely no sense, because we were the first ones and no numbers justified that.

Finally, very briefly, let me highlight where we struggled the most in terms of management mechanics. We decided that instead of the hotel management trained people, we had to involve the local community to make the experience of staying here more authentic. We realized that it is important to focus on the quality of experience that a tourist would get while staying here. Our guests, who are primarily ninety-five percent being international tourists, would come in to Bari Kothi, and want to spend their time with our boys and girls, who are their hosts. They would like to go to their houses, possibly eat a meal over there. And, that to me is finding the economic sense in heritage and management mechanics. MHDS, Murshidabad Heritage Development Society becomes a very important platform to create awareness. I think, the first step towards creating any form of movement in the heritage space is to create that awareness, and such bodies as Murshidabad Heritage Development Society are useful. Moreover, the festivals and activities that we do throughout the year, like the mango festival, where we have one hundred eight different mangoes are also beneficial.

Thereby, we create movement in heritage space. I am sharing my screen to show you a few visuals of what we have done with Bari Kothi. Maybe in a few years' time, I would love to have ten different hotels, maybe 200 rooms, make it a destination where people are not thinking about Rajasthan, or South India, rather they directly come to Bengal, spend those 11 nights here and go back. That is my dream too, for the heritage of Bengal, and particularly, Murshidabad. Visuals show the condition of structures both before and after the restoration, clearly depicting the stage in which we had it and about our journey. Nature of structures has not been altered. We have tried to keep it as genuine as possible. The theme is maintained to be the same and we have only used the local community. However, as we did not have the skilled personnel, it has been a Herculean task. For example, in Halwai Khana, which has a central courtyard, we have to break open the floor because the place was wholly damp and we had to let the light enter. We got featured in National Geographic for this particular central courtyard and our restoration efforts. We are very proud about this particular block. The Naubat Khana is literally opposite. From the window, one can see the Naubat Khana there. So we have dedicated this space in Naubat Khana which was used as a storage space before, as a Mughal Restaurant celebrating the Mughal elements in our Sheherwali cuisine to cater to someone who wants a mix of everything that was going on in the world back then. All the houses in that region are all mixed architectural forms. Neighbouring structures, like Singhi Kothi, one of my favourites, are beautiful. Marble Palace, is on the left. And the fact remains, if we did not restore, the walls would be caving in, and everything would be destroyed and locked down. Presently, the ground has been rented out to a bank and is caught in a family dispute. Kathgola Palace which has been beautifully restored runs as a museum. Thus, they have created extraordinary employment opportunities for themselves. I am most proud of creating such a self-sustaining ecosystem. This to me is being able to promoting a destination as heritage tourism. Our 'Noukas', or indigenous boats, are not the fancy ones as in South India, or anywhere in any other parts of India, rather the original Bengal 'Noukas', we have been able to create experiences of those boat rides. Thank you.

Moderator

My next question would be to Rajesh. The Zs' precinct at Kolkata employs reuse that is not entirely reliant on tourism. The tourism model worked for Darshan, but yours is a combination of various arts and community. So, could you tell us a bit about the project, and what convinced you that it was required, or that, it would work?

Rajesh Sen

I am not sure if I know whether it will work, because the financial outflows have been huge, but I was in a situation where I had to do this. I came back to Kolkata and, I needed to do something that I would enjoy. Heritage, history, and having nice things around me has always interested me. So, when I found this house through a common friend and started working on it, it took me a year to restore. Meanwhile, I got more ideas about what I could do with this house.

Importantly, when we restored it, we went back to what it would have been when it was built. So, we have not really touched anything in the house, flooring, walls, ceilings, woodwork, everything remains the same. Rather, we created something that could sustain it, not for anything else, but, as an example to other people as well, because there is nothing special about this house, and it is a common south Kolkata middle class house, or, a townhouse. It could have been demolished, if the owner wanted, because that is one of the biggest reasons houses get demolished. And, there is no law which can stop that. So, this was really something which we wanted to tell people, that this is an economically, financially viable model and you can do this to restore your own houses. Moreover, it is something that the next generation must understand: we are what we are because of what we have been through, the homes we have lived in, the homes we have seen our grandparents and parents live in, and the stories we hear about them. We can relate all these stories to make them understand the importance of keeping our old homes, our own spaces, to understand where we have come from. And, that was precisely what I was thinking while I restored this house

As I said earlier, old homes can also be used for tourism at one point of time. So, we have four different areas visually demarcated in this little space of about eighteen hundred to two thousand square feet, over three floors: homestay, café, museum shop, and an art gallery. I wanted to be different, and I am glad that it has been well-received. The quality of life of people in this city can improve if they do the same.

If you see the house, you are likely to overlook it as there is nothing special about it. Like any other house in the neighbourhood, it is an Art Deco house built in 1930 in South Kolkata which was influenced by Art Deco, for instance it has rounded edges instead of square ones. We simply cleaned and painted the walls and windows. Everything remains the same: adapted floors, terrazzo floors, light fittings, windows, staircase and fan. We have used the furniture in the museum shop, the cupboards belong to the house, and added lights to convert it into showcases. Similarly, in the art gallery, we have added lights and cleaned up the place. And, yet, it created a unique space that people found beautiful, even though it remains the same house. I mean, any house could turn beautiful if you clean up and use your spaces intelligently. Thus, in terms of the larger context, such restoration of old houses in Kolkata also benefits its particular locality or, precincts, colloquially known as 'para'.

Moderator

I think I will come back to that: I will come back to the involvement of the government – what you request, later. Thank you so much for sharing the precinct experience with us.

Rajesh Sen

In case you're wondering what the 'Zs' in 'Zs' Precinct' is, it is named after my twin daughters.

Moderator

So, that's why – Zara's and Zoya's! Thank you! Now, my next question would be to Bente. So, we looked at two examples here, and if you think of them as tourism-driven reuse and community-driven reuse – as two alternative approaches, which is the approach which was recommended for Serampore, or if there is a combination, how do you see Serampore going ahead?

Bente Wolff

There was a lot of hope for international tourism in Serampore. However, such hopes often lead to disappointment: for instance, if you start training guides from the start, and no tourists come anyway, then people get disappointed. Being in an urban setting like Serampore, people are familiar with a modern cafe culture, and restaurant culture. Here, the local market can be viable. People from Kolkata can go to eat at the Denmark Tavern in Serampore, or, spend the night there and make a weekend trip. And, they do that. So, there

is a potential for developing a huge local market. People do not have enough long holidays to go to far–off places, but they can make a day trip or, a weekend trip. If you revitalize these urban areas and make this lovely local scene, it will also attract long-distance tourists. The local staff is part of the experience for the foreign tourists and so are the street vendors and local guests in restaurants. I am sure that the tourists will like the area if it there is a vibrant local life. That is why I like going to Paris, or Berlin, to be part of the local life there. I would hate if Paris, or Berlin are only places for tourists, rather I would prefer to meet the locals. I would certainly like to see that in India as well. So, I am pretty sure that tourists will like Serampore, when it has been restored and upgraded. However, international tourists will never become the main economic base for the heritage buildings. The point is to make the space nice for the residents and local visitors. Foreign tourists can supplement to the economy of the restored buildings, but they cannot bear it on their own.

Another problem in Serampore is that most of the private *zamindar rajbaris* (royal mansions of local feudal lords) are now surrounded by high rise buildings. So, it is going to be really difficult to develop the old palaces for tourists. I think, one should look into other options if they are to survive. The Indian palaces are half the history. The European heritage buildings history are only one side of history. The beautiful thing about the Hugli, or the Bhaghirathi area, is that you have the heritage buildings of both the European and the Indian elite. You do not have that in Malacca in the same way. In fact, you do not have that anywhere else in the world. Only in this region called "Europe on the Ganges", you have both sides of the colonial trade relation: the wealthy Indian houses and the European houses. Hence, something should be done to preserve and use these palaces. The only thing I can see is that they could be used by local businesses, perhaps for architect's studios, interior decorators, or, advertising companies. They could rent the rooms in these palaces. Or, it could be used by an advocate or someone else needing an office space. I think that would be more viable for those private palatial buildings, if they are to survive.

Moderator

Thank you. So, we are having different kinds of ideas of reuse. Now, I would like to take a look at some formal mechanisms, because till now we are talking of all the initiatives which are happening in the absence of existing robust formal mechanisms. However, the government of West Bengal has recently declared two cities as heritage cities. So, my next question would be to Haimanti.

The proposals for Cooch Behar Heritage Town, as I understand, try to address the issue of opportunity cost, which Donovan raised in the context of development restrictions in the heritage zones. So, could you please share the mechanism proposed to address this? And what were the challenges, if any?

Haimanti Banerji

Government of West Bengal has declared two towns as Heritage Towns, Cooch Behar being one. We are working on it. We are preparing our heritage development and management plan for the town, along with Land Use and Development Control Plan (LUDCP). Before I discuss the legal mechanism that we adopted in our Development Control Regulation (DCR), I would like to talk about the built and rich cultural heritage of Cooch Behar.

Cooch Behar is a small town, about eight or nine square kilometres in area that has a rich cultural and built heritage. There are the tanks, or the manmade water bodies. As a part of our project, we have identified about 155 heritage properties in the town which need to be understood spatially, so that the problem that we are facing about proposing a road map for the future development of Cooch Behar becomes evident. There is a core heritage zone where majority of the heritage properties are clustered along the Rajbari, which is an ASI protected monument. What we have done in the initial stages of our work is to come up with some core zones. So, there is core zone One, core zone Two and the rest of the city forms zone Three, which has some character. It has a typical grid iron plan, and has a low-rise dense residential development. So, these are some of the characters which are also important from an urban design point of view.

We did not want the place to become a kind of museum, because we wanted the town to grow. One restriction that we had is that our main heritage buildings were about 14-meter height, so we wanted to have height restrictions similar to that. Our current West Bengal Municipal byelaws allow about 20 meters, but we did not want to restrict the FAR. Hence, we proposed the issuance of the TDR, or the Transfer of Development Rights certificate, so that the development rights of the property owners is not curbed, because if anyone is refused

on any proposed development, then they can be compensated elsewhere. As highlighted by Dr. Mukerji, our major challenge, was to compensate for the restrictions on the core zone. Where should be the receiving zones, where should we allow development? That was a very important question or a challenge that we faced for the opportunity cost. Now, in order to do justice to that, we did a very exhaustive plot survey of twenty-four thousand plots in the town, and tried to understand the character, and the visual appearance. The local boys helped us in the process. And, in the process we surveyed the age of the building, wall finish, the building height, ownership, roof material, and roof type and boundary walls.

Just outside the core zone, where the multi-storied development was coming up, in the vicinity of the core zone, changes were noticed. We have a few GIS generated image for all the attributes that we collected physically on ground. Our main purpose of this very exhaustive survey was to understand the zones where there is potential for development. Subsequently, what we inferred was that some of the zones could be the receiving zones. For instance, 3A, 3B & 3C, are the basic zones, zone 1 and zone 2 are the core zones, where we have the clusters of the heritage buildings, and leaving out 3C1 and 3C2, which act as buffer or transition zone between the heritage zone and the zone of potential development, which were 3B1 and 3B2, identified as receiving zones. For the legal part of it, we are not only doing the heritage development and management plan, but we are also doing the LUDCP. So, within the LUDCP, we have included this for the Development Control Regulations (DCR). Additionally, we have also been given the task of the Act amendments of West Bengal, where we can propose these few additions and insertions of clauses to make this more feasible. For the West Bengal Heritage Commission Act, we have proposed to include this concept of TDR. Also, we believe that it should also be included in the Municipal Affairs Act. We worked on some numbers, where we had referred to the Ahmedabad TDR mechanism, about how they have done and also some of the best practices in the country. We have also come up with how much should be the maximum eligibility of the same plot, or what should be their charges.

This is how we proposed to deal with the opportunity cost issue. We faced major challenges in land value, as we did not get authentic information of the current market values of the land. When we were proposing equal or compensatory development right on the zones, which are at the periphery, that is 3A, 3B & 3C, and we are shifting them from the core zone, there is an issue of the land value. Nevertheless, we are still figuring out how to handle that on a case-by-case basis. What I want to share with you, is that we have tried to include this mechanism in our development control regulation, as well as proposed this as a part of the amended Heritage Commission Act so that the statutory part is strengthened and we can have a more robust mechanism.

Moderator

Thank you. So, now I come to ask some very important questions to Mr. Mohta. You see, development control regulations for historic areas and precincts – like the one being proposed for Cooch Behar, and probably later on, even for Kolkata – they would carry these associated opportunity costs, in terms of opportunities missed related to redeveloping heritage properties and getting maximum possible returns. The thing to be noted is, if it is addressed for heritage precincts and areas, even some properties that are not of heritage value themselves, but whose development impact the heritage character of the area, would also be affected by these development rules. So, in this context, what kind of relaxation, incentive, or compensation would the developer fraternity of West Bengal welcome? And since we are talking of TDR, do you think TDR really works?

Sushil Mohta

I will answer your last question first, that is TDR. TDR can work, but not in all areas. In West Bengal, we have very high FAR, in most areas the FAR is between two to three, and somewhere it is more than that. So, to consume that much of FAR in itself is a herculean task because the plot sizes in city areas are very small. It is easy to consume larger FAR if the plot size is big. For instance, 3 acres/4 acres, then you can use high FSI or FAR. However, in most of the city areas, the plot sizes are starting from 5 Katha to 30 Katha (1 Katha = 0.013774 Acre). So, the whole process becomes really difficult, with some exceptions.

Now, coming back to your other question, about the loss to the neighbourhood. If a particular *rajbari* is there in a lane or a road, we will definitely have opportunities if we restore that *rajbari*, or a good heritage building/structure. What about the neighbourhood? So, the whole idea is that, the *rajbari,* or the larger development can become the anchor and rest of the area can get to support that anchor: for instance there can

be nice boutique developments, retail areas, and cafes. We will require some development restrictions in those particular zones. In North Kolkata, for example, we have some beautiful old *zamindar baris* (mansions of zamindars or feudal lords). So, if we have an important development in a particular lane, or a road, what about the neighbourhood? If the neighbourhoods are allowed to develop without any control, they will dominate the heritage building/structure which is not advisable. Hence, the other one should also be in sync with them, may be restored. Then, we also need to bring some economic activities into them, because without that it will not work. We can have some micro development zones, like LUDCP, which is a much larger context. You can have those micro development zones, and you can incentivize those other property owners by some relaxation in municipal tax. The government has to come forward, give some benefit in GST, or some discount in property tax, et cetera, if these properties are utilised as a café, or retail area. Thus, to use those neighbourhoods, the municipal authorities, or the development authorities must have flexibility in mind that if those buildings are developed in sync with the larger development, like fast track approval process, fast track legal resolution process. Incidentally, in many of those small buildings, or in old part of the city, there are litigation cases, because of tenants, and joint-family ownership. So, we also need to find a solution to mitigate those.

Moreover, some of the owners of heritage properties are also facing financial problems. Thus, we need a holistic approach towards micro development plan for each of the zone. Lastly, we need to identify the heritage buildings and zones which are important. We just cannot go blindly about that. If, somebody has developed a building in South Kolkata, you cannot have the entire South Kolkata like that. It is not practically possible. Because we have limited resources, and our socio-economic conditions are not as robust as European countries, or cities. Hence, I think we need to take a call on what are our priorities. Thank you!

Moderator

Thank you so much. I would now like to go to Donovan.

Sushil raised points about non-economic benefits for the neighbourhood, though, we have been mostly talking about economic costs and benefits. Further, to make sense of this bigger picture of non-economic benefits, would you tell us ways of translating these in objective terms – maybe, how to assign some monetary values to these benefits, if possible?

Donovan Rypkema

A great question and a great challenge. In fact, I am glad you raised it now, because we are currently working with the city of Calgary, Alberta, in Canada. And, what they have asked is for their heritage resources to be valued on the triple bottom line basis. Most of you are familiar with the concept of the triple bottom line, that is, measuring profit like corporations do, but also what is the environmental contribution, return and what is the social or human return? It is a challenge because of these two concepts of quantification and monetization. Well, with the economic things, it is really one and the same that we get a return of X number of rupees. And so the number, the quantification and the monetization are one and the same. With environmental side of things, many of the environmental measures, it is relatively easy to quantify. For example, what we are using in Calgary is the embodied energy in existing buildings that is quantifiable. Tons of materials that goes into a landfill when a building is razed are quantifiable. So, you have the first step quantifiable and then you have to figure out ways to monetize that so that X tons of material into the landfill is worthwhile the cost Y Canadian dollars, or whatever. And then, you get to the social side and both the quantification and the monetization are extremely difficult and have not done in many places. Now, there has been approach that has been used. There is a great economist in Australia, David Throsby, who has done work in India and around the world for the heritage resources, and mostly for the World Bank, used a process called the willingness to pay measure. From these wonderful examples from the presentations and commentary, I am thrilled to learn what is happening here.

Importantly, there is a prima facie value to the community. So, how do you turn that into rupees, or, euros, or, yen? The willingness to pay is a survey-based approach that goes into grandeur populations, and says how much would you be willing to pay, for instance, for the restoration of the Souk's in Fez, Morocco? Somebody can say, "Oh, that's not mine; I am willing to pay nothing". Someone else can say, "Well, I would pay two euros". Using that survey basis, you expand that demographically and say that, to the community, it is worth X. Now, I have some scepticism because it is much easier to say 'I would give three dollars', than to actually

give three dollars. Hence, the numbers themselves are worth some scepticism. Nevertheless, it is an approach to get relative values to the community as they are respondents expressing their value in having that and they are not collecting any rent. They do not own the property. They might not even be visiting, but it has a value to them. And, at least that is one way to get a proxy, a starting point for assets that have value, but that value is not traded in the marketplace. The associative value, or the cultural value, even the aesthetic value is not something for which there are buyers and sellers. That is a proxy measure to start with. So, you have to find an alternative way. The issue is a challenging, but not impossible.

Moderator

Thank you so much. Now, I have another common question, which is about the way forward, to all the panellists. But before that, I would like to take some audience questions now. I have one question for Donovan, which is from Manish Chakraborty.

There are two parts to the question. The first one is: "Are there any special loans as incentives for projects from private banks", and, "What would be the present going rate of interest for heritage projects in the US?"

Donovan Rypkema

Well, yes. Sometimes, there are loans, and we have a programme in the U.S. called Main Street, that is central city revitalization in the context of using their heritage buildings. Now, again, when we say heritage building, it is almost embarrassing relative to the centuries old buildings that you have in India. Often, a part of the package that Main Street programme has put together, is to go to all the local banks and assemble a low interest loan pool that will make loans below the market rate for projects in the area. And again, it is just a social bank, with their social responsibility. The loans need to be underwritten, and it must be made sure there is a way to get the loan paid back. However, often those will be a percentage, or a percentage and a half, lower than the market rate. The trouble is where we have situations like today, where interest rates are historically low, you can borrow from a bank at low interest rates with no special programme. So, the incremental benefit of a low interest loan pool is much less than a higher interest rate situation.

The second part of the question, "Without a focussed loan, how could you borrow money for a heritage project in the U.S.?" Well, it will compete with other real estate. And, bankers will judge that based on the loan, the strength of the borrower, the project, their appraisals, and their whole underwriting criteria. However, if you are a good borrower with a good project, you could probably borrow money today at six percent, or, six and a half, or, maybe five and a half percent. Now, in the longer term, in the last three months, there has been a real caution backing up for all kinds of real estate loans, not just among heritage, among private banks in the U.S., because of the uncertainty of the kind of length of the virus scam that we are seeing. In general terms, a historic preservation project will have a competitive rate to a new construction, if the projections, if the strength of the borrower, if the appraisal of the property are similar. Thank you.

Moderator

I have a question for Darshan, it is a quick question which says "What is the flooring material of Naubat Khana?"

Darshan Dudhoria

Obviously marble, as you can see in the pictures. One of the biggest challenge with us was the flooring of Naubat Khana, because it was used as a storage space. Moreover, it was infested with rats and snakes. So, at the beginning of the project, we first had to fix the flooring, and after which we laid on the old marbles of the house which have been cut into pieces.

Moderator

Is it part of it is original marble, or is it all new?

Darshan Dudhoria

Earlier, during the monsoon season, that wall caved down, and the ceiling almost fell off. So over a period of time of 40-50 years, a lot of marble was very nicely stacked up, a very common practice in sort of old houses in the region, and was then put back to use, particularly in Naubat Khana.

Moderator

A question for Mr Mohta from Kirtida Unwalla, from Bombay, who was there with us yesterday: "With respect to TDR, do we need to be careful about who benefits from the DRC, the owner or the built form, because the owner can encash the DRC only once and eventually may sell the property. So what happens to the continued maintenance once again? What is your opinion as a developer?"

Sushil Mohta

You mean to say, the maintenance of the property for which the TDR has been allowed? There has to be a business model for that particular property. I think, most of these properties must be tourism–oriented, or maybe with some offices, or retail, or museum, so that it can be self-sustaining. Otherwise, it does not work. Further, there can be a mechanism: the money received by the owner can be deposited in a trust, so that a part of that can be utilised for the maintenance of the heritage property.

Moderator

I have another question for Donovan. This is from Sanghamitra Basu. So, she asks, if we bring in economic activities in residential areas, what happens to increased infrastructure, demand, and safety? Further, the use may change from residential to commercial causing gentrification. How to take care of that?

Donovan Rypkema

Well, of course, it is a complex and challenging issue that is being faced all over the world. Nevertheless, let me separate the several issue involved there. I do not know about the taxing system in India, but in the North America and much of Europe, local governments are highly dependent on property taxes, and property taxes are based on the value of the properties. So, if your property is worth a million dollars, and mine is worth a half a million, you are going to be paying twice as much in property taxes. And, as values go up, property taxes go up. So, that is again a way to address the infrastructure needs, in the value of the properties, let us just call it a revitalization area. As the economic success increases, the value of those properties are going to go up. Therefore, the property taxes are going to go up. So, that gives a revenue stream to put in that new water line, or sewer line, or parking garage, or, whatever is needed on the infrastructure side. Hence, a revitalization program can be structured. Thus, cost of things like public infrastructure, public spaces and sidewalks, and others, can almost be self-funding through the increase in property values. Now, on the gentrification side, it is a challenge everywhere. However, I want to make a distinction of terms 'displacement' and 'gentrification', because often, at least in the U.S., they are used as synonyms, and at least here they are not.

Displacement is about people who are actually being placed out. Gentrification is when a kind of new group, usually better educated and better paid, move in. Now, sometimes, those are one in the particular events. Sometimes, they are not. I do not know many places in India with a low density, where lots of people have moved out, and where there is a lot of vacancy. Maybe, there are not many places in India like that, but there are in U.S., often, the areas are being gentrified by new people with more money coming in. However, it is not a displacement issue, because nobody is displacing. Above all, heritage conservation needs to be about people, not about buildings. I love the comment made earlier, about the recognition, that there was that intangible heritage which can be the driver for economic success. So, when we are doing a comprehensive revitalization strategy, we need to see who are the human beings involved, what are their skills, attributes and culture that can be incorporated as a part of this. It needs to be a formal strategy at the beginning of the process. How can we have physical change while chasing out everybody? One needs to have well-drawn strategies from the beginning to face these challenges.

Moderator

The next question is for Haimanti from Aditi Rai: "Have you considered the evaluation of the benefits of DRC received by an owner, and whether it is sufficient for the preservation of their structure? Also, how much time is needed to award DRC? And what are the documents which need to be submitted?"

For clarity I will just break it into two question. The last part says, how much time is needed to award the DRC and what are the documents needed to be submitted?

Haimanti Banerji

The Documents, which are required to be submitted for DRC, are the standard ones, required by the municipality, the valuation of the total FAR that a particular property can get. So, that will depend upon the property itself. About the valuation, are you talking about the valuation of a particular heritage property? The benefit, which the owner gets?

Moderator

That was the previous question. The previous question was, "Have you considered an evaluation of the benefits of the TDR received by the owner and whether it is sufficient for the preservation of the structure?" If I may intervene, I think there is a misconception here. The TDR is to compensate for the opportunity cost and it is not for maintenance of structure, right?

Haimanti Banerji

Yes, this is basically what we visualized. TDR, to compensate for lost FAR, the development restrictions that we are imposing on the particular heritage zone. As a result, if someone is not being able to consume the FAR that they are getting, it can be consumed somewhere else. So, this is not related to the maintenance and up keeping of the property in the core zone. That is different.

Moderator

Thank you. Now, I have another question from Ananya Bhattacharya for Donovan: "After the pandemic, depending on tourism will be a challenge. So what are the other ways? What do you think would come up?"

Donovan Rypkema

One of the comments that I heard earlier, that I just cannot reinforce enough is this issue about looking for other ways beyond just tourism, for support of heritage based economy. I am not a tourism expert, but I was once on a panel with a guy who was, and he said a sentence that has just stuck in my head for two decades: "If you do it for the locals, the tourists will come. If you do it for the tourists, only the tourists will come." And, I think that is such a simple but straightforward and germane statement. Both in general, even in normal times and in the pandemic, we really need to look for alternatives. I think that one of the lessons we learnt worldwide in the pandemic is that local economies, exclusively, or primarily based on tourism, are extraordinarily vulnerable. No matter how strong your tourism market, you need to look for ways to diversify that. Further, the second thing, is we need to just step back, just societally and quit thinking about heritage buildings, and rather think about our everyday lives. That is why I love the example of what I saw, this fabulous art deco house. The owner kept saying that this is just a regular old house, which is a perfect example of saying this is just part of our life. This is not going to make the cover of Architectural Digest magazine, but this is our life. And, so, we need to think about all of the aspects of our economies that, in fact, can do perfectly well in heritage buildings. Now, I do not know that how much of this actually translates at all from the U.S. to India, but we do lot of city level studies. We just finished one in New York City, where there was a revealed preference among tech industries, restaurants, creative class workers, and knowledge class workers to being in heritage buildings. If you look at the share, those categories are of all jobs, that there is a disproportionate share in heritage buildings, in heritage districts. I think there is, particularly among the young, a kind of recognition, that there is something more than these high-rise glass buildings that we want to work, live in and shop, in places of character. And, if we think about what is the local market, what is the opportunity, I think that if we have that as our basis, we are much less vulnerable to this dramatic falls like we are seeing in the tourism market today.

Moderator

Thank you. I have a similar comment from Sanghamitra Basu in relation to Serampore. She has suggested that co-office spaces and institutes could be possible adaptive reuses, catering to the local people, their views and economy.

One question to Kamalika from Manish. "Do you think the private sector investments in Murshidabad could have been more? And if so, what would have attracted more private sector investments? Or, in other words, what are the impediments for more private sector investments in Murshidabad?"

Kamalika Bose

I will again speak specifically within Azimganj, because as we know, there is no one singular zone which you can call Murshidabad. As I explained, it is each pocket and each cluster in the entire urban development that has its own dynamics. So specifically, when we talk about private sector in the context of Azimganj, we have to motivate the private homeowners, and get them to see the logic, the value is kind of reinvesting back in their own properties, in their own legacy. And, that could become the fulcrum for exterior, also external private sector, which is not linked to that legacy and that heritage, but eventually, may get interested at a later point. Further, another portion of Murshidabad, which is closer to Cossimbazaar, or where the palace epicentre is, has a very different dynamics. So, I do not know if we can really look at private sector as one homogenous entity, because that itself has several classifications. I think in the last webinar, where we were looking at national case studies, the panel discussants spoke something about creative financing, and working out our own tools in the absence of formal enforcement, to creatively imagine how different segments of the private sector can get involved in different parts of Murshidabad.

Moderator

I would like to have the second round of questions. It is a common question to everyone and just a brief response is requested. I will just read out my question. I would like to start with Rajesh. The question is: "What, in your opinion, would be the one key reform, which the government of West Bengal should immediately consider, to ensure economically viable conservation of historic precincts and areas?"

Rajesh Sen

The mind-set of the government, of recognizing heritage as something of value that can bring value and the spinoffs. I mean, there is so much that it can bring, starting from tourism, to work. My little restoration, from part-time employment of one maid, has now given employment to 10 people, for security, cleaning, et cetera in the house. So, it works on employment levels as well as tourism levels. If this becomes something like Klasky in Singapore, that can bring in tourists. It can improve the lives of the local residents. It does not have to involve tourists. However, the change in the mind-set of the government to help a homeowner who is facing difficulty in preserving their old property needs to come in first. I think that is the most important reform that the government should look at.

Moderator

Thank you. Dr Wolff, what would you like to say regarding this?

Bente Wolff

First, I would like to say that the municipality has a lot of formal power in these matters, but they do not have any actual power. This is a market with a lot of big money in it with real estate development, and the municipality has no real authority to control it. So, I think more formal power for heritage conservation should go to the top. Moreover, in Serampore, I know there is this problem of gentrification. It is happening, anyway, with new people moving into the new flats. Hence, for the low-income groups already living in the area, the best chance for them is actually heritage restoration, because with heritage conservation, the old public areas are kept open and accessible. With high rise development all over, people feel physically and economically squeezed out of the area. Thus, restoring the buildings is a way to keep the public space open and allowing for some viable economy for these people. They can stay there and use the areas. However, as price levels are going up, gentrification takes place. The people moving in to the new flats also say that they chose Serampore because of this restoration project, and this little historical core. Finally, I will reiterate the point about using the old palaces for local companies to work in. Developing companies in the residential suburbs, instead of concentrating everything in Kolkata, would also save people from commuting and reduce traffic.

Moderator

Thank you. Haimanti, what would be your response to this: one key reform by the government of West Bengal?

Haimanti Banerji

I would like to highlight two points. One, to see if we can have something like the historic tax credit, as successfully done in Detroit. Another point is that if we can have something like the Heritage Fund, a separate

fund created at the disposal at the urban local body level, which can help in disbursement for the rest of the heritage conservation committee.

Kamalika Bose

I feel that we need to give more agencies. I will not directly start with an economic reform, but look at two agencies that exist within our formal structure right now. One is the West Bengal Heritage Commission and the other is the Heritage Committee of Kolkata Municipal Corporation itself. These organizations either have an authorizing or regulatory mandate, but they really lack the courage to go beyond. We have not been able to introduce Heritage cells, the way other municipalities in Ahmedabad, or, Bombay, has had for decades now, which is really responsible for initiating many studies, documentations, feasibility level proposals, and be responsible and accountable to come up with viable and creative ways of microfinancing. As until we start doing this, there will be sporadic and isolated attempts with limited lifespan, as an experiment, without a desired systemic long term impact and change. So, I think it is important to avoid randomly introducing ad hoc economic reforms. Instead, we should start at the foundation level, with what we have and make them more powerful, employ architects, economies, people who can really make that difference in a formal way within a heritage cell. Moreover, what applies to Kolkata will not apply to a small town, or, rural area. So, both these heritage committees should be able to work in tandem with local municipalities and really look at larger impact.

Moderator

Thank you. Darshan?

Darshan Dudhoria

Your question is about one key reform to make conservation economically viable. The point that needs to be addressed is that of the present problem, particularly in Murshidabad, of joint ownerships of properties, where people want to do something, but his relative is not allowing that. When we use one reform, it should involve a comprehensive and complete policy wherein it can help them resolve these problems. I believe in certain European countries you have laws where one co-owner can actually force the other one to sell for certain reasons. So if you have something where you create these enablers. The second aspect of it is while enabling them, there should be a committee, like for example, in the textile sector, enabling manufacturing in different parts of India, and in different parts of rural Bengal. Where there is a board, where you have all of these empanelled architects, for instance, all of those who are there in this particular webinar meeting, and then you have all of them together advising and helping these homeowners. One last point here, is focussing on someone who put financial funds, access to funds and incentives. For instance, in the textile sector, for every investment you are making in, like setting up a small manufacturing facility in Murshidabad, the government gives you free electricity, and incentives on loans that you are taking. Similar things be done in the heritage space. I think such comprehensive view could improve the heritage conservation scenario in Bengal.

Moderator

Thank you. Mr Mohta?

Sushil Mohta

Extending Darshan's arguments, I would like to further add that we require a holistic heritage conservation policy. We have policies in law, but I think still a lot of pieces are missing here. The involvement of all stakeholders is most important. It should not be just a government imposed policy. We also need to have active involvement of developers, media, and, academics. And, then, that policy should enable identification of the right Heritage Zones, micro planning of those zones, and find a way forward. There should be some ways and means to develop economically viable models for those zones, so that, if there is a proper Heritage policy to conserve and bring those economically viable policy that can be a win-win situation. Thus, we require involvement of all the stakeholders.

Moderator

Thank you. Now, we have almost reached the end of our discussion. To conclude, I know Mr Rypkema is not entirely acquainted with the scenario at West Bengal, nevertheless, would you like to add to the suggestions from your global experience?

Donovan Rypkema

Well, yeah, my one suggestion would be to make a list of the suggestions we just made and put them to work. Because without knowing the local market, all of those are kind of both the bottom up, the participatory, the authority to act, those range of things that just are a prerequisite.

Moderator

Thank you so much. It was so nice to have you with us and it was a pleasure for me to interact with you. Thank you.

Concluding Remarks

Suggestions included empowering the local government and fostering mind sets towards conservation, maximizing potential stakeholder involvement and local engagement, introducing tools like comprehensive heritage policy and incentives such as historic tax credit & funds.

Sustainable planning and conservation of the urban morphology of historic areas, neighbourhoods, or *paras*, which represent the emotional embodiment, the history of the communities and their culture, can lead to fulfilment of aspirations and economic prosperity. The discussion highlights how any recognizable activity progressed by any authority in a 'locality' creates an atmospheres of zeal for all other stakeholders around the locality, and in ushering a visible rejuvenation programme in all possible forms. This can be achieved through both tourism-oriented and community-focussed activities, such as heritage hotels, bed and breakfast opportunities in heritage properties, or reuse of old houses as boutiques, cafes, museums, or offices.

To continue conservation, sources beyond government should also be looked at, in order to match financing and share the burden of the private owners. To attract private capital, we need incentives, whether in form of direct monetary benefits, or, policy intervention. The case studies showed how pragmatic approach to conservation works, and how stakeholder engagement and mobilization of resources, become essential.

For effective conservation of historic areas or precincts, it is also necessary to look beyond individual restoration, or reuse projects, and integrate conservation with urban planning and development control, with proper identification of heritage zones, duly considering their significance, development of mechanisms to hounour development rights, and mobilization of funds and incentives to offset costs of preservation incurred by private owners. Conservation of the 'context', which exudes greater interest and creates a sense of pride is important.

Bengal needs to become the next travel destination and for that, the examples from Bengal have shown how to look beyond economic costs, employ TDR and reduce dependency on the foreign/ tourist market because "if you do it for the local, tourists will come".

photo courtesy Kamalika Bose

Engaging Communities for Sustainability and Resilience

Engaging Communities for Sustainability and Resilience

The theme for the third session was conservation of historic precincts and areas by engaging local community — how it valorizes local heritage, strengthens values and builds custodianship. The keynote, case studies and the panel discussion explored the scope and means of community engagement and participation in heritage conservation and management, which, in turn, would also work towards the socio-economic development in historic areas and precincts.

November 21, 2020

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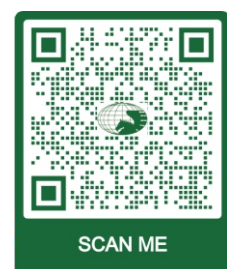
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Saleem Beg | Sandeep Khan | Santanu Banerjee | Shama Pawar

C.1.

Nizamuddin urban renewal initiative – Restoring heritage, rebuilding lives

Ratish Nanda

CEO, Aga Khan Trust for Culture, India

I have had the honour of working for the Aga Khan Trust for Culture for almost 25 years. During this period, we had an incredible partnership with various government agencies in Delhi and Hyderabad at Humayun's Tomb, Nizamuddin and Qutb Shahi Heritage Park, Golconda respectively. I would like to take this opportunity to focus on our projects leveraging heritage assets to improve the quality of life for communities living around heritage sites. I want to begin first with a quote from His Highness the Aga Khan (2007):

> […] the Trust's support to historic communities demonstrates how conservation and revitalisation of the cultural heritage – in many cases the only asset at the disposal of the community – can provide a springboard for social development. We have also seen how such projects can have a positive impact well beyond conservation, promoting good governance, the growth of civil society, a rise in incomes and economic opportunities, greater respect for human rights and better stewardship of the environment. (p.4)

At the onset, I should mention that many people are of the opinion that we at the Aga Khan Trust of Culture, (AKTC) work with the communities in the Nizamuddin area as we have focused on Humayun's tomb. I would like to put a different perspective on that thought. When the Government of India invited AKTC to do further work in the field of culture in India, we were offered various sites; except for the Taj Mahal, there were about 50 significant sites that we were requested to choose from. Having already done a garden restoration project at Humayun's Tomb, we decided to come back to Humayun's Tomb as there was a huge potential to conserve the World Heritage monument and several other important structures in the immediate setting; couple the conservation effort with a major socio-economic development initiative as well as create a city park for the people of Delhi. About 400 families who trace their descent from the saint Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya, have lived in this area for almost seven centuries. We needed to work in a zone where we could demonstrate that the culture is indeed an asset of the community, which could be used as a springboard, or leverage for the social-economic development of the community.

This is something that His Highness The Aga Khan had been suggesting and directing AKTC to demonstrate since the late 1980s. With the Aga Khan Trust for Culture being part of the Aga Khan Development Network, the primary objective of the various AKDN agencies working across 30 countries is to improve the quality of life. At AKTC, we attempt to do so through leveraging cultural assets, like music, food, museums, and heritage cities.

We have worked in India and worldwide, but it all started in the late 1970s at a garbage dump. His Highness was attending a conference in Cairo when he was informed that there was just enough green space in the city for every citizen to put one foot on the ground, which led him to offer to build a park. A garbage dump yard was the site given to him and us, Aga Khan's Trust for Culture. It had over a thousand years of accumulated rubbish. Once the site had been cleared, it revealed the Fatimid era city wall buried under the rubbish. About a kilometre and half of the historic wall was found here, restored and the Al Azhar Park created – today attracting more visitors than the Pyramids. Over 2 million people lived around here and with the creation of the park, we could address a lot of the socio-economic needs of the community. This is where UNESCO's Historic Urban Landscape resolution came about. So, together with building the park in Cairo, we were able to do conservation

work on major monuments that stood in the World Heritage site of Al-Azhar and a lot of social and economic development activities. The same approach was further applied in our work in Kabul, where again, we were working on the Bagh-e-Babur Garden restoration. Still, there was a settlement linked to the garden that kept on growing, but as it was informal and illegal, it required a lot of intervention. We did a lot of activities to improve the quality of life in these communities.

