UNBOX

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Mapping Mapusa Market

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Executive Summary

Mapping Mapusa Market is an exploration into how a typical Indian local market can be creatively and collaboratively 'mapped'. Researchers Bahbak Hashemi-Nezhad, Stanzin Losal and Andrew Burton worked with project partner, Orijit Sen, Director of People Tree to create a series of workshops and live interventions that aimed to open up new perspectives on this dynamic and vibrant – but vulnerable - space. *Mapping Mapusa Market* involved the generation of new creative works including performances, murals, videos and sculpture. These works have been 'mapped' onto a new website that invites further contributions.

The project began with market users devising 'their' walk through the market. Whether carrying goods, scouting for trade or browsing souvenirs, each walk had a special purpose based on their creators' individual knowledge, experience or expectations.

As the research developed, this set of 'cross-sectional views' was extended with works created by new participants. These works, plotted onto a topographical view of the market on the *Mapping Mapusa Market* website, represents a range of creative responses, charting Mapusa market as a nexus of cultural, commercial and social relationships. Through this process the project extends knowledge of this uniquely vibrant, complex and dynamic hub of commerce and cultural production.

Researchers and Project Partners

Andrew Burton, Bahbak Hashemi-Nezhad, Stanzin Losal, Orijit Sen (People Tree)

Summary report

Please provide details of the collaborations that have developed during the project, whether planned or serendipitous, especially your Indian collaborations. How have these collaborations brought added value? How has the project evolved over the period of fund?

Mapping Mapusa Market aimed to develop a series of collaborative investigations that would document Mapusa Market through a set of creative responses, culminating in the development of an innovative and interactive website. Collaborations, often happening 'on the ground' in the market as live interventions, involved a range of market stakeholders. Whilst some interactions were planned, the research was designed to allow for more spontaneous and open-ended interventions. Ideas generated during workshops, events and discussions were explored during fieldwork in the market.

Initially, participants were drawn from the People Tree network or serendipitous encounters in the market . As the project progressed an increasingly wide field of collaborators was attracted. During two field trips (September 2013 and January 2014), we used social media as well as press announcements, posters and leaflets to publicise the project,   attracting collaborators including artists, craftspeople, designers, architects, business people, educators, students, stallholders and market workers as well as Goa's many market enthusiasts. Other than two UK-based researchers, all our collaborators were India-based. with participants travelling from Kolkata, Hyderabad, Delhi, Mumbai and Bangalore, thus potentially generating a pan-Indian network. Participants ranged from graduates with higher degrees to people with little formal education but highly advanced craft skills. The range of collaborations, a significant feature given the segmented nature of Indian society, added greatly to the diversity and quality of creative responses and to the richness of our discussion and knowledge exchange.

The project benefitted from unforeseen fillips: in 2013 Goa University offered Project Partner Orijit Sen the newly established Mario Miranda Chair of Design based at the University's Mapusa campus, thus allowing the project to develop within an Indian academic context. *Mapping Mapusa Market* workshops were developed, and delivered under the auspices of Goa University and attracted enthusiastic participants. Our workshops began with presentations of work from the UnBox Fellowship, contextualised through discussion about possible approached to creative mapping and how these could relate to the Market. We devised collaborative games, set tasks and timed interventions, all aimed to encourage open-ended creative thinking. The 'Hundred Rupee Challenge' for example, inspired teams to express the essence

of the market through juxtapositions of low value purchases that were presented to other members of the group. Tasks involved creating walks, poems, songs, recipes or 'reimagining' the purpose of objects whose proper function was obscure. The intention was to creatively rediscover the market, and use new knowledge acquired as a basis for more sustained creative work. Working individually or as teams, participants produced exciting results: illustrations inspired by one stallholders' knowledge of homeopathic/herb based remedies; murals, photo-essays, drawings, sculptures, even a connoisseurs collection of aubergines. With results posted daily on the *Mapping Mapusa Market* blog, the workshop culminated in an exhibition staged in the Market's main entrance. This was well supported by the market executive and local politicians and attracted a large audience.

Building on this success, we expanded the scope of the 2014 workshops, seeking participants with specialised interests in creative mapping and, by supporting travel and accommodation costs, attracting participants from across India. During the workshops, a number of 'market evenings' in Assagao brought together participants from different stages of the project and enabled the project to tap into local knowledge of market enthusiasts and use this to inform broader creative interventions. We also worked with local art and design students.

Discussions about the social and economic situation of Mapusa market, and Indian markets more generally were lent an intensity by the announcement of plans to include Mapusa Market in an ambitious – but controversial – city development.