In Delhi, the Humayun's Tomb, was built at its location on account of the site's proximity to the shrine of Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya. Around the rear of the saint's burial site, a necropolis was created from the 14th to the 19th century, with numerous buildings – mainly mausoleums but also gateways, mosques, step-wells and a community that had grown but could do with all the help it could get. In 1947, there were a lot of refugees coming in to settle here. Similarly, in the 1980s, there was another wave of people relocating to the area from UP. Since then, the community has grown because Nizamuddin has become the first point of immigration for Muslim migrants into Delhi.

The Archaeological Survey of India, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi and the Central Public Works Department came together in 2007 and signed a single MoU with the Aga Khan Trust for Culture to initiate the urban renewal project. This was critical as each government agency had different mandate, and it was important for the trust to have them all signed on that single piece of paper for an urban conservation and development project to be undertaken. The ASI protects and owns 29 monuments of national importance in this area; Municipal Corporation is responsible for health, education, urban improvement, sanitation, et cetera and the CPWD owns 67 acres of the Sunder Nursery.

There is a lot of tangible and intangible heritage in Nizamuddin. There are about 700 years of heritage; built heritage and ritual, music, food, craft, et cetera. There is also a whole matrix of quality of life indicators, including heritage and open space. So, we worked on this triangle of economics and livelihood, health and education, and social benefits to the resident communities. We started the project by undertaking a baseline survey in 2008, which revealed some shocking figures for a settlement in the heart of the national capital. There were around 20,000 people residing in the community, but there were about another 20,000 people who were homeless - a floating population. We estimated that pre-Covid 19, nearly 4 million people were coming as pilgrims to this place. We also estimated that less than 1 percent of youth had access to vocational training and that health, education, infrastructure, sanitation, and infrastructure were primarily absent. Less than one percent of women had any economic opportunities, and malnutrition was very high at 70%. There were several issues, and our team set out to address them.

But unfortunately, our project started on the back of a proposal made by the related Ministry to relocate many people. Before starting the project, there was an attempt to treat this whole area as a museum, or a frozen heritage zone and relocate the local community. So, we did not have high hopes when we started the project. That was also a pity because we could not engage with the local community until the MoU was signed. The resident community learnt of the project only through the newspapers on the signature of the MoU. You can imagine what sort of rumours floated. It was imagined that Aga Khan Trust for Culture will fulfil the earlier stated government objective 'to build parks where people live and build houses where they were parks'. They were told by some of their officials that we were going to build 1970 American style ghettos and multi-storey ghettos to relocate some of these people. So, in that background, one of the first things that we needed to do was establish communication, which required us to spend days and days meeting over *chai* (tea) and *biriyani* (a mixed rice dish originating among the Muslims of the Indian subcontinent)*;* every evening was spent in the *basti* (an overcrowded area where many poor people live, in this case it refers to Nizamuddin Basti).

The topic of heritage was taboo and a source of risk, or discomfort in the community. So, we could not possibly start by looking at the heritage assets. So, we began by improving the health and education infrastructure. A school building was built there, but it was dilapidated. The top two floors were not usable because it was leaking. Hence, at first we addressed the need for education and health. As architects, we were able to easily change the condition of the municipal school by changing some of the physical infrastructures. However, about 90% of the effort was through education, parent-teacher association and placing community teachers. For 15 years, we have employed 20 women who assisted the municipal teachers in imparting education. Soon, the number of children enrolled there went up from about less than a hundred to about six hundred and fifty. It led to a visit by the Vice President of India, which was remarkable for a municipal school. The state of computer

learning and art and education also improved. We found out that less than one percent of the kids took part in any art education. One of the significant advantages of private sector schools, now, even in Nizamuddin, is that every kid gets at least two hours of art and teaching every week.

Kabir Bajpayee, the architect, engaged various building parts as a learning aid. However, it was all done in stone rather than paint, for we were concerned with long term maintenance. So a lot of work that we had done there was vandal proof. The school has bulletproof, literally unbreakable glass window panes as we realized all the window panes were broken as sport! The condition of the toilets was not pretty. We built many toilets in Nizamuddin. We found that 25 percent of the local community did not have toilets, which needed to be addressed.

This was the very thing that a fraction of the community was seeking - having good health and establishing a municipal polyclinic. Having built a clinic there for almost ten years, the facility has treated about 600,000 individual patients. Now, though the local population is only 20,000 people, people from Delhi and further coming to Nizamuddin as pilgrims were also accessing these facilities. Hence, we had to engage in a proper community health program. We trained some 50 hard-working women to work as health workers who did exemplary work during the Covid pandemic. Their work resulted in us receiving the International Responsible Tourism Award. Many might not know this, but Nizamuddin - Tablighi Jamaat - was the outbreak centre. Very few people know about this because from that outbreak till the end of lockdown, there was not one Covid positive case amongst the residents of Nizamuddin. Again, the health program focuses on women, youth, and children, by placing doctors, gynaecologists, ENT specialists, and doctors at the municipal polyclinic.

India is in dire need of good sanitary toilets. The major community toilet at Nizamuddin was in a terrible state. A point to be remembered is that the place gets up to four million pilgrims every year and about 25% of the local community is without in-home toilets. And that is without saying the embarrassment the women had to face using the toilets. Men could easily sit on the rooftop and peer into the women's toilet. This was one of the many essential things that we addressed. This was a significant need for the community as it was used about 7000 times a day. Today, we do not manage the toilet anymore because a community group is driving it. We subsidize it continuously but do not manage it. There was another toilet that had open to sky cubicles and was surrounded by buildings, but all these studies were part of our baseline survey. It allowed us to know what the community wanted, and many residents had expressed how the place was constantly dirty, and the biggest problem in the community was hygiene.

However, nobody was doing anything about it. The garbage was thrown into the public space, creating problems in the lane. So for many years now, we have started collecting trash from every household. One of the biggest advantages the action brought was that the subsidy we provided to the waste collectors began to be reduced. More and more money was being paid from the households. By the time the project is finished, probably all of the money will be paid by the local community.

It is easy to engage in 15 hours of study regarding waste paper and toilets. Still, almost everything we have done, from setting up a women's gymnasium, or landscaping the parks, needed hundreds of street meetings (Fig.1) and formal community meetings (Fig.2), and there was no shortcut to it. We had to create an interdisciplinary team that included people with expertise in health, education, socio-economic development and many more, working together, holding these meetings and engaging with the community. Our reach was to such an extent that we now know every household today. We have got a detailed list of every family, so we know how many women there are of childbearing age, how many children there are, how many people have diabetes, and details like that. We know the community inside out.

Street improvement projects began again with the municipal corporation. Finally, after three to four years into the project, we were able to find a slight footing in heritage preservation. This heritage is linked with the community. Nizamuddin has a *baoli* (a water reservoir) present amongst the community. At some point, a part of it had collapsed. About 18 families or 80 people, were known to be living on the top of the roof of the *baoli*, which soon became a challenge. So, community meetings were held on fixing the *baoli* (Fig.3). Here, the primary challenge was the fact that in order to fix the *baoli*, we had to clean it first, and all teams failed to develop a feasible plan. Ultimately, the bucket method was decided. We had cleaned about 40 feet of rubbish. We would accumulate the *baoli* remains with buckets which took 8000 man-days to complete. Then we built alternate houses for all of the 18 families living atop the *baoli*. This entire project was a five-year process. We

had to get the government to give us land for building the houses, cost the design process, and make sure that the sense of community was retained with all the plots next to each other.

The *baoli* continued to be the centre of several more minor interventions. One prominent local family approached us and offered to dismantle portions of their house to reconstruct a 14th century arcade that his grandfather had demolished to make space to build their house. So instead of destroying the house, it was pushed back about 6 feet. This process costs a lot of money, but rebuilding was the only possible option. By doing so, we were successfully able to restore the arcade.

Fig.1: In front of Jammat Khana Mosque, establishing communication with the residents

Fig.2: A formal community meeting in progress at Jammat Khana Mosque

Fig.3: At the *baoli*

Notably, Nizamuddin is not only about the monuments or the people; it is also about the living culture. The very familiar *qawwali* (a musical performance of Sufi Muslim poetry) was born here with Hazrat Amir Khusru singing in praise of the *Pir* (a title for a Sufi spiritual guide). So we created performance zones amidst monuments and conservation zones to restore the culture in the community. Many Hindustani cultural icons also lived or were buried here, amongst them Jahanara, Ghalib, Rahim, and Khusrau. So, we landscaped Ghalib's tomb to create a performance venue for *Mushairas* (a poetic symposium).

Amongst the traditional building crafts, the art of glazed tile work, which was lost in India, was revived during Humayun's Tomb Conservation project. The art style was in urgent revival, and surprisingly, it was something the local community took to, unlike the sandstone work. They spent several years on it but unfortunately, did not have the initiative to start their independent businesses. However for many years, the youth of the *basti* was engaged in making these tiles. So, this is something we hope to revive in the future.

One of the critical challenges was that less than 10% of the local women had any economic opportunities. Many projects have since been undertaken which focused on women and was led by women. So, they now make crafts related to paper motifs and textile stitching which they can sell to tourists at Humayun's Tomb and elsewhere. They have earned significant amounts of money. For women who never made a penny in their lives, they were now together earning about 41 Lakh rupees in a year. That was a commendable achievement, primarily when they were operating through small kiosks.

When it comes to the question of community-based conservation projects, cultural heritage and built heritage play an essential part in it. We conservationists should change our approach from 'What is the role of community in conservation?' to 'how heritage can bring benefit to local communities'. Only then will the people who struggle to make two ends meet, or have two meals a day be engaged.

From our Life-cycle approach – addressing needs of new-borns to the elderly, we have been running at 8 *anganwadis* (child care centres) and are expanding our partnership with the Delhi government, who has these *anganwadis*. We have built a preschool where every kid in the *basti* is monitored for malnutrition, health parameters and education. We have trained several groups of women in crafts and cuisine – the Zaika--Nizamuddin group started with making food to address this issue of malnutrition and have now ended up managing kitchens at the Hyatt in Hyderabad and the Marriott in Bombay. Having never stepped out of the *basti*, they have now flown halfway across the country and lived in 5-star hotels. One of the first things we

started during our heritage mapping stage was to take 30-40 youths of the Nizamuddin Basti for walks. This had a similar impact to the heritage walks done in various parts of the country, which brought a sense of pride in each of these kids, which was very infectious.

On the southern side, the Nizamuddin Bas*ti* is bounded by a *nallah* (gully)*;* with a flyover being built over this, it became the main facade of the *basti*. Also, years of neglect had turned the water into a sewage deposit. We realized we needed to address it, and it took us 5-6 years to change the dirty front into an open public green space as this was a community that did not have enough open spaces. For this initiative to be successful, we would collect 400 truckloads of garbage every year till we reached the tipping point. We held hundreds of meetings and involved the households and even the children and every member of our interdisciplinary team - whether they were engineers or health workers, or people engaged with sanitation. AKTC built new sewer lines while connecting them to the toilets. One of the biggest risks of such projects in operation is that the bathrooms were still being used while installing these pipes.

In 2008, it was also shocking to realize that only one percent of the local population had visited a park in the past year. Thus having these green spaces was an absolute necessity for the resident community. After years of efforts, open spaces were recovered and landscaped for community functions, including a women's park.

Even up until a few years back, people would ask whether we had won the community's trust. And truthfully, it was something difficult to answer, but in 2014, we were requested to conserve the principal mosque in the Dargah complex, a 14th century structure. Having since conserved the mosque, we could say that yes, we had the trust, and we are working on it. We had taken off layers of brick to fix the leakage. We had restored ceilings and the lost details. This required some community engagement and involvement every step of the way because it was something that the community owned.

Through this project, we were not only addressing the community of Nizamuddin Basti within the city, but all of Delhi. With our creation of the 90 acres of Sunder Nursery Park to make it the new heritage park or city park. This land was inaccessible: though at the heart of the city, the park was not open to the public. However, this is how Delhi has always been. We are now getting people from across Delhi to visit here regularly and provide them with a different experience. Everyone in Nizamuddin gets a highly subsidised pass to come and walk in the park every morning and evening.

I want to conclude by saying that green spaces are significant to historical places, and to the quality of life. It takes an interdisciplinary team to do this work. It is not just the architects or engineers. Still, the requirement of people from at least 30 different disciplines working together enabled us to work in such a diverse urban conservation-development initiative. For me, the biggest joy was to work with them over the years and learn from them.

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C.2.

Kolkata's Chinatown: A community rises like a Phoenix – a case study in resilient, sustainable development of historic precincts

Rinkoo Bhowmik

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The phoenix – that fabulous, majestic, mythical creature from Greek folklore – is said to be cyclically re-born or regenerated every thousand years or so, after perishing dramatically in a burst of flames. The death is quick; the re-birth happens soon after.

In the case of Kolkata Cheenapara, the decline has been brutal, long-drawn-out, and painful with no signs of a rebirth for decades. The city's old Chinatown has been declining since 1962. So, when the first signs of revival are apparent, they are thrilling to say the least, like the first green shoots sprouting out of parched soil after a shower of rain.

First, let us discuss about the first signs of revival in Kolkata's Chinatown. If you were to visit Cheenapara today, you would witness a picture of extreme neglect and squalor. Where is the much-touted urban revival that was supposed to transform this derelict neighbourhood?

Indeed, no magic wand has beautified the streets, yet. But under the surface, exciting things are happening. The phoenix is stirring, ready to rise. The first example of 'adaptive reuse' has come up (a restaurant in an underused Chinese club); young people are chattering about Cheenapara on social media; bloggers are bringing its history alive; the youth are organising festivals; heritage walks are bringing out Cheenapara's hidden gems; young people are making catchy music videos; the community is coming together to paint shop fronts; residents are sprucing up their homes.

In this context, let me refer to a small incident[1] that took place in Toronto, Canada, a few years ago, and one that reveals so much about Kolkata's once-bustling Cheenapara.

Two men, who were strangers, get into a lift in an office building. One looks Caucasian; the other is possibly Chinese. The Chinese man asks the other:

> "Are you from Kolkata?"

The Caucasian man, an Anglo-Indian born and raised in Kolkata, is totally taken aback.

> "How did you know?"

The Chinese man points to his shoes and says:

> "You are wearing Uncle Henry's shoes."

The famous Chinese handmade shoes from Bentinck Street were that distinctive. You could tell the craftsmanship from a mile away. And yet today, hardly any remain. They have almost shut the shop.

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[1] This anecdote is from a thesis paper by Dr Jayani Jeanne Bonnerjee (2010), Professor and Associate Dean, Academic Affairs, Jindal School of Liberal Arts and Humanities.

How did this happen? How did a once-bustling Chinatown that highlighted Kolkata's cosmopolitan identity turn into a neglected neighbourhood, completely devoid of character?

It all went downhill from 1962 when India and China went to war. Suspected of spying, the Chinese community in India came under surveillance. Many were persecuted, deported or interned. Properties were confiscated, and business was adversely affected. It was a watershed event for the community (Xing and Sen, 2013). A mass exodus followed leaving the community broken, depleted, and gasping.

There is a video available on YouTube, a short AP news clip from when tensions between India and China were mounting and the Chinese in Kolkata were being rounded up for questioning. It is interesting to note how Chinatown looked back then – streets bustling with Chinese restaurants, shoe shops, laundries, carpenters. Interestingly, in Kolkata, the Chinese diaspora stamped its presence not with giant lanterns and souvenir shops, but with its unique skills and trades.

How do we bring back those skills and trades and make Cheenapara hum again? How do we save a centuries-old heritage from fading away? That is the challenge The Cha Project has undertaken.

The Cha Project (Cities • Heritage • Architecture) is an urban curation and design studio based in Singapore and working in partnership with INTACH (Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage) in Kolkata. Our role is to provide solutions to complex urban problems; we provide feasible, practical design solutions after meticulous research, stakeholder surveys and community participation. To bring the buzz back to Cheenapara, The Cha Project has proposed food streets, night markets and heritage trails along with preservation of Cheenapara's unique tangible and intangible heritage, with simple interventions that do not require demolition or construction but which can have transformative effects (Fig.1).

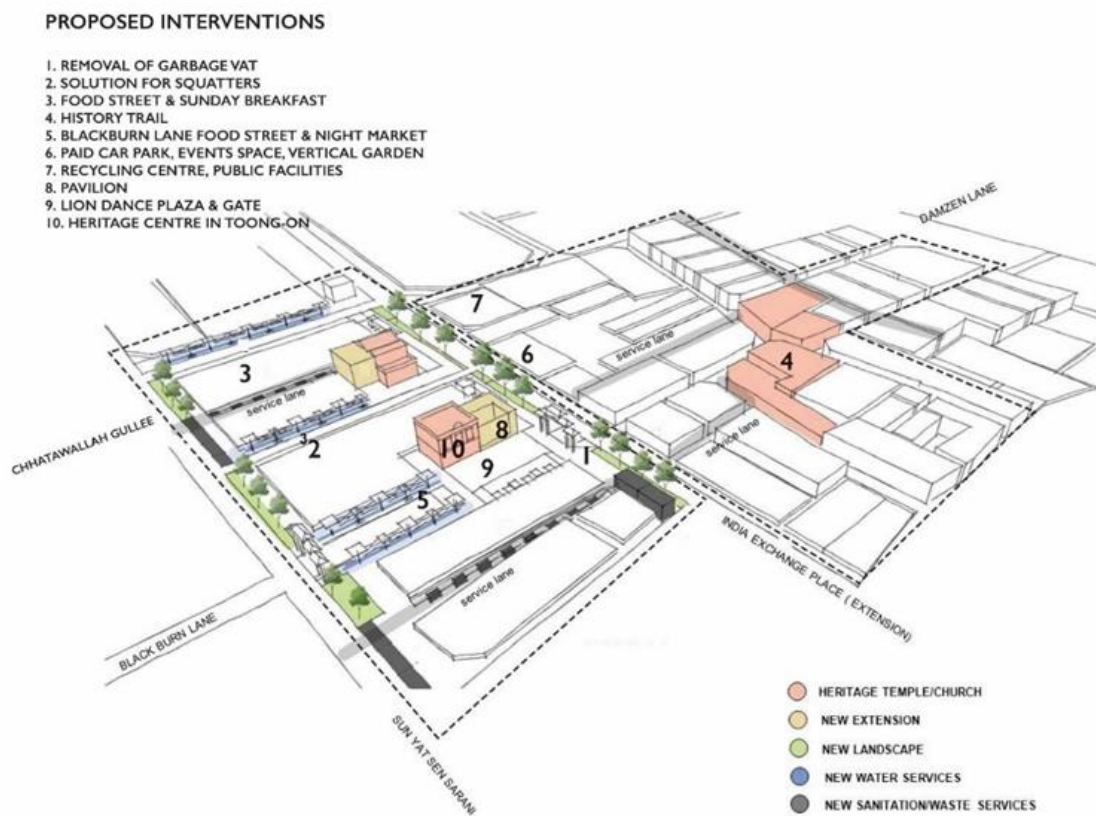**Fig.1:** The CHA Project's planned interventions mapped by Ong & Ong

We see ourselves as providing governments, developers and stakeholders the blueprint for green, socially equitable urban design.

What is it that makes Kolkata Cheenapara an interesting case study? It is The Cha Project's zealous insistence on an inclusive revival, the hallmark of the project, ensuring a resilient and sustainable future. The project looks

at the big picture, solving problems of garbage, encroachments, infrastructure, livelihood and conservation first, instead of cosmetic interventions.

Impediment 1: Garbage, Garbage, and More Garbage

The presence (and stench) of an enormous open garbage vat proved to be the biggest hindrance to the revival of Kolkata Cheenapara. It sat right outside Toong-On Church, a heritage building from the early 1900s which is the unofficial centrepiece of the revival.

For years, waste materials from three neighbouring wards were dumped here. Petitions, letters, media stories had done nothing to move the vat. Businesses from the many trading hotspots around Central Avenue were dumping unsorted wastes and packaging material and rag pickers were sifting through piles of rotting food and faeces to salvage any bit of metal, plastic or cardboard that could be re-used. It was unsanitary, hazardous and inhuman. We proposed a solution that would solve multiple problems.

Solution: Not Just a Garbage Compactor, a Multi-Function Facility

We identified an open government plot next to Todi Mansions and drew up a concept plan for a sustainable, green, multi-function, revenue-generating facility that would include not just a garbage compactor but recycling spaces, public toilets, washing areas, *aanganvadi* (child care centre), herb gardens and a paid carpark-cum-events space as well. The design even made sure that none of the existing informal occupants would be evicted.

Finally, a Garbage Compactor

After years of liaisons, letters, meetings, petitions, presentations, site tours for senior officials, the compactor has finally been installed. But wait! Instead of moving the garbage away from a heritage location, what Cheenapara got was a cumbrous, unsightly compactor, squat in the middle of the main thoroughfare with no consideration whatsoever for aesthetics, respect for heritage, convenience of passers-by, sustainability, or profitability. But beggars cannot be choosers so we will take what we get (Fig.2).

The compactor has been symbolic of change. Even before it was installed, it was the expectation of a cleaner neighbourhood, the hope of a revived Chinatown that galvanized a change of attitude.

Changing Mind Sets

At The Cha Project's first community engagement workshop which brought together representatives of 24 different clubs, temples and trusts that previously never saw eye to eye, attendees were cagey, cynical, still smarting under the wounds of the past. They spoke of their anxieties and about what made them sceptical and mistrustful. Today, the community is more open, and allegations of factionalism that have always hounded the Chinese in Kolkata are slowly dissipating as the temples and clubs open their doors – Sea Voi Club is now a restaurant; Sea Ip hosts community art workshops; Toong-On is the de facto Community Centre. In short, thus, the workshop was, in some ways, cathartic.

Mapping – a Key to Any Revival

Even long-time Kolkata residents are unaware of the heritage gems – Chinese temples and social clubs – that sit tucked within the alleys of Tiretta Bazaar. They bind a unique community together. It is a living, throbbing heritage that goes back more than two-and-a-half centuries and urgently needs to be preserved. No regeneration can happen without proper research, documentation and mapping. Led by The Cha Project's Consultant Conservation Architect Kamalika Bose, students from Denmark's Aarhus School of Architecture and Ahmedabad's Centre for Environmental Planning and Technology (CEPT) got together for a summer school to collaborate on a complete documentation of Cheenapara (Bose and Hilberth, 2014). It was the most comprehensive mapping ever done of the area and one that guides every aspect of the revival. The mapping has given residents a renewed sense of pride in their properties and in the heritage of their *paara* (neighbourhood). Building owners are now far less susceptible to succumb to the developer's lure (Fig.3).

Fig.2: Solution for garbage. Top: The Cha Project's proposed revenue generating garbage solution with public facilities (A) on the roof, recycling units, and a paid carpark/events space (B). Courtesy: Concept by Rinkoo Bhowmik, render by Abhimanyu Prakash. Centre: Old Chinatown has finally got a garbage compactor – but unfortunately one that squats on the pavement, blocking Toong-On Church from view. Courtesy: Photo by Dominic Lee. Bottom: Visualisation of Blackburn Lane Food Street after the installation of the compactor. Courtesy Render by JIA Studios.

Fig.3: Mapping. Top Left: Kamalika Bose (extreme left) oversees documentation work in Cheenapara; Top Right: Students measure Choonghee Thong Temple; Bottom: Detailed mapping has given the community renewed pride in their built environment.

Adaptive Re-use

The project's aim is to create enough awareness so that individual property owners see value in preservation. We present ideas and possibilities to the government and stakeholders. Mr. Yao Wah Chen has been a trailblazer in the way he has given Sea Voi a fresh lease of life by turning an underused portion of the club into a restaurant. Sea Voi's restoration embodies so many elements that this revival is all about:

— It is a perfect example of adaptive reuse;

— It preserves the community's food heritage;

— It is a good example of sustainability as care has been taken to retain most of the original material. Mr Yao has handcrafted the damaged rails and trimmings;

— It helps preserve history. Just down the road is the house where the first Chinese settlers took up lodgings; right opposite is the funerary home; the space taken up by the restaurant used to be the waiting area for families who had lost a loved one;

— In a ripple effect, other buildings in the lane have got a fresh coat of paint. This is what a revival is all about (Fig.4).

Fig.4: Revival. Top: Visualisation by JIA Studios for The Cha Project showing how Blackburn Lane can be revitalised; Bottom left: What the premises of Sea Voi Club looked like. Photo Courtesy: Soma Dutta Gupta; Bottom right: Sea Voi Restaurant is a perfect example of adaptive re-use.

In another part of Blackburn Lane, across the main road, another man is doing things a bit differently but in equally significant measure. Mr Li Han Kuang is steadfastly resisting commercial offers of converting part of Toong-On Church into a restaurant and turning it, instead, into a much-needed community centre. After all, it was the community that came together in 2008 to save Toong-On from the wrecker's ball.

A Community-Driven Regeneration

A big step towards revival has been getting the youth involved. Jie Wu, a research scholar from Ithaca, NY, working on a thesis on migration and place making, rallied the youth together to hold the first Dragon Boat Race in Kolkata. It is now in its fourth year running with boats being shipped in from China. Thomas Chen, the community's singing star and songwriter has come up with a catchy music video on Cheenapara's Sunday morning breakfast. Young people like Swati Mishra and Alan Wu are getting the community together through art while Janice Lee and Robert Hsu are keeping the community enthused and engaged through social media. The role of heritage writers, bloggers and social media influencers like Deepanjan Ghosh, Rangan Dutta,

Soumitra Das, cannot be over-emphasised.[2] Heritage walks are the most vital way to experience a living heritage – Iftekar Ehsan, Manjit Singh Hoonjan, Tathagata Neogi and many others are doing great work to spread awareness in creative ways, from food trails to photography tours. The Cha Project's Cheenapara Walk, part of Sahapedia's[3] month-long Indian Heritage Walk Festival, gave Kolkata Chinatown pan-India attention. When Dominic Lee and his wife Ann cooked with television food show host David Rocco in their home, Cheenapara got global attention.

But none of these efforts will stick if the marginalized remain neglected.

Impediment 2: Proliferation of Informal Settlements

Every pavement and alley in Cheenapara has been encroached by shanties. But given the symbiotic relationship the shanty dwellers share with the residents and businesses, eviction was never ever an option. But how can we design food streets when there are families living in abject poverty?

We needed to design a solution that would not displace the squatters, yet simultaneously turn the place into an attractive destination, preserve the area's history and also bring about an economic revival. A very tall order, but that is what design is all about – finding solutions to seemingly intractable problems. So we conceptualised Doonya.

Solution: Shop-Homes for the Marginalized as One of the Solutions

Doonya is a transient mobile shop-home meant to replace an existing *jhuggi* (a slum dwelling typically made of mud and corrugated iron) and designed to not only improve living conditions but provide the poor with a source of livelihood as well, and a radical shift from conventional notions of poor housing as sub-standard homes. Instead, these are smart, full-facility, modern, sanitary, green, modular homes meant to uplift and delight the user as well as enliven and clean the street.

Pilot Intervention

The Cha Project will install five units of Doonya, sponsored and developed by Singapore's The Shelter Company, to kick-start the food street in Chhatawallah Gullee known for its Sunday morning Chinese breakfast.

Currently the popular Chinese breakfast is sold in the most insalubrious, and unhygienic conditions. With proper stalls, seats for customers, and sun shades, the entire breakfast experience will become exponentially better and could extend to all days of the week. Multiple vendors can benefit from a single unit if different vendors sell at different times of the day, depending on the need of the hour, servicing the huge workforce from many offices and businesses in Central Avenue. As aptly explained by Janice Lee, a fifth generation Chinese youth, who returned to Kolkata from Canada to join the family business: "To me CHA represents Co-operation, Hope and the Aspirations of the marginalized."

Recommendation: Design Thinking

While the community remains charged, municipal authorities have dragged their feet. The biggest problem we face is the lack of communication between government bodies which work in silos. There is urgent need for policy makers to adopt Human Centred Design, that powerful tool used around the world to improve public services and make governments more responsive. It involves multidisciplinary approaches to problems, encouraging a cross-fertilization of ideas, resources and solutions.

The importance of design cannot be over-emphasized; the lack of it is killing innovation. Badly maintained, uninspiring, government offices are stifling creativity, productivity and vision among staff. Design needs to become a central part of urban planning.

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[2] Articles by Soumitra Das are available on the Internet (https://www.telegraphindia.com/west-bengal/breakfast-in-chinatown/cid/1256416).
Rangan Dutta's blog (https://rangandatta.wordpress.com/2011/11/10/chinese-temples-of-tiretta-bazar/) and Deepanjan Ghosh's writings (http://double-dolphin.blogspot.com/search/label/Chinese%20Temples%20of%20Tiretta%20Bazar) have done much to draw attention to Chinatown's fading heritage.

[3] Sahapedia is an open online resource on the arts, cultures and heritage of India (https://www.sahapedia.org).

This is a unique revival of a neighbourhood comprising a distinctive community that is determined to build a better future for itself, and a resolute, energetic youth that is making a difference. It is a case study of a passion project and community spirit pushing things forward with no private investment and minimal government support, ensuring that the past is not forgotten and the future is bright. In terms of overcoming adversity and emerging from the crisis even stronger, Kolkata Chinatown and its associated Chinese community seems to be like the phoenix rising from the ashes.

In the words of late Mr. Paul Chung, former president of the Indian Chinese Association, "Like a phoenix The Cha Project will make Chinatown rise again. Though I regret I am a bit on the old side and may not witness it, it is better late than never."

Unfortunately, he died a few months later. However, his words remain prescient as like the phoenix the Chinatown appears to emerge in a stronger and powerful shape.

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C.3.

Raniganj and Asansol: Efforts of public participation for Bengal's industrial heritage

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Introducing the AHRG

The Asansol Heritage Research Group (AHRG) is a collective of independent heritage enthusiasts and researchers who have been trying their best to create public awareness in the last four years (2016 - 2020) about both tangible and intangible heritage of the Paschim Bardhaman district, especially in the Asansol and Raniganj area.

Originally all members of this group were collectors of fascinating narratives about people, buildings, public places, various customs, rituals and diversified cultural activities in and around Asansol and Raniganj. Subsequently, they wanted to connect with more people to chronicle the narratives of rich and multi-layered heritage associated with railways, coal mines and steel industries. In more than three hundred years' journey from a small rural tract to an immensely significant industrial place, there have been several transposed cultural heads, created over time, in and around Asansol- Raniganj which make the job for the heritage researchers immensely challenging. AHRG has gladly accepted this challenge though till date it has received no funding, has no official website and permanent office, and no well-formulated guideline to follow. Only with a great hope for a better future of industrial heritage it works on the ground level. It plans according to its meagre resources and possible reach, believes in the basic strategy of winning trust of local people who cherish their memories, and thereby continues documenting and disseminating through social media whatever valuable it comes across.

In the last four years AHRG has covered.a vast area which is in fact quite incredible for any amateur group to work on. As a result, it has received recognition from the Edinburgh University, INTACH, RIBA, the Railway Enthusiasts Society, the Rotary Club, the Freemasons, the Asansol Durgapur Development Authority, the Kazi Nazrul University and many other important organizations and people.

As a founder member of this group, here I would like to put forward an outline of some of our achievements and failures, our partial accomplishments and challenges while working with industrial heritage. This paper would focus on the four interesting cases namely the Asansol-Dundee Cake, the Lodge Pioneer-Freemasons' Hall, the Durand Institute and the Raniganj Railway Station - Narankoori Colliery in order to give some idea of what has been done by this group in these years in terms of creating public awareness and participation, and also what the members of this group could not manage to do.

The Asansol-Dundee Cake

Some Muslim bakers at Asansol have been running their trade at the Bastin Bazar area since the late nineteenth century. They believe that their ancestors came from the neighbouring state of Bihar in the early post-mutiny days to work as labourers with the East Indian Railway. One of the ancestors of the locally famous Minar Bakery Shop received a chance to enter into the kitchen of a Scottish Railway Officer, probably a Divisional Superintendent and learnt the recipe as well as the detailed process of baking the Dundee Cake which has been a celebrated Scottish delicacy since the reign of the Mary Queen of Scots. Later on that man opened his own

shop at the then newly established market and for the last one hundred and fifty years almost, the shop-owners are baking the Asansol-Dundee cake during the Christmas till the New Year.

1. The Asansol Heritage Research Group literally began its journey, or "cakewalk", by identifying the cake, the bakers' shop in the market (Fig.1), the relevant story, and eventually creating public awareness about this very small but noteworthy intangible cultural heritage. It all happened when the Scottish Bakers were asking for a GI for the authenticity. We first interviewed the baker and collected the narrative and made an academic presentation at an Indian Association for Scottish Literary Studies conference which was jointly organized by the Bankura University and the Kazi Nazrul University during the winter of 2016.

2. We subsequently contributed a chapter in a book with the focus on Scoto-Indian Cultural Interrelationships that would be published very soon by Routledge India.

3. We published stories about our activities celebrating the heritage of the Asansol – Dundee Cake, Minar Bakery Shop, in Anandabazar Patrika, Telegraph, and a local newspaper named the Industrial Organ. Our friends in ICOMOS and INTACH in Kolkata helped us in this regard.

4. We placed this story before a team of heritage experts at the Edinburgh University and invited them to collaborate with us and to visit Asansol to verify facts, taste the Asansol-Dundee cake and present this case in their part of the globe.

5. And through our Facebook Group named 'Asansol Heritage', we made this intangible heritage popular within and outside India. The students of the Kazi Nazrul University and local people have visited this shop several times during many heritage walks in Asansol. Since the sale has increased with our honest efforts, the shop owner is very happy; he wishes to apply for GI for this cake in near future.
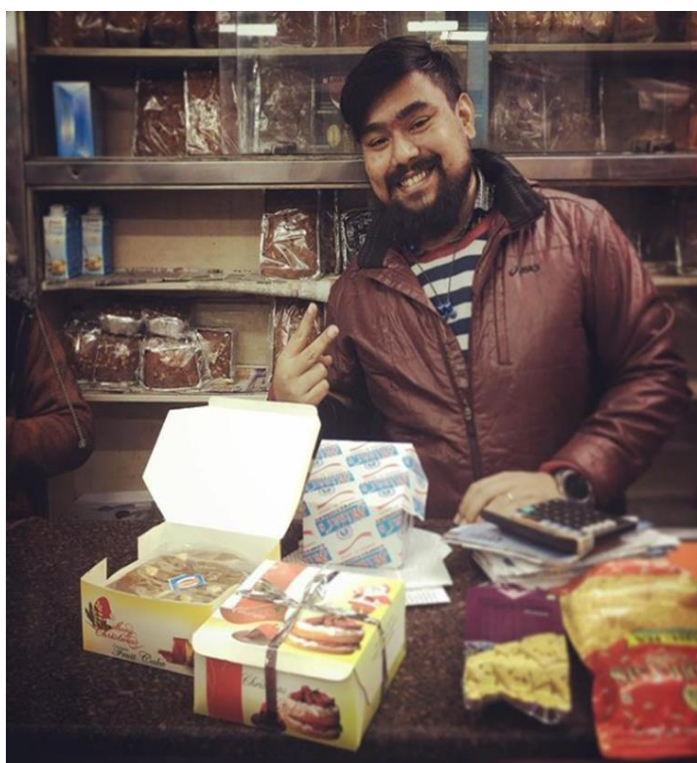
Fig.1: The Asansol-Dundee Cake, Minar Bakery Shop (2020). Courtesy: Edward Hollis

However, we are yet to convince the Asansol Municipal Corporation to erect a plaque, or provide a heritage certificate to the owner of the Minar Bakery. In fact, the Asansol Municipal Corporation has no heritage committee of its own and it hardly pays any attention to tangible and intangible heritage issues.

The Durand Institute

When we informed the Divisional Railway Manager of the Eastern Railway, Asansol Division – Sri P K Mishra about the Asansol- Dundee's story and requested him to permit us collect more narratives about the Railway Heritage in Asansol – it's residential and office buildings, roads, and water-bodies, he readily agreed, and

further sought for our help on three levels in materializing his official project of renovating the famous Durand Institute (Fig.2). It has been the East Indian Railway's first cultural centre and officers' recreational club in India and also a World War I memorial.

Fig.2: The Durand Institute (2019). Courtesy: Anirban Banerjee

After going through all available maps, designs, documents, books, furniture and trophies related with this building and found at the site, for the Asansol Divisional Railway we prepared a heritage survey brochure and eventually a coffee table book on the Durand Institute.

1. We described before the railway officers about the importance of the heritage in their possession, in both tangible and intangible terms.
2. We helped the DRM to organize the First Heritage Walk at Asansol in collaboration with INTACH, Kolkata, and the Railway Enthusiasts' Society, New Delhi, the Lodge Pioneer- Freemasons' Hall, Asansol, the Kazi Nazrul University and various local schools. It was a gala event in November 2018 and a huge success. The local people voluntarily participated in this programme and the news channels and print media gave it a very wide coverage. Subsequently, the Asansol Divisional Railway set up its own heritage committee to look after and renovate significant heritage structures throughout the railway division. We helped the heritage committee in identifying thirty important buildings and in their restoration plan.
3. We also assisted the Asansol Divisional Railway to prepare a short documentary film on the Durand Institute. The coffee table book, the heritage restoration plan and the documentary have been made available on the railway website for public viewing and appreciation. The railway men at Asansol took further initiative in erecting "RAILWAY HERITAGE" plaques on their important buildings. This plaque too was designed by us.
4. Since then several other heritage walks were organized by the Railway Heritage Committee, Asansol Division, in which we participated. In their endeavours in heritage preservation, the Asansol Railway Division has received official appreciation from the Railway Board as well as the Ministry of Railways, the Union Government of India.

The Divisional Railway basically runs under the dictates of the DRM. Sri P K Mishra has been a great heritage enthusiast. But we have not been able to motivate the next DRM and other key railway officials to develop a sustained mechanism of taking care of the earmarked heritage sites under the Asansol Division.

The Lodge Pioneer – Freemasons' Hall

On the railway land and in the erstwhile European railway colony is located the Lodge Pioneer – Freemasons' Hall (Fig.3) which has been the oldest Freemasonic building in West Bengal. The present members of this society under British Constitution are all local people and at our request they joined the heritage walk that was organized by the Asansol Divisional Railway. In reality, the Freemasons' relation with the railway has been extremely bitter on account of decades old legal battle over the rights of the building. Apart from their colonial documents, the notoriety of the building as a *bhoot bangla,* or a haunted house had been protecting the Freemasons from eviction.

Fig.3: The Lodge Pioneer, Asansol (2016). Courtesy: Suvojit Chatterjee and Santanu Banerjee.

We took the following steps in our efforts to preserve the industrial heritage of Lodge Pioneer-Freemasons' Hall:

1. Our intervention indeed helped the ice to melt a bit. For the first time in the last fifty years, the railway officials came to see the invaluable Freemasonic heritage in Bengal which had been set up in Asansol by past railway workers. The present Freemasons too joined in the heritage initiatives of the Divisional Railway.
2. We convinced with the help of our Kolkata based friends related with both ICOMOS and INTACH, and friends abroad working in the conservation panel of RIBA, that the doors of the Lodge Pioneer must now be opened for public. It is no secret organization and the "haunted house" label must be discarded.
3. We contributed some articles on the Lodge Pioneer in local newspapers and national journals in both Bengali and English.
4. We also inspired the Freemasons to host cultural programmes in their premises and invite members of the Civil Society to participate more and more in those events.
5. We had also organized a lecture of Prof Edward Hollis, our friend, co-researcher and professor of Interior Design, Edinburgh College of Art in the Freemasons' Hall where we invited academicians, heritage enthusiasts, political activists, cultural workers, students and also lay persons. We did some promotion of these initiatives chiefly through social media posts.

Consequently, the tag of "Railway Heritage" is accepted by the Lodge Pioneer. Though unfortunately the legal battle with the railways is still going on, we hope neither this building would be forcefully occupied now nor

the Freemasons would be evicted from here. The people of Asansol have started taking pride in this *bhoot bangla*. They are paying regular visits to it and also commenting on it through social media posts.

The Freemasons of Asansol are divided into internal camps or groups. As we have noticed, one group of members really understands the value of heritage while the other opposes sometimes negatively and strongly deny cooperation. Such internal squabbling seemed to be a challenge in our efforts to preserve the heritage of the Lodge Pioneer – Freemasons' Hall.

Raniganj – Narankoori

Our rapport with the Divisional Railway office helped a great deal while working at the Raniganj Railway station, the second most important railway station perhaps, of the East Indian Railway during the days of its inception.

1. We visited this place at several occasions, and explained before railway officials the importance of this station, its furniture, clocks, ticket vending machines, lanterns, weighing machines, *godowns* (warehouses)*,* platform shade, the old engineering bungalow and the vast estate of the Burn and Company Refractory adjacent to the station terminus. We narrated the story of Sir George Turnbull, the first railway engineer in India who came from Scotland to Calcutta, and then from Howrah to Raniganj to establish railway tracts.
2. With local people and the Divisional Railway, we participated at a small heritage walk in the station and its surroundings. On that day the station and the engineering bungalow received the "Railway Heritage" tag.
3. We further motivated local artists to paint a series of brilliant watercolours on this station and the adjacent centuries-old Raniganj town.

Nevertheless, railway lines reached Raniganj primarily due to repeated demands made by none other than Prince Dwarkanath Tagore who had owned collieries at Narankoori and Egara. As we have made our visits to those places, we find a small group of local heritage enthusiasts of the villages struggling to save the remains of the Carr Tagore and Company's jetty on the Damodar River, old Haulage House of the coal mines, the two walls of once attractive Tagore Bungalow (Fig.4), and the dilapidated portions of the Bengal Coal Company's office. The local enthusiasts could manage to convince through the local MLA and other political leaders of the ruling party in West Bengal, the West Bengal State Heritage Commission about the cultural significance of this place. Though these buildings including the local Goddess Mathurachandi temple were declared as heritage, no funding was offered to the Narankoori Heritage Society for preservation or development of the area.

1. We joined hands with the Narankoori Heritage Society and wrote on their behalf in the newspapers, journals and book chapters, brought members of the Tagore family to this place to reclaim authenticity. We also took university students, freelance journalists and local historians to this place.
2. Prof. Edward Hollis visited Narankoori twice and talked on the importance of this place. Noted urban conservationist Kamalika Bose also visited Narankoori and joined us and the villagers in a press conference. We further participated in a *mela* (fair) organized by the Narankoori Heritage Society in January 2020 and put some pressure on the state government. Subsequently, the Asansol Durgapur Development Authority and the Block Development Office received few crores of money for preservation and development of this site.

The entire site is on coal blocks and the Eastern Coalfield Limited is least interested in the preservation and development of this area. Alongside legal mining, unlawful activities are also prevalent. These are serious threats which we cannot control. The Narankoori Heritage Society too is divided into small camps – political and moral. The fund sanctioned by the state government is therefore not yet fully utilized. In spite of our repeated attempts the members of this society do not properly understand the meaning of a heritage landscape and the importance of developing it through right planning and design.

Fig.4: Remains of Tagore Bungalow at Narankoori, engulfed by a mining pit except the three walls, which are saved by the efforts of the local villagers (2020). Courtesy: Kamalika Bose.

Conclusion

Asansol and Raniganj does not figure anywhere in the tourist map of India, or the world. One does not expect another Taj Mahal, or the *ghats* (riverfront steps) of Varanasi, or even the green hills of the North East here. It is not at all a great subject for conventional photographers.

However, in the industrial map of Bengal as well as India, Asansol and Raniganj has been quite an important field and it has many incredible untold tales. The Asansol – Heritage Research Group is primarily narrating those tales to the world which it believes is the first step taken towards heritage awareness and preservation. In the process, it is inevitably helping them to earn people's trust.

Though public participation in heritage awareness and preservation is often described as something which needs intervention of experts in this field, we, the members of AHRG are involved in this project not as experts, rather through our voluntary efforts to motivate people to work for exploration of this lesser known heritage.

Acknowledgements

C.4.

Panel Discussion

Ratish Nanda, Rinkoo Bhowmik, Saleem Beg, Sandeep Khan, Santanu Banerjee, Shama Pawar

Moderator: *Dhriti Ray*

The session theme was conservation of historic precincts and areas by engaging local community, how it valorizes local heritage, strengthens values and builds custodianship. The vital role of the process in safeguarding heritage, the socio-economic development of people living in close vicinity and the impact of education and health-related infrastructure was highlighted through examples, case studies and discussions.

Moderator

I feel privileged to present three distinguished guests to the audience, Mr Saleem Beg, Mr Sandeep Khan and Ms Shama Pawar. They will be joining the speakers of this session for the panel discussion.

I would like to begin today's discussion with Mr Saleem Beg. Kashmir is a land known from Ashokan period, with a history and heritage of more than 2000 years. Kashmir has unique cultural landscape with both tangible and intangible heritage. What lessons of community engagement, for monuments as well as areas and precinct can we learn from your experiences?

Saleem Beg

Thank you for providing me an opportunity to talk about Kashmir and the historic city of Srinagar. I would like to add just a sentence about its geography, and link it with the areas north and south of Kashmir. Towards the southern part it looks like we are a part of a Gangetic plain extending up to the hills, but from the other side, we are connected to the countries like Afghanistan, China and Central Asia.

Most of our crafts and our interface with the world of art has been through that side. For purposes of culture and history, heritage is also the engagement to the community. River Jhelum is defining the city located on its two banks. If we compare photograph of 1910, about 110 -year -old photograph of riverscape with present one, except for the colours and some roofs changing from mud to iron sheets, rest of it looks almost the same. So, still it has that historicity into it. Built heritage is 200 or 2000 years old (Fig.1). However, I would like to concentrate on the advent of Islam as the main aspect because most of our architecture or culture is influenced by, or evolved around, this major historic intervention.

We are located at crossroads of cultural influences of different countries. As a result, this place evolved as a trade, craft based enterprise, and thereby its prosperity depended on its commerce. In other words, workshops and *bazaars* (markets) were the key supporters of urban life and urban lifestyle. The city also became a focal point, or a centre for men of wealth and religion, as often people from mainland India spent their summers there and bought crafts and decorative items. During Mughal rule, Kashmir ushered into a new era of a vibrant cultural space for an extended period with ample promotion of arts, crafts, calligraphy, literature, and Persian poetry. We still have remnants or vestiges of that rich cultural influx (Fig.2). Presently, since the 50's, the city entered into a new phase of urbanization, which challenged the settlement pattern, whose first casualty was public spaces, community institutions around markets and shrines. The public pressure and haphazard growth stressed the infrastructure in the old city.

Fig.1: Jhelum River front, Srinagar. Courtesy: INTACH, Kashmir
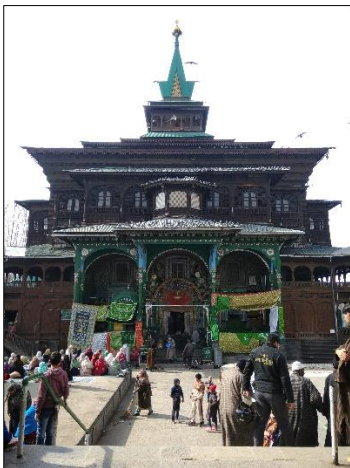
Fig.2: Remnants or vestiges of rich cultural influx. Left: Khanqah Shah Hamdam, Srinagar; Right: Raghunath Temple, Habba Kedal. Courtesy: INTACH, Kashmir

Currently, we would like to discuss about the rich vestiges. The city is still a unique example of built heritage and vernacular architecture. The first attempt to comprehensively study the mapping and documentation of the historic city was made in 1988 by INTACH Delhi. The cultural heritage zones were mapped under the leadership of the eminent architect Mr Khosla, and the initial steps were taken in exploring the cultural space of the city. The importance of mapping and documentation was recognized, and thereby, we digitized the city along the river, and identified the properties located around the river. Most of them are no longer in the news as they were originally but existing on ground at the same locations. With digitization or mapping, cultural resource mapping could be accomplished, which got the attention of planners and citizens. Earlier the historic city was taken for granted and we lived with it; this was the first attempt to identify, establish and articulate the historicity and cultural significance of Kashmir.

We also got involved in some kind of community engagement, or preliminary baby steps, along certain buildings in the riverfront. For example, a temple that looked like a house, built up the vernacular character of the river, so well integrated and merged in the local architectural theme, contributing to the character of the

riverfront. One of our engagement projects included restoring a colonial building, which was demolished as somebody sold it, and only a part was left of the building. We thought that if we do not work on such buildings, all these would be lost. Thereby, we started reconstructing the cultural centre known as Lal Ded School, by engaging people so that they develop some kind of an ownership for the centre. So, we made a presentation of the craft skills in terms of production, or how it is manufactured and developed. Interestingly, later, this served as a pilot project for a bigger River Jhelum development project. We renamed the centre as Lal Ded Cultural Centre, which is now a perfect instance of community engagement. It not only provides an expert insight of their indigenous craft, but also their related employment and business prospects. There are displays of unique crafts, like a small wooden fixture, which is used in weaving the local Pashmina shawl.

We did another community engagement project for a ninth century Mansabal Temple on a lake close to Srinagar. The walls were covered with fence that they lost, and then community came and did another fence. However, as the fencing misrepresented the main temple, we cleared the area, and constructed a stone wall around the temple, which brought the feeling of originality to the religious structure. The idea behind such community ownership oriented projects was basically to link the monuments, or specific areas, to local people so that they are able to connect, and thereby develop some respect for the culture and heritage associated with it. Thank you.

Moderator

Thank you, Mr Beg for an enlightening presentation about Kashmir. It is an opportunity for us to know from you. Now, I would like to know from Mr Sandeep Khan.

Mr Khan, it is really commendable how you have contributed in transforming a small village to a heritage place in West Bengal tourist map. Please share in brief the history of the Narajol Raj Bari, and your related activities in last three decades to restore and preserve the buildings and precincts by forming the Narajol Archaeological Preservation Committee.

Sandeep Khan

The origin of the name of 'Narajol' comes from *Nara* which means stem of a tree, and *jole* which refers to a flooded area. Around 1414 CE (820 Bengali year), Uday Narayan Ghosh, the Dewan / minister of Burdwan Raj Icchai Ghosh, spent a night at Narajol while on a hunting expedition, and being blessed by the Goddess Joydurga, founded the royal dynasty there. His descendant Shri Kartik Ram Ghosh received the title 'Roy' from the then Bengal ruler Soleman Karbani, and later in 1596 CE, the eighth descendant Balabanta Roy, received the 'Khan' title from the Mughal Subedar / ruler.

Narajol area is quite significant for historical, archaeological, cultural, natural and geographical reasons. Surrounded by a river, this settlement is encircled by a moat, comprising the *Rajbari* (royal palace), Jalahari (the Lake Palace), Hawa Mahal (the dancing hall), and more than fifty temples, all built in Indo European style of architecture. Ancient indigenous folk arts, festivals and rituals like Pata painting, Tusu song and tribal dances have enriched the intangible cultural heritage of Narajol.

Narajol royal family played significant and active roles in the freedom struggle of India including Chuar Revolt and Medinipur bomb conspiracy case. Distinguished national heroes and freedom fighters of pre-independent India like, Mahorshi Debendranath Thakur, Rabindranath Thakur, Mahatma Gandhi, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, Motilal Nehru, Pandit Jawharlal Nehru, Kaji Najrul Islam, Rishi Aurobindo, Deshbondhu Chittaranjan Das, Khudiram Bose, Sarojini Naidu, Hemchandra Kanungo and later Indira Gandhi frequented the Rajbari. The Royal family's contribution in the spread of education, art, culture and social reforms like religious intolerance, removal of untouchability and various societal activities are of immense value. The royal palaces and residences are now threatened due to lack of proper maintenance, which the present descendants are not able to support.

In 1993, some members of the royal family and a few local residents formed Narajol Archaeological Preservation Committee, which later got official recognition as Narajol Archaeological Preservation Society from both State and Central Governments. This society has played a pivotal role in making the local people aware of heritage through various action plans, like publication of several books on Narajol history, making of documentary films, establishing libraries, awareness campaign in newspaper, websites and through social

media like Facebook, organizing educational trips and providing services, effort to include Narajol in the district tourism atlas, cleaning and beautification of historical precincts, arranging for police safety camps as well as undertaking urgent repair and renovation work of heritage structures according to established norms. In addition, the Society has done various programmes for education, health and hygiene, environment and social services. Due to continued and repeated appeals of the society in various forums from local Panchayat to the President of India in 2008, the West Bengal Heritage Commission declared the Rajbari as heritage structure in 2011, and Archaeological Survey of India, Kolkata circle has recommended them to be declared as nationally protected monuments. In 2011, West Bengal Government sanctioned 46 lakhs rupees for renovation of the Hawa Mahal, which has been partially completed. Presently, the District Administration has prepared a Detailed Project Report (DPR) of 6 crores 52 lakhs rupees. The Society has been able to act as a watchdog in preventing unlawful activities by local mafia and influential people, including incompatible commercial use of the heritage structures, encroachment of heritage precincts and areas marked for tourist activities. The society along with a few members of the royal family has chalked out a tourism development plan and tourist circuit based entirely on private initiative. The plan includes home stay for a capacity of 60 persons at the Rajbari, and tour options of a Day Out, One Night Two Days Plan, Two Nights Three Days Plan, all on reasonable rates. Other future plans are a museum, *son et lumiere* (light and sound) show, location for documentary filming , picnic spot , Eco Park, Fishing Point, installation of CCTV, public toilets, rest rooms, interpretation and signage for heritage structures, heritage walk, road construction and adaptive reuse of the palace and heritage structures for various social and welfare activities. Expected benefits and employment generation are direct gainful employment of 50 persons as well as involving local communities of Narajol and adjoining places in various activities. Around 200 *patuas* (artisans engaged in making painted scrolls) and *patua gaan* (a genre of folk music performance given with the help of a scroll paining) artist community will gain due to the increased demand for performance of songs and for craft items. The potter community will also be benefitted due to increased demand for earthenware for food items; besides, various crafts like the handicraft of Dom community, wood craft, clay craft and idols, conch shell craft will see increased demand and the sweet meat community and local transport operators will also be benefitted. Additionally, performance by local artists, especially in the evenings after the day long tours and outings, will not only drive the economy but also contribute towards preservation and revival of intangible local heritage. The society looks forwards to more membership, online subscriptions and patronage from interested people and organizations. Adversaries/ difficulties are caused by resistance and opposition of influential people with vested interests. There has not been much initiative from administration for heritage preservation and tourism development.

Moderator

Now, we would like to hear from Shama. Shama has a vast experience in working with the local community in Halebidu, Hampi since few decades, especially in conservation of local heritage and community development. We would be happy to hear from you how you integrated community with conservation of local heritage that resulted in the sustainable development of the Hampi area. Your experience could be inspiring to others who are facing many challenges in doing so.

Shama Pawar

Basically, I work in the historic settlement of Anegundi (Fig.3) which is part of the Hampi World Heritage site, where we have about twenty villages and sixty thousand community members. It is also called the Cradle City of Hampi which has a beautiful *mandapa* (pavilion) in the middle of the river, which has 64 pillars, and is therefore called 64-pillars Mandapa. According to me, this is the most important monument of Hampi because it represents the tangible and intangible heritage together. When one looks at these 64 arches, for example, it is kind of a timeless entity – it is not stagnant in time, as it represents things that could be relevant to today's life.

I started my journey about 25 years ago. And like everybody is talking about sanitation being the very major issue, I also had the same thing in mind. Those days, there were some serious sanitation issues, including defecation in front of homes and garbage. Today I would think otherwise, because in those days, 25 years ago, we had pretty much organic waste. And today we are facing a very different scenario of a lot of garbage, which we have no control over, which is plastic and reusable things. We started with what is close to the people, the local community. I started having tea with the sweeper community, some of whom are still working in the

village, while others have retired. As for the open defecation, we actually started giving trench toilets because there was no facility. People were shy to even have to have toilets in their homes because they thought it was unhygienic, and it was not at all easy to instil the awareness and importance of sanitation. I was a woman, who came from outside, and was driving a car. They were not interested in such kind of a person. But, I was very lucky to have friends and colleagues, and founding members, who had other ideas. With their help, we started *rangoli* (an art form, in which patterns are created on the floor using material such as powdered lime stone, red ochre, dry rice flour, coloured sand, quartz powder, flower petals et cetera) competitions and clean street competitions, which was how we started changing the situation of the homes and the streetscapes. We also started a beautiful programme of education, and the performing arts. Though I am not an architect, but an artist, I have always been interested in architectural conservation.

Fig.3: Anegundi village

The second important thing which we started was the banana fibre cottage industry because the bananas grow there, which has become Hampi's heritage. I developed my friend's idea about a local banana fibre cottage industry and established the Kishkinda Trust in 1997 to initiate the venture. Today we have three hundred women who are working in the banana fibre cottage industry. This took a lot of meetings with the community, a lot of time getting them to experiment. It was really an interpersonal relationship with me and the community that actually made these things happen. After the initial support of the Ministry of Textiles, the cottage industry eventually became an independent, zero-plastic organization, working with local resources, thereby enhancing the local economy. The ministry of textiles recently recognized our efforts towards the development of the Craft Tourism Village, for the enhancement of the working conditions of the local artisans. However, we have some issues, which need to be discussed, like what happens to the local community and what are the challenges in the context of the World Heritage site? We started working on the simple things that people do at home, like the *rangoli*, to enhance the physical environment and quality of life for the community in general and also instil a sense of pride in it. Similarly, we started like a small *santhe*, which is a local market, which used to happen on a weekend every month. We did it for almost five years, this was organized for the tourists with a view for local community to make some earnings. The tradition has stopped.

Further, we worked with the heritage resource of the place which was Hanuman's birthplace as a tangible aspect of the site that is actually able to produce whatever the skills that we can teach them and augment those things. We worked with those kind of tangible and intangible spaces and created something which was highly appreciated by communities who were visiting us as well as the local community. We stopped the *santhe*

activity in 2015 because I feel that we need to do it in a bigger way, though now the pilgrimage footfall has gone up.

Additionally, we had the performing arts programme, which is one of the most important programmes and the most powerful way of creating awareness for local communities by inviting international guests and dancers. We organized a performance with a distinct depiction of Ramayana with local and visiting artists at Chintamani, which is especially pertinent in the context of the local story of Ram shooting Bali at this spot. We were very blessed to have some great artists performing in Hampi in many cultural events. Interestingly, the local communities were involved in managing the entire festival, which had a zero impact, with no artificial background, and a philharmonic orchestra with two hundred artists. The local community brilliantly arranged the five day event which had guests from UNESCO and distinguished people like Dr Subramanian.

Finally, we bring in students for the documentation of the development of craft in cottage industry, which foster an atmosphere of creativity. We are very resilient and adaptable, have many women in our cultural industries who have helped it to grow further. Additionally we have a future plan, which we have presented to the government, focussing on how these 29 villages can further grow, and how we can conserve those spaces without going with the ripple effect. In this context, at last, I would like to point out the issue of the non-inclusive ways of the World Heritage Management Council.

Moderator

Thank you very much. It is really an incredible work for the environment and community. We will again come to you in a second round of discussion. So, now we would like to continue our second line of discussions with questions from audience. Starting with Ratish Nanda.

In your presentation, you have shown many activities of the Aga Khan Foundation. You have a long experience in dealing with heritage precinct especially with the local community in Nizamuddin. Please share with us your experience about any attitudinal change in local people you have seen in safeguarding our heritage precinct. Are they now coming forward?

Ratish Nanda

Some of the questions have already been addressed. Nevertheless, one of the questions is what is the involvement of the community now? When we started, a lot of the programmes were done by external experts. But in the last decade, almost ninety five percent of the staff running the programme are residents of the modest locality or, *basti* (an overcrowded area where many poor people live), which is critical for sustainability of the work in the future and empowerment of the local community.

Hence, the two pertinent issues are interlinked, getting the local people together in formal community based organizations, and making them aware of their own rights to get access to the related government schemes. Here, I think a community empowerment has been a very critical thing. For instance, when we started the project in Nizamuddin, the parks were taken over by contractors to store building materials, however, now the local people are very protective of their open spaces, owing to their community participation and engagement with conservation. In the process, there is greater awareness within the community now, and a sense of pride, this is evident in their self-help group activities, like, the Nizamuddin heritage guides, or the women who make products based on patterns of historic buildings. Thus, the community realizes that they owe the creation of infrastructure and facilities they now have access to, to the heritage status of their settlement. Therefore, hopefully, in future, the community can act as protectors of their own heritage and associate with it.

Moderator

Ok, thank you. We would like to hear from Rinkoo Bhowmik who gave an excellent presentation on Chinatown, the place with which most people in Kolkata are familiar with. You are working since long to restore the whole heritage of Chinatown. As you were already working in Chinatown and the Chinese community living there, will you share with us what kind of support you would actually request from the government side to promote the Chinatown area, or Tangra, as a whole? You definitely have some plan for getting it done.

Rinkoo Bhowmik

Tangra (New Chinatown) is actually an area that needs more urgent attention than Cheenapara (Old Chinatown) because there is such rampant land grab happening and soon there will be nothing left. All of it is being converted into luxury apartments, so-called gated communities. It is extremely sad to see a different kind of encroachment of the rich, which is a very complex issue. We are working on a proposal for what can be done with Tangra, and I am sure, even the developers understand that heritage preservation increases the land value.

It is important for all stakeholders to sit down at one table and discuss what the alternatives are. Does it only have to be luxury residential apartments? What can you create that will keep this heritage alive, keep the identity of Tangra alive, or be related to the past.

At the government level, we faced the problem of miscommunication between the different departments, resulting in lack of coordination and unnecessary delay in the project.

Moderator

Thank you for sharing your concern. So, now I would like to have Santunu join in our discussion. I appreciate you for such an informative presentation about industrial heritage and British colonial legacy in Asansol region. We want to know about the challenges you and your society have faced in restoring and preserving those heritage places. Moreover, how did you overcome it?

Santanu Banerjee

Asansol or Raniganj are nowhere in the heritage map of India, and one does not find anything significant like the Taj Mahal of Agra, or the Ghats of Varanasi, or even the Green Hills of Ooty here. However, this region has been extremely important for the coalmines, railways, and iron and steel industries. This is primarily a big challenge to let people understand the worth of such a heritage that does not often produce very nice picture postcards. Since this alternative concept of heritage is yet to be appreciated in our country. Hence, unfortunately, the coal landscape of Ranigunj and Narankuri, and the big and small buildings namely the Bengal Coal Company office, the Tagore bungalow, the Mathurachandi temple and the Jetty Ghat, all built by Dwarakanath Tagore's Carr Tagore and Company, are greatly underrated and in grave danger. Though the local people here have recently formed the Narankuri Heritage Society and trying to protect these sites by popularizing them, they are yet to receive appropriate funds and technical support. It is true that the West Bengal State Heritage Commission has declared some of these places as State Heritage already, but much of this is done merely on paper. There is a meagre and irregular supply of money from the State Government reaching Raniganj, and that too after putting great deal of pressure through some of our influential friends from the Tagore family, from Edinburgh University, and from ICOMOS. However, that fund is not properly utilized due to the lack of scientific planning and design required for the protection and preservation of such an important heritage landscape.

Throughout the Asansol Railway Division several important heritage associated with the railways namely the Raniganj and the Asansol Railway Stations, Burn and Co's bungalows, the Durand Institute, the railway school buildings and the Freemason Halls – all have come under the threat of demolition through the railway's decision of building a revenue earning Railopolis in this region. We were fortunate to receive Mr. P K Mishra, the earlier DRM (Divisional Railway Manager) who took interest in heritage. However, the scenario has now completely changed in the two COVID 19-ridden years. Railway now makes its presence felt through bulldozers and evictions only.

The local self-government in Asansol is also lagging far behind in the matter of heritage conservation. It has no heritage committee and it seems that in the next fifty years it would be having none! I must tell you about a small shop which is located at the heart of the city of Asansol. It is a baker's shop associated with the memory of the poet Kazi Nazrul Islam who is also the national poet of Bangladesh. Here at the early part of his career, the poet worked as a bookkeeper. Though we have been trying to make people aware of this shop, and along with the shopkeeper and the local organizations appealing several times before the Asansol Municipal Corporation for its preservation, in the last four years no positive outcome is visible.

Similarly, the wonderful Director's Bungalow of Sir Rajen Mukherjee in Kulti has been subject to utter neglect. Although the buildings associated with Sir Rajen in Kolkata, are of the same architectural design and beauty and have already considered as heritage property; the Kulti Bungalow is in a dilapidated state. It is sharing the fate of the entire range of almost three hundred bungalows built in the Asansol region at different phases of the colonial and the post-colonial history. Not very far away from Asansol is the Panchakot Raj palace. This important building too is suffering from neglect.

The Asansol Heritage Research Group has done many activities in a short span of time by earning the trust of the local people. However, we have not achieved complete success, and there is a long way ahead.

Moderator

Now, we want to know from Mr Beg. Mr Beg, you told us that redevelopment of historic sites is well integrated in the plan. But what else needs to be done?

Saleem Beg

There are two questions about the integration and redevelopment of historic sites, namely, whether redevelopment is well integrated into the planning process, and, whether redevelopment has actually occurred. Unfortunately, integration and redevelopment of historic sites is not happening adequately. Unless we mainstream the heritage and concerns about heritage in the planning process, we will not be able to go very far. In fact, all of these things are rooted, managed and administered through civic institutions or state institutions, where one needs a proper planning system for practical interventions.

There was one intervention to create a space and an opening for heritage conservation that was part of the planning process, which the JNNURM attempted to review. It is a different matter that most of the agencies were not able to take advantage of that simply because of insufficient capacities on ground, and lack of expertise. I went for a UNESCO assignment there to find out what has happened to this amount. We were told that we cannot spend it because we cannot find people to use this money. Anyway the whole point is, unless we mainstream the heritage conservation, with all appropriateness, we will not be able to go very far. Unfortunately, there were some gaps in the projects for JNNURM. There is enough dialogue now about this fact that it has to be mainstream, and some constituency has to be created.

Moderator

Now back to Sandeep Khan. In 2011 you gave a proposal to ASI to declare Narajol Rajbari as a monument of national importance; if this becomes a reality then is there a chance that, due to regulatory policies of government, there could be a conflict with your present community activities or the proposed tourism plan, or will you be benefitted? What is your opinion in this regard?

Sandeep Khan

We are trying to preserve it for a greater cause. We have made application to the government that as our ancestors had made significant contribution, there are so many references to their self-sacrifice where they worked endangering their own lives, we need to sacrifice a bit of our own self-interest and work in a united way to preserve the ancient history of India. The land where there are the monuments, is mostly with the government of West Bengal, and will get transferred as per existing government rules. There are many more monuments and heritage structures on private land or properties which are privately owned, but if government takes initiative for these land parcels and /or structures, we will welcome any such government initiative. The owners from the royal family are willing to cooperate as per the present rules and regulations. We would like to see the improvement of the local socio -economic condition.

Moderator

Shama, what should be the current policy of the government and what other support do you require from the stakeholder in heritage management and community development?

Shama Pawar

For the World Heritage Site, there is a master plan and we have a body which is supposed to be monitoring the World Heritage area. Unfortunately, the masterplan has not been revised, it is in need of revision, which has

not happened for a very long time. The plan currently is under revision, but from our previous experience we know that this is a non-inclusive process, which has given very little confidence to the community. Actually, there are two districts in World Heritage-Koppal and Bellary. Though I am not so sure about the authenticity of this news, but the Koppal district is saying that they do not want to be under the Hampi World Heritage Area Management Authority, and they want to have their own authority. I think it is a consequence of the non-inclusiveness of the community and opportunities and planning, because we do not provide opportunities or guidelines for the community to grow and meet the aspirations of the community and actually have proper consultation. We have to realise that whatever we do, it has to be done in a united way, we have to work with the community as a team, be it with the NGOs, or the government organizations. There is a lot more scope for developing, because the main concern is not that we have received some heritage in this generation, but what we are going to leave for the next generation. So we have created certain plans at INTACH, we have created Kishkindha Trust which are living examples of what can be done and things are quite strongly evident. However, even our organization have to face a lot of difficulties, for instance, to get permissions to set up Art Institute or Cultural Industries.

Meanwhile, things happen without any control and any planning, and then it becomes very difficult to reverse back to the pristineness of the site, which Hampi offers. I am looking at heritage in a much broader way, be it agricultural practices, horticulture or, mythology. Hampi is very rich heritage site, as what is visually very charming is not only buildings and monuments, but also the corridors and the landscapes. However, there are concerns like the solid waste management, with which we have been working from the beginning, especially in the context of the two district issue. Likewise there are a lot of things and we need to do this very quickly because right now the two districts seem to be against each other. The local community says that we do not want any anyone to tell us anything. We want our own masterplan, which may be good for decentralizing because local community should have enough say in the management plan and master plan, and there is more consideration for the community. So it has to be inclusive, they have to be supportive, there need to be state of the art institutions for training people. It is not about the numbers, but about quality. It should be about creating a sort of flagship examples for what can happen based on the heritage resources.

Moderator

Thank you for sharing. And yes, there are so many issues right now. There are some questions from our audience.

Question Answer Session

Audience

While Agha Kahn trust is working in Delhi and Hyderabad, has it considered taking up any project in West Bengal? As an example, the site in Murshidabad, seems to be a possibility.

Ratish Nanda

We work on the invitation of the government. We build partnerships with government agencies where we are invited. We have not yet received any request from the government of West Bengal to work there.

Audience

The Cheenapara in Kolkata is already known for its food culture as the morning street food legend. How the new street food information as Cha initiative proposed accommodates this existing structure?

Rinku Bhowmick

The new intervention hopes to bring in cleanliness, hygiene, better protection from the elements and more vendors. It has now dwindled to a few Chinese vendors on Sunday mornings. It is in extremely unsanitary conditions right now, and that is what we want to tackle.

Audience

Mr Beg, I would like to know, what are the challenges in design and with the local community as conservation is still a sensitive topic in India?

Saleem Beg

It is a sensitive topic, which has many challenges. The main aspect is the capacity to meet the requirement to translate into planning process, into community development funds. Certain things have not been able to get due emphasis and attention as these would have been. I hope that in future these things can be addressed.

Moderator

I have another question, a common question to all of you - what about the ways to funding challenges? Could you share one suggestion?

Shama Pawar

For anything, you will need some funding and backing. However, I feel it is about awareness and education amongst the governmental bodies and the communities. Communication is a very important tool that we can use for getting our point across for the better, brighter future.

Shantanu Banerjee

I would certainly agree with Shama Pawar in this regard. Governments do not know how to and where to spend money properly. So funds from the government will always come, if people know how to put pressure. Moreover, all sensible people must stand united to put pressure. To this end, awareness of heritage is very important. Until and unless people are made aware of their heritage so that they may get united and put pressure, money shall remain an issue.

Therefore, awareness is the matter of chief priority.

Concluding Remarks

In the session various issues were discussed. The examples corroborated how engaging communities brought about change in the community attitude and the kinds of support required in pulling off such projects. The main points that were elaborated in the discussion included the need for a collective voice, documentation and reaching out to the people through skill-development, women empowerment, hygiene improvement and a holistic approach towards natural as well as cultural heritage.

Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage

Safeguarding
Intangible Cultural Heritage

Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) is traditional, contemporary, and living. ICH encompasses inherited traditions as well as rural and urban contemporary cultural practices; it includes oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts. ICH has passed down through generations and has evolved in response to the natural and social environment of a place. Thereby, it strongly contributes to building a sense of identity, responsibility, and belonging among communities. The fourth session examined the need for interventions integrating efforts of revitalizing intangible cultural heritage along with conservation of historic areas and precincts, and harnessing the contribution of culture in achieving the sustainable development goals.

November 25, 2020

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Recording of webinar

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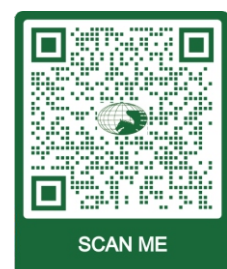
D.1.

Connecting living heritage with sustainable development

Dr Shikha Jain

Director
DRONAH (Development and Research Organisation for Nature, Arts and Heritage), Gurugram;
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I will primarily focus on the living heritage in Indian cities, and how urban development projects by the concerned ministry, or even professionals and NGOs in India, are addressing living heritage. I will begin with the definition of living heritage in Indian cities, give some examples of the challenges in safeguarding this heritage through few case studies. These examples showcase the attempts to connect the living heritage with urban conservation, management and planning. And, lastly, I will conclude with what could be a possible way forward to connect the living heritage with sustainable development of our cities.

So, starting with the definition itself, ICCROM has recently come up with the definition of Living Heritage and talks about a living heritage approach which is a move further from the value-based approach. It is largely a people centric approach. In a way, it is a bit different from what UNESCO speaks about living heritage because the latter primarily focuses on the living heritage term under the ICH, which is the Intangible Cultural Heritage:

> ICH comprises of the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity. (UNESCO. 2003)

Kamalika also spoke about 'diving into ICH', the Intangible Cultural Heritage or living heritage. What UNESCO has actually captured in this 1-minute video (UNESCO, Dive into intangible cultural heritage!) is how they have defined and mapped the living heritage. This short video created by UNESCO shows the complexity of living heritage which has 503 elements across many countries as mapped by them. It also provides a perspective about the Intangible and Living Heritage as defined by different international organizations.

Moving on now to how India is looking at Living Heritage, and the very name India and its heritage, as we are all aware, has the living component as an essential aspect to it. Recently, NITI Aayog has accepted the significance of India's 'Living Heritage' in its Heritage Management report of June 2020. This dynamic heritage in India needs to be recognized and addressed appropriately while providing a management frame work because it is different from the Western nations. At times, it shows more continuity since centuries, there is sometimes no break in the usage of the site in existence. INTACH in its charter (2004) defined it quite well because they are talking about the heritage that is manifest in both tangible and intangible forms, and that is essentially the living heritage. And in its diversity defines the composite culture of the country. INTACH (2004) says, "Conserving the 'living' heritage, therefore, offers the potential to conserve both traditional buildings and traditional ways of building" even traditional ways of use and lifestyle. There are organizations across India, various NGOs and one example is the Maharana Mewar Charitable Foundation, Udaipur which has started a World Living Heritage Festival since 2012 because they want to promote the living heritage of

Udaipur and also understand living heritage across various cultures. This is an initiative with UNESCO New Delhi that has been continuing since 2012. There are several discourses on Living Heritage in India and, in 2011, UNESCO had created the Indian Heritage Cities Network (IHCN) programme that came up with a heritage definition inclusive of the living component. IHCN stated that "Heritage is not only monuments and architectural master pieces, it is about the way a settlement evolves in relationship to its natural surroundings, the water bodies. A city's heritage is about its streets and public squares, including basic utilities, food and festivals, crafts and craftsmen, and about peoples' livelihood and contemporary creativity" (IHCN-UNESCO, 2011). So, it covers, the vast gamut that we just saw in the previous definitions and this was already part of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development Programme under JNNURM (Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission) at that time.