Collaborators also included members of the expanding team at People Tree: for example, intern Mehar Kaur has become a key member of our web-design team. In regular contact with our UK-based web builder, she has provided excellent input, enhancing her skills and potentially future employment prospects.

We benefitted from the involvement of Sharmistha Karr who joined Newcastle University as a Charles Wallace Trust Visiting Artist in 2013. In India, Sharmi joined the project, bringing her network of artists and educators and developing an ambitious performance in the market.

What lessons have been learnt during the project?

- The importance of a close working relationship with the host organisation: People Tree are loyal and enthusiastic supporters, allowing us to benefit from their resources, expertise and networks. On-going development of the research brief through continuing

and evolving dialogue with People Tree has been at the heart of keeping the project continually reinvigorated.

- The value of a practical strategy for engaging local people to access local knowledge: using social media and conventional means (press announcements, posters and flyers) to reach potential participants.

- The value of a good local base: a traditional Goan villa, secured by People Tree, enabled us to stage social events, a key means of bringing participants together outside the busy and frenetic market place.

- The importance of an open framework for the research, allowing us to respond positively to developments 'on the ground' : e.g. optimising benefits from the establishment of the Miranda Chair.

- That effective planning for work in India often happens on the ground: whilst we were in regular contact with People Tree in the lead-up stages, the value of face-to-face and day-to-day exchange in facilitating developments was critical.

What future plans have developed out of the research?

As Professor at Goa University, Orijit will embed Market workshops into the academic programme – the University welcomes non-student participants (a policy which allowed the involvement of motivated and knowledgeable local people in 2013) - ensuring the production of future content for the website, and presents a possibility of running future collaborative workshops.

Populating the website with projects and information is ongoing. Its moderators include People Tree and the research team, ensuring continuing collaboration. There is potential to use its open framework structure as a case study for mapping other local markets around India.

Please describe the methods of dissemination and outreach you have used during your project.

The main method of dissemination will be the Mapping Mapusa Market website, which will go live in September.

In Mapusa, open discussion groups in the market and at People Tree engaged a range of participants and market stakeholders with the project's themes, exchanging knowledge, experience and views and were an effective way of broadening participation and knowledge of the project. These often developed – or followed on from – live interactions, games and

performances. Dissemination by word of mouth was important and is ongoing: for example, the work that Salil and Joel (Konkani speakers) are conducting is spreading knowledge of the project to local audiences that we would find more difficult to reach. Local media was important in spreading awareness. In Assagao, our informal 'Market Evenings' were an important means reaching out to local people.

A wider audience, including academics and students, has been engaged through seminars, lectures and workshops, (some of which have had a public audience). Hashemi-Nezhad presented the project at 'Designing Futures' ICA, London. Burton discussed the project at a talk and Q&A session at the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Art, Norwich, at a lecture in the 'Materials Library' series at Bergen Academy for Art& Design . The project will be presented at a forthcoming lecture at Wolverhampton University, a symposium at Kingston University on mapping informal spaces and at a practical workshop and at an Art and Heritage conference both at Newcastle University.

Participation in the Alchemy Festival brought the research to a wider international audience affording them the opportunity to explore live 'mapping' with our special camera rig.

The project is cited on various websites, e.g. Artist of the month on Axis web website or the project page on the Newcastle University website as well as on our individual websites, e.g. Bahbak Hashemi-Nezhad's website, participating artists have also posted work produced e.g. Youtube.

Please describe the impacts or potential impacts that your project has had (these could be within the areas of people development, collaborations and knowledge exchange or the creative economy/economic impact).

The project has had a significant impact on developing our careers as researchers. Stazin Losal writes:

The project since the beginning has been steep learning curve for me as a creative practitioner. I learnt a lot about formulating a research project, making successful collaborations, how to deal with an evolving and dynamic subject of research and about different ways of approaching and thinking about a multi-faceted project. I gained a new understanding of Goa, with its unique colonial history within the context of India. Due to my upbringing, I have always felt strongly about the class divide. Lower income groups see a different reality and the fact that I never had the opportunity to really engage with them meant that there was a lot I did not know about who they are, where they're from, their perception on the World. The fact that the project was based in a market, where most of the

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day vendors were from low income groups, a lot of them doing the same trade over a long time, made me feel closer to their reality and I gained a better understanding of many important issues.

The project has made me, as an Indian, more critical of the fast changing commercial environment of India, where for example the trend of an all encompassing super market has emerged for the upper classes. And how, for us, the idea of a street market is already starting to be seen through a nostalgic lens.