Interestingly, in India, the national highways often transform into pilgrim routes. For instance, during the time of Kanwariyas in the auspicious Hindu month of Shravan, devotees of Lord Shiva, especially in North India, walk barefoot to Haridwar and Gaumukh in Uttarakhand to fetch holy water from river Ganga. Often, processions in urban streets, or, squares corroborate as ritual spaces. Even, stones on pavements sometimes evolve into living temples. Notably, as pointed out by Rahul Mehrotra, mega scale Kumbh Mela installations become accepted role models for city planning and urban management. In short, the significance of Living Heritage cannot be ignored, and, we need to address it in our future projects on urban renewal, development, or conservation.
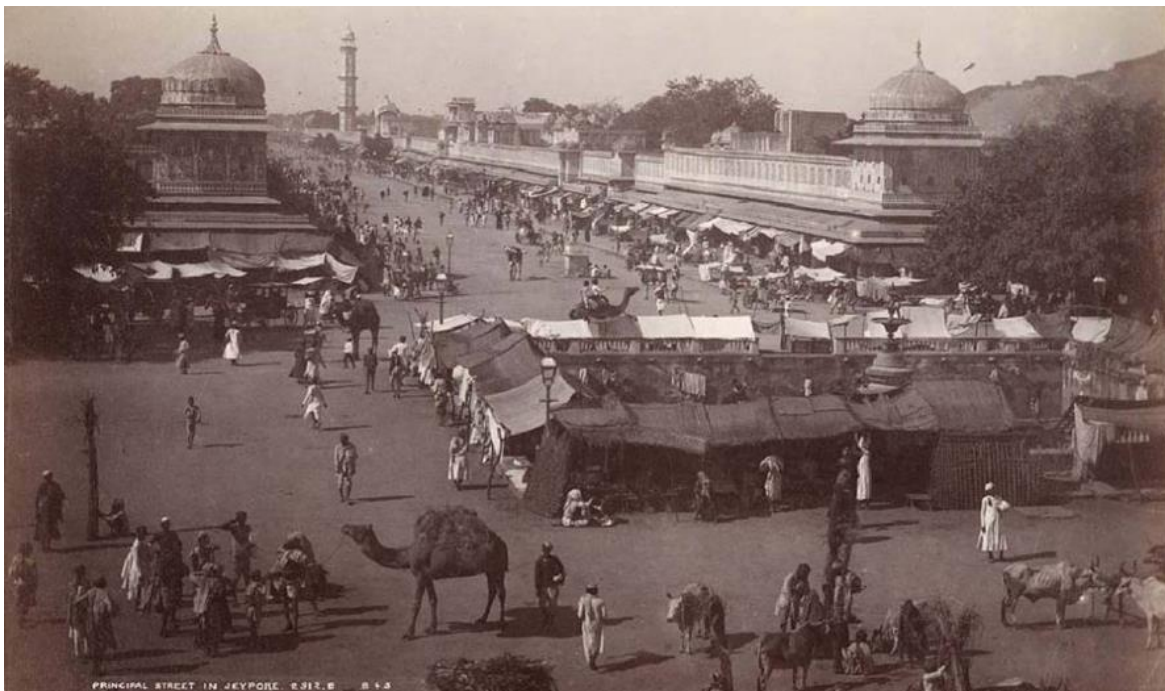
Fig.1: Jaipur *chaupar*

The above photograph (Fig.1) shares the example of a public square or *chaupar* in the city of Jaipur, which can give you a brief hint of how the understanding of public squares is different in different cities, or what kind of components, or complexities are present across living heritage of Indian cities. The 18th century city has many important public squares, or the *chaupars*. In this archival picture of the *chaupar* dating from the 19th century, one can see the informal vendors - the *phoolwallahs* (flower vendors) and *chudiwallahs* (bangle vendors). And, it was in 2009-10, the local vendors association who has their shops in temporary kiosks at the *chaupar* approached the Government of Rajasthan. In 2009-10 the vendors' Association Head spoke to the Principal Secretary, Urban Development and requested for permanent structures for themselves as they have been trading there for many generations. Subsequently, we had a dialogue, where we explained them that as their ancestors always carried out their businesses in these temporary kiosks, so this character of the city must be retained, though we can redesign the kiosks for better use and efficiency. So, this was an exercise with the vendors' community and this entire space was designed in a manner that the kiosk could be folded and closed at night and locked safely. However, by 2014, the city Mayor decided that the vendors needed to be removed

from this space, as the shopkeepers who have permanent shops behind the kiosks were concerned that these kiosks would become permanent and block their sales. So, the shopkeepers' association came together and talked to the Mayor, and all these people were removed from the *chaupar*. In fact, then, the vendors' association Head requested us if they could get those kiosk design because they had got a land from the government to be relocated. However, we were convinced that eventually the vendors will be back in their original space. Now, the vendors have returned with the *phoolwallahs* sitting around the *chaupar* again. Significantly, we need to realize this particular aspect in our cities, as rightly pointed out by anthropologist Nold Egenter and Rahul Mehrotra that temporary structures are more permanent than the permanent fabric of our city and, unless we understand this cultural aspect, we will not be able to sustain both together.

Another case that is shown in the photograph (Fig.2) is in the city of Udaipur. It is on the Pichola Lake bed. There is a group of women and in the middle, there is a blue structure which is actually a water tanker. It was in 2006 when the lake was completely dry, and I was working around the site when I checked with a local person what was happening here. He said this is a fairly common ritual, which takes place about 3-4 times a day, when there is a death in the family, the ladies have to take a community bath in the lake. Particularly, the spot near the *ghat* (series of steps leading down to a water body) is an auspicious place for them. This is irrespective of the fact that they have attached toilets in their houses with water supply. But because this spot itself is venerated and the community ritual is so important, they actually stand on the lake bed and order a water tanker, even though the lake is dry. This again raises a relevant question that when we have to do planning in our historic city cores, can we really go ahead without understanding these kinds of associations and rituals which are still embedded in the minds of our local people, and citizens, and the community living there.

Fig.2: Even with the lake with no water, traditional rituals such as bathing of the ladies after a death in the family is being carried out on the lakebed by ordering a tanker from the municipality

Further, I am going to share few examples where some attempts were made to integrate this living heritage with urban conservation and management initiatives. I will begin with the city of Udaipur, one of my favourite cities, a picturesque city set in a valley with Lake Pichola. And, this was the lake that was completely dry in the previous photograph and with the ladies on the lake bed. I am sharing some key facts, as I do not want to get into the details of the history of the 16th century city. Notably, a city development plan that was made said

that there is an approximate population of five lakhs with a slum population of one lakh nineteen thousand. After the Udaipur Municipal Corporation prepared this city development plan, they actually got into an agreement with UNESCO New Delhi and the Maharana Mewar Foundation (MMF) to review this plan because they felt that the city development plan did not address heritage which was essential for Udaipur. They wanted UNESCO New Delhi and the Indian Heritage Cities Programme to really look at how it could be a heritage-based development plan. As a team we reviewed and critiqued the plan with recommendations to integrate the component of living heritage. In the case of Udaipur, when the lake is dried, it is really critical both to the local citizens as well as to the city's economy which relies on tourism. Famous international hotels like the Taj Lake Palace Hotel organizes camel rides on the lake bed to entertain the tourists. The MMCF, UNESCO New Delhi and the Udaipur Municipal Corporation hosted this joint co-operation programme, which intended to integrate the intangible with the tangible, and also included a more heritage-based approach through proper planning. Such a holistic approach has been employed by the royal foundation through the festivals celebrated in the main palace square since the 16th century. The conservation programme for the City Palace Museum is not only conserving the building itself like the Naggarkhanaki Chatri here, but also focusing on the Naggarchi. The traditional family, was interviewed and the Naggarchi was reinstated back with the Nagada that was also conserved. This is a conservation policy that they adopted including all rituals during construction and conservation like the *kalash* (a metal pot with a large base and small mouth large enough to hold a coconut) in the picture (Fig.3), is being placed on the *chhatri* (an elevated dome shaped pavilion in Indian architecture), and it is this aspect of living heritage that is very essential within the city.

Fig.3: Chhatri Kalash, Udaipur

While reviewing the plan, we saw that there are several craft villages in the city. However, the craftsmen do not have direct access to the tourists. Hence, they keep on migrating to other urban areas. Unfortunately, this significant aspect was completely ignored in the city development plan. We had an anthropologist in the team. There is a plan suggesting that we should be overlapping the tourist spots with the crafts villages. So, we worked out and realized that the tourist spots are very close to the craft villages. However, unless you create a route through that, the tourist is not going to experience that particular living component of the city which is

very critical even for the socioeconomics to give the direct access to the craft people. So, this was the proposal that was given to the government and some of the crafts walks now integrate this proposal in Udaipur.

Moreover, we found, that the slum population is one lakh nineteen thousand, and we realized that the slums were actually crafts clusters, the old crafts villages, rural villages that became a part of the urban area, which happens in many of our cities. So, this was an important aspect that a crafts village, or a rural area within an urban area, should not be labeled as a slum area. Pertinently, here, I want to highlight that the Kumartuli area in Kolkata was actually improved under a slum upgradation DPR (Draft Detailed Project Report) under JNNURM. So, it is not only in Udaipur but in several areas that the crafts which is actually our living heritage gets categorized under slums which is a great concern. Nevertheless, the key point is to integrate this into our planning document, into our tourist itineraries and actually link it together so that craftsmen get direct access to the tourists. Today, Udaipur is showcasing its living heritage in the Smart City Expo at Barcelona. They presented the city as a smart living heritage city, probably the only city which was presenting its heritage in that particular section at the Expo in 2017. The whole focus is on linking all these activities, promoting the crafts in the area, along with the built heritage component. So, these various heritage walks make you experience the *havelis* (mansions), people, lifestyle including the religious associations, temples, wells and rituals which could include significant monuments, or ordinary spaces. Above all, you have that indigenous associations and local stories which people want to know about, encouraging promotion of local arts and craft. They started the World Living Heritage Festival (Fig.4) which is actually getting bigger and bigger, trying to get more exchange on this component of living heritage and how we can link it with our historic city upgradation. When Chinmay, one of the guides, actually came to one of the World Living Heritage Festival, he realized the potential of heritage walks and with his own initiative he is now conducting these living heritage walks in the city.

Fig.4: World Living Heritage Festival, Udaipur

The next example that I am going to share is on HRIDAY which is the Heritage City Development & Augmentation Yojana which was floated by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, India. Twelve cities were picked, definitely because of the ICH component, like the Sikh traditions in Amritsar, the Golden Temple, the church is Vellankanni, the Dargah in Ajmer, or the temples in Mathura and the monastery in Gaya. It is sort of trying to target all possible diverse cultural heritage values in this particular urban renewal programme, or urban conservation programme, which was one of its kind. There was an attempt to address the living heritage though it is not really the mandate of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development.

However, that was the first effort and in all the twelve cities they had quite a bit of success in achieving some very good ground level interventions. For Ajmer and Pushkar, where we were involved, the first thing was to map the heritage assets, not only the tangible but also the intangible heritage assets. Then, five major interventions were proposed as five pilot projects, which included heritage walks, upgradation of the areas, talking to the locals and making some kind of intervention. There are gaps in the stakeholder consultants or in mapping rituals as this is a time-bound government project. If you are really marking rituals, you need the entire year because our rituals have a cycle. Unfortunately, government projects do not usually allow for that kind of social mapping. Hence, we had a parallel research networking project with the Cardiff University and the School of Planning and Architecture where we looked at the social and the ICH component and interviewed the owners in the walk area and tried to determine how the living heritage traditions of the city are continuing.

I will give the example of a small *haveli* called the Gota Haveli because this old *haveli* which had beautiful paintings of Ajmer city, started manufacturing *gota* (a type of Indian embroidery, gold lining on cloth that originated in Rajasthan, India) about few years back. In the picture (Fig.5) one can see painting which were hidden by the loom. The owner was completely oblivious of the fact that these paintings are of any significance. It is only during the awareness programme and discussion during the heritage walk, we tried to explain him that if there is a heritage walk, people can actually come and see how the *gota* is actually made with the loom, while the loom is kept in a distance, such unique paintings can be appreciated and conserved. For instance, we have the story of Ajmer in the painting inside the *haveli* and that can be a great experience to the visitors on both the *gota* making as well as the history of a place. So, these are the same kind of interventions that one was trying to do under HRIDAY.
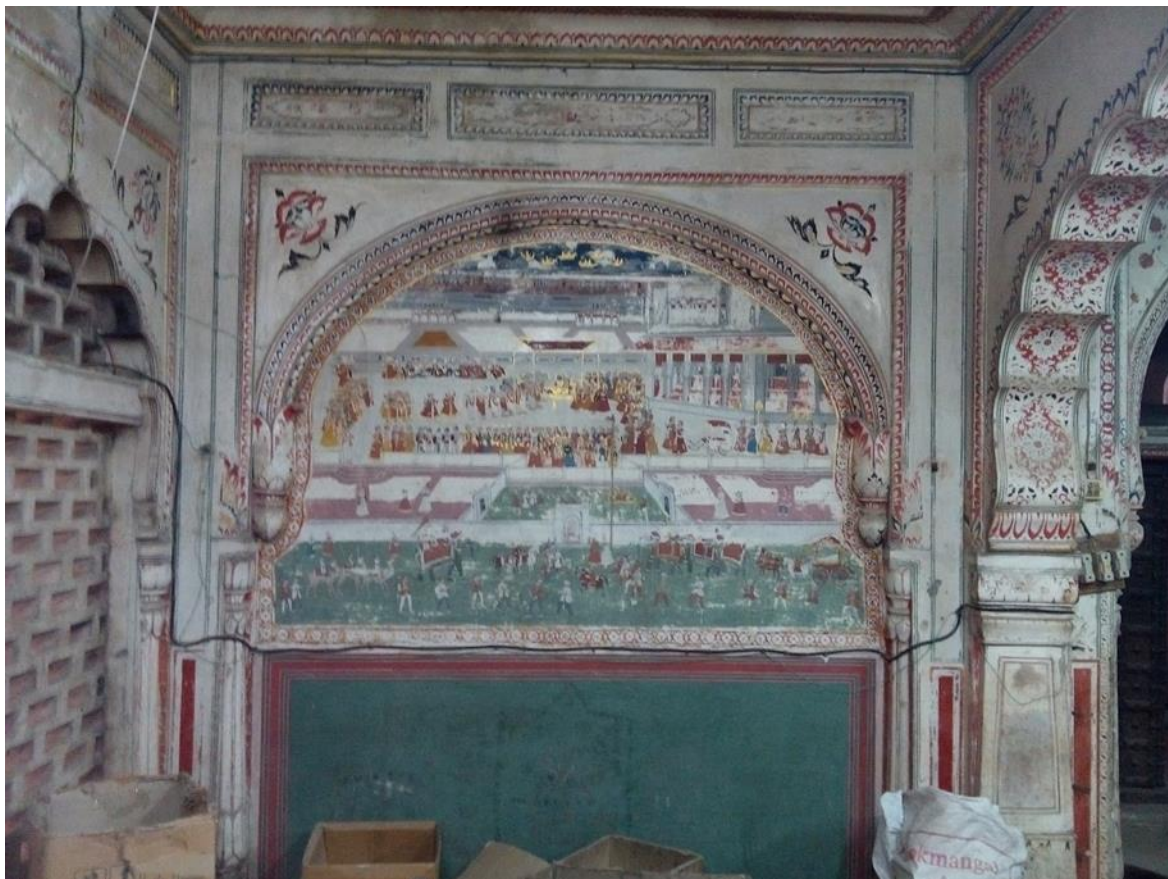
Fig.5: Paintings in Gota Haveli, Ajmer

Lastly, I will talk about these three cases including Jaipur, Udaipur which was a local government initiative, and Ajmer which came through the Central Government programme, and try to show how these various projects look at living heritage. In the case of Jaipur, which is probably one of the only city in India which has both the UNESCO Creative City tag and the UNESCO World Heritage City tag, there was a conscious decision that we need to first move for the Creative City recognition because crafts and folk art and the living heritage is really very critical both to the planning and functioning and operations of Jaipur and its long-term

sustainability. That is why this designation was in 2015 and World Heritage City was actually in 2019 which was the second step. Of course, regarding its built heritage, Jaipur had focus since 2006, when conscious conservation projects had been taken up. This very initiative to go for the UNESCO Creative City as the first designation and also to ensure that criteria six, or 'intangible', is included in its inscription as World Heritage, is something that we felt would help the living heritage component, the craftsmen, and look at the holistic heritage management of the city and not just the built fabric itself. These are few examples of conservation of entire areas.

However, one of the main focus in built heritage conservation is promoting the craftsmanship. Hence, the built heritage projects in Jaipur and Rajasthan, have improved socio economic environment for the traditional masons and the skilled workers, in the sense that they are being involved in projects across various states in India, which have recently been taking up conservation projects. So, this is one example, where again the community was involved, it was not just the built heritage conservation but also talking to them and starting a walk. And, similar walks which were there include Thateronka Rasta which is for the brass craftsmen in Jaipur in a particular street, and the Maniyaronka Rasta which is for the lacquer bangle makers. Detailed social surveys and participatory walk designs were encouraged including institutions like Oxford Brookes University, showing the designs to people and really working with them on how it can be sustained. So even though Jaipur has the main *bazaars* (markets) that the government conserves, we had to look at improving and upgrading the craft streets and the way the craftsmen lived. Above all, there was the agenda of creating more opportunities for them owing to the Creative City designation and UNESCO's commitment for Creative Cities is that the Sustainable Development Goals should be linked with planning of the city. In the mapping of the craft clusters, there are various categorizations not only of the crafts but folk arts, local folk arts, like *galibaazi* (a street corner tradition unique to Jaipur where witty repartee in local slang regale those hanging around local shops at street corners) which is just done in a *mohalla* (an area of a town or village; a community) in one corner, which could be a dying performing art, and *tamasha* (a spectacle; show) and puppet shows.

The city of Jaipur is being included in this particular network as a commitment to incorporating sustainable development projects for upgrading the crafts area. So, already the Thateron ka Rasta and Maniyaron ka Rasta have been taken up and now the next few craft areas are also being taken up under this commitment. Buildings like the Rajasthan School of Arts has been converted into a museum of crafts which is actually used for crafts workshop by the master crafts people. Students and young artisans come and learn from them. Whatever walk is there, it makes sure that the walk goes through the shops or workshops of the crafts people where they (walk participants) can directly access the crafts person and buy whatever products from them. Another point is how they can innovate in terms of design. So, there are various events organized as part of this. With the Aayojan College of Architecture students, a public installation (Fig.6) was done for a discussion on this Kriti Manch on the crafts, the *chattiskarkhanas* or thirty-six craft industries of Jaipur.

And as World Heritage, the criteria six which says that there is direct association with longstanding arts and crafts traditions that characterize the city as a centre of artistic excellence throughout its history, is included. So, the whole intention here is, the government or Jaipur Municipal Corporation is now committed to reporting on both these. This is the monitoring report for the Creative City that was submitted in 2019. But, as a result of this there is a definite effort, because there are some short-term and long-term targets, on addressing ICH and the crafts component in association with the built heritage conservation and overall heritage management of the city, whether it is through the Creative City or through the World Heritage.

These are basically the tools that one can use in some way to generate some kind of framework for living heritage even if we do not have it in our current system or in our current governance. These are various activities like the 36 Karkhanas, or the thirty-six industries. Since last year, even this walk has a digital heritage walk experience, which is quite pertinent in post- COVID era, as the closure of all these markets hugely impacted the economy. Incidentally, Jaipur was the epicentre for COVID. They managed it quite well, though the craftsmen suffered a lot. Thus, the experience of online sales, or having a digital *bazaar*, could be the key for such pandemic-like situations in future. So, one is looking at incorporating that as part of the overall management plan for Jaipur.

Fig.6: Public Space Installation Kirti Manch, Jaipur

Lastly, I would like to conclude with some of the key points that come through all my experience of working with living heritage and historic cities across India. We can say that history, traditions, cultures are central to residents' health and identity. Planning decisions often need to reflect local values as a cultural matter and not as a technical point. Importantly, master planning should integrate local living heritage values and SDGs or Sustainable Development Goals. Significantly, in the Sustainable Development Goals we have the goal under 11.4 that incorporates the natural and cultural heritage. However, culture is something really cross-cutting and whichever goal you take in some way one needs to address that. As we saw that even when it is the case of water supply, if one does not understand the association with the lake and the place as seen in the Udaipur picture, we are not really going to achieve much. And, that is why this point that planning decisions are a cultural matter and these aspects really need to be thought more in detail and needs to be integrated into our planning systems.

Moreover, I want to emphasize is that heritage legislation needs to be based on local values and intangible cultural heritage. This is something, I never really experienced until I started working on the Kanchendzonga National Park, which was a mixed nomination, and India's first mixed nomination as a World Heritage Site. However, this was a case when it was only a natural heritage site and the local community came to the Ministry of Culture. They said, no, we are associated, this is Mt. Dzonga, our God, and you cannot put it as a natural heritage, as this is also cultural. That is when the Ministry of Culture wrote back to the Sikkim government and it was prepared as a mixed nomination. Importantly, what I leant in the process was that all the mountain peaks and the lakes that were revered by the local Lepchas and Bhutias, is what got translated into the legislation for Sikkim. So, if you see the Sikkim laws for forest areas, they are all about protecting the lakes and the mountains that the locals associate with and sometimes we do not do that. We do a different kind of valuation; it could be national protected monuments but they create the distance with the community. In this case, this is something that even ICOMOS really appreciated because it was the indigenous practices that converted into legislation so there was no question of that legislation being flouted. In fact, it was the other way, if there is a hydro power project proposed in the area, then the community actually gets together and protests against it, if they feel that it is going to harm the natural resources.

The last point I would like to highlight while reviewing our intangible cultural heritage, or rituals, is the need to really look at whether they are meaningful as they were within the framework of the natural or built heritage. So, this is looking from the other side and asking whether these rituals are meaningful and linking them with

whatever meaning they had in terms of nature and culture. Above all, the value of craft and art as unique and indigenous socio-economic assets should be emphasized in urban development projects intended to connect living heritage with sustainable development. Thank you so much.

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D.2.

Chitpur Local: Envisioning heritage precincts as public cultural hubs

Sumona Chakravarty

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Mapping Chitpur Road

Chitpur Road is a name that will not appear in contemporary maps of Kolkata, yet the name is associated with a range of stories and emotions even today. Named now after its most famous resident, Rabindranath Tagore, Rabindra Sarani runs north and south, parallel to the Hoogly River, starting just after Laal Bazar Police Headquarters and continuing north for approximately 5 kilometres. Often cited as one of the oldest roads in the city, it started as a pilgrimage trail to the Chitteshwar Temple.

Today, the road can be navigated as distinct zones or clusters, with a new artisanal trade or craft concentrated along the road every few hundred metres. Anchoring these clusters are important historical landmarks – palatial residential homes from the 18th and 19th centuries, around which these clusters flourished, or a mosque like the Nakhoda Masjid, or even *bazaars* (markets) like Notun Bazaar. For example, a cluster of shops and studios making musical instruments are seen around Jorasanko, the heritage home of the Tagore family. Cluster of shops and studios making hand carved moulds (Fig.1), brass objects and utensils are found around Notun Bazaar. Garanhata, a cluster of jewellery shops and studios skirt the red-light district of Sona Gaachi.

Fig.1: (Left) Shop making hand carved moulds; (Right) Hand carved moulds. Courtesy: Hamdasti

Much has been written about the history of this road, and there have also been initiatives to map its history, urban landscape and document its heritage clusters. However, efforts to engage people outside academic circles, or professional circles of architects and urban planners, have been few and far between. A notable exception was a project led by the Goethe Institute to create a photobook and exhibition on the houses of Chitpur, as well as walks and tours conducted by organizations like Calcutta Walks.

In 2014, I was a part of Hamdasti, a group of artists who started engaging with the diverse communities living and working around the central axis of Chitpur Road through our project 'Chitpur Local'. What drew us to this road was its many histories, diverse communities, the variety of crafts and living traditions and its potential to become a public cultural hub. This desire was borne out of a need to create spaces outside of galleries and cultural institutions for art and culture, something which we, as a collective of artists felt was lacking. By finding ways to locate art in public spaces, and finding ways to make it more participatory and accessible, we believed we could create more engaged and empathic public or civic communities.

Over 4 years, we focused our efforts on a one kilometre stretch of the road from Jorasanko and its hub of musical instrument shops to Battola, the printing centre and Garanhata, the jewellery centre. This expanded to Sovabazaar Street, a perpendicular road, north of Garanhata leading up to the Hoogly River.

As I recollect on my experience of working in Chitpur, I would like to start first by building a case for public cultural hubs, exploring how the final vision may be aligned for both cultural hubs and heritage precincts, the steps to get there, or the priorities and parameters for impact may be different. I would also like to argue why the arts and artists are central to public cultural hubs and how including the arts can further bolster heritage precincts as vibrant public centres.

Envisioning Battola and Garanhata as a Cultural Hub

In 2014, the first year of Hamdasti's workshops, street corner installations and pop-ups in the Battola and Garanhata area of Chitpur, we worked primarily with students from the Oriental Seminary School, local crafts people and the De family. The year-long programmes in the community culminated in a public art festival (the 'Chitpur Local Festival') in March 2015.

Over the two days of the festival, the arts projects were installed at the school, inside the Diamond Library heritage bookstore and at street corners (Fig.2). There were screenings, talks and performances at the school and on the streets. The students and their parents were the primary hosts, taking visitors around to and introducing them the projects. In addition to the art interventions and activities, there were also some visual changes to the streetscape - the buildings were highlighted with a string of lights, and the streets were cleaned up with the support of the Corporation (Fig.3).

These two days, we felt, presented a blueprint of what a public cultural hub could be – with local community members and local histories at the forefront, creating a platform that welcomed and supported art, where art brought diverse people together to share stories, ideas and perspectives. Conservation of built heritage, preservation of intangible heritage, development of new urban infrastructure, and improvement of the urban streetscape were all a part of this vision for a cultural hub. However, we prioritized the human interaction that happened through art as our primary focus in this vision.

In 2019, there was the last iteration of a public art festival at Chitpur –5 years from the start the project. By 2019, we had formed a collective of artists, cultural practitioners and local crafts people each of whom set up an interaction or installation across 18 points on a one 1 kilometre trail down Chitpur Road. There was a GPS enabled map for visitors to navigate the trail, and signage along the way to mark the stops. You could stop to learn how to cast a piece of jewellery from a dice at Sudarshan Santra's shop, or pause to look at the engraved artwork made by Biman Das in front of his shop selling *sandesh* (a dessert, created with milk and sugar) moulds. Once again, community members were at the forefront. Yet, unlike the first iteration of the festival where the vision of a cultural hub was an ephemeral and temporal one, this iteration presented possibilities for long-term engagements along with pop-up engagements. We envisioned a hub where there would be ongoing workshops and exhibitions at the craft studios, where a map and signage would mark important points of interest for locals and for tourists, and local councillors would work with the crafts people to maintain the urban landscape. There would also be temporal, pop-up works, with artists and crafts people constantly developing new collaborations and presenting new stories and ideas, continuously generating new possibilities.

Fig.2: The first edition of the Chitpur Local Festival brought diverse people from the community and beyond together through art. Courtesy: Hamdasti

Fig.3: Visual changes to the streetscape during Chitpur Local Festival. Courtesy: Hamdasti

Cultural Hubs as Civic Spaces

Between the 2014 and 2019 iterations of the Chitpur Local Festival, 15 artists and over 100 community collaborators came together for over 50 events, workshops and art experiences. These encounters that happened between the larger festivals were at the heart of developing Chitpur as a cultural hub. In fact, each

encounter was a proposition to make art and culture an integral part of community life, and of the public domain. The public domain or public realm, is said to be a space for encountering the 'other'- for the coming together of different perspectives, creation of empathy and negotiating hierarchies. Whether it is the Greek agora, or the public space of social media – these spaces are essential to civic life and to an engaged and active citizenry.

This framework was an inspiration for our desire to not just create a space for culture, or to put art in public spaces, or conserve heritage – but to make a neighbourhood like Chitpur, with all its diversity, a space for vibrant public life. Keeping this in mind we assessed each artwork on a number of parameters that were markers of open, inclusive and engaged public domains. We investigated whether our work helped to explore underrepresented stories, made the familiar unfamiliar, and generated unusual encounters across communities and social hierarchies. These three questions were integral to the projects we developed over the five years.

For instance, in 2018, during the project 'Framing a Griha Lakshmi' (Fig.4), Srota Dutta worked with women and local photographers to facilitate a series of dialogues on gender and photography, using matrimonial photographs as the catalyst for these exchanges. The project brought into the public domain the personal experiences of the women and highlighted an under-represented aspect of the narrative of Chitpur. The stories were curated as a sound and image show on a bioscope and taken to parks and street corners to spark new dialogues. Creating a cultural space, or a public domain, made room for multiple histories, instead of promoting one narrative.

Fig.4: Creating public platforms for dialogues that explore multiple histories through the project 'Framing a Griha Lakshmi'. Courtesy: Hamdasti

Similarly, Varshita Khaitan and the students of the Oriental Seminary School, created a community sourced pop-up museum in 2014 that brought multiple histories together. It also transformed a cul-de-sac into a two-day museum, bringing different communities together for those two days to exchange stories and experience their neighbourhood in a new and unfamiliar way.

I facilitated a project with the police at the heritage Jorabagan Traffic guard, where I created a game, that took audiences across different rooms of the station, as they played with the police and debated questions on urban life. The focus of this encounter was to shift the way in which police and communities engage with each other – even if it was just for a day.

Other than the three parameters we used for assessing our engagements, the process of developing the projects also ensured that they brought artists, community collaborators and audiences together as equal participants. Each project was developed by first collectively mapping local histories, then identifying shared areas of interest and inquiry, and finally creating a framework through which different participants could contribute in their own way. At each step of this process, we created space for feedback and ideation. For example, in the Jorabagan project, I first worked with the officers to map their experiences. We then identified a shared purpose for the project, taking into account their need to create a dialogue on traffic rules and my desire to create a

dialogue about how we navigate the city. And finally, I developed the structure for the game, that I populated with recipes, photographs and stories from the officers and sergeants, using traffic rules as obstacles that you had to overcome to experience these stories and share your own perspective.

Through each of these projects, a heritage neighbourhood became a cultural hub, where the arts played an important role in creating a vibrant domain. In turn, this cultural space generated new possibilities for the future of this heritage precinct.

Communities, Culture and Heritage Precincts

Reflecting back on the last iteration of the Chitpur Local Festival, we can see how our long-term arts engagements and projects brought attention to diverse histories, shifted people's perception of Chitpur and enriched their understanding of its craft traditions through new unfamiliar experiences of the locality, and also how these engagements have created a local network of community members. What we have refrained from doing is to use the arts to beautify the locality, or take on the position of experts who can build heritage awareness. This has enabled us to work as catalysts and collaborators instead of prescribing solutions. Yet, we feel we can do more to create a platform for our community collaborators to get the support they may need to take the many ideas that have been generated through this process forward.

Historic areas, like the diverse neighbourhoods around Chitpur Road, are full of possibilities for artists, cultural practitioners, students and community members who want to engage with local histories, and create spaces for expression and dialogue through the arts. And the arts, as we have seen, can play a role in creating engaged, active public domains in communities. However, while the artworks can build community engagement, bring people together to build a community network and generate many new possibilities, the task of conservation, restoration, and urban improvement needs a larger ecosystem of stakeholders, working in tandem.

Conversely, architects, heritage enthusiasts and urban planners, who are working to develop heritage precincts, need artists, who can work independently or work together to ensure that heritage spaces remain vibrant cultural centres and civic spaces with the community at the forefront.

Acknowledgements

D.3.

Investing in heritage for transformation: The story of Purulia

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Purulia, the westernmost district of West Bengal, is blessed with an abundance of beauty. Lush greenery, free-flowing rivers, rocky landscapes, bright blooms and scenic waterfalls - Purulia is a locale of nature's untapped bounty. Popularly known as the land of red soil, the region also has a rich tribal ethos, home to migrant, agrarian and artisan communities like the Santhals, Mahato, Munda, Mal, Bedia, Kalindi and others, each having a very important anthropological significance. Alongside are various folk songs and dances, rituals and festivals, intrinsic to the lifestyle of Purulia. Reminiscing of the past, it is also the place of tribal kings, their ruined palaces and relics of centuries.

The district of Purulia has undergone immense reorganization to attain its present status. From Vajra Bhumi, to Jangalmahal and then Manbhum, the place has had different names at different times, finally until in 1956 when it became a separate district of West Bengal. Purulia is tropically located and has all-India significance for both its shape and function like that of a funnel. Today, Purulia has an important place in the tourist map of India.

According to the Census of 2011, Purulia had population of 2,930,115, out of which 87.26 % are residing in rural areas and 12.74% in urban areas. About 51.09 % of the populations are males and 48.91% are female. The percentage of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes are 19.38% and 18.45% (Purulia District Website).

Natural and Built Heritage

Purulia is endowed with an expansive amount of both natural as well as built heritage. Adjacent to the Dalma range is the famous Ayodhya hills, located in the eastern part of the Chotanagpur plateau. One of the most popular tourist spots, the Ayodhya hills has a huge forest cover and is home to various exotic species. Other beautiful ranges are the Joychandi hills and the Bagmundi hills. Adding to the picturesque charm of Purulia are also cascading waterfalls, beautiful rivers like the perennial Bamni waterfall, Turga Falls, Kangasabati River, Subarnarekha River and dams like Panchet, Murguma and Futiari. Exquisite flowers like Palash (flame of the forest), ponds filled Shaluk (water lily) and lotus - all combine to provide gorgeous nature trails in this red hinterland.

Alongside meandering streams and sloping hillocks, Purulia has architectural splendours, symbolic of the locals' creative excellence. Witness to royal dynasties, a popular place of interest is Garh Panchkot, a ruined fort located by the Panchet Lake offering a panoramic view. The Kashipur Palace, dwelling place of the Panchkot royal family, built in 1916, is another attractive work of architecture in Purulia. There are also intricately carved terracotta temples dating back to 750 AD standing as a testimony to the bygone era. With a significant influence of the Jain style of architecture, few temples are situated at Deulghata engraved with figures of deities, local flora and fauna on walls. Some other styles of temples remain at Telkupi, the lone survivor among the 22 group of temples and an eight-domed terracotta temple at Chelyama. Baranti, popular for trekking, is a small tribal village surrounded by the Panchet Hill and the Biharinath Hill on either side (Purulia district tourism website).

ICH of Purulia

"Senge jujung kajigo durung"

"We sing while we talk, we dance while we walk"

Purulia is an amalgamation of diverse art and cultures. Drawing from folklore, rituals, stories of daily lives, totemic beliefs, and the people celebrate life through songs and dances. People speak different indigenous languages, most of which are devoid of a script. The communities have their own festivals, rituals and own totems. Leading an indigenous life, they practise various folk art forms like the Chhau Naach, Jhumur, Pata Naach, Natua, Bhuang Naach, Chhau mask-making, basketry and folk painting like Patachitra. Purulia may be called the land of festivals where all year round, people take part in unique and beautiful celebrations like Holi, Shiv-Gajan Utsav (a Hindu festival celebrated mostly in the Indian state of West Bengal, which is associated with such deities as Shiva, Neel and Dharmaraj), Chhata Parab (celebration in mid-September where thousands of Santhals and others, people from Purulia as well as from surrounding districts attend the fair, which starts with the raising of a white umbrella on a long pole by a representative of the Panchakot Royal family), Palash Parban (a festival where the Palash and Simul trees are in full bloom), Tusu (a river centric folk festival), Bhadu (a social festival of South Bengal), Manasa Puja (worship of Manasa, a Hindu goddess of snakes) and others. They celebrate the unique confluence of people and their distinct identities. Chhata Parab, or umbrella festival of Chakoltore, is quite noteworthy among the local festivals. Thousands of Santhals attend the fair, which commences with the raising of a white umbrella. They choose their partner and come together under the umbrella. The fair goes on throughout the night where people dance and sing to the beats of Dhamsa (a percussion instrument in Chhau dance) and Madal (a drum made of a hollowed tree trunk with skins stretched at both ends).

The exuberance of Purulia is clearly expressed through its unique intangible cultural heritages. The vibrant folk dance, Chhau is an acrobatic martial art-based dance form inscribed in the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Practised by local communities, the dance involves the use of colourful, ornate masks and costumes with dancers performing somersaults and vigorous movements. The dance emulates the movement of birds, of the peacock, snake, the monkey and other animals. Dances are based on themes mainly based on epics or mythological stories and are accompanied by the playing of folk instruments like Dhamsa, Dhol (a percussion instrument made of wood, brass, leather, cotton, parchment and metal), Shehnai (a musical instrument), Charchar (a folk drum), Tikra and Nagra (traditional instruments used during Chhau performance) and others. The communities mostly live in the Balarampur, Bandwan, Barabazar, Jhalda – II, Baghmundi areas of Purulia (UNESCO 2011, Outlook 2018).

The masks adorned by the Chhau dancers are made by a community of rural artists living in Charida village in the Baghmundi block of Purulia. Crafts persons make masks of deities, tribal characters, various animals and birds. The masks are of different sizes starting from small to large ones. The tradition of making Chhau masks started in Charida around 150 years back during the rule of King Madan Mohan Singh Deo of Baghmundi. Today, Geographical Indication (GI) has been registered for Chhau Mask of Purulia. Chhau masks are integral to the dance and dancers wear masks in line with characters he/she enacts in the Chhau productions locally known as *pala*. Often these masks are bought by tourists, who visit Charida, to decorate their homes. Tourists also visit the Folk Art Centre in the village and appreciate the art display and its process. The Chhau Mask Mela organized by the artists' collective attracts more than 10,000 visitors every year. The website www.puruliachau.com shares about Chhau dance and Chhau mask making communities.

Another interesting living heritage of Purulia is folk painting, Tribal or Santhal Patachitra (traditional cloth based scroll painting). The Patachitra tradition practised in Purulia is characterized by its simplistic style and compositions, minimalistic background decoration and distinctive themes, which are strikingly different from the scroll paintings of Medinipur, Bankura or Murshidabad. Purulia's Patachitra are essentially a ritualistic practice associated with events of the daily lives of people. Created with simple, bold strokes, there is nominal use of colour, and the colour palette is limited to not more than two-three colours in the frames. The Patuas paint stories ranging from the origin of the Santhals to the likes of Madanmohan Leela, Krishna Leela and Raas Leela (popular forms of folk theatres or dances depicting divine acts), which reflect the influence of Hindu neighbours and intermingling. The paintings include everyday activities like, hunting, farming, and pounding grain. Apart from the narrative scrolls, there are symbolic traditions like the Chaksudhan Pata or

Paralaukik Pata. This is practised as part of a funeral ritual (*Bengal Patachitra*, 2020; *Google Art and Culture*, 2021).

Art for Life

Banglanatak dot com is a social enterprise that works for inclusive and sustainable development using culture-based approaches across India. In 2004, the organization initiated 'Art for Life' (AFL) as its flagship initiative for empowering communities to develop micro economies based on traditional performing art and craft skills. The prime objective of AFL was refurbishing cultural traditions, providing direct market linkages, and conducting exchange-collaborations. Integral to the process was also grooming and supporting artists and crafts persons engaged in practicing Intangible Cultural Heritage precisely in performing arts and crafts. Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) reflects a community's skill and spirit. In actuality, ICH may be expressed through myriad ways. It may manifest by means of oral traditions, folk performances and visual arts, traditional craftsmanship, knowledge of nature and universe, sports, rituals and festivals.

The AFL model has been adopted by the states of West Bengal, Bihar and Rajasthan. As part of the same, the Department of Micro, Small, Medium Enterprises and Textiles (MSME&T), Government of West Bengal, West Bengal Khadi and Village Industries Board (WBKVIB) supported the development of rural crafts and cultural hubs between 2013 and 2019 covering more than 15000 traditional practitioners of art and craft. Through AFL, traditional art and culture is looked at as a vehicle for socio-economic improvement and social inclusion. AFL believes in supporting a significant number of creative talents in the rural pockets and alongside revitalizing their skills as means of sustainable livelihood. The Art For Life (AFL) model aims to create community-led creative enterprises. The initiative constantly works for achieving its three core pillars - capacity building of the artists, direct linkage with markets and developing artist villages as cultural hubs.

Purulia is one of the poorest districts of West Bengal. People used to migrate for work. In a dry region like Purulia, agriculture is only a seasonal occupation. Hence, residents depended on non-agricultural works like, *beedi* (a thin cigarette or mini-cigar filled with tobacco flake and commonly wrapped in a Tendu or Pilostigma racemosum leaf tied with a string or adhesive at one end) binding which often resulted in tuberculosis. Chhau artists hardly made any income from their art and they were also not connected to the market. There was no investment in their rich heritage. This situation began to change in 2006, when the Eastern Zonal Cultural Centre started working with folk artists under a project called Revival of Performing Art Traditions for Sustainable Livelihood. The Chhau dance form had lost its repertoire of stories and dance pavements owing to lack of practice and lack of opportunity to learn. The old steps and nuances of the dance were hardly portrayed and the dance was more about somersaults and jumps. However, with the commencement of rural workshops for skill training by the masters helped in development of skills. The Chhau dance groups were supported to showcase their art across the country and abroad. Village level Chhau festivals were started to create opportunities for the groups to perform and showcase (Fig.1). The government invested in developing resource centres in Charida, Bamnia and Maldi. Annual village festivals brought about a huge number of tourists. Gradually villages got rebranded as cultural destinations. Charida which is the village of mask makers is now part of tourist itinerary of visitors going to Ayodhya Hills (Fig.2).

The women living in the forest fringes traditionally made robes using Sabai grass (Eulaliopsis binata or Chinese alpine rush). West Bengal Khadi and Village Development Board helped them to diversify their skills by making diversified products thereby reducing poverty (Fig.3). The women are now travelling to different parts of India and their products are being sold in online websites.

The 'Art For Life' model extensively focuses on intangible cultural heritage promoting village Artist and Art. It creates ecosystems supporting ICH-based heritage education. Hence, it simultaneously helps in attracting new customers keen to explore India's cultural diversity and motivates rural artists to build sustainable creative enterprises.

Fig.1: Chhau dance of Purulia. Courtesy: banglanatak dot com

Fig.2: Tourists in Chhau mask makers' village. Courtesy: banglanatak dot com

Fig.3: Women making basketry with Sabai grass. Courtesy: banglanatak dot com

Impact

The impact of the AFL initiative has been immense in terms of transforming the lives of artists and crafts persons and their villages. Better opportunities and an enhanced quality of life have led artists to become custodians of their traditions. Many dissipating art forms have not only been revived, but also created a new audience with an improved viability. Villages have transformed into cultural destinations. Thus, a holistic development has led to a positive socio-economic growth with an enhanced access to market, increased income, women empowerment, opening of bank accounts, and improved hygiene. Today, the community of Chhau dancers has their own website website with recordings of their performances. Purulia Chhau Mask has received the Geographical Indications (GI) tag in 2018, with the Chhau mask as its logo. The GI tag conveys an assurance of quality and distinctiveness which is essentially attributable to the fact of its origin in that defined geographical locality, region or country. Also, artists are using QR codes on products to convey information about the masks and the dance. Technology is playing a big role currently to familiarize the traditional art form. Artists are also designing new *palas* or productions and training the next generation. Further, Chhau dancers have also engaged in cultural exchanges through unique collaborative productions. A dance theatre troupe, named Bangarra from Australia created amazing production with the Chhau dancers.

Chhau has predominantly been a male-centric art form. Breaking stereotypes has been Moushumi Choudhury, a leading Chhau dancer, the first woman to learn and perform Chhau. Learning the dance from her father, she has taken Chhau to both national and international platforms. Moushumi was also the Grand Prize Winner in the category of Young Practitioner, 2019 Asia-Pacific Storytelling Contest organized by UNESCO-ICHCAP (ICHCAP, 2019). She trains young children and is an inspiration for other girls learning dance.

AFL has led to the revival of the strong cultural heritage in Purulia. It has strengthened the identity of artists and generated pride among them. Today, the community is coming forward to safeguard their traditional art, manage their own collective all rooting from an increasing awareness about their heritage. The AFL initiative has also helped in alleviating poverty, reduced migration leading to a transformation and making Purulia, one of the most popular weekend getaway today (Palit et al, 2021). In short, then, Purulia showcases how tangible and intangible cultural heritage are cultural capitals of a community which if properly safeguarded can become valuable resource for transformative change.

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D.4.

Panel Discussion

Ananya Bhattacharya, Monalisa Maharjan, Sanjib Kumar Borkakoti, Sumona Chakravarty, Shikha Jain

Moderator: *Madhura Dutta*

The all-encompassing character of intangible cultural heritage (ICH), connecting living heritage with sustainable development and the rich and diversified nature of urban cultural landscapes were the focus of discussion. Discussants shared ideas and experiences of how communities can be engaged in understanding their heritage, the importance of community-based arts and artisans' organizations, and activities and ways to safeguard ICH.

Moderator

In today's panel discussion we have two eminent speakers with us, Dr Monalisa Maharjan and Dr Sanjib Kumar Borkakoti who will be joining us in the panel discussion today along with the speakers of this session. I would like to start by extending a very warm welcome to you both.

There would be two rounds of discussions, first with our panellists, and then with all the speakers reflecting on what has been discussed today.

So, my first question is for Monalisa.

I saw that your research work is located in Kathmandu Heritage City, and focuses on linking tangible and intangible cultural heritage as well as regeneration of the city itself. Can you please share from your work, the key aspects of urban planning and policy that impact this intangible cultural heritage of the city, and, how local residents engage or respond to this living heritage?

Monalisa Maharjan

I think the case for Kathmandu Valley is similar to the case of India. We go through the same trajectory of city evolution and have similar social, and cultural aspects. We may have distinct political problems, yet we are not so different. The cities in Kathmandu Valley are living cities with interconnections between the cultural, social, economical and everyday activities and aspects of the life of the people. So, they have evolved through a long history of thousands of years. However, in the past few decades, the cities have gone through drastic changes due to urbanization and migration within the city's areas for jobs and other parameters. Hence, there has been a disconnection between the city's living heritage, the planning process, and the political system, for example, who makes the plan for the city and tries to budget, and who proposes designs for cities, et cetera. Right now, in Kathmandu Valley, we have been talking about satellite cities and smart cities, but we already have a living city, which has been planned so many centuries ago, and is still functional.

If you can see, the city spaces like squares, streets, or even small public spaces come alive during the cyclic rituals (Fig.1). It also impacts the economy as it is associated not only with the art, artisans and craftspeople, but things for everyday lifestyle, like, vegetable markets, or the market for the special rituals. When you see a historic city, or village, and their new ways of modernizing, for example, a live picture with a big car coming through a narrow lane, it seems disconnected with the whole idea of urban planning. The planners need to know that the heritage city cannot function like the other cities with wide roads and networks of

the railway, or metro. There have been serious issues related to this, though it is not a negative thing. There are some rays of hope with the new generation coming in to discuss these issues. I think our generation has much more awareness. So, you can see a lot of people from the younger generation standing up for heritage conservation in their individual capacities, and not from the government, or, the organized fund. There are some organizations that have started focusing on the areas of heritage conservation and preservation. You also see small informal groups of people, and communities with their representatives coming together to protest the insensitive development, or small young kids continuing the traditions. Moreover, multiple cleaning campaigns organized in these areas reflect the awareness among the younger generation.

Fig.1: City spaces like squares, streets, or even small public spaces come alive during the cyclic rituals in the Kathmandu Valley

The 2015 earthquake triggered a bit of emotional sentiment of the people when they realized what they had been saving their whole life. This has been a good change in itself, and has to be implemented in the education system and at the planning level. It is important to really understand what the heritage is, because it does all the parts of the SDGs or Sustainable Development Goals. So, I think there has to be a long term plan, a formal plan from the government to really act on these things, to take it forward, not only for heritage, but for other parts of the cities and provinces. I hope that I answered your questions.

Moderator

Sanjib, you have been a cultural activist with extensive work and research in the field of intangible cultural heritage in Assam. And, one of the very interesting cases is that of the historic holy place of Bardowa Than. My question to you is, can you please share your knowledge about how the different forms of intangible heritage that have sustained through time and contributed to the sustainable development of Bardowa Than? Over to you Sanjib.

Sanjib Kumar Borkakoti

Bordowa Than (Fig.2) is the first Sattra created by Srimanta Sankaradeva. It came into being in the 15th century over the period of 1468-1509. The Sattras are residential institutions of this order known as 'Eka Sarana Nama Dharma'. However, they also function as social cultural centres that were set up in his lifetime and are known as 'Than', and those set up later are called 'Sattra'. Bardowa Than is known for so many intangible cultural heritages. The prayer performed there is with music. The musical community prayer is

highlight of the Bardowa Than. Both men and women participate in it. This has continued for over five and a half centuries. Now, this is practised in 862 Sattras all over Assam. These Sattras are the residential units of the Vaishnavites 'Eka Sarana Nama Dharma' order, founded by Srimanta Sankaradeva.

Bardowa Than is the birthplace of the classical Sattriya dance and Ankiya play, the first play form in modern Indian languages, both created by polymath Srimata Sankaradeva in 1468 AD. Manuscript paintings and wooden sculptures were some important crafts practised in Bardowa Than. The Sankari School of Painting thus came into being.

The point that I want to highlight is that the participation of women here is very prominent. Women not only take part in the community prayers, but also have special prayer sessions reserved for them in Bardowa Than. The celibate devotees live in quarters allotted to them in Than premises. Thus, all sections in the society contribute to the intangible cultural heritage over centuries. These have also become a part of sacred Assamese culture. At the centre of the Than there is Kirtanghar, where the cultural tools like plays are held to convey messages. As I said, Ankiya plays were the first play in all modern Indian languages.

A special type of Ankiya painting also came into being based on the scene used in the play, this form of painting was later used in the manuscript illustrations. Moreover, there are numerous wooden sculptures made by the devotees themselves. All this makes Bardowa Than a unique place. Even the architecture of the worship hall, the Kirtanghar, is unique. It is different from all other temples of that time. Community prayers known as Prasanga take place 14 times every day, and devotees use different classical Ragas created by Srimanta Sankaradeva in devotional songs and even prayers.

Another unique feature of Bardowa Than is that it is open to people of all religions, making it a vibrant place. These incredible cultural heritages have been continuously practised for half a millennium. These have been sustained by the oldest living in the premises, as well as the millions of followers spread all over the Brahmaputra Valley, because these were part of the lifestyle created by Srimanta Sankaradeva. People living in the vicinity of Bardowa daily take part in activities, like Prasanga. Since those who have come up all over the valley, have carried on these legacies. As I said earlier, there are eight hundred sixty two Sattras in Assam. All of them look up to Bardowa Than as the patron place and inspiration.

Fig.2: Bardowa Than

Sattriya is included in the curriculum of three universities in Assam. This is also taught in a university in France. Ankiya play is included in the curriculum of the National School of Drama. Further, some artists have taken the songs and the dancers from out of the Sattras, and thus they are spread outside so well. These were earlier performed as prayers. Later they came to be recognized as performing art forms. Now, these are part of the secular Assamese culture. Young people are learning this ICH after its recognition as a classical dance form by Sangeet Natak Academy. The Sangeet Natak Academy has helped us in revival of the original Aharya used in the Ankiya Plays.

Moderator

Coming to the second round. We have heard about two cases, the key viewpoints and observations, one from Assam in India and another one from Kathmandu in Nepal. We can understand through all the presentations, that intangible cultural heritage and culture is a very crosscutting vertical along the entire heritage and community development processes that we look at. With that, I am going to first address a question to Dr Shikha Jain, to bring in a more global perspective.

So, my question to Shikha is regarding the heritage divide between tangible and intangible cultural heritage, and imbalances in programmes and policies seen at a global level. Moreover, you mentioned through your work, how you have been able to bring it together, but still that divide exists. So, what would be your recommendations going forward for a more holistic approach and actions?

Shikha Jain

I think ICH is something that we usually do not question. As ICH, we are mapping processes and rituals and associations and we just think that it is all positive that needs to be documented. What I was trying to say is that, there are a lot of traditions that we follow just for the sake of traditions, even though they had certain meanings. It was embedded in how we understood nature, or related to seasons and agricultural practices, and other aspects, or even in simple things, like, when the deity is immersed in water during a Chhath Pooja, and the kind of material that was used earlier and the plastic and other things that are used today.

Thus, there is a big difference in how we perceive rituals. At times, I feel we are following rituals for the sake of following rituals, without understanding its origin. I think we need to inspect the origin and meaning of the rituals. And, if it requires a change to the contemporary scenario, then we should attend it, understand it and explain it to the community, so that they can also realize its purpose and meaning, rather than just blindly following it just for the sake of it, or, because it has been followed for generations.

Moderator

There is a question for Shikha, I will just read that out - 'we have seen that, when big city municipal corporations designate and list heritage precincts and map neighbourhoods, the criteria and significance is largely drawn from its architectural and heritage attributes, and ICH is rarely mapped, or considered. How can this much-needed change be brought at the Heritage Committee levels?'

Shikha Jain

I think that is a very relevant question because, that is the standard that a lot of Indian cities were using and, it had largely architectural, and historic significance. Now, we are taking up that exercise for Jaipur because of the very fact that it is inscribed on criteria six. So, to make the detailed special area heritage plan, the development plan for the area, we have to take that as a value. It is just part of the outstanding universal value attributes. We have two conservation architects and other people who are going through the exercise where they have a complete table for the ICH value. The associated value to social, religious et cetera, as seen in the case of Kanchenjunga National Park, was also taken as an important value.

So, we have to address the municipal corporation and get those documents changed to integrate that value, along with the architectural and historical values. Everyone needs to realize that the values also get customized to the particular site of the cities. So for each city, we really need to look for the local values that are particularly associated with it and not generalize it. It is an exercise that we are carrying out in some cities, though probably Jaipur would be the first case where it will actually get reflected in the municipal corporation documents. And I will be happy to share it if any other municipal corporation wants

to take that on board. However, that is something we need to feed into all of these corporations and the documents that exist today.

Kamalika Bose

Yes, because I thought that is almost something that is always missed out. We try to get other organizations, education institutes, or partnerships that tend to research and study documents to finally notify neighbourhoods, but they might end up not designating a rich neighbourhood because of the lost architectural qualities. However, the neighbourhood may have some very rich intangible qualities, and we tend to overlook it because it does not fit.

Moderator

Thank you for explaining this so nicely. My next question will be to Monalisa, and I am requesting you to respond after Shikha because, we could really see the connection between your and her approach, viewpoints, or and the critical points that you were both making.

So, Monalisa, what would you say are the three key takeaways for stakeholders of urban governance that would best balance urban conservation, city infrastructure and vibrancy of ICH in a sustainable manner? You have given us a presentation specific to Kathmandu, but we wanted to understand if there are three takeaways that you want to share, what would be those stakeholders' involvement in governance?

Monalisa Maharjan

First, I think the takeaway message would be that the government and the stakeholders should understand what traditional knowledge is, and not just to follow tradition for the sake of it being a ritual. It is important to understand the meaning behind it.

As individuals, or governments, we intend to divide cultural heritage as tangibles or intangibles. However, we tend to forget that for the local communities practising the same, there is no difference between the tangible and intangible. We should have a real understanding of the local community's perspectives, at a grassroots level, who are the actual people, who are the bearers and practitioners of these traditions.

Moderator

Thank you, Monalisa, for making a strong point about what can address the problem.

My next question will be to Ananya. We saw the whole transformation that happened in Purulia, and we understand that it is a very long-term process. So I want to ask you, how can the experience of Purulia transformation be disseminated in a way so that such learning can be integrated into more broad based programmes and policies? How do we make learning more broad-based? As Kamalika also said that, this is a beautiful intermingling of smaller projects because everything is under a particular department or under a particular specialization, but at the end, it brings the whole thing together. So, how do you see this learning getting integrated into more broad based programmes and policies? Please share if you have undertaken any such effort to ensure that.

Ananya Bhattacharya

In Purulia, we have primarily worked with Khadi & MSMEs (the micro, small and medium enterprises), because our focus has been on cultural industries, and the tourism story that I told you, has been an outcome of the same. However, if you look at our tourism policy all across our country, we are not talking about investing in the skill of the community because often it becomes like organizing a performance, or, maybe a walk. Nevertheless, even the community needs to be trained in storytelling, in productions which can be offered and experienced as tourism products. So, now we are trying to develop policy briefs which can be shared with the stakeholders. Hence, we have our Ministry of Commerce with the IPR policy. Interestingly, even though the craft is the second most important livelihood for rural India, the policy does not talk about all these. So, these are the places where I think we need to ponder while shaping the policy. We have also recently organized consultations with stakeholders, where we have shared a toolkit on how to commercialize ICH, and how to make sure it remains heritage sensitive, and avoid all the pitfalls of over commercialization.

Thus, I think these are part of the processes that you need to engage the stakeholders. We are talking about ICH and its connectivity to various forms and through design and other sectors. For example, in Purulia, the Chhau Dance has been used in famous movies, like 'Barfi', though nobody acknowledged that. The artisans and the dancers have been paid, but that acknowledgement is missing. The artists have come up with a code of conduct with which they are now reaching out to the stakeholders for due recognition of attributes and involvement. Actually, these are long steps, but through these stakeholder consultations and availability of guidelines, documents, briefs et cetera, I think we can all take this forward.

Moderator

Thank you, Ananya. I will go to Sumona Chakraborty now. So, the initiative that you talked about is extremely interesting in terms of how art can actually contribute to refreshing the community memories in the local places. What you rightly also pointed out is that it needs to be more sustainable, but then necessarily it does not overlap with the artist's work, and there are other stakeholders who need to come. I wanted to ask you, how you think the Chitpur initiative can sustain in the long run and attain economic viability for the local communities. Even if it is rough, do you have any exit strategy in mind?

Sumona Chakrabarty

One of our thoughts was to keep on building this ecosystem as artists have the unique role of constantly raising questions and instigating people's imaginations. For example, I want you to create a product and the finished product, will go to the market. However, that defeats the complete purpose of engaging the art with ICH. The purpose is to keep going, keeping it fresh, while questioning and reinvigorating it.

We tried to continue with this bottom-up approach, and created the Chitpur Craft Collective. Hence, we invited designers, people in the city who are working with crafts, stores and retail outlets, art schools, tourism companies, companies organizing walks and learning centres to come and think about projects that they can do with the craftspeople in the crafts collective (Fig.3).

So, that has been an ongoing initiative that we are trying to structure and build. It originated because of the pandemic, but hopefully we want to continue with this collaborative and bottoms-up approach: bringing other stakeholders into the ecosystem to see how they can add or build on the work that has been catalyzed on the ground by the artists.

Fig.3: An art installation as a part of Chitpur Craft Collective. Courtesy: Hamdasti

Moderator

Thank you, Sumona. You basically reiterated the points that you made in your presentation. Going over to Dr Sanjib. Throughout our discussions, we have seen that ICH plays such an important role in sustainable regeneration and conservation of historic areas. Moreover, from your presentation, I understand that because it has been there for such a long time, I am sure the traditional contexts of ICH that you have talked about, have changed over time. So we want to understand, does that pose a threat to the ICH in any way? And, how do you see them coexisting together through time?

First of all, has the context changed? And if so, then do you think that is a threat to ICH?

Sanjib Kumar Borkakoti

Before I reply to this question, I would like to say a few words in context of your question to Monalisa. You asked her the take-away, and I realized that Ankiya played the hymns and songs of Srimanta Sankaradeva that has impressed people for five centuries, whereas some songs composed last year do not attract people. When I analyzed it, I found that it is a very important message in those Ankiya plays, songs or hymns, and that is: message and ethics are very important. The songs talk about the ethics of not harming people. In terms of the people or the audience, it is meant to be for everyone. So, ethics says, not to harm humanity and have love for all. This has kept people interested over the centuries.

Regarding the challenge, which you raised in your question that has come from the modernization. The young and professional singers have changed the songs a bit, and even some reputed singers have done that. Classical song, or classical dance, is something which should be preserved and all the parties should honour that. Organizations and Sangeet Natak Academy also have a role to play. Secondly, it is a very crucial problem faced by all the actors, including the ones in Bardowa Than.

Moderator

What about the fact that earlier, these ICH had some context, but right now those contexts may or may not exist? My question is, how do you see the continuity of these? Significantly, you said the message of humanity, which I think is core, because of which it has been going on for decades. But then just to reiterate the question, how the ICH has impacted their continuity or their forms in any way?

Sanjib Kumar Borkakoti

The content and the context have remained the same over the centuries, and because of that it has survived. Even now, when an Ankiya play is directed, people attend them in huge numbers. The popularity exists because of the context.

Moderator

I think it is a very interesting point, because we understand working with intangible cultural heritage that content and context play extremely important roles, which is also intrinsically linked to understanding the community, understanding the culture. Thank you Dr Sanjib.

So, there is one question for Sumona: how can we find more details or published materials on your project?

Sumona Chakrabarty

We do not have a publication as such, but a lot of the information is on the website. So, I shared the link and you can access the collective website as well. The important documentation work is still left to be done.

Moderator

I wanted to ask this, because this question triggers the thought that you have done so much work, the things that you shared were interesting, and had a different perspective in terms of how an artist is looking at it. And, they are like all separate art projects brought together. So what about the documentation of that?

Sumona Chakrabarty

We work with strained resources, and when we get time we will certainly do that. Meanwhile, there is already an interesting research project on the Crafts of Chitpur, with which we can collaborate.

Moderator

So, integrating lots of knowledge together makes a difference.

There is a question for Shikha, by Kamalika - 'We have seen that, when big city municipal corporations designate and list heritage precincts and map neighbourhoods, the criteria and significance is largely drawn from its architectural and heritage attributes, and ICH is rarely mapped or considered. How can this much-needed change be brought at the Heritage Committee levels?

Shikha Jain

I think that is a very relevant question because, that is the standard that a lot of Indian cities were using, and it was largely architectural, historic significance. We are now taking up that exercise for Jaipur, as it is inscribed on criteria six. So, to make the detailed special area heritage plan, the development plan for the area, we have to take that as a value. It is just part of the outstanding universal value attributes. Hence, currently in the heritage cell, we have two conservation architects and other people who are actually going through the exercise, where they have a complete table for the ICH value. The associated value to social, religious et cetera, as seen in the case of Kanchenjunga National Park, was also taken as an important value.

So, we have to address the municipal corporation and get those documents changed to integrate that value, besides the architectural and historical values. Everyone needs to realize that the values also get customized to the particular site of the cities. So for each city, we really need to look for the local values that are particularly associated with it and not generalize it. It is an exercise that we are carrying out in some cities, but probably Jaipur would be the first case where it will actually get reflected in the municipal corporation documents. And I am happy to share it if any other municipal corporation wants to take that on board. However, that is something we need to feed into all of these corporations and the documents that exist today.

Kamalika Bose

Yes, because I thought that that is almost something that always gets missed out. We try to get other organizations, education institutes or partnerships that tend to research and study documents to finally notify neighbourhoods, but they might end up not designating a rich neighbourhood because of the lost architectural qualities. But the neighbourhood may have some very rich intangible qualities, and we tend to overlook it because it does not fit.

I would like to ask if any of the discussants and speakers would like to react to any of the presentations or thoughts that have been shared. Do we have more audience questions? We can attend to them first.

Question Answer Session

Moderator

So this is a question from Sukrit Sen for all the panellists and the speakers. He asks - 'When we talk about ICH, it has a direct link with its current surroundings, which has been changing and adapting since time. Today when we are in an online era where the so-called physical aspect does not play the most important role, how, as heritage enthusiasts, do we encourage the custodians of the ICH to not get drawn towards modern establishments, which is often logistically suitable in current times? Or do we need to, at all?

Sanjib Kumar Borkakoti

I think these online facilities have given us a fresh set of eyes to the ICH, because people are getting more informed about ICH.

Shikha Jain

I just wanted to cross-check whether the query is about the facilities or the tools? I think using the digital technology works very well for ICH. As Ananya was saying, these digital tools can be used for crafts persons for skill investment, it will really upgrade their skills. Moreover, it will not detract them from the significance of the craft. In fact, it will enhance it.

Audience

We are definitely looking at current times as an opportunity. However, many craftsmen in historic towns sit in their own neighbourhoods and do their work from their shops, which also adds to the character of a precinct. Now, when we are looking at an online era, people are selling and creating stuff mainly through computers. They do not really need any additional infrastructure. And, too many people had been renting places in heritage areas to perform or put their artworks on display or sell. Now, they often think that it is better to make the products at home and not to go out on the streets to sell them, because the customers are available online. I think we may face a slight decline, or a small disruption in the way ICH connects to art and artisans and these historic precincts.

Shikha Jain

I think that is a very good question, because that is something that was in all our minds. We were discussing how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the craftsmen in heritage areas and the new technology can be very helpful now. For example, the Jaipur government conducted drone imagery activities during Covid and executed a lot of mapping. Even the UNESCO World Heritage City lab also asked for an image showing how they did the drone coverage.

From a different context, I do not feel very good buying things online. Even in case of crafts, I would prefer to see the craftsperson in person and how the craft is being made. There are a lot of people who want the real experience and nothing can replace that. However, what would be really good is if we can have that experience virtually. So, it is not about just looking at some names or photographs, but you actually have an immersive experience in the city. For example, I can virtually walk into the streets, in the *bazaars* (markets) and go to a shop and buy the craft. And, that can be a completely virtual immersive experience with the technology. We have to give the audience that feeling that he is actually walking into the city without being in the real one.

That is where we are getting with virtual reality and augmentation solutions. A complete city can be created where customers can directly hit the shops and the craftspeople. I feel it is one possible solution. Even in these situations where there is a lockdown, sellers and buyers would still have that access. There are a lot of tourism programmes, where people are going on online tours these days.

Moderator

I would just like to address one more question, which is a very interesting one. This is a question from Aastha Gaur, a student of the University of Hong Kong. She is asking all the panellists and the speakers- 'Don't you think that the potential of culinary heritage has still not been realized in India? How do you think food like art can be used as a tool to empower communities?' And this is not really a specific component of any of the case studies, but it is an interesting question and I am sure you come across these things when you look at them.

Shikha Jain

I just want to say that I think it is being recognized. Last year we had Hyderabad as the UNESCO Heritage City of Gastronomy. At that time, we had three cities competing, Lucknow, Amritsar and Hyderabad, who sent in their applications and only Hyderabad got through. So I think now cities are realizing their culinary potential.

Moderator

Thank you, Shikha for very pertinent examples. Thank you to all our speakers and discussants for this very lively discussion.

Concluding Remarks

The panel discussion examined policies and programmes needed for integration of ICH, its revitalization and integration in conservation of historic areas that ensure cultural sustainability and long-term viability. Discussants shared about their experiences inculcating ICH in urban planning policies. Deliberations that emerged from Q&A session elucidated the need for understanding the potential of development schemes

and programmes by professionals and the community and its effective implementation. Progress and gaps in harnessing the potential contribution of culture in achieving the sustainable development goals were also explored - across global, national, regional and local scales.

Resilience to Disaster, Pandemic, and Climate Change

Resilience to Disaster, Pandemic, and Climate Change

The aim of the fifth session was to consider strategies for building resilience to disaster, pandemic, and climate change, and how culture and heritage may be mobilized for risk reduction and ensure local actions to achieve SDGs in historic precincts and areas. The objective was to focus on the local wisdom, and traditional knowledge and practices that help in disaster risk reduction, as well as the means to ensure local implementation of actions, and identifying the role of special working group of ICOMOS India towards developing a road map for a resilient approach. The keynote, case studies, and the discussion focussed on the idea of resilience in the collective consciousness of the community, their adaptability in coping up and living with the natural disasters, and the dissipation of tradition knowledge system through capacity building.
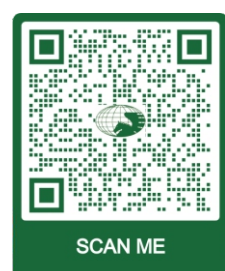
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Recording of webinar

Participants:

Ranit Chatterjee | Repaul Kanji | Rohit Jigyasu | Sandeep Virmani
Sanghamitra Basu | Shalini Dasgupta | Sukrit Sen | Sumana Gupta

E.1.

Towards transformative adaptation for building resilience of historic cities: Challenges and initiatives

Dr Rohit Jigyasu

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I intend to explain transformative change for historic cities. While discussing historic cities and their vulnerability to disasters, one can cite several examples where urban heritage or historic cities have been exposed to disasters leading to many kinds of damages. I would like to cite instances from central Mexico earthquake in 2017, where a large part of the historic neighbourhood, and cathedrals in central Mexico and especially Mexico City, were badly damaged due to the Earthquake. Further, Kathmandu Valley and its major historic settlements too were heavily impacted in a major earthquake in Nepal in 2015. In India, in the 2001 Gujarat earthquake, for the first time, we were similarly confronted with the huge challenge of urban recovery because of the damages to historic settlements in Bhuj and Anjar.

Apart from earthquakes, our historic cities are also vulnerable to other kinds of disasters, like fire. For example, Lijiang, which is a World Heritage town in China had four incidents of fire in 2013 and 14, leading to huge damage in the historic neighbourhood of Alysia. Coming to our own country India, one keeps on hearing about the news of one or the other fire incident affecting our cities. For instance, in 2014 in Chandni Chowk, Old Delhi, a fire destroyed a considerable portion of historic buildings in the old part of the city. There are also incidents where museums have been affected, the ones which are located in urban areas. And in Delhi in 2016, there was a huge fire in the National Museum of Natural History and a significant amount of collection in the museum, which was mainly an organic collection, got completely damaged.

Moreover, historic parts of cities are very vulnerable to urban flooding, which is presently a regular phenomenon. For instance, there was a large flood in 2014 in a very historic city in Croatia, which they could not get rid of for many weeks. In Paris too, floods threatened the storage of the Louvre Museum, especially the forecourt of that museum. A large amount of collection, which was in the basement, was at high risk because water entered there. It was an unprecedented threat that led to one of the largest evacuations after the World War.

Recently, in the past decade, such incidents in cities are becoming increasingly frequent. In the 2014 disastrous Kashmir floods, Srinagar was devastated. In 2015, December, in Chennai, India, there was a significant loss of life and property due to unprecedented flooding. In 2015, other historic towns in India, like Ujjain and Ahmedabad, faced floods too. Similarly, in Mumbai, flooding is a regular phenomenon. In urban flooding, historic part of the cities is more vulnerable because of poor infrastructure or outdated infrastructure. In some cases, there is so much water that there is no way that the water can be dissipated in a shorter period of time, leading to the stagnation of water for days and weeks. Moreover, owing to the destruction of the natural

ecosystem, a lot of natural water outlets, like canals or areas where water could actually flow, have been built over. Due to such urban development, urban flooding is much more predominant now. Nevertheless, climate change is one of the contributing factors to this increased incidence of climatic events, from flooding to extreme temperatures, storms and droughts. Above all, the microclimate of cities is heavily impacted.

However, it is not only about how climate change impacts cities, leading to climate-related disasters, but also its effects on animals. There are animals whose habitats have been changed, where they live, what they eat, and what their eating habits are changed, because of the destruction of the ecosystems of which settlements are an inherent part. Thus, I am glad that the webinar is not just engaging on disasters, climate change, and pandemics, but discussing them from a holistic perspective, elaborating on how they are all interconnected to each other.

From the point of view of human-induced events, we also find that there are disasters related to human actions, for example, stampedes, especially in big festivals like Kumbh Mela or Puri Ratha Yatra. In addition, there are human-induced disasters especially targeting historic cities, like ISIS destroying a very important historic city Mosul, and Aleppo in Syria.

Therefore, I want to emphasize that, while discussing resilient historic cities, we have to consider all the interconnected phenomena affecting those cities. Rather than merely highlighting the impact of earthquakes, floods, or pandemics on cities, we should instead consider how multiple events come together and affect cities, and the complex crises they generate. One must study how these disasters, climate change, and pandemic situations are affecting different dimensions of our urban heritage. Rather than focusing only on buildings, we have to start thinking about other components of urban heritage, such as traditional spaces, historic roots or traditional objects, even landscape elements. For example, in Ahmedabad, we have bird feeders, which are very specific to the urban neighbourhood. Such soft landscape elements subtly affect the social structure of the cities, because many intangible activities are connected to the spatial distribution of communities in cities. As some communities are more vulnerable, their intangible practices too are more vulnerable than others.

Furthermore, in the context of urbanization, we must also concentrate on the role of traditional water bodies like lakes, canals, and wells, which are an inherent part of many Indian cities as traditional livelihoods are centred on that. Hence, a discussion on the vulnerability of cities should highlight how such crucial elements that are integral to the lives of the city residents get affected. Pertinently, it is important to understand that our cities are expanding rapidly. A graph showing the urban and rural populations of the world from 1950-2050 shows how they are increasing more than the increase in the rural population. Further, the projection is that this is going to exponentially increase over time. However, we must also remember that the urban population is not equally distributed around the world, and some countries are going to be densifying more than others. Unfortunately, India is one of the countries that is projected to densify more than any other country or region in the world. Therefore, we have to be prepared for a very high rate of urbanization.

Herein, it is important to remember that all cities are not impacted in the same way. Some large megacities cities are getting stagnated, as they have already grown to a significant size, like Delhi, Mumbai, or Bangalore. However, when we examine the growth of large villages in India from 1951 to 2011, we find that the percentage of increase in the number of large villages turning into cities is much more than that in the megacities. Such uneven growth has an impact on the heritage of those cities. We have to start focusing on where the pressure is going to be increasing in the coming decades so that we can take action in advance on the basis of proactive planning. There are some very interesting studies done in the Indian Institute for Human Settlements in Bangalore on the projected Indian urban scenario, where huge urban agglomerations have been predicted like that of Noida, Faridabad, and Gurgaon in Delhi, a kind of phenomenon that is observed in many developed

countries like Japan. Simultaneously, it has also been predicted that many Indian villages are going to be gradually transformed into cities and face the urban crisis.

Significantly, in this context, it is imperative to discuss how the economy of these cities is connected with urban heritage. Especially, one should study the kind of vulnerabilities they are facing in light of disasters, pandemics, and climate change. Interestingly, the top hundred largest cities are estimated to produce about 43 percent of the GDP, with 16 percent of the population and just 0.24 percent of the land area. There is a striking disparity, in terms of the amount of land mass that they occupy, the kind of economic contribution that they make to the entire GDP, or the economic growth of the country. So, whatever happens in cities is going to affect the country at large, and that would not exclude heritage. India is supposed to add at least 300 million new people to its cities in 30 years, and that is on top of the current urban population of 300 million, of which over 70 million are poor. Notably, 3 of 10 of the largest megacities in the world will be in India, and 70 other cities will have a population of over 1 million.

Thus, regarding the impact of urbanization, or increasing vulnerability of urban heritage, I am going to talk about a few examples. If we consider how Bangalore looks today, we find that some lakes are scattered here and there, and one hears about kind of weird incidents of fires in these lakes owing to the carbon monoxide produced by the stagnated sewage. However, the ecology of Bangalore city is different from when it was originally planned, as the whole ecosystem of lakes and water bodies and the interconnected canals were duly considered. So, more than the individual lakes, it was the interconnected lakes that really played an important role. In fact, in Bangalore, there was a very interesting system of controlling the flow of water. For example, there is one old structure in the middle of the city, which was used as a water gate. When there was enough water, water could be taken out and the gate functioned like that to control water. However, this has stopped working, because all the canals were built due to rapid urbanization, which has not considered the existing water system of the cities. This phenomenon of sprawl that we see is a very common phenomenon around the world, but more so in developing countries leading to the land being turned into residential use and in that process, the ecosystem getting destroyed.

From the perspective of urban heritage, we must also understand in terms of planning of historic cities and historic settlements. For example, one of the settlements that I studied was in an area which was not so fertile, though the surrounding area was very fertile where people would do farming. Thus, the morphology of the place was quite compact. The boundaries were determined through rituals indicated by the ritual paths, and one was not supposed to build outside that. So, heritage essentially became a way of controlling the growth of the city, as their rituals and festivals ensured that the settlement would stay sustainable over a long time. However, it was eventually destroyed, and this kind of sprawl is now seen everywhere.

Further, there are numerous instances of how traditional knowledge helped in mitigating disasters (Fig.1). Many earlier constructions in Thailand, for example, were built on stilts but is no longer so in many areas. They now want to occupy a maximum area, and hence build the ground floor, and end up getting affected by floods during heavy rain. So, a lot of traditional knowledge in planning, design, and construction, especially for urban situations, has been neglected. Nevertheless, there is a lot to learn from these examples, with regard to the sustainable relationship between humans and their environment (Fig.2). I would also like to highlight how development is taking place around heritage areas. Those who are from Delhi will know the beautiful tomb in Nizamuddin. However, if one looks at what is happening around the tomb, one sees the urban reality of multiple new developments of people living around those settlements. Obviously, from one perspective, it might seem an encroachment. However, we should make a distinction between what is heritage and what is not heritage.

Fig.1: Vernacular features that featured well during 1995 Marthwada Earthquake

Fig.2: Examples of traditional knowledge for structural stability and risk reduction

We must not forget that it was all part of one reality and that a change of heritage structures results in a change in its relationship to the urban surroundings, both in physical and social terms. In terms of disaster vulnerability, it also means that there is narrow access to these places, and so if there is an emergency, we will have to face problems of bottlenecks. Further, there is a subtle relationship between the communities living around these heritage structures and the historical context. Moreover, on one hand, we have to deal with the realities of multiple ownerships, which leads to structural and physical vulnerability. Eventually, a single house with many multiple relationships and ownerships will not be maintained as one whole, as it leads to different kind of additions and alterations that, affect the physical vulnerability to earthquakes. On the other hand, beautiful historic houses, like what we find in Ahmedabad, a World Heritage City, are all in wood and are extremely vulnerable to fire, but presently there are no residents as they have moved out. One day maybe it will be just pulled down and made to develop, or even if it is kept, it is very vulnerable to fire because there is no fire prevention there, and nobody to take care of them.

So when we discuss disaster vulnerabilities of cities, we cannot just look at them in isolation, but rather consider the entire urban scenario in terms of current transformation processes that result in an increase in the vulnerability of cities as a whole, and in that process affects the historic parts of the city as well. Lastly, let us not forget that cities are made of people, and not all of them are similarly impacted. There are people who are more impacted than others, and when we think about urban population or urban communities, there are poor people who are living around heritage structures for the simple reason that, even if they do not want to live there, they have no other choice and they are most vulnerable when a disaster hits. So let us not think about only the structures but also think about those communities, or those neighbourhoods of people who are more vulnerable living in these historic neighbourhoods.

In this interface, climate change and ill-conceived urban development are what make disasters increasingly complex. This further makes planning more challenging. It is a usual practice in planning to classify different land uses like residential or commercial or parks and indicate those with red, blue and yellow colours. However, we fail to recognize (in land use classification) what is heritage, and that many of the urban heritage spaces are at risk of turning into parking lots or gardens. For example, in the middle of the city of Bangalore, there is an area called Gaviopuram, a small area with a tree with some sculptures which people used to pray. Such places are very vulnerable to being turned into a parking lot because planners often overlook such aspects. And that leads to a lot of challenges when we consider disaster risk reduction. Widening of roads becomes an important feature now in many cities leading to the pulling down of trees or ignoring the traditional water systems as in Bangalore. We do not acknowledge that religious structures, traditional open spaces and social networks actually contribute in a very positive manner in a disaster situation because they bring communities together, and act as social anchors, which are really required when disaster strikes (Fig.3).

Fig.3: Considering the connections of heritage sites and livelihoods, Kathmandu

Thus, the key message that I want to convey is that we need to work with what is available. How do we improve access and escape routes which require a lot to work on scenario-based planning, and how do we deal with transportation in our cities? I think we have to move beyond a mere master plan to a holistic futuristic plan with a vision, in a very evidence-based manner. Besides, we should learn from tradition, as we have seen in some of the examples of historic cities. Notably, the emergency water supply systems using river and waterways in Kobe, Hyogo to prevent fire or the traditional water system in front of every Japanese temple for

rainwater collection systems called 'Rojison'. Thereby, one can make unique use of local sources of water supply, simultaneously for rituals and for fire prevention. Further, another good instance would be the construction of an underground water tank as a local water source without affecting the heritage or urban landscape, as in the historic part of Kobe city. It requires a lot of designing, planning and creativity so that what you introduce in these cities is not affecting the character of these cities. This is very important for us because if the character changes, then the values will also change.

Thus, on one hand, we want to make this city safer, but, on the other hand, we also want them to keep their heritage value. Kyoto provides an innovative example of fire prevention by having a fire hydrant but keeping it in a way to maintain the character of the historic houses. In this way, you increase the availability of these hydrants amongst local communities to prevent fires. One can find similar examples in other places too, as in Gjirokastra, one of the historic towns in Albania, where they use the traditional water tank for fire prevention. Above all, we need to understand the importance of engaging communities in disaster risk reduction (Fig.4). Japan has a very strong tradition of engaging communities and understanding their ideas on disaster risk reduction. So, in historic neighbourhoods, one can work with the communities living in them and try to reduce disaster risk.

Fig.4: Engaging local craftsmen in post disaster recovery, Kathmandu

We need to integrate adaptation and mitigation strategies into regular heritage management procedures. This implies that we need to connect climate change and disaster risk management strategies for urban heritage with DRM policies. Simultaneously, we need to have systems for the protection and management of urban heritage sites, which are connected to larger urban development. Thus, the key point is that in order to have a holistic and resilient urban development plan for historic cities, we need a transformative change involving good coordination between different departments and related officials.

E.2.

Planning for resilience to anthropogenic shocks in heritage precincts: Case of Rathayatra, Puri

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Introduction

During 2015 the special event of Rathayatra or chariot festival, Nabakalebar (the ritualistic recreation of the wooden icons of four Hindu deities at Jagannath Temple, Puri) took place at Puri, India and a thorough study was undertaken to understand the modus operandi of the entire event and its effect on the city as a whole. The robustness of the control system is proved only when it handles the event smoothly with all human activities. This article tries to highlight how the town of Puri and the community within the precinct in particular contribute in getting over with the entire pilgrim activities during these festive days. The article also intends to study the finding from the various stakeholders to examine the success.

The sacredness of holy cities calls for gathering of millions of pilgrims within a limited space and time. Thus, there are large scale human activities over a short duration of time in heritage precincts. The heritage town of Puri is no exception. The Jagannath temple is an ASI protected monument declared since 1975. The Jagannath temple precinct is a Grade II heritage precinct based on the heritage selection guidelines of the CPWD (2013) (Mohanty and Chani, 2020). The Temple along with the Grand Road has been delineated as Zone I of the heritage precinct in the Draft Comprehensive Development Plan.-.2031 prepared by CEPT (2013). It includes heritage buildings of local importance, like the *mathas* (place of stay for pilgrims for religious purposes), the temples and the palaces (Fig.1). Other activities along the entire Grand Road, the spine of the heritage precinct on which the chariot festival or the Rathayatra takes place, is majorly commercial like shops and hotels and mixed use residential with commerce at ground floors. The Grand Road is full of livelihood generating activities round the year and they are mainly related to tourism and pilgrimage. One can see squatted sellers of local handicrafts, temple offerings, play items, sweets and fruits mostly on the Jagannath temple side from which direction the Rathayatra begins. Thus through hawking a set of people earn their livelihood. Through the Grand Road runs city and intercity buses of a few routes originating from the Gundicha bus terminal which are rerouted during the Rathayatra period. Two wheelers and non-motorised vehicles are also permitted on this road for tourist visits to the temples and regular trips of locals. The Puri Sadar Hospital is along the road with the police station and police outpost. Nearing the Gundicha temple the road widens to 100 meters with commercial establishments like shopping arcades and hotels.

This major festival happens every monsoon when Lord Jagannath along with his elder brother Balabhadra and sister Subhadra moves in three chariots along the Grand Road from the Jagannath temple to the Gundicha temple and pulling the chariots is believed to be a holy act by the pilgrims. This stretch of three kilometres transforms into a sea of pilgrims and records mention that the footfall is in order of few lakhs every year. It impacts the citizens.

Preparedness for Hosting the Religious Event

Researches by Orbaşlı (2000) and by ICOMOS (ICOMOS UK, 2001) had identified overcrowding, mismanaged traffic, inadequate parking, poor services, and infrastructure facilities as common challenges facing tourism in historic towns. Studies by Mohandes (2015) and Verma (2014) highlight problems related to provision of pilgrim facilities.

Puri is a terminal station regionally connected by the Eastern Coastal Railway. The highways NH 203, NH 312, and NH 312A from the north, east and west respectively connect Puri with Bhubaneswar, Konark, and Brahmagiri. Several state highways connect cities of Bilaspur, Raipur, et cetera. The Bay of Bengal is to the south of the city. The district of Puri and the adjoining districts are connected by roads of different order starting from arterial to rural roads which finally leads to the highways and approach the city. Day pilgrims enter the city using trains, four wheelers, two wheelers, cycles and on foot to witness the festival. On reaching the city, they are restricted to enter with the vehicles beyond the city level facility points. Within the city a number of parking and pilgrim amenity points are provided at strategic locations to decentralise the crowd (Fig.2). This restricts the pilgrims to some extent to enter the holy precinct which gets an opportunity to keep itself ready to face the huge show.

Fig.1: Broad elements in Heritage Zone in Puri town (Map source: ORSAC data, CEPT analysis on PKDA Draft Comprehensive Development Plan-2031
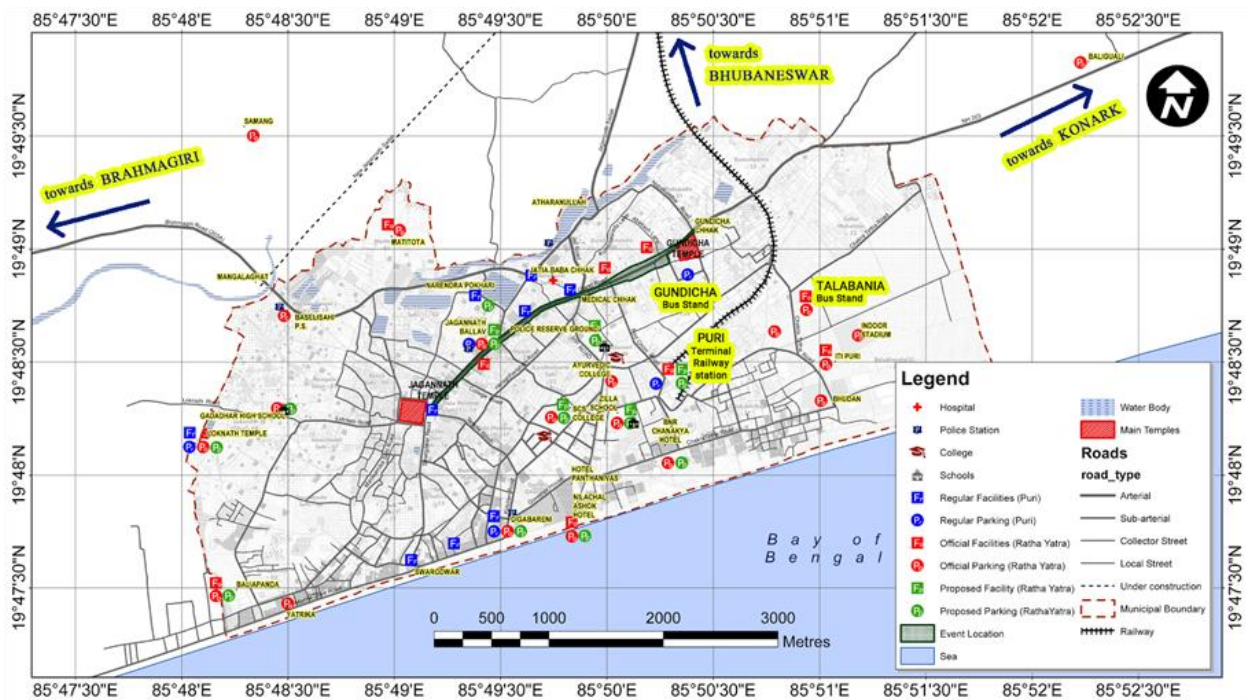

Fig.2: Public facilities assigned for Rathayatra event in Puri town

The transformation of the three kilometre long Grand Road as observed is narrated. The squatted hawking activities along the road disappeared and only some were seen to vend on cycles and vans. The city bus service from the

Gundicha bus terminal through the Grand Road was withdrawn before the nine-day long festival. The stray cattle were taken to the kine-house. The road got ready for the show with water tankers at locations, food and water distribution services encroaching most shop fronts, medical kiosks and first-aid kiosks, water sprinkling by fire brigades to ease out the heat and dehydration caused to pilgrims and ambulances to cater to the casualties. By afternoon, the roof tops of residences and hotels were full as they were let out to pilgrims for viewing the festival. The road was flooded with people heading towards the chariots.

Management of the Event

Key to success of a public event lies in intense administrative involvement. In this case, with the district magistrate playing the pivotal role, the local authority and the resources from neighbouring districts were brilliantly organized. Full support was obtained from neighbouring district authorities towards providing resources like water tanks, police force, ambulances, and fire engines. Officials under different departments along with local authority were mobilized towards completion of their target responsibilities. To understand the impact of all preparedness for the purpose, primary survey was considered as an important tool. Various stakeholders were surveyed on the day of Rathayatra and also during the nine-day event. The pilgrim survey results were important marker of the success. Above all, the survey conducted with the resident and the commercial establishments reflected their resilience.

Participation by Non-Government Organizations - Non-Government Organizations play an important role by training and engaging local people into various activities. The service providers were surveyed on the period of their engagement to service delivery. The major survey finding was that about 67.5% of the service workers were engaged on a daily basis, and 12.5% on a shift basis and the remaining 20% staff was working on-call basis. Approximately 90% of the service workers agreed on the adequacy of the existing workforce for proper service management and 97.5% of the surveyed staff was working voluntarily.

Community participation is the key to success for hosting such large scale events. Here, citizens participated in a very positive way. High school and college students played active roles. They were involved in activities like food distribution, water distribution, medicine distribution, providing first aid, helping in way finding, managing lost and found kiosks, public announcements, traffic control, and crowd control. The success of the district level government was also reflected through the participation of the citizen. Volunteers organized from schools and colleges were engaged into various activities like traffic control, rescue operation of victims in ambulances, and water sprinkling to ease out pilgrims from uneasiness due to dehydration.

Crowd management- On the starting day of the festival, the crowd grew gradually through the day on the Grand Road. Platoons of police, army men and volunteers controlled the event. Several web like road of the network (Fig.1) leading to the Grand Road remained closed for access to the venue. This helped in entry of pilgrims from one direction. The narrow roads were reserved as escape routes in case of emergencies. Residents too took part actively to stop entry through these roads and kept the emergency routes clear. Crowd management plan and road entry control were strictly executed as the entire stretch faced a moving crowd.

Signage and Dissemination of information – The signage assisted the arriving pilgrims which benefitted the management system. The entire event was managed smoothly through information sharing by media through internet, radio, television and newspaper. Time to time announcements from the Jaggannath Suchana Kendra for the holy rituals and direct telecast of event through various mass platforms at the state level kept the citizen and the pilgrims informed.

Heritage Values and Sense of Belongingness of the Citizen

The land use of the entire precinct is majorly residential and commercial. Primary survey of different stakeholders became an important tool for assessing the phenomena. The shopkeeper survey details revealed their difficulties in access to the road and in travelling during the entire duration. The other major point raised was related to inefficient garbage disposal and the after effect. Importantly, they offered shop front for food or water distribution, rooftops for viewing, and engaged people for garbage accumulation. However, during the period some commercial establishments make large profits. The hotels offer packaged stay for two nights and three days as minimum and no single day stay is offered.

From the analysis of the resident survey data collected by uniform random sampling, particularly within 500 metres of the Grand Road (event location), it was observed that residents are reasonably satisfied with the overall management of the pilgrim crowd during Rathayatra, and they visit for *darshan* (an occasion of seeing the image of a deity) mostly

during night time in the lesser crowded situation. It is a passive way to support viewing of the pilgrims first. The residents in the precinct faced difficulties in moving out and within the city due to restricted vehicular access and withdrawal of bus services. Residents did not usually let out their rooms as most of the pilgrim groups were large in number. 59% of the residents admitted that waste collection was completed within a day of the Rathayatra event. Around 25% of the surveyed sample of residents and 16.6% of the shopkeepers along Grand Road complained that waste collection needed at least 2-3 days. The rest were not satisfied with the waste collection scheme of the administration. The waste generated mostly comprised of used cups and plates (paper/ plastic/ polystyrene), used water pouches, soft drink bottles and polythene bags. The frequency of collection was not satisfactory as revealed through the survey. It causes clogging of waste water channels and flooding as the festival is during the monsoon months. Thus, time to time lack of garbage clearing was a major challenge.

Pilgrim Survey

Pilgrims are the key persons for whom the entire arrangements of temporary nature are planned during a religious event. Satisfaction of pilgrims is an indicator of the quality of services rendered by the organizing authorities. Data on pilgrim satisfaction were collected on nine facilities namely drinking water, toilet, food, waste-vat, security, power cut situation, lost and found/ emergency facilities, information announcement, and display boards. Each facility was evaluated on four parameters, namely, availability, adequacy, quality, and signage for analysis. The pilgrims across the town were served uniformly and satisfactorily with all amenities as presented in Fig.3. The ground verification at all points also revealed the same. It is worth mentioning that the pilgrims were satisfied with reasonable facilities considering the holiness and scale of event. Pilgrims also expressed that the decentralized facility locations from the venue were within walking distances.
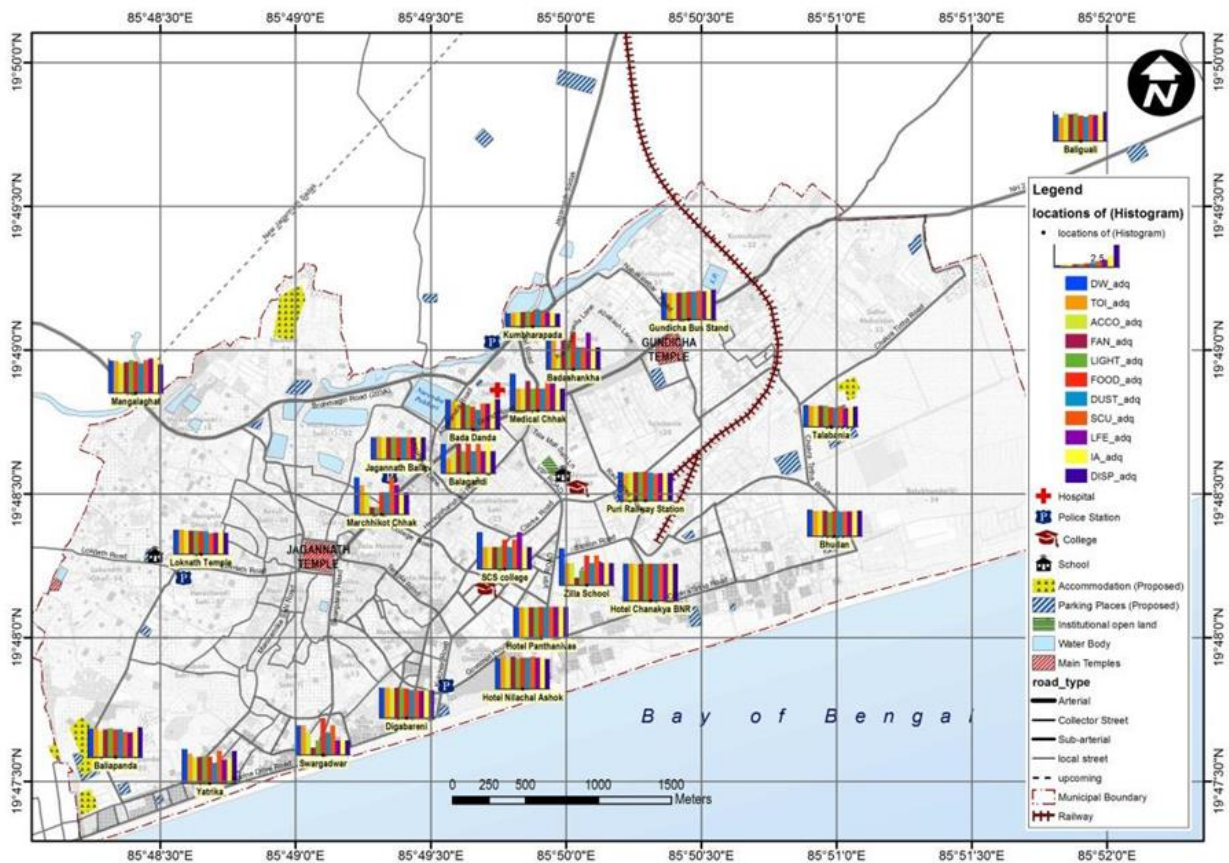
Fig. 3: Pilgrim satisfaction at facility points

Pilgrim survey at hospitals showed that 97% of the patients in hospital agreed that the quality of medical attention provided in hospitals had been good during the Rathayatra event. Approximately 63% of the patients availed free medicines for treatment, while 36% had to pay for treatment. In the case of accident victims, 66% of the patients were lucky to have an ambulance arrive within 5-10 minutes of the incident and in 21% of the cases medical care took around 15-30 minutes. Pilgrim admissions were mostly due to dehydration and minor accidents with fewer cases of

enteric diseases. Drinking water quality check conducted from samples collected from 19 points using "Prerana Master Kit" was also found to be good.

Resilience to Shocks as an After Effect of a Religious Event

Thus, the study revealed that the overall satisfaction was achieved from pilgrim point, and there was a positive support from all level of stakeholders to make the event a success. However, lack of proper waste management and drainage from the venue were the predominant challenges. According to newspaper sources, 360 metric ton solid waste was produced during the day due to littering along Grand Road. Improper and delayed waste collection lead to choking of open drains causing water logging and overflowing in places making waste water run through the roads and infecting the urban environment at large.

There had been reports of contamination of sweet water zone in the Talabania region, a large open land utilized for regional bus parking during Rathayatra. This was a temporary accommodation place for thousands of pilgrims. In spite of adequate sanitation facilities provided, the pilgrims practiced open defection. This is owing to high salinity, iron content, biological contamination, leaching from the petrol and diesel from the vehicles. Long protest of citizens against the poor water quality led to the shifting of this major transport hubs to Malatipatpur, a location seven kilometres away and developed solely for regional buses to terminate. The facility point is connected by city buses. Pollution, heaps of untreated wastes, garbage, plastics further became threat to wildlife at Balukhand reserve forest**.**

Conclusion

Thus, in short, the study revealed that the key to successful planning of religious festivals is an integrated planning approach and preparedness, with the concept of decentralization of mass pilgrims at several convenient locations with controlled pilgrim movement to the core. Community participation and trained volunteers as on-site response teams is the strength of the entire administration. The city administration should exploit the potential of the same to bring in success. However, every step towards risk management natural or manmade with possible mitigation measures should be considered as a contingent plan by the authority which should showcase the strong management capacity in case of some disaster. The most affected are the people who are at the core of the temple town where the venue is usually located. While the city gets a lot of opportunity by holding such festivals, the most affected are the citizen who have to live with the after effects of the human activities.

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E.3.

Exploring challenges to the continuity of customary regulations and its impact on ecosystem conservation in the Indian Sundarbans

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Introduction

The distinct physiology of the present-day Sundarbans reveals that it is ecologically endangered. It is located on the Ganges, Brahmaputra, and Meghna (GBM) river basins (UNESCO, n.d.). It counts as one of the most extensive mangrove forests globally, with about 10,000 km², of which 6,000 km² are in Bangladesh, and about 4,000 km² are part of India (Getzer & Islam, 2013). The landscape is ever-changing and evolves through the bio-tidal processes of accretion and erosion. The ecosystem represents the process of delta formation and the subsequent habitation of the newly formed deltaic islands and interconnected mangrove communities (Nishat, 2019). It exemplifies monsoon rain floods, delta building, tidal effect, and plant colonization. The distinctness and exclusivity shape the Sundarban National Park in India. The Sundarban Reserve Forest in India has been declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO and listings in the Wetland of International Importance in the Ramsar Convention (World Heritage Datasheet). It has been recorded with a unique outstanding value under the Natural Criteria (ix) and (x) as a World Heritage Site (UNEP-WCMC, 2011). The Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) denotes cultural or natural incomparable significance that transcends national boundaries and is of global relevance across all future (Sen & Pattanaik, 2017).

Sundarbans are primarily rooted in vulnerable customary associations and forest measures (Sen, 2019). The World Heritage site is prone to various natural hazards. The observed trend in the increase in frequency and severity of natural hazards may be attributed to the impact of climate change (Agrawala et al., 2003; IPCC, 2012). As a result, alongside the vital ecosystems, the outstanding universal value stands at risk of being degraded or destroyed (UNESCO et al., 2010). One of the intrinsic conservation practices is the customary regulations that safeguard and stand as an obligatory rule of conduct by the local communities. The narrative of Bonbibi-r-Palagaan ensures the continuity of customary regulation of the Sundarbans to address the challenges posed by the vulnerable ecology (Sen & Mukherjee, 2020). Over the ages, Bonbibi has emerged as the symbolization of the Sundarbans' forest guardian and folk inherent force in people's rituals and lives (Biswas, 2020). The religious practice has significantly played a vital role in underlining the place-based framings on environmental consciousness and forest conservation (Sen & Mukherjee, 2020). This paper is an attempt to explore the significance of traditional knowledge and its incorporation that helps in building a holistic cultural conservation forest management system in the Indian Sundarbans. Based on literature review, an attempt is made to substantially highlight the scope of the traditional narratives and customary regulations to conserve, regulate and restore the ecosystem and its linked resources.

Literature Review

In both the countries, India and Bangladesh, Sundarban's natural resource management emphasizes conserving flora and fauna rather than habitat conservation, overlooking the spatial progressions and interdependences of the complete ecosystem (Sen & Mukherjee, 2020). Interestingly, livelihood of over 3.5 million people is supported by the Sundarbans' ecosystem. They include those who live in coastal communities and are reliant on the varied marine species it supports. Drawing on instances from around the world, it is evident that there is significant involvement and participation of local communities (Sen & Pattanaik, 2017).

Community-based natural resource management has been recognized as an effective way of sustaining the common pool of resources (Gruber, 2011). This approach ensures environmental sustainability, social justice, and equal representation of the local communities in the management (Menon et al., 2007). These community-level governance frameworks are often referred to as "customs" or "customary regulations" (Tamanaha, 2008). Customary regulations have attributes such as collective social monitoring, sanctions, and traditional rules of governance that emerged as an outcome of the postcolonial structure, or as a response to them. However, a myriad of formal rules coexisted in post-medieval times (Sen & Pattanaik, 2017). The Sundarbans stand discrete with a linked landscape of different ecology and ecosystem services, communities, hazards, climate risks and livelihoods. The landscape has been subject to transition due to exertion and dilution of the parameters. With the livelihoods connected and representing the different socio-cultural practices and ecological knowledge. The community with a place-based identity performs certain customary rights. It follows, therefore, that the religion of the forest gets affected when there is a diversification in livelihood practices due to the commercialization of the resources. Above all, uncertainties related to natural hazards and climate risks soar over the place leading to out-migration and community disintegration. Against the ecological backdrop of Sundarbans, the current dialogue attempts to highlight forest symbolism in the Sundarban's folk tradition and the cult of Bonbibi (Fig.1). The continuity of the customary regulations through *paalaa gaan* (musical narratives or ballads about Gods) is effective in communicating risk (Fig.2). In recent times, the inclusion of cyclone 'Aila' into the *paala gaan* ensures new risks and event experiences are communicated to future generations.

Fig.1: Deity of Bonobibi. Courtesy: Arkabipta Banerjee

Bonobibi emerged as the folk divine in 1770, possibly after the great Bengal famine, and is the most worshipped deity in the Sundarbans by both Hindus and Muslims (Chakraborty, 2021). The faith in Bonbibi has traditionally offered islanders confidence in their ability to cope and adapt to comprehensive series of socio-environmental changes, including natural hazards like floods and cyclones. It is their customary course of coping with calamities (Sen, 2019). In a broader sense, Bonbibi is the forest's spirit embodied in a feminine form. 'Bonbibi Johuranama,' which narrates the tale of Bonbibi, is recited by the forest workers before venturing into the forest for their livelihood (Sen & Mukherjee, 2020). Interestingly, the cultural identity of

Sundarbans is grounded on traditional livelihood practices, and performing this ritual, in a way, helps in reinforcing such livelihoods based on customary rights, instead of an ascribed status like caste or class, or venerable authority. Most importantly, Sundarbans is the only region where a deity is revered not as a prerequisite of a ritual, but out of necessity, the need to acquire courage and confidence before entering the forest (Sen, 2017). Hence, from this collective effort of protection, Bonbibi transcends communal barriers and is worshipped by dependents of the forest, namely livelihoods fishermen, crab-hunters, honey-collectors regardless of caste or creed (Chakraborty, 2021). The conception of Bonbibi as a forest goddess and the "religion of the forest" has intricately shaped and been manifested within daily lives—it emphasizes the local ecological knowledge, customary regulations, and an embedded belief structure. In short, then, a distinctive perspective highlighting sustainable activities and ecological resilience is at the crux of such a place-based religious framing (Sen & Mukherjee, 2020). With the advent of time, the significance of Bonbibi has been dwindling due to disaster-induced mass migration, Marichjhapi incident, and reduced access to resources. Deprivations of customary rights have mainly persisted, resulting in opposition, disputes, and political engagement across the country (Bhargava, 2002). Learning from the different experiences and concerns of indigenous peoples and local communities that have evolved as customary rules and customs is a significant factor. This is undoubtedly a critical stage in comprehending such laws and practices' status and possible involvement (World Intellectual Property Organization, 2013). Rituals and livelihood, river and forest, are interwoven in the Sundarbans, and culture is constructed from multiple interconnections among the major components; religion, ritual, narrative, occupation, and nature (Biswas, 2020). The recognition, promotion, and protection of customary laws and practices are becoming an increasingly important aspect of national, regional, and international policies and programs about the interests of indigenous peoples and local communities. The policies and practices promoting the adequate use and protection of traditional knowledge as an attribute of indigenous peoples and local communities' sustainable development forms an integral part of these programs (World Intellectual Property Organization, 2013).

Fig.2: Bonobibi's *paalaa gaan*. Courtesy: banglanatak.com

Methodology

The paper has substantially drawn information from available literature to analyze the past and the present conservation scenario. The explanatory form of review has helped to generate both analytical insights on how the interdependency of the livelihoods-ecosystem and conservation conflicts are understood in the region. The references are taken from namely, Conservation Assessments (IUCN World Heritage Outlook), World

Heritage Datasheets, reports by World Intellectual Property Rights Organisation (WIPO), other scientific articles, case study-based research papers, forest policies, country-specific examples, project documents et cetera.

Results and Discussion

The study demonstrates that Sundarbans stands as a judiciously protected area (World Wildlife Fund, 2008). Still, due to blind spots in conservation policies and strategies, marginalized communities remain disadvantaged. Drawing reference from Sen & Pattanaik (2017), the inclusion of the community customs based on their traditional knowledge would improve conservation regulation for the landscape and help preserve the Outstanding Universal Value that it possesses as a World Heritage Site (UNESCO, n.d). These sites help mitigate the impacts of natural disasters and reduce vulnerability to natural hazards (UNESCO et al., 2010).

The ecosystem can be perceived as a linked landscape with varied spatial and temporal linkages (Fig. 3). The sociocultural practices and ecological knowledge linked to livelihoods enhances community participation. With the co-existence of place-based identity with the regulation of customary rights and different religious narratives (Ray-mangal and Johuranama), the Palagaan helps the forest develops a pluralist framework (Biswas, 2020). Governmental-led developments and actions on the Farraka Dam and Marichjhapi Massacre 1978 have had a huge transformative impact on the community and livelihoods, along with a persistent pressure of urbanization in recent times.
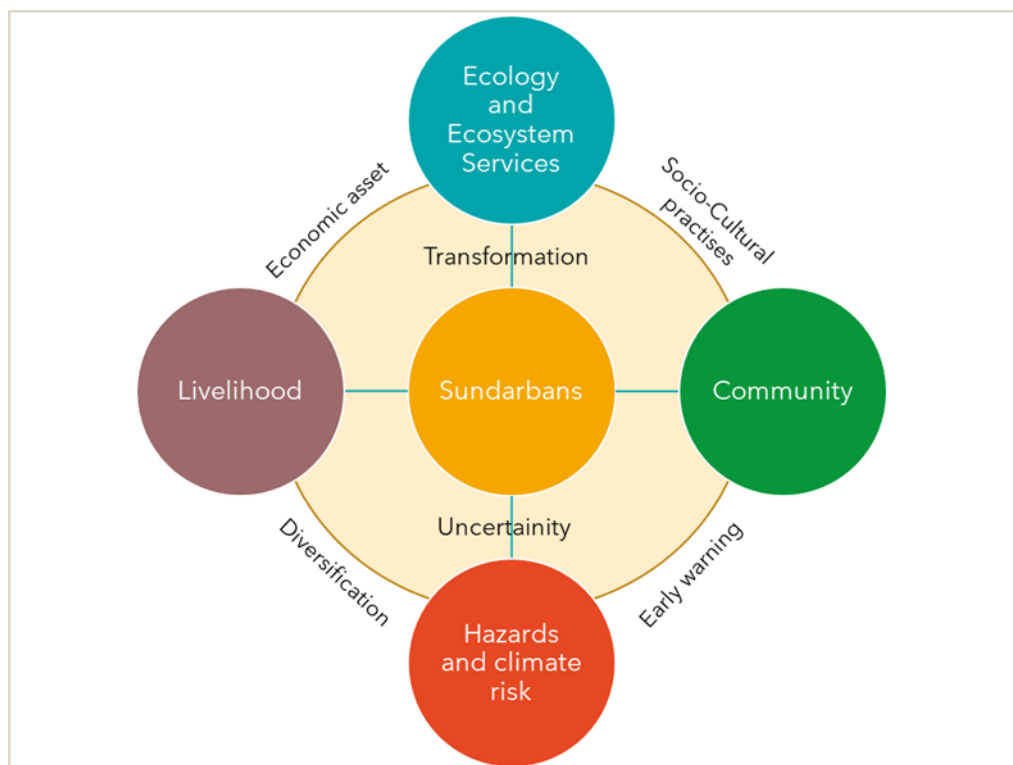

Fig.3: The interlinked landscape of Sundarbans

In context to the interplay between customary law and governance from a bottom-up approach in Sundarbans, the folk culture of Bonbibi with time is fading as a place-based customary norm in safeguarding the forest resources and the livelihood practices (Darwin, 2014). Bonbibi holds a pivotal role in the folk culture as faith and their beliefs and customs have evolved around her worship (Fig.4). Bonbibi is an inherent adaptive potential of the indigenous populations, reflected in their traditional ecological knowledge and adaption to hostile forests. Since the customary practice holds the potential for holistic growth as a part of harnessing local knowledge to manage ecosystem services and safeguarding the local species through Joint Forest Management (Sen, 2019). Moreover, the study discusses the significance of a community-based participatory approach that would help reshape cultural assets into economic assets. The inclusion of the folk narrative of Bonbibi in the planning would help an integrated cultural belief system to risk communication and mitigation measures. With

this bottom-up approach, the interlinked landscape can enhance local adaptation and regulating services in a holistic Forest Management Plan.
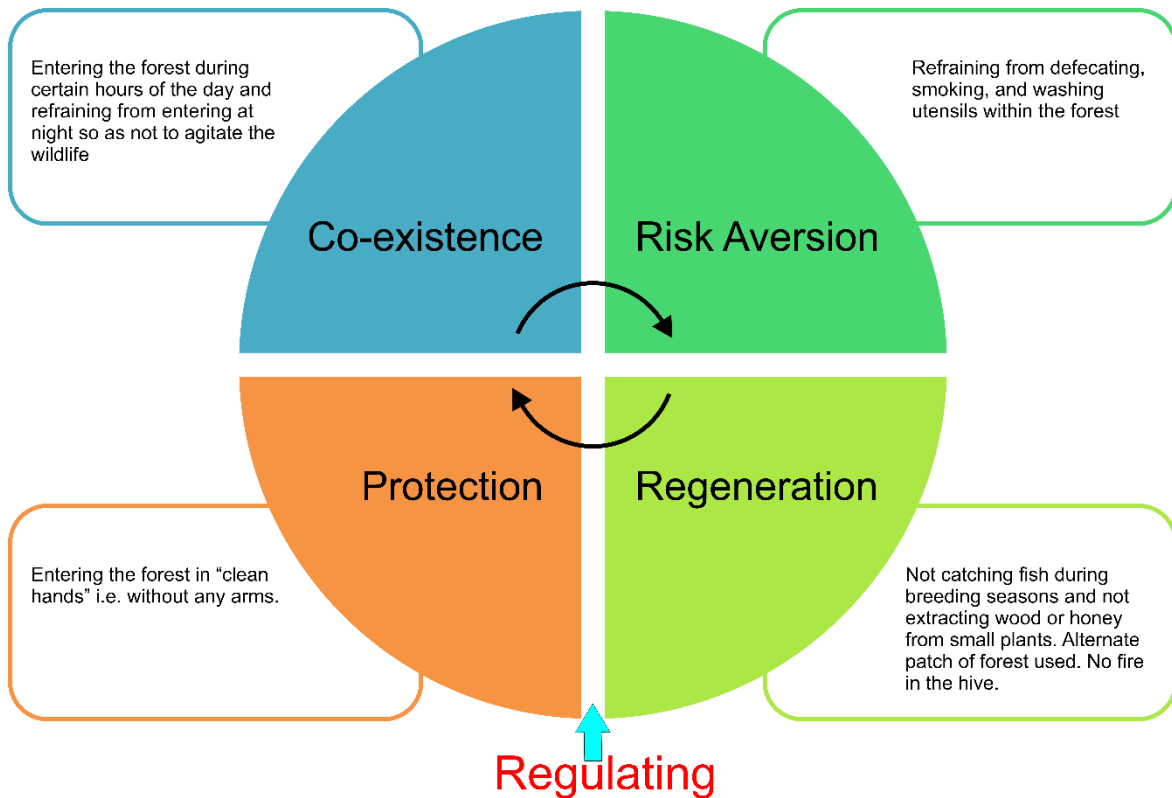

Fig.4: Customary regulations and its relevance for ecosystem services. Courtesy: Adopted from Sen and Mukherjee (2020) Bonbibi

Conclusion

With every preceding structure, the traditional rights of forest resource collection acquired from the indigenous knowledge, traditional cultural acts, beliefs, and customary regulations of the forest resources to ensure sustainable collection towards better management of the mangrove biodiversity resources (Berkes et al., 2000; Moller et al., 2004; Nishat, 2019). However, for communities inhabiting particular regional areas for generations, their awareness of the ecosystem is embedded in their cultural system. Referring to the existing literature, it is observed that symbolic representation and belief influence the ecological processes of the region while also necessitating the knowledge system of the communities. Paradoxically, their customary beliefs and religious faith protect them from ecological, and natural hazards and socio-economic adversities. Therefore, traditional knowledge is constructed, and rituals are performed in a pattern to protect and safeguard resources. Bonbibi stands as an assimilated force of nature co-existing with religion, and bonding cuts across different religions and social groups. The cultural continuity of Bonbibi is a unique and practical pathway to ensure the conservation and restoration of the ecosystem services in the Sundarbans.

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E.4.

Panel Discussion

Rohit Jigyasu, Sumana Gupta, Ranit Chatterjee, Repaul Kanji, Sandeep Virmani, Shalini Dasgupta.

Moderator: *Sanghamitra Basu*

The last session of the webinar series focuses on resilience to disaster, pandemic, and climate change in historic precincts and areas. It highlights different challenges and priorities for disaster risk reduction of historic urban areas and how these areas fall prey to the impacts of different hazards resulting in increased vulnerability. The various examples cited here show that the traditional communities in such historic cities often develop different practices towards prevention and mitigation, emergency response, and recovery. Thus, the panellists concluded that by raising awareness amongst all stakeholders, we can find a way forward to avoid impending disasters and further concentrate on certain practices in the emergency and post-disaster recovery phases.

Moderator

After an interesting discussion on the case study by the speakers, we now have a very distinguished panel of experts, Dr Repaul Kanji, Mr Sandeep Virmani, and Ms Shalini Dasgupta joining us in the panel discussion today along with the speakers of this session.

My first question to Repaul is on the impact of the recent Covid-19 pandemic. Since the onslaught of this pandemic, you have been actively working especially in the historic part of Ahmedabad city where the concentration of cases was quite high. These historic areas and precincts are generally quite different in many respects from other parts of the city. In your study and surveys, were you able to identify some specific traits that distinguish these areas in terms of people's response, their efforts, and their ability to face the challenges and restore normalcy?

Repaul Kanji

Thank you so much for giving me the opportunity to share my experiences. I would give an account of what happened in the old city of Ahmedabad, which is, of course, a living heritage in its own right. I would share some examples from which we need to learn and which depict areas where we probably could have done better and most importantly, whether there are chances of replication or not. Before I go into the details of the cases that I want to talk about, I just wanted to make sure that we all are on the same page because terms like resilience and sustainable development, have been threatened by ambiguity to the extent that people have different interpretations, different understandings of it, which is, of course, a very normal thing. But still, I just wanted to go through these terminologies before I start talking about the subject.

So, what is resilience? There is a definition of resilience given by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, which focuses on the attributes of a community or a system which we are talking about. It should have the ability to resist, absorb, and accommodate. But the interesting fact is that when you talk about resilience with different people coming from different countries, regions, and communities, you understand that the word resilience has different interpretations in different languages. We did a very small exercise with members coming from different countries of the BIMSTEC[1] region and found that for some while it meant adaptability, for some it meant bouncing back, and for others, it was just being able to respond to an event. So,

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[1] The BIMSTEC states are those which are on the shore or are adjacent to the Bay of Bengal and are dependent on it. It was formed on 6th of June 1997, through the Bangkok declaration and is headquartered at Dhaka in Bangladesh.

it is important to understand what resilience means to you, and what resilience means to the community that we are talking about.

We know about sustainable development, and going by latest trend, it is associated with 17 Sustainable Development Goals. However, the idea of sustainable development is old school, because, now we are talking about risk-informed sustainable development. We are moving from an era of responding to disasters, and the consequences of an extreme event, to an era where we will probably be able to manage our risks rather than managing disasters, where we are more prepared to live with our uncertainties. So that is something that we are striving to achieve. A conceptual representation of how sustainable development looks like is when you see all 17 goals, which are basically the assimilations of the different sectors of development coming together, some goals which we have to work to increase, and some goals which we have to work to reduce. And of course, there are guiding international frameworks and national policies and agendas. So, we need to have a very comprehensive view of how we look at the development and how we ensure that development is risk-informed. Why am I talking about all these? Because when we are talking about cultural heritage, it is not really the site or precinct but basically the whole urban scenario, a community that has eventually developed around it. So, the community, in its entirety, needs to work towards risk-informed development reducing existing risks and ensuring that no new risks are created during fostering development.

We, that is our communities, need to be more risk-literate, more risk savvy. But, it is very difficult because understanding disaster risk is not as easy as it seems to be because disaster risk is systemic in nature, consequences of your action or inaction would be manifested years after the implementation of decisions. It is something that you do today and you think that you are doing correctly but over a period of time, you would see that no, my decision was wrong. That is the systemic nature of disaster risk, and it makes an assessment, and understanding of disaster risk very difficult. Disaster risk reduction needs to be taken up holistically and not in silos. For example, if you talk about the old city of Ahmedabad, it is not just the jurisdiction of the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation, there are various other departments that are responsible for ensuring risk-informed development and they all have to work together, in sync. In fact, the idea of the responsibility of managing disaster risks or managing disasters is only of the government is also flawed; disaster risk management is everyone's business – it requires the involvement of all of the society and all of its institutions. When an event becomes a disaster, it has a widespread effect on a region. For example, in the case of the pandemic, the effect and the impact are seen all over the world. But resilience is actually something very local – we cannot talk about building national resilience if our communities are locally not resilient to risks and uncertainties.

Moving ahead, let us talk about the numbers (of COVID-19 cases) that we have now; we have Ahmadabad leading with the number of cases in Gujarat, and Gandhinagar where I am based. So, the working idea of why the old city of Ahmedabad was the hotspot could be attributed to factors like population density, the active number of cases, the socio-economic conditions, the age of the population, and the level of health sector preparedness. Interestingly, in 1918 there were cases of the Spanish flu reported, though unfortunately, we did not learn anything from it. Just to give you an idea of what the old city of Ahmadabad looks like – there are snippets of heritage walk through some sections of the old city. The best part is that it starts from a Hindu temple and ends at a mosque, which is absolutely interesting. And then, of course, as pointed out by previous speakers, it is not just about the sites and precincts that we are talking about, it is about the neighbourhood, the vibrancy of the neighbourhood that has evolved eventually. For example, there is Manek Chowk, which is a food street and remains open throughout the night. The jewellery shops that are around this food street do not require any security. Manek Chowk, the vegetable market, clothes market, and book market (those of you who are from Kolkata, which will probably relate to the College Street book market) were closed during the lockdowns.

Opening up these spaces during the unlock period was a challenge because the land use pattern is not conducive to practicing physical distancing and hygiene. Additionally, there were other demotivating factors too, including social behaviour of the locals who were not keen on following COVID-19 appropriate behaviour. Let us discuss an example from the old city when only essential services were allowed during the lockdown. So, those shopkeepers who were not into essential services started selling vegetables – an essential commodity. The Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation recognized the novelty and started a drive of bringing together e-rickshaws and such sellers. They also included women's self-help groups. So you see, how different

stakeholders, different groups were brought together. And this entire thing was made into a drive that gave impetus to start the economy once again, at least for those businesses that were going down. However, there were problems because the services were allowed only in the containment zones and outside the containment zones, there were established services like Big Basket, and Reliance Fresh. Eventually, authorities also started screening and issuing licenses, and in India when you are issuing licenses, so many problems need to be taken care of.

Could the idea of licensing be replicated in other conditions, for example, during Durga Puja, or in Kumartuli in Kolkata? That is something that we need to think about. Because you see, when you are going with the idea of licensing, you need to have a system in place and all of that cannot be done overnight. From the perspective of prospective risk management, we never thought that we would encounter such a scenario!

The government schemes of Atmanirbhar Bharat were applicable to MSMEs (Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises). However, the question remains how many of these traditional shops, and traditional crafts are eligible for this kind of promotion, and how many of them were or are actually aware of that?

Then there was an option of going over to a digital - aggregation platform. For example, you develop an app using all the vegetable sellers or all confectionaries together, and then you build an app and then you provide services. While this would have worked in this sector, I do not think this would be applicable to Kumartuli. But the idea is not to discard this entirely, the idea is to reflect upon how we could have modified this, or how can we modify this because, COVID-19 might seem to be a single extraordinary event, but we should prepare for such uncertainties in the future.

Another interesting fact was that while the celebrations were completely brought to a halt in Ahmedabad, Kolkata could manage Durga Puja celebrations. The idea of digital celebrations may appear lucrative but is personally not appealing to me, for Navratri celebrations are immersive experiences and cannot be replaced digitally.

There is yet another important aspect associated with the issue. There was a problem of old age homes filling up because people thought that the elders are more susceptible to being infected easily. However, I cannot understand the logic behind it because though the degree of severity was high in infected old people, contraction of infection is supposedly high amongst the younger generation. Moreover, the idea of leaving aside older people when they need your support does not make any sense to me.

Thus, I would like to wind up with three concluding remarks:

1. When we think of risk-informed sustainable development, we need to look back at our cultural practices, and traditional knowledge. The pursuit of growth and development must have a balanced approach – technology should be harmoniously blended with our culture and heritage.

2. Consequences of extreme events may be expansive but resilience is to be built locally and that again, should be driven by communities based on their practices, culture, and perceptions.

3. We need to learn from disasters in history; we do not do that enough.

So, cultural heritage needs to be looked beyond the idea of a site or a precinct from the perspective of the collective consciousness of the community. The communities have inherent ways of dealing with risks and uncertainties, and what is required is to understand those integral nuances and extend support towards their empowerment to make risk-informed decisions rather than bogging them down by decisions from the top.Thank you so much. I hope I have been able to answer your question.

Moderator

Thank you Repaul. You have talked about the local consciousness and resilience, and I am also thankful to you for relating to Kolkata. We will come back to you.

And now I go to Mr Sandeep Virmani. Mr Virmani, you have been working in different parts of Kutch, Gujarat for many years now. This area has a long history of recurrent earthquakes and droughts, which the communities have survived and at the same time managed to retain their cultural identity. Could you please tell us about your own experiences of working in some of these areas, about the indigenous knowledge systems of the people which helped them to reconcile with extremities and reconstruct their life after the disaster?

Sandeep Virmani

Thank you for having me on this programme. I shall talk about a community in the Banni grasslands in Kutch. I will take you through two of their constructs, which will try and throw some light on how cultural constructs are able to help them find resilience in dealing with disasters and conflicts.

You will remember the devastating earthquake that hit Gujarat in 2001. Kutch was the epicentre of that earthquake. Most of the building typologies in rural and urban areas were damaged or destroyed. However, in Banni, a vast grassland of 2500 sq. km in size where the pastoralists live, their homes called Bhungas did not collapse! These Islamic pastoral communities have an interesting symbiotic relationship with the Meghwals who are Hindus. They provide artisanal services to pastoral communities. The Meghwals take the leather from the pastoral animals and make leather goods for them like shoes, water *mashaks* (a leather bag used for carrying water), horse saddles et cetera. In return, they get free milk and buttermilk. They also provide building services to pastoralists. The Bhungas (round huts of Kutch) are circular structures that survived the earthquake. So, we asked the master artisans of the Meghwal community, and they explained to us that it was after the 1819 earthquake, that the Bhungas were invented by their ancestors. Till then these communities used to live in square forms. So, it is not that cultural and traditional changes happen very gradually. It was a very big event that almost immediately called for a change in the building form.

We asked our structural engineers to study why these circular structures did not break They deduced that in a square structure, the lateral thrusts of an earthquake make the corners of a building vulnerable; while one of the walls acts like a buttress, the other wall is thin and vulnerable causing a crack to appear at the top end of the corner where the two walls meet. The crack travels to the floor causing the wall to collapse followed by the roof. However, in a circular structure, the lateral thrust actually gives an 'arch action' and the forces of the earthquake travel circularly into the building and then dissipate into the ground. And that is why these Bhungas do not break in an earthquake. We discussed this with the Gujarat State Disaster Management Authority. GSDMA acknowledged that in spite of being earthen walls the structure did not collapse. The Bhunga was approved for reconstruction. This was a major change in the functioning of a government agency; they not only learned from the traditions of a community, but also approved an earthen structure in Zone V seismic conditions, a material till now defamed for being *kutcha* or weak. A modification was also introduced in the traditional Bhunga, as the community wanted to use tiles instead of thatch for the roof. With the Master Artisans, an eight-sided tiled roof was designed to sit on a cylindrical wall with eight steel bars in the wall which helped take the lateral thrust of the roof at the point where the two planes of the roof met. In the rehabilitation programme, the Meghwal masons took the responsibility of rebuilding the entire region with these Bhunga structures. About 1200 such structures came up within one year after GSDMA sanctioned this cultural typology.

Ever since we have studied the traditional building typologies of regions with high incidences of earthquakes including Kashmir, Uttarakhand, Spiti, Himachal, Bihar, and the Northeast, and they all have their own unique methods of building resilience in their building typologies, using locally available materials and incorporating social needs. We have helped the governments of Kashmir, Bihar, and Uttarakhand recognize this wisdom for their housing and post-disaster housing. We will soon bring this out as a publication and encourage National Disaster Management Authority to include this in their guidelines to the States.

In Banni, we went on to bring 12 of the artisans together and design their first indigenous tourism project. Since the Bhungas had become popular after the earthquake, they wanted to express themselves in more elaborate circular structures. So with these 12 artisans, we designed the Sham-e-Sarhad resort. These artisans provided different services to the pastoral communities; bell making for their buffalos, lacquer for their furniture, Ajrakh (a unique form of block printing) for their clothes, thatch for their roofs, and leather for their shoes. They all came together to bring all the knowledge systems into this resort. It is a well-known resort, which has won many awards and is run by the community itself. They do a business of about 50 to 60 lakhs every year during the winters.

The second cultural custom I want to share with you is called Aabhat. This is practised during the summer months and during droughts by the pastoral communities in Banni. Their water bodies, which provide water to their buffalos, dry up by the time the summers arrive. They have a system of making small wells in the bottom of the water tank to access the sub-soil water in the ground. To do this, the owner of the well invites

an Aabhat. One member of each family comes to help him make the well. However, the custom requires that the family with whom the pastoralist may have had some misgiving, some fight during the year has to be invited to the Aabhat. The Aabhat cannot begin without this family's participation. If he does not show up, the person calling the Aabhat is obliged to send the eldest member of his family to request him to come. If the person is extremely angry, he may refuse, thanking and apologizing to the old man for taking the effort to come. However, when he sends the youngest daughter in the family to go request him to come, it is said that his heart melts and he cannot refuse the young girl and consents to join the Aabhat. At the end of digging the well, the two warring parties eat from the same plate and let bygones be passed.

These are two small stories that I wanted to share with you, of how cultural customs are built into the fabric of society to deal with water scarcity and earthquakes seamlessly interweaving science and economics to strengthen community ties and become better human beings themselves. Thank you.

Moderator

Thank you for these wonderful narratives that show how much we can learn from these people. We will come back to you again. I will now ask Shalini.

So far, climate change has been mainly a concern for the environmentalist and the ICOMOS generally focused on cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible. But with the initiation of the Nature Culture journey in ICOMOS 19th General Assembly at New Delhi 2017, we saw a convergence emerging, a new perspective of looking at the cultural heritage aligned with climate change and Sustainable Development Goals. ICOMOS India has recently launched a working group on Climate Change which you are coordinating. Could you please enlighten us about various activities that this group has initiated, the plans and programmes in the context of historic areas?

Shalini Dasgupta

Yes, thank you very much for having me today, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank the organizers for giving this opportunity to the Climate Change and Heritage Working Group to put their ideas and thoughts across at this platform.

The Climate Change and Heritage Working Group of ICOMOS India is one of the nascent groups that has got formed. This is our alignment with the parent body. ICOMOS is a founding member of the Climate Heritage Network CHN. ICOMOS is the secretariat for this organization CHN. That enables ICOMOS to set up these working groups and work with CHN on various climate leadership programmes. So, that is the parent body to which ICOMOS international CCHWG group is aligned with and we are the national representatives for the International Climate Change Group. The group was formed in January 2020, to support and collaborate on the activities of the ICOMOS Climate Change and Heritage Working Group, and present the perspective of this part of the world and incorporate it within the mainstream work.

These are the three streams of work that were identified by the main working group, and that is what our working group has tried to align with. Since we started in January 2020 the pandemic hampered physical work. Nevertheless, we can put forth our ideas which were discussed in our brainstorming sessions. There was an initial working group agenda as we deliberated on various heritage and climate concerns. Presently, there are 26 members in the working group and our theme is to develop an ICOMOS India resolution on climate change and cultural heritage and develop an ICOMOS India climate change roadmap, which will feed into the larger objectives and framework of ICOMOS climate change initiative, working group. For this, we need to further work on the formulation of a white paper, or a position paper, which needs to be put together, and members have to come together to work on that.

The international working group was divided into four thematic teams when they started working, including mitigation, energy efficiency, adaptation, loss and damage, communication, and research. In a similar vein, we can take that forward here in India. In India, there is substantial ongoing work on addressing climate change. However, in terms of better mitigation and adaptation of issues related to tackling climate change, one needs to holistically address several complex and intertwined challenges.

Of course, the overwhelming challenges that we have are due to rapid population growth, overburdened infrastructure, poverty, and income equality. So, sustainable development and climate change actually are not

very prominent on the political agenda in our Indian cities. Moreover, recently, urban activities have grown in cities like New Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai, Surat, and Hyderabad. There are four main challenges in secondary research including the politics of the global climate change policy, reducing India's coal dependency, reforming our climate-insensitive agricultural policy, managing our growth and environment, and balancing the growth and environment to managing the politics of global climate change policy. India is a signatory to climate change and all the international frameworks which are there, and it is the fourth largest emitter of greenhouse gases. Europe and USA have contributed to more of the world's CO2 emissions than India in the last 250 years. Nevertheless, our country needs to manage such inequalities integral to these climate negotiations.

Of course, a whole lot of our Indian emissions mainly come from energy production, and India's dependency on coal is something the government is trying to wean off by trying to invest primarily into renewable energy and reforming climate-insensitive agricultural policy. One should also take note of the current socio-political and economic scenario of the farmer's agitation and the fact that a significant chunk of India's fiscal resources are directed towards improving the life of the farmers, for instance, through the minimum support price combined with helpful electricity, and fertilizer subsidies, encouraging farmers to grow water-intensive crops in land. So this is partly why, despite widespread water shortages, India is a net exporter of water due to the excess water used in agriculture. Taken together, India's agricultural policies aggravate water shortages and encourage crop burning, which we do not support, which is bad for climate change or climate change mitigation.

Thus, the crux of the current developmental economics of the country lies in balancing growth and environment. Further, the main challenge in climate change mitigation policies is can be seen as a forging a feasible balance between the growth and environment, without disturbing our natural resources and cultural heritage. One of the recent instances of practical challenges in climate change policies include the concerns raised over the Goa Forest projects. In short, climate change in India has a major impact on our cultural heritage.

The point I want to make actually is that there is this gap, between Heritage and Climate Change. Here, we are trying to address this general absence of cultural heritage from the climate discourse. So as ICOMOS members we would like to try to identify existing works happening by various organizations, like the Category 2 centres of UNESCO, namely, the Centre for Science and Environment, and the Vasudha Foundation for climate change in Southeast Asia. So how can we engage with all these? There is already a lot of work that they have done in the field of climate change. However, unfortunately, there are no discourses on cultural heritage in such projects on climate change. Hence, one of our upcoming activities includes working with GEO (Group on Earth Observations) on climate change and studying its impact on World Heritage Cities. As it is a community activity and our Climate Change Working Group has been shortlisted to work on this, we are going to work on two World Heritage Cities that we have, which are the two nominated World Heritage Cities of Jaipur and Ahmedabad. We would like to actually identify and make a repository of all the factors that have negative impacts of climate change on cultural heritage, identify cultural heritage and the negative impact which climate change is having on them, positive potential of cultural heritage to enhance responses to climate change, various regulations and measures which are prevalent within various cities. We would also like to take into account all the current climate policies and attempt to address the widening gap between cultural heritage and climate change policies, which has not been addressed by the policy makers till date. Thank you.

Moderator

Thank you Shalini. It is heartening to see ICOMOS in a facilitator's role and the fact that it has a roadmap, which is very important, especially in the context of heritage cities. Thank you so much, Shalini.

I shall ask a question to Rohit, our keynote speaker. Rohit, you talked very extensively about the role and the concerns of integration and change in the management plan. What will be your specific suggestions on how to integrate these concerns of resilience to disaster, pandemic, and climate change in the urban planning process of India, especially in the context of urban heritage in historic cities, areas, and precincts? I know you have touched on this, but can you just give us a few specific suggestions?

Rohit Jigyasu

I want to elaborate on a few points on climate change policies in urban India. First, we have to go away from traditional ideas of conservation plans for a historic precinct or an urban area. Rather, we should look at it more holistically in terms of regular problems of infrastructure, problems of regeneration of sewage and housing the people, and upgradation of the services. These are common urban issues and what is really important is that in the urban development plans, heritage concerns should be addressed, and not having a heritage-specific plan separated from these, because then what happens is that either it is not taken into account by the municipality or those who are doing urban development, or it sometimes conflicts with what, the planners are proposing in their master plans or documents which foresee the future of the city. And the concerns for heritage have to be reflected there. And the solutions that arise have to be decided, those have to take into account, which also means that when decisions like widening of roads for improved access to emergency facilities, or the kind of signage to be put in place in historic urban areas for telling where the evacuation routes are. If heritage professionals and agencies are not on board, then they may take decisions that are going to actually adversely impact the heritage. Hence, one has to make sure that they are always there to voice the concerns of heritage when different decisions are made regarding making historic cities or urban areas safer against disasters and climate change, and other kinds of risks.

The other point I wanted to emphasize is, that we need to connect city planning with wider territorial or regional planning because cities do not function in isolation. What happens in cities is connected to that in the fringe and rural areas, due to the interdependency between them. As cited in the given examples, I would like to point out how open spaces are often marked in a plan. If a planner is just looking at those open spaces, they will just mark them as green, which can further be interpreted in many ways, such as a park, forest, or amusement park. But when you have to overlay what it means in terms of heritage values, the kind of explanation of that green will differ. And that can only be overcome when heritage planners, and professionals are on the board when the planning decisions are taken.

Moderator

This is a very pertinent question and suggestion. Just to add to the points raised by you, recently the West Bengal Government has started the process of declaring two cities Cooch Behar and Nabwadeep as Heritage Cities. We told the government that it is not only the West Bengal Heritage Commission that should be responsible. It should be the entire plan which should be integrated with that process. They agreed and in both cases, it is integrated with the land use plan. Regarding integration with the regional plan, in Bhubaneshwar and Cuttack too, we exactly did the same thing as suggested by you, first the regional plan and then the city plan. It is good to see now how heritage zones and areas there are integrated and designed taking small things such as signage and other elements into consideration. However, I suggest that it should become a standard accepted policy, because, in each of these cases, we had to convince the government that this is required to be done. The government could have not listened to us. Hence, it should become a normal practice that the region, city plan, and heritage should be a part of the development plan. The discussion of this green code, is very important, as I remember in Bhubaneshwar, in the old heritage city, we had different colour codes for various land uses in heritage zones - a different blue colour for heritage institutional areas, specific red colour for the commercial area of heritage zone et cetera. It is now well integrated into the city planning document. This is very important that this integration is considered at a policy level.

Thank you. I shall come to my next question to you Ranit. Since we are talking about resilience and climate change, do you have any specific example to highlight? You elaborated on how a shift in the occupational pattern and changing scenarios creates knowledge stress and disruption of social cohesion. Could you also suggest how the integration of traditional knowledge, which you have pointed out, scientific research, and awareness programmes, can play important roles towards regeneration and resilience, and also in achieving some of the Sustainable Development Goals?

Ranit Chatterjee

Thank you for this very interesting question. I shall just take up a case from Kutch, which we are currently working on. We are working on camels that can swim. They are a special breed called the 'Kharai' camels that have the ability to swim, and a pastoral community that herds this breed of camel in Kutch, stay along the

coastal region. These camels have been on the endangered list and are further marginalized due to climate change stress as Sandeep Bhai also said. Kutch has two parts - one is the Banni, which is the greener one, but the other part is the semi-arid region. So, it is in this part where these camels are herded. The area faces frequent droughts and now they are even exposed to issues of flooding and cyclones. Also, these camels need to feed on mangroves, so it is very difficult for the community now to take them to the coastal areas for grazing because of the government regulations, as the international border with Pakistan is very near raising concerns about national security. As a result of various hardships, people are now shifting their occupation from being pastoralists to general commercial work. The Gujarat earthquake also brought a major shift to such work cultures due to the development that happened in this part of the country after 2001. So, people now have newer options that is much easier resulting in the dilution of the existing traditional knowledge. And if that keeps on happening, possibly at one point in time, we will see that these communities have stopped keeping these camels resulting in them becoming extinct.

So, what we are trying to research is whether these camels, which were a cultural asset, can actually become an economic asset for people, to become an incentive for them to still keep them. There is also a local narrative that suggests that when the camels graze on these mangroves, they actually help them grow. But then there are two sides. How do we prove what these locals suggest? Our studies show that, to a certain extent, the grazing pressure helps the mangroves to grow. But what is that cut-off? I think most of these belief system need scientific evidence, and a practical threshold to which you can generalize. Thus, we need to holistically integrate such kinds of narratives with policies along with scientific evidence.

Moderator

Thank you. It is interesting to see how you address issues related to occupation and endangered species along with local narratives infused with scientific research.

I shall now ask Sandeep a particular question because you both are working in the same area and you have already told us about this Kutch area. Do you have any experience that you would like to share with us regarding traditional knowledge systems, and suggest specific ways for dissipation of that through the capacity building? How can you do that through capacity building?

Sandeep Virmani

Let me share two training programmes we run for building artisans and pastoral youth.

One is a yearlong residential programme for youth in the age group of 18-25. These children of artisans not only learn their traditional craft of earth construction, carpentry et cetera but also understand how to integrate their craft into urban scenarios. When they realize how urbanism and market economies are destroying the environment and humane ways of economic engagement, they begin to take pride in their traditions and knowledge systems. Often the science of their building technologies is not understood, though the practice continues. Here the students learn how to adapt to site and location by applying scientific principles and calculations to build resilient buildings. The pedagogy of teaching too follows 'practice to theory' continuously reinforcing their confidence in delivering refined buildings. They are therefore not afraid of taking p*arampara* forward. Interestingly, *parampara* or tradition means moving away (*para*) from the now (*param*). Fortunately, they do it incrementally, and logically, understanding the meaning of change in the new context without losing the basic principles and values of the tradition. Each batch has 20-25 students and Karigarshala of Hunnarshala has been running this for eight years now. Many artisans have set up their companies to provide environmental services to the market.

Similarly, in Banni, we are teaching pastoral youth a course on environment and pastoralism. This is a UGC-approved 300-teaching-hour programme with Kutch University. This course helps them decode the significance and values of their cultural practice that helps them thrive economically and simultaneously preserve, in fact, augment the environment. The course offers no promise of economic benefit, but youth are very keen to reconnect with their own traditions and feel proud of their heritage and skills being formally taught in the university. In fact, the *bhagias*, or traditional knowledge bearers are also enrolled as teachers alongside doctorate researchers from reputed institutions like ATREE, NCBS, and professors from Kutch University.

In short, more than the lure of jobs and money, traditions need to be recognized. Youngsters who are proud of their heritage not only find their own ways of being economically sustainable but are now ecologically and socially contributing to solving problems the world faces.

Moderator

Thank you. That is a wonderful news. It can really become a role model for other areas. And you have also talked about two very important concepts. One is conservation is not preservation, but continuity and, how you can teach the other people to integrate it, even if not in the same profession, or same community. Thank you.

We learned about a wonderful example of capacity building from Sandeep. Let us hear from Repaul.

Repaul you are also working with the youth to develop awareness and preparedness for disaster. So can you tell us how you involve the community and how you work with the youth? And as you are from Kolkata, do you have any specific suggestion on what can be done in Kolkata, in West Bengal? Based on your experience of working with the youth, please give us your suggestions for how to incorporate such initiatives in historic areas of West Bengal.

Repaul Kanji

I will talk about the latest project that we did. It was about engaging and documenting community-based disaster risk management practices, supported by ICCROM and the Swedish Postcode Foundation. The idea was to integrate cultural heritage into disaster risk management. However, when we started working on the project, we thought, why do we want to do this? Because CBDRM or Community Based Disaster Risk Management is obviously an established aspect. It has been documented well. There are manuals about what needs to be done and how it is to be done and what not! When we look at the communities very closely, we understand that those communities which are already living in hazard-prone areas have adapted their lifestyles to such risks, they have their own incredible ways of life, which ideally should give us a lot to learn from – rather than imposing DRR measures, we should build a culture of co-creating solutions! These communities are usually relegated as vulnerable communities, and their stories of resilience need to be highlighted to underline the fact that those communities which usually are considered to be vulnerable, also have systematic capacities.

So, the two points that we wanted to highlight through our initiative are how do we go about it? Do we include experts who are already working in the field or do we include professionals who have a lot of ideas about all this? But then we thought, why not develop a programme which is a procedural capacity-building process in itself? For example, if we engage youths who are still graduating, and yet to start working, they would benefit a lot as they would understand what disaster risk management is, what culture is and how they intersect with each other. Most importantly, these young talents would be the ones making powerful decisions in the years to come, which further justifies their involvement. So we embarked on this journey and interestingly, it was all done during the lockdown. People were working remotely. And I was supervising from Gandhinagar and the entire team comprised of members who are less than 30 years.

There is a very small 10-minute documentary on CRRPs on YouTube channel, if you see it, you will understand that the change that these people underwent is tremendous, their understanding of what cultural heritage is, what disaster risk management is, has completely changed over a period of three months. So if three months can bring about such a change, imagine what we could have done with more people and this kind of programme being done throughout different places. So if I am to talk about what we can do, possibly in West Bengal and in other areas, probably we should also think about doing this kind of programme, trying to reorient the youth towards the understanding that you need to be in a position where you understand your own risks. You need to act towards addressing it. You have to be the one who does it. You cannot, always, rely on someone else. Further, there is another thing that possibly we should also do - we need to orient them to the idea that it is not always science and technology, it is not always GIS.

There is a collective consciousness of a community to be resilient, we should not forget to use that; you have to look into your past and then build a bridge towards the future. Thus, these are the two important things that our youth from Bengal needs to be oriented towards.

Moderator

Thank you. This work of capacity building, what Sandeep and you are doing with the youth, is absolutely wonderful and should be imitated and we should get inspiration from your work.

Now I have a question for Sumana. I think what you have shown is an extensive work, and I am sure there has to be a policy decision as a part of management. Can you just briefly say what type of background studies will be necessary to frame policies and strategies for making heritage precincts and areas more resilient and sustainable? Please tell us about some of the background studies, which are required for making such an extensive management plan.

Sumana Gupta

That was more or less a success story, how the Ratha Yatra is running year after year is not achieved in one day, it has now become a system, basically. So in the case of West Bengal, we need to do some ground verification for different types of events that we host. We have to know the nature of the festival, say it may be in open ground, like the Poush Mela, or the Rash Mela, or it may be along a water body like the Gangasagar Mela. So for each of them, the approach should be different. However, it should be going beyond the administrative boundary to the local level. It should, as Dr Jigyasu emphasized, be thought at a regional level, and then only it can bring in success. The other pertinent issue that remains is ground verification. What is actually there, how we can utilize the people through capacity building, the volunteering process, the sense of belongingness into the entire city of Puri - how they actually rope in the strength of the youth, that is also to be tapped in case of our festivals within Bengal. So, it should consider the scale of the event, the time of the event, particularly the climate, et cetera, and the purpose of the event, like whether it is some act like pilgrims having a holy dip or viewing something or doing something like the Sravani Mela in Tarakeshwar, that also calls in many pilgrims. Simultaneously, an appropriate survey has to be done about how the people are responding and feeling. Other equally important concerns which should be considered in policies remain hygiene issues like water contamination, food standardization, drinking water checks, et cetera. A well-managed festival can be arranged only after thorough and holistic consideration of all such pertaining issues.

Moderator

Thank you, Dr Gupta. Your publications are available, so one can also refer to them.

Question Answer Session

Moderator

We have some questions for Shalini. What are the plans of ICOMOS working group in facilitating activities of similar other groups and organizations in achieving SDGs for historic areas and cultural heritage in the Indian context? Can you please tell us how the ICOMOS working group is facilitating similar other groups and organizations in achieving SDGs for historic areas and cultural heritage in the Indian context? And you have a few questions from Aditi Rai – 'did the group also link aspects of heritage with the sustainable development goal of 11.4 and other indirectly related targets, as we do not have a specific working group on sustainable development goal group?' There is also a question about the membership - 'can any ICOMOS member become a part of this working group?'

So can you combine this question about how you are facilitating and how they are related to Sustainable Development Goals, and on workings of this group and how an ICOMOS member become a member of the working group?

Shalini Dasgupta

I shall take the last question first. Yes, India does not have a sustainable development working group, but internationally ICOMOS has a SDG working group. So, if members of India want to put a group together, they can form a group and that can be facilitated to form a separate SDG group because the international community has two separate working groups. They have a SDG working group which is separate and they have a climate change working group which is separate. They also have a rights-based working group, a water heritage working group that is on the verge of becoming an international scientific committee. These are the four working groups that are currently there. In India, ICOMOS India has got three scientific working groups

besides the Emerging Professionals Working Group. And of course, when in climate change, the linkage of whatever SDG goals can be linked with the climate change work, we would definitely look at that. We are still in the formulation stage. So, maybe in future seminars of this nature, we will be able to present more concrete work that the group would have put on.

In the context of the other question about facilitating similar organizations, in 2018, I remember that ICOMOS India had been a facilitator for one of these events like this with the WII, that is the Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun which is a UNESCO C2C centre. We need to actually be facilitators to many more such organizations. We need to actually bring in the dialogue of climate change in many such events. At that time, the event was around nature and culture journey. As ICOMOS, we need to engage with the C2C centres and get their stand on how they respond to climate change, and its impacts on World Heritage, Indian heritage, natural heritage, and all cultural heritage. I think we should collaborate even with the Ministry of the Environment and Forest and Climate Change, and various other organizations, to advocate such matters. But there is an endless list of organizations that are doing work in the climate change area. Plus, like I mentioned before, the discourse of cultural heritages is sort of missing with most of them. So we actually need to bring that in their discourse of whatever work that they are doing, and see how to bridge that gap of cultural resources and climate change.

Lastly, how can they become members of the group? So I think it is open because in the end, it seems you can only be a part of two NSCs. But I think the working group is open to anybody who has an interest in joining the working group; so one can write an expression of interest to the secretariat and then can join any of the working groups.

Moderator

Thank you, Shalini. I have some opinions regarding these Sustainable Development Goals. I think climate and Sustainable Development Goals, for the time being, can remain together because they are so interrelated. And in historic cities of India, everything is so interconnected.

Participant

Regarding Sustainable Development Goals, it is very important to look into the aspect of localization in a particular context. So, if that could be addressed on behalf of ICOMOS at any level, it will really bring a change in the way we are looking at localizing SDGs in the Indian context and Indian cities and urban areas.

Moderator

Yes, it is important to look into a specific context of localization. I think ICOMOS should take care of it. To conclude, this has been an enlightening discussion with participation from all the speakers and the panellists. Thank you.

Concluding Remarks

During the session, there were specific suggestions to integrate the concerns of resilience disasters, pandemic and climate change in the urban planning processes of India where heritage concerns should be addressed in the urban development plans. Integration of traditional knowledge, scientific research, and awareness programmes can play an important role in the regeneration and resilience of the SDGs. The importance of integrating traditional belief systems with scientific evidence in holistic planning policies has been elaborated through practical instances, like that of the unique role of the endangered Kharai Camel in the local Kutch community. Dissipation of traditional knowledge systems through capacity building, training programmes for building artisans in decoding the scientific basis of the practices, and pride in the knowledge system in the community ensure a longer chance of sustaining. Reorienting the youth to understand the challenges associated with heritage management and negotiating ways to combat them may work as an effective solution in urban areas like Kolkata. It is not always science and technology, but what is important is to "look into the past and look forward to the future of capacity building". To make a development plan with a resilient approach, it is required to have a thorough background study. Finally, organizations like ICOMOS India can play a meaningful role in facilitating other organizations in areas related to Sustainable Development Goals.
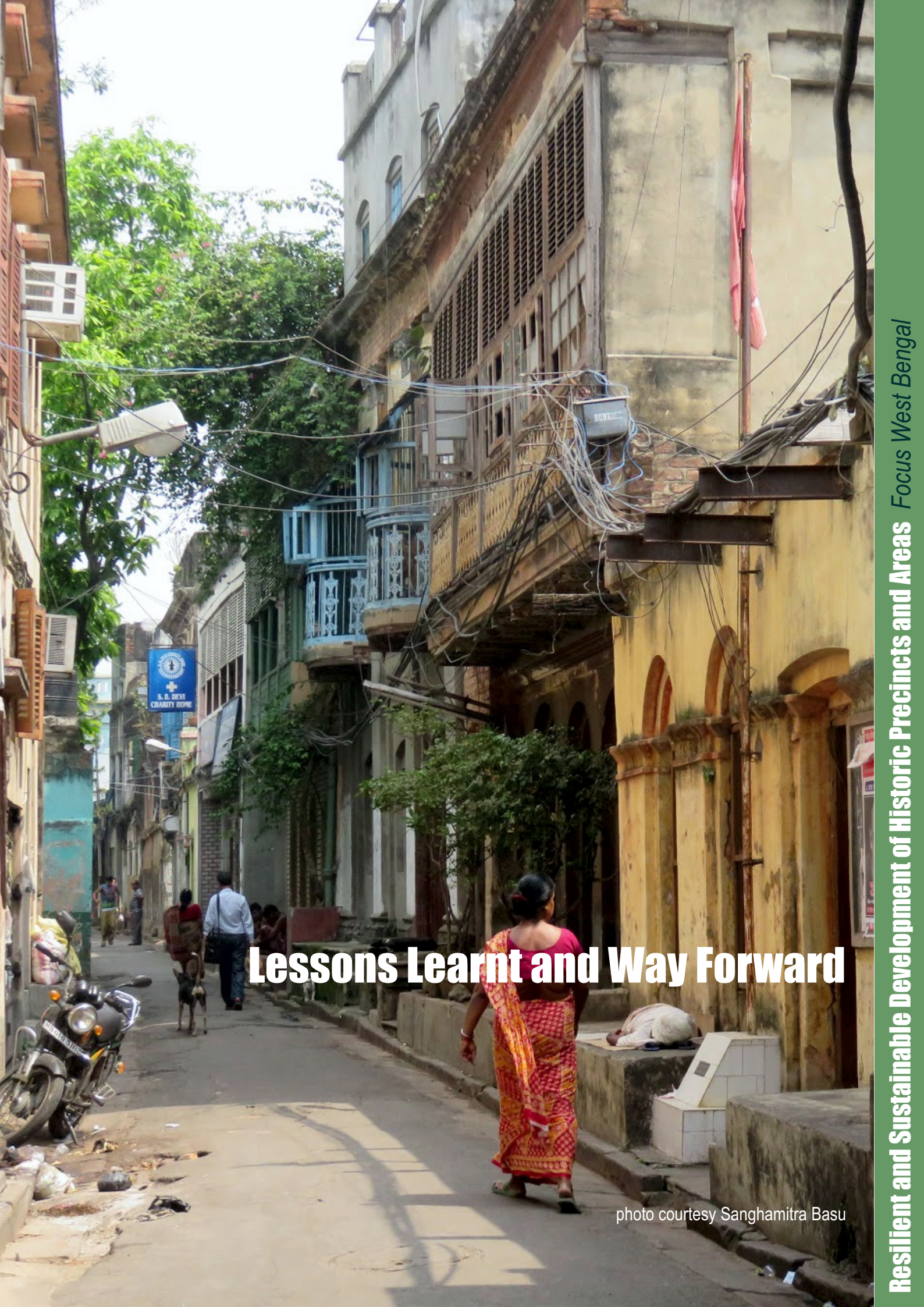
Lessons Learnt and Way Forward

Lessons Learnt and Way Forward

The goal of the webinar series was to find new directives for resilient and sustainable development of heritage precincts and areas in West Bengal. This section presents a summary of the learning and the key actionable points that were identified through the presentations and discussions of the various sessions.

F.1.

Key Takeaways

Editors

In the previous sections, we have documented the key notes, case studies and panel discussions presented over seven sessions and five themes of the webinar series. The idea has been to evolve a strategy for resilient and sustainable development of historic precincts and areas of West Bengal. Specific cases from West Bengal, along with examples and case studies from other places of India and also various parts of the world, were presented and discussed. Theoretical and conceptual deliberations, experience sharing, and focused discussions indicated various policies, programmes and activities that need to be adopted to enable the historic precincts and areas of West Bengal to be resilient and sustainable. Some of the key observations which emerged across the webinars are summarized below.

1. A paradigm shift in approach to conservation of historic areas

There is often a disconnect between our contemporary approach to planning and managing the built environment (which is largely influenced by Euro-American practices) and our social values and cultural norms. Heritage is not only monuments and architectural master pieces; it is about the way a settlement evolves in relationship to its context – the natural surroundings, the streets and public squares, the basic utilities, as well as food and festivals, arts, crafts, tradition bearers, and traditional practitioners. Heritage precincts are historic landscapes that include not just buildings or clusters of buildings, but the geo-topography, vegetation, water features, the social spaces, the community structures, and the indigenous urbanisms, offering an idea of particular ways of life and historical periods. Conserving the 'living' heritage offers the potential to conserve both traditional buildings and traditional ways of building, and even traditional ways of use and lifestyle. A new paradigm for development, one that is rooted in the ethics of conservation, aimed at creating continuity rather than disjunctions, is the call for the day. The future of historic areas and precincts entails development-oriented conservation, while encouraging indigenous urbanisms and traditional practices.

For detail discussions, refer keynotes A.1, B.1, D.1, E.1; the cases of Cooch Behar, A.2; Bihsnupur, A.3; Chitpur, A.5, D.2; Azimganj, B.7; Sundarbans, E.3; and panel discussions A.6, C.4, E.4.

2. A multi-pronged approach for conservation of the heritage context

Identification and delineation of important heritage properties and zones, clearly articulating their significance, and adopting micro-development plans for each of the zones, ensures a rational and holistic approach towards conservation of the heritage context. Both tangible and intangible assets and values of a historic area need to be understood. Multiple architectural and communal identities of a place need to be recognised while identifying heritage zones and precincts. Distinct typologies of space-form relationships exist in heritage precincts. A precinct can be an amalgamation of many character zones. Understanding indigenous urban culture and urban history through a 'historic urban landscape' approach is a prerequisite for identification of heritage precincts and heritage corridors.

For detail discussions, refer the cases of Cooch Behar, A.2; Bishnupur, A.3; Chitpur, A.5; Azimganj, B.7; and panel discussion A.6.

Knowledge systems

Documentation entails carrying out measured drawings for listed heritage buildings, checking listing formats, keeping photographic records and site sketches, and concluding with digital record of measured drawings and

details. Detailed classification and record keeping of all heritage buildings, with regular updates, can address the processes and challenges faced with grading and listing of heritage properties. A clearly articulated, rational system of grading, considering value, significance, authenticity, and integrity is required to prevent ad hocism.

For detail discussions, refer keynote E.1; the cases of Cooch Behar, A.2; Chitpur, A.5; Ahmedabad, B.2; Azimganj, B.7; Kolkata's Chinatown, C.2; and panel discussion E.4.

Legal and regulatory environment

There is an urgency of precinct designation, and the legal provision for doing so. Regulations need to define 'Listed Heritage Precincts' separately from 'Listed Heritage Structures'. The regulations should address various aspects of protection through bylaws or development control regulations. Several overlapping conservation laws are there in our country with regard to restoration and renovation of old buildings. Compatibilities between the ownership patterns, land use patterns, legal rights of development, and the overarching policies for conservation need to be reviewed. Heritage legislation needs to be based on local values and intangible cultural heritage. Appellate bodies are needed for an efficient mechanism to implement the laws and the necessary dialogues between different departments. Experiences of the Heritage Conservation Committee in Delhi may be referred in this regard.

For detail discussions, refer the cases of Cooch Behar, A.2; Chitpur, A.5; Ahmedabad, B.2; and panel discussions A.6, B.8.

Incentivizing heritage conservation

There is need for fund for addressing the challenge of maintaining historic buildings and heritage structures. The private sector has the greatest potential for contributing in this regard. Regulations should consider using development incentives for economically viable heritage conservation.

For detail discussions, refer keynotes B.1, B.5; the case of Ahmedabad, B.2; and panel discussion B.8.

3. Integration of heritage concerns in urban development planning

Individual conservation initiatives need to be integrated with urban planning and development control, with proper identification of heritage zones, duly considering their significance, development of mechanisms to honour development rights, and mobilization of funds and incentives to offset costs of preservation incurred by private owners. By preparing a conservation development plan as a part of Regional Plan / City Development Plan / Master Plan, heritage conservation becomes integrated with the formal planning process. Heritage professionals need to be on board when planning decisions are taken. A Master Plan that creates a shared vision of the historic settlement needs to recognise the associated local values and not take a generalized approach, while a conservation plan has to holistically consider the scope of addressing common urban issues like housing people, providing economic opportunities, and upgrading services and infrastructure. While zones of development control with a view to conserve are necessary, it is also important to identify the zones where there is potential for development; these zones can act as receiving zones with respect to TDR. Scenario-based planning is needed for building resilience.

For detail discussions, refer keynotes A.1, E.1; the cases of Cooch Behar, A.2; Azimganj, B.7; Puri, E.2; and panel discussions B.8, C.4.

4. Contribution of heritage conservation towards creation of new possibilities

Heritage can bring benefit to local communities. Projects for revitalization of cultural heritage can positively have an impact well beyond conservation, through promotion of good governance, growth of civil society, rise in incomes and economic opportunities, greater respect for human rights, and better stewardship of the environment. Culture is not only important for universal recognitions (for example, the benefits of UNESCO Creative City tag), but for contribution towards sustainable development goals or SDGs, and building resilience, as realized during the pandemic.

For detail discussions, refer keynotes B.1, B.5, C.1, C.2, D.1, E.1; the cases of Pondicherry, B.3; Serampore, B.6; Azimganj, B.7; Chitpur, D.2; Purulia, D.3; Sundarbans, E.3; and panel discussions, B.4, B.8, C.4, D.4, E.4.

Motivation through demonstration and evidence building

Conservation of significant heritage buildings in the historic town core or heritage areas, and creation of inclusive spaces for various activities like recreation, government administration, or small scale businesses, are useful as demonstration projects. Heritage assets, if managed properly, can work as leverage to improve the quality of life for communities living around heritage. Investments in heritage has the potential to catalyse other economic activities around it. It needs to be demonstrated that conservation and revitalisation of cultural heritage (in many cases the only asset at the community's disposal) can provide a springboard for social development. It entails making people aware of what we mean by a heritage precinct and what does it mean to live in a heritage building – the associated opportunities and responsibilities.

For detail discussions, refer keynotes B.1, B.5, C.1; the cases of Cooch Behar, A.2; Pondicherry, B.3; Serampore, B.6; Kolkata's China Town, C.2; Raniganj and Asansol, C.3; Chitpur, D.2; Purulia, D.3; and panel discussions A.4, B.4, B.8, C.4, D.4, E.4.

5. Localising heritage management systems

Empowering the local government, stakeholder engagement, and mobilization of resources become essential in conserving heritage. The Historic Urban Landscape protocol includes civic engagement tools, knowledge and planning tools, regulatory systems, and financial tools, and these should be geared towards making people aware of what they can do for conserving heritage, and supporting their endeavours. It is necessary to acknowledge the importance of collective decision making in heritage management, and the myriad roles of local community, bureaucrats, politicians, as well as the private sector. It is usually not easy to get public sector funds allocated for conservation projects; one needs to be creative enough to manage funds from other sectors. People-led initiatives and local authority play an important role as catalysts.

For detail discussions, refer keynotes B.1, B.5, C.1, D.1; the cases of Cooch Behar, A.2; Ahmedabad, B.2; Pondicherry, B.3; Serampore, B.6; Azimganj, B.7; Raniganj and Asansol, C.3; Chitpur, D.2; Puri, E.2; and panel discussions A.6, B.4, B.8, C.4, D.4, E.4.

Community-led participatory approach for heritage conservation

Promoting community engagement through collective mapping of local histories, followed by identifying shared areas of interest and inquiry, and finally creating a framework through which different participants could contribute in their own way are necessary steps. At each step of this process, space for feedback and ideation needs to be created. The way forward would be through enhancing awareness, with a focus on capacity enhancement and hand-holding by consultants and experts. It is imperative to get these stakeholders together through formal, community-based organizations – making them aware of their own rights, and getting access to the usual government schemes are necessary tasks.

For detail discussions, refer keynotes C.1, D.1; the cases of Kolkata's China Town, C.2; Raniganj and Asansol, C.3; Chitpur, D.2; Purulia, D.3; Sundarbans, E.3; and panel discussions C.4, D.4, E.4.

Risk-informed approach to integrate technology and traditional knowledge

Climate change and ill-conceived urban development are making disaster management increasingly complex. Communities have inherent ways of dealing with risks and uncertainties. What is required is to understand those intrinsic nuances and extend support towards their empowerment to make risk-informed decisions rather than bogging them down by decisions from the top. The scope of the traditional narratives and customary norms to conserve, regulate, and restore the ecosystem and its linked resources needs to be highlighted. The recognition, promotion, and protection of customary laws and practices are becoming an increasingly important aspect of national, regional, and international policies and programmes. Religious structures, traditional open spaces, and social networks actually contribute in a very positive manner in a disaster situation because they bring communities together; they act as social anchors which are really required when disaster strikes.

For detail discussions, refer keynote E.1; the cases of Puri, E.2; Sundarbans, E.3; and panel discussion E.4.

F.2.

Call to action: Charting a stakeholder roadmap for heritage precincts

Editors

Introduction

Old cities are living entities where development cannot be frozen. Adhering to what is compatible may provide a direction. Each city, town, or village had its own strengths as well as drawbacks, and any heritage management mechanism that is adopted needs to be devised accordingly. It is easy to enact legislation but difficult to implement it. The dynamic living heritage in India, which is manifest in both tangible and intangible forms, needs to be recognized and addressed appropriately. When we have to do planning in our historic city cores, can we really go ahead without understanding these kinds of associations and rituals which are still embedded in the minds of our local people, citizens, and the community living there? There is a need of flexibility in conservation plan development. Wonderful reports and fabulous documentation is of no use if we cannot actually convert it into action plans. Each of us have a role to play — by being stewards of our built and cultural heritage.

This 'Call to Action' is an outcome of the webinar discussions and critical points made by speakers and panelists, and outlines actionable ways in which all stakeholders can play an active role and do our bit towards resilient and sustainable development of historic precincts and areas. The following sections address:

1. *Conservation professionals*
2. *Urban planning and design professionals*
3. *Students and educational institutes*
4. *Community stakeholders*
5. *Private property owners, and real estate groups*
6. *Citizen collectives, advocacy groups, media, and heritage enthusiasts*
7. *State government departments, and urban local bodies*
8. *Non-governmental organizations, funding agencies, and the corporate sector*
9. *Legislature and judiciary*

1. Conservation Professionals

Approach

As a professional group, conservation experts must continually establish the need of conservation for historic settlements. An important agenda for contemporary professionals in India, both from a cultural and pragmatic perspective, is to engage positively with indigenous urbanism. There is a need to understand the nature of rationality in the social and spatial ecology of pre-colonial settlements with a positive and inquisitive state of mind, to build systemic knowledge and assess the positive attributes of our historic cities to create better modern cities.

How can conservation professionals develop new paradigms of urban planning to tackle the existing and emerging complexities of cities? This needs a multi-disciplinary approach where urban conservation, urban planning, and urban design professionals work together to formulate and discuss context-specific solutions to local problems, instead of advocating universal models. From the start, conservation professionals need to be a part of the team for heritage-based development planning – formulating and critically reviewing the plan, with recommendations to integrate various aspects of heritage, including the component of living heritage.

Actions

Identification of heritage precincts should be based on a scientific and technical process. Conservation professionals must assist, and be employed in, accurate delineation of boundaries and character zones that identify each precinct. This is an absolute pre-condition before any designation process can start. For this, a detailed mapping and zone-wise documentation of each precinct is essential. Assessing the layers of social, cultural, political, and economic aspects of each of the precincts further helps in rationalizing the boundaries. The easiest and best method to identify the historic character is seeing the clustering of listed buildings, indicative of a very distinct historic fabric of the city. Dalhousie Square in Kolkata is a good example of precinct listing. Cultural resource mapping is also very important. Prepare maps of the heritage assets, not only the tangible but also the intangible heritage assets, identifying cultural heritage zones followed by mapping and documentation.

The role of conservation professionals is to act as catalysts and collaborators, instead of as prescribers of solutions. They can do more by creating a platform for community collaborators to get the support needed to take forward the many ideas that have been generated through participatory approaches. Strengthening interpersonal relationships with stakeholders and the community can actually make things happen. For maximizing potential stakeholder involvement and local engagement, talks can be arranged where the owners of the heritage buildings are invited. Support from government agencies should be sought for some catalytic projects. While applying for funds for projects, proposals need to be based on a well-prepared plan. It is usually not easy to get public funds allocated for conservation projects; one needs to be creative enough to access funds from other sectors.

With respect to urban planning policies, both professionals and the community need to understand the potential of Intangible Cultural Heritage-led development schemes and programs, and their effective implementation. It is necessary to showcase models where the community is made aware of the projects and owns up the project. It helps to use the sense of appreciation, belonging, and pride, to create an enabling situation. The role of heritage professional is critical in working with educated and enlightened clients and community groups to galvanize a process where a tourism-based approach becomes holistic and sustainable. It also creates a pioneering example of how an influential community's change of attitude towards their own heritage – from apathy to self-organization and pride – can create effective impact at local, sectoral, and regional levels; thereby bringing forgotten places back to life.

Consultants providing technical support facilities for restoration and maintenance for private and public buildings need freedom to look at the quality of the implementation, conducting regular audits/reviews of plan implementation, and reporting.

2. Urban Planning and Design Professionals

Approach

Sensitive planning and urban design, informed by principles of conservation, is the key to protecting, conserving, and allowing changes in historic precincts. In our modernising society, the approach of urban researchers and scholars, urban planners, and administrators often align with the aspirational expectations of a large section of the general public – for 'modern 'and 'world class' habitats. Urban planners are often unable to fathom the complexities of the urbanization processes, and the symbiotic relationship that existed between the living cultures, traditional building practices, and the development of habitats. This leads to gaps and shortcomings in the Master Plans, and a degree of failure to realise their objectives. It is imperative for urban planners to engage with indigenous urbanism.

There is a need for a pragmatic approach to conservation works – by re-inventing or redefining the values for successive generations, and adopting a comprehensive, long-term programme that re-instils lost heritage identity to historic towns. Essential to this is a comprehensive heritage policy, and a heritage-based development plan, which incorporate guidelines for conservation based on what we have and what we need. By preparing a conservation plan as a part of Regional Plan / City Development Plan / Master Plan, heritage conservation becomes integrated with the formal planning process. It would become a normal practice when heritage planners and professionals are on the board at the decision-making stages. In case of West Bengal,

there is a need to dovetail the heritage management proposals with the 'Land Use Development and Control Plan '(LUDCP), which is a statutory document under the WBTCP Act.

Actions

How can there be flexibility in planning? By integrating local living heritage values and SDGs, and ensuring that the Master Plan / Development Plan is flexible enough to allow necessary changes and variances, it is possible to forge a feasible balance between urban growth and concerns of conservation – providing a useful management framework without disturbing our natural resources and cultural heritage. UNESCO's commitment for Creative Cities provide useful reference framework for linking the Sustainable Development Goals with planning of the city. Encouraging and working towards Creative City designation can be a good starting point.

Heritage tourism should link the religious tourism circuit, if any. In heritage sites of religious significance, it is necessary to build up a sense of trusteeship for the restoration of points of attraction like religious structures and facilitating building of additional new amenities for extending stay of religious pilgrims, and, at the same time, instigating them to explore non-religious heritage sites of the locality. There has to be a focus on employment generation to benefit the local economy, and enhancing regional pride and a sense of identity. A pilot study sets an example of how to revive the identity. Tourism circuit with 2-3 day itineraries that link the heritage sites and activities into a holistic offering of tangible and intangible heritage of the area need to be worked out. To unlock sectoral linkages through heritage tourism, it is important to establish communication and engagement with the community. This can start with improving the health and education infrastructure of the community – such as training local women to work as health workers, organising street meetings, or formal community meetings.

Interdisciplinary teams should be engaged in diverse urban conservation-cum-development initiatives. Identification of the negative impacts of climate change on cultural heritage, and making repositories are essential. To enhance responses to climate change, the positive potential of cultural heritage, and the various regulations and measures which are already prevalent in various urban centres, need to be identified. Planning and designing green spaces would contribute significantly to enhance the quality of life in historical places.

3. Students and Educational Institutes

Formal Education

To focus on constructing context-specific strategies for transforming historic precincts, both professional practice and academic pedagogy need to operate in tandem. There may be some positive outcome by reforming academic pedagogy to examine immense wisdom embedded in indigenous urbanism. Heritage sensitization should first address architects and designers, and, for this, the efforts and exposure needs to begin in educational institutes, especially those for higher education, through involvement of professionals and educators having a good understanding of what is meant by heritage conservation and what our heritage is – an understanding that it is not making something touristy, or merely making something visually attractive, but much beyond. Architects and civil engineers have to be aware of the issues because they would be involved in construction, design, and, at times, even in decision making. Every civil engineering college should teach how to maintain, repair, and conserve heritage buildings. Courses on ethics of conservation need to be introduced at the undergraduate level.

Inclusion of ICH / heritage education in curriculum helps in sustainability (SDG 2). The youth are very keen to reconnect with their own traditions and feel proud of their heritage skills when these are being formally taught in the university. If we engage youths who are still graduating, and yet to start working, they would benefit a lot as they would understand what disaster risk management is, what culture is, and how they intersect each other. Youngsters who are proud of their heritage not only find their own ways of being economically sustainable, but ecologically and socially contribute to solving problems the world faces.

For a true people-centric approach for historic areas and heritage precincts, in the long run, it is necessary to install a sense of pride for heritage and an awareness about heritage from very young age. This necessitates inclusion of heritage education as a part of primary school curriculums as well.

Training

Institutes can organize basic orientation courses on the ethics of urban conservation for the governmental departments involved in urban administration. Municipal corporations, development authorities, and even small municipalities and panchayats can benefit from such capacity building and training programs.

Capacity building of artist communities also needs to be addressed as a key component of tourism planning and promotion. These should address showcasing traditional art and craft, developing artist habitats as cultural destinations / cultural hubs, using accreditations and GI registrations for collective branding. Educational institutes can play a key role in building this capacity. For creating authentic travel circuits and management of heritage assets, local communities need to be trained in the hospitality sector. It is a part of the experience – creating a self-sustaining ecosystem, and promoting a 'destination'. It helps to educate the youngsters – a training centre for local youth in different activities, including hospitality management. It encourages them to stay in the city, be entrepreneurial, and employ other people instead of just going overseas.

4. Community Stakeholders

Participation

Importance of collective decision making for heritage management, and the roles of local community, bureaucrats, politicians, and the private sector, needs to be acknowledged. If we want to bring in citizens' participation, we have to bring in the municipal councillors and political support. It is very important that the local legislature leaders and the strongmen get around and stand behind a chosen project, which is a very important management ethic. The community needs to come together and mobilize this. However, while the community can have a say in what is to be conserved, most often, how it is to be conserved has to be decided by the experts.

Any recognizable conservation-oriented activity, progressed by an authority in any locality, creates an atmospheres of zeal for all other stakeholders in and around the locality. It has the potential of ushering a visible rejuvenation programme in varied forms. While working with multiple stakeholders, and several different organizations, trust building is the most important aspect.

Community participation is the key to success for hosting large scale events that are prone to disaster. By engaging and documenting community based disaster risk management practices, we can build a culture of co-creating solutions with those who are usually relegated as vulnerable communities.

Resource

There is a need to find local resources through private and local small scale initiatives. This can be achieved through both tourism-oriented and community-focused activities, such as heritage hotels, bed and breakfast opportunities in heritage properties, or reuse of old houses as boutiques, cafes, museums, or offices. A lot of things get done if it is a joint effort, a collaborative effort. For carrying out research on heritage, local groups are quite resourceful. Community-based natural resource management has been recognised as an effective way of sustaining the common pool resources. 'Willingness to pay' can be a proxy measure to start understanding a community's contribution potential for heritage related projects.

Cultural heritage is not really the site or the precinct, but basically the whole urban scenario – a community that has eventually developed around it. So, the community, in its entirety, needs to work towards risk-informed development – reducing existing risks, and ensuring that no new risks are created during fostering development. When the local communities realise how urbanism and market economies are destroying the environment and humane ways of economic engagement, they begin to take pride in their traditions and knowledge systems. Cultural customs are built into the fabric of society to deal with water scarcity and earthquakes, seamlessly interweaving science and economics, and strengthening community ties. Importance of engaging communities in disaster risk reduction is becoming evident.

5. **Real Estate Groups, and Private Property Owners**

For heritage sensitive commercialization that safeguards intrinsic values, there is a need to promote ethical approaches giving recognition and benefit to tradition-bearers and stakeholder sensitization. Bengal needs to become the next travel destination, and, for that, a few notable private property owners from Bengal have shown how to look beyond economics, employ TDR, and reduce dependency on the foreign / tourist market because 'if you do it for the locals, tourists will come'.

It is essential to create an ecosystem for heritage-led economic drivers, where, through a series of local actions from within the community – especially by private property owners, one could leverage heritage assets of a place and its immediate surrounds. Local builders should adhere to the Façade Control policies on their own. In many places of India, corporate houses are in possession of several heritage buildings, and it is their responsibility to conserve them and continue to use them with minimum changes. It is also their duty to restore the unused heritage structures for adaptive use. Small private owners may be encouraged to convert their homes to Heritage B&Bs. This brings revenue for private homeowners, which could be ploughed back into the conservation process of more historic buildings. However, conservation professionals should be employed to appropriately restore such structures and arouse a sense of pride and ownership in the users. Establishing a network of heritage property owners who systematically open up their properties to guests through partial conversion to hospitality use, helps in creating alliances for symbiotic opportunities.

Adaptive reuse of private palatial buildings need not be only as museums and hotels; there can be many more viable uses that benefit the local community. Thinking about our everyday lives – restaurants and cafés, spaces for creative class workers and knowledge class workers, local businesses, perhaps for architect's studios, interior decorators, or advertising companies, or, it could be used by an advocate or someone else needing an office space. Real Estate Groups need to diversify and think beyond tourism as the go-to solution for heritage properties – the idea is to make it self-sustaining, while tourism may act as only one of the anchors. In some instances, depending on the picturesque qualities of a heritage place, the possibility of the place becoming a film shoot destination may be explored, with some restrictions.

6. **Citizen Collectives, Advocacy Groups, Media, and Heritage Enthusiasts**

Awareness

The role of the heritage enthusiasts and advocacy groups are very crucial in convincing civic or public authorities. There is a need to facilitate local heritage societies in making people aware of heritage through various action plans. Consultation meetings with community members and local Heritage Development Societies help in generation of ideas and are key steps for self-organization and collective action. Activities like publication of books on local history, making of documentary films, establishing libraries, awareness campaigns in newspaper, websites, social media, and organizing educational trips, can play pivotal roles in heritage awareness and advocacy. Media needs to publish stories and reporting of heritage related activities.

A better appreciation for intangible attributes that make historic urban spaces a living heritage needs fostering. Presentation or a display of the craft of the community in terms of production, its manufacture and development, can serve as a pilot project giving visitors an insight into what the craftsmen are doing. This can also become a source of employment for the craft community. More than the lure of jobs and money, traditions need to be recognized. Youth who can be proud of themselves and their heritage not only find their own ways of being economically sustainable but they can ecologically and socially contribute to solving problems the world faces.

Performing arts program is one of the most important and powerful ways of creating awareness for local communities. Heritage festivals may be introduced, along with inviting international guests and performers. The festival should also celebrate the natural heritage of the region. Some of the activities that facilitate heritage festivals are – inter-school heritage quiz competition, photography exhibitions along the theme of each year's festival, a walk through city's streetscapes, dance and music, book events (either books about the place or local authors), open house (opening places and institutions in heritage buildings to the public during the festival), seminars with experts, conversations, food trails, and heritage walks.

Positive and far reaching results accrue through organizing various heritage walks for experiencing the built heritage, which could be significant monuments or it could be ordinary spaces, people, and lifestyle, including the religious associations, wells / water bodies / natural heritage and rituals. Local association and local stories which people want to know about need to be highlighted.

Technological development is opening up new possibilities; through virtual reality and augmentation solutions, a complete city can be created where customers can directly visit shops and the craftspeople. Making creative public space with media support has also proved to be successful. Media, as well as the new generations – particularly school and college children, play important roles.

Mobilizing Participation

It is important to build up a people's movement where communities, local companies, and corporates join hands in a partnership of mutual goodwill and gain. Promoting community engagement through collective mapping of local histories, identifying shared areas of interest and inquiry, and finally creating a framework for diverse participants to contribute are necessary steps. During heritage mapping, involving the youth of the community for heritage walks helps in bringing a sense of pride in each of the kids, which is very infectious. For awareness and consciousness, it is important to target this at primary school levels of education, and start with children for capacity building. At each step of this process, space for feedback and ideation needs to be created.

Managing heritage precincts require a much decentralized and localized approach. While appreciating local aspirations for mobilizing precinct designation, importance of local pride and valorization also need to be recognized. Conservation has to be people-centric. The community needs to be brought back into the system, figuring out a localized way of solving and appreciating the problem. When a heritage precinct is declared, for an inclusive, participatory, and people-oriented process, people need to understand what it means, what are the restrictions, and what are the incentives.

7. State Government Departments, and Urban Local Bodies

Regulatory Interventions

To convert a heritage precinct into a legally viable entity, it needs to be recognized in municipal byelaws and be a part of the government gazetted heritage list. If necessary, proposals need to be made for amendments that would technically allow to declare a heritage precinct – by arriving at a rational method for delineation of precincts. Context specific bye-laws could be adopted at local level, e.g. creating a Bengal model. A very strong appellate body to facilitate a dialogue between the developer and the people who want to protect heritage is essential. Heritage regulations need to be specially crafted for private, residential and living heritage where the challenge is about how to take everybody along and successfully create a situation where thousands of houses are managed and preserved. Appropriate building bye-laws need to be formulated to upgrade and modernize historic precincts which are a part of a larger modern settlement. To allow sensitive growth in heritage zones and control reckless development, there can be height restrictions pertaining to a context.

Regulations cannot work with just sticks, there has to be some carrots as financial incentives as well. Unless we provide sufficient incentive, it is very difficult to implement laws, or deal with opportunity costs arising out of demolition. The only tool that currently favours heritage conservation along with ensuring development rights is TDR, or Transfer of Development Rights. However, owing to Tenancy and Rent Control Acts, there are challenges and issues of implementing the TDR. For non-listed buildings in heritage precincts, General Development Control Regulations (GDCR) can be eased out as incentives; for example, if you are retaining building footprint, there will be less taxes, as also ease of permissions to repair and restore. A Single Window clearance helps to facilitate restoration permissions for listed heritage buildings and a fast-track approval process would be more than welcome.

Planning Interventions

Unless we mainstream heritage concerns in the formal planning process, we will not be able to go very far. There is a need for scientific planning and design for protection, preservation, and interventions to important heritage properties and historic landscapes. On the one hand, arbitrary downgrading of listed properties is a menace. On the other hand, it is important for Government stakeholders to understand the essence and value of traditional knowledge, and not following it as a ritual just for the sake of it being a tradition. The need is to find equitable solutions rather than take an obstructive stance. Government/PWD participation requires fair and open dialogue. Actionable plans for a heritage-led revival and resurgence stems from generating a holistic conservation strategy plan. As a future roadmap, heritage values within the tangible and intangible aspects of the settlement need to be identified with a focus on viability, revenue-generation, and tapping into tourism potential. Tourists will like the area if there is a vibrant local life. Urban and environmental issues that enhance quality of life, in a designated heritage precinct, needs to be duly addressed. Some possible areas of intervention are: a historic city signage system, non-polluting traffic and transportation, matching grant for heritage buildings, solid waste management, plans for revitalization of specific areas, model street and façade restoration, façade control grants, heritage walks. In fact, all of these aspects are rooted, managed, and administered through civic or state institutions. Local actions should have larger regional impacts, and trigger a wider economic benefit through inclusive and participatory community-driven conservation mechanisms. Formal approach towards working with privately owned heritage comprise increasing awareness in people and bringing out the potentials for community-led conservation and maintenance. Formulation of a Trust, which can work with people and provide necessary hand holding, is a key step for this.

Authorities should support pilot projects, which can become model examples for the community, and may generate the impetus necessary for conservation of historic areas and precincts. Actual demonstration projects allow local stakeholders (government representatives as well as residents) to visualize in real life what the experts demarcate in a plan proposal. Any recognizable activity progressed by any authority in a locality creates an atmospheres of zeal for all other stakeholders around the locality and in ushering a visible rejuvenation programme in all possible forms. It provides a pragmatic approach to conservation of heritage buildings and precincts. Pilot projects serve as role models that can trigger future actions to unlock entrepreneurial spirit and secure funding for adaptive reuse for private properties. This changes the community attitude and brings in required support in pulling off such projects.

Specific policies and programs are needed for integration of Intangible Cultural Heritage – its revitalization and integration in conservation of historic areas that ensure cultural sustainability and long-term viability. Living Heritage Festival helps to link culture and ICH with historic city upgradation. There is a need to integrate local economy into way of living by giving impetus to small-scale, self-sustaining initiatives as well as public-private ventures that encourage local craftsmanship and enhance capacity building at multiple levels. For example, in Nizamuddin Urban Renewal Initiative, economic opportunities for women, crafts related to paper motifs and textile stitching which they can sell to tourists, proved to be a successful model. For a successful event, the city administration needs to exploit the potential of community participation and trained volunteers as on-site response teams, utilize people power through capacity building and volunteerism, and build a sense of belonging.

Economic Interventions

For a revitalization area, as the economic success increases, the property valuation will rise thereby suitably increasing its property taxes as well. This allows for a revenue stream to put in upgraded amenities – new water or sewer lines, parking facility, and other essential infrastructure. Some percent of the revenue from new developments may be diverted towards conservation. It needs to be ensured that after carrying out repair of the buildings, the traditional businesses and long-term residents can actually continue to stay in the heritage precinct. The mind-set of the government needs to be pro-homeowner, who is facing difficulty in preserving their heritage property. The overarching nature of the Rent Control Act that governs the development and change in the context of heritage conservation becomes a hindrance. The implementation of Rent Control Act needs to be very selective, with provision of grant to the property owners, for physical upgrading of the

buildings. It is necessary to have agreement that they will keep the long-term tenant for some years, and they will not increase the rent. Government needs to provide matching fund and also building up a trust with the property owners and with the tenants. Financial assistance from government can be debt-based incentives, or low interest loans, or subordinate loans or forgivable loans, or loans of unusually long term/ subordinate equity/ regulatory incentives. State governments can also give direct financial assistance/ a grant to heritage related activities in appreciation of non-economic values of heritage / tax-based incentives. Historic tax credit and a dedicated Heritage Fund, at the disposal at the urban local body level, are viable and creative ways of micro-financing heritage conservation. Authorities also need to be creative about the finance, like presenting smaller projects with the entire estimate before financial year ending, approaching councillors, MP, MLA's to tap unutilized fund and getting the budget approved for meaningful conservation works. A convergence of funds from various departments, like the department of Tourism, Department of local craft / cottage industries and related public works departments can ensure a substantial funding, along with setting up a Government investment agency who can lead to better management of economics and cost benefit ratio.

For properties not being maintained by private owners, there should be an option that the property may be acquired by the city government through negotiations. But it is not possible to buy all. Habitat Seed Fund can be introduced to restore some of the properties and simultaneously work for long-term tenancy. It is necessary to establish a system where the owners and the people and the tenants can work together to ensure rights of the tenants.

Administrative Interventions

Heritage Cells should be present within all key municipalities. It should create heritage initiative or awareness programmes. Inclusion of conservation architects as well as town planners in the Heritage Committee as well as in the Heritage Cell ensures a bottom-up approach from urban local bodies. Heritage Cell should have its own finances. The municipal administration should be part of the process of any heritage initiative or awareness program. It helps to organize heritage walks for Municipal Councillors and officials who govern the Municipal Corporation – elected by citizens and in-charge of betterment of the place – to be sensitized to heritage areas and issues.

A fully government controlled company for managing heritage projects may be set up, where Director of Archaeology and the Director of Tourism may be the board members. Every step towards risk management, natural or manmade, with possible mitigation measures should be considered as a contingent plan by the authority which should showcase the strong management capacity in case of some disaster.

8. Non-Governmental Organizations, Funding Agencies, and the Corporate Sector

Projects

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play an important role in training and engaging local people into various activities. In case of a perceived threat to Heritage / Eco-Sensitive Zones, comprehensive listing with a guidance program may be steered by NGOs, collaborating with local residents to establish their stake hold. It may be commissioned to a competent body like INTACH, with a goal to culminate into the identification and notification of the sensitive heritage zone. Systematic assessment and recording of heritage resource involving survey, investigation, and record keeping need to be ensured.

NGOs like ICOMOS and INTACH can actively engage in promotional activities like organizing exhibitions for interest and awareness building among stakeholders and general public at museums and heritage festivals, organizing international seminars on recognizing the potential of heritage as an asset, sharing best practices and generating discourse, bringing in the best minds in conservation and sustainable tourism practice.

Empowerment of private property owners of built heritage is critical. So it is not only necessary to increase the awareness in people, but getting them together in formal community based organizations, making them aware of their rights, and getting them access to the usual government schemes. Participation and involvement in identification of the economic interests of the land owners and the property owners has to be taken care of. It needs to be ensured that during any restoration process local vendors and small shop owners are not being

cleansed from the heritage zones to provide a posh feel to the restored site. Rather they should be repositioned post restoration of the heritage sites / natural landscapes / river fronts. This should eventually lead to higher footfalls warranting higher income opportunities. NGOs can join hands with right-based organizations keen on helping owners and tenants figure out how they can continue to stay even though the rentals or opportunity costs are high. Sustainable outcomes involve boosting local livelihoods of current residents of the place, supporting the use of traditional structures / house as a homestay, a café, a museum shop, or an art gallery.

Craft Tourism Village may be showcased as demonstration projects for which plans need to be prepared to enhance the homes and working conditions of the artisans. For an integrated tourism management for the area, it is necessary to link all activities, promote all the crafts in the area, along with the built heritage component – ensuring the continuity of both skills and crafts, and the recognition and platform for skilled craftsmen of a living heritage settlement / area.

We need to explore creative ways of financing, and how different segments of the private sector can get involved in terms of corporate social responsibility (CSR) – by hosting cultural activities in old halls, encouraging voluntary efforts, organizing fairs and festivals, preparing documentary films, installing plaques, or publishing books. It may be worthwhile to encourage Indian investors from other parts of the country to invest in old houses to restore and use.

Funding

Economically sustainable adaptive reuse of heritage buildings is a key way forward to enable adequate and compatible use and help earn necessary revenue for maintenance expenditures. Financing needs to be a part of the heritage equation. We need money for conservation, and funds can be raised from Debt or Equity, or as intervention funds and grants. The various sources for it are the public sector (and the quasi-government sector – like institutions, universities), the corporate sector, and the third sector – comprised of NGOs and community-based organizations. However, the public sector has more pressing concerns, and the third sector has limited funds, so, almost by default, the corporate sector has to get involved.

To attract private capital of the corporate sector, incentives with either direct monetary benefits or policy intervention is required. Development incentives are a way to encourage investments that otherwise would not take place because it is an irrational economic act to spend a million dollars on a historic asset and receive no economic benefits. Policy interventions could be like American central city revitalization programme called 'Main Street', which enables developers to approach local banks and assemble a low interest loan pool that disburse loans below market rate for projects involving heritage buildings in the area. A mechanism / business model for a particular property can be that the money received by the owner can be deposited in a trust, so that a part of that can be utilized for the maintenance of the heritage property.

9. Legislature, and Judiciary

The West Bengal Heritage Commission Act should be amended to reflect necessary changes already incorporated in the Municipal Act. Necessary amendments to the building bye-laws is a step forward to help preserve built heritage. There is a need for specific legal provisions for historic areas and heritage precincts. In the formulation of byelaws, the highlight should be on what would be permitted – what could be done, rather than what could not. These byelaws should not be solely based on the criteria advocated by ICOMOS or ASI, but evolved by understanding what the local context needs, and the local people want.

The court plays a very important role in interpreting the law ensuring its implementation. Education and awareness about legal provisions are also important aspects.

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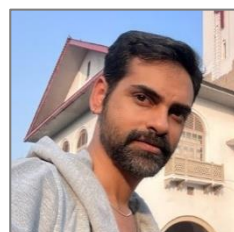
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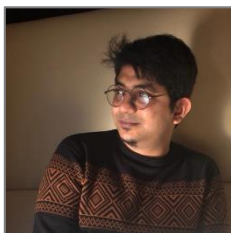
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Focus West Bengal

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Historic areas and precincts have been a less debated subject in the realm of heritage conservation studies in India, and this publication intends to fill this lacuna. It is the outcome of a series of webinars held between August and December 2020 organized by ICOMOS India East Zone in collaboration with the National Scientific Committee on Historic Towns and Villages, ICOMOS India. The overall theme of the webinars was 'Resilient and Sustainable Development of Historic Precincts and Areas', with a focus on West Bengal. With contributions from highly skilled experts in their respective fields, the different sessions threw light on important aspects such as concepts, frameworks, legal tools, heritage economics, management mechanisms, community participation, intangible heritage, resilience, sustainable development, and disaster mitigation. The publication includes keynote speeches, articles and case studies, as well as transcripts of panel discussions, concluding with a summary of the lessons learnt and actionable points. Written in an extremely readable style, and illustrated with relevant images, the compilation is bound to appeal to both the expert as well as the curious, non-expert reader. Links to digital video recordings of all the webinar sessions are also included.

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