Bahbak Hashemi-Nezhad states:

I have used our research methodology and website format as an example for a tool to understand spatial and social complexities in the UK. Primarily in Church St Market NW8 where well-established communities and small businesses are facing regeneration and decanting.

Andrew Burton's recent residency at Airspace Gallery, Stoke developed the idea of intensively studying a specific local space, using methodologies developed in Mapusa to create work that was both literally 'of' (in terms of the materials used) and 'about' the space.

Equally, the project has been beneficial to People Tree themselves, increasing their visibility and reach in Goa and providing important new work experience and opportunities for their staff. People Tree have gained a deeper knowledge of the market, expanded their local networks and fostered potential collaborators for the future. Staff have gained valuable experience of web-development in a research context. The series of workshops and seminars now regularly offered by the University as part of the Mario Miranda project will continue to engage students with the creative possibilities of working in the market.

The Project has impacted on its many participants, introducing them to creative research methodologies, deepening knowledge and appreciation of an important – and vulnerable – local resource and by broadening horizons: "*It was exciting to see perceptions of the market change and participants beginning to find aspects and stories of the market previously unknown. It was fascinating when discussions evolved into debates around Goan culture, the predominant presence of women in the market, the unique culture of bread, or the presence of migrant workers. These discussions really moved the project forward and kept redefining the project's parameters.* (workshop participant)

Through collaboration we have exchanged knowledge and experience –personal, cultural and professional, and have been creatively and intellectually enriched through the process. These

impacts will feed our individual and collective contributions to the creative economies of Britain and India.

The workshops conducted with undergraduate Art& Design students from Goa University and extended this into a series of practical experiments in the market, thus developing their research skills.

For the public at large, the functional (quantitative) layer of the website can be used for navigation and information, whereas the qualitative, social layer can be a valuable resource for urbanists, designers, artists, architects and policy makers. In heightening awareness of the vitality and fragility of the market in its current formation, we have drawn attention to the cultural and commercial importance of this important and unique space at a key moment: the market now faces the challenging situation of redevelopment and possible relocation. We hope that the website will be a useful resource for disseminating information about this, and a sounding board for opinion.

Workshop participants included

September Sessions

Kaushik Ramanathan; Prerna Neelavar; Salil Konkar; Prashant Falari; Nelvin D'Souza; Vanessa Desa; Atri Kambli; Yugank Naik; Anant Kamat Bambolkar; Tabasheer Zutshi

January Sessions

Shubhanshi Mishra; Gayatri D'Souza; Werner Souza; Maithili Borkar; Alok Johri; Shankar; Nash Paul D'Souza; Gurushabd Khalsa; Anita Haladi; Alito Sequeira

Students from Goa University

Staff of People Tree

Web-Builder Andy Sheridan (UK)

Mapusa Market is typical of many local Indian markets. But it is also nique and distinctive in the way it reflects the Portuguese colonial history of Goa, for example a Goan version of 'chorizo', spicy pork sausage is sold on Fridays when day vendors flock to the market from local towns and villages.

Bananas are sold year-round on every corner, one of the workshop 'challenge' games was to identify how many different types are sold by day vendors – there are four totally different

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varieties grown locally, with others coming from neighbouring state Karnataka. Sweet 'green' bananas are especially prized.

This unit is entirely dedicated to fixing food mixers and blenders – most families still prepare their own spices and masalas daily: a processor saves hours of hard work chopping and pounding, and for many families repairing a blender, or buying second hand is a necessity. But cheap imports are contributing to the arrival of a 'disposability' culture, particularly amongst the middle classes. 'Mending' skills are at risk.

Anand, a Credit Union Collector, practices his walk with the special camera rig

Hyderabad based artist Sharmistha Kar joined our second workshop and produced the performance work 'Mane' which involved surrounding the market with a 100m garland of flowers. The work appealed greatly to women shoppers and vendors of all ages, an audience we were delighted to engage.

The UnBox Booster funding scheme aimed to enable teams who have met through the UnBox fellowships to sustain, develop and expand creatively upon the collaborations formed.

Dr Emma Wakelin, Associate Director at the AHRC said:

'The AHRC was delighted to work with the British Council, UnBox and the Science and Innovation Network India to support the UnBox festival 2013. Finding new ways to support UK researchers in the arts and humanities to work in collaboration with partners in the creative and cultural sectors is one of our priorities, as is encouraging international networks.

We were particularly pleased that all five UnBox Fellows in 2013 were successful in gaining AHRC booster funding, enabling them to continue to develop the collaborative projects and the fruitful partnerships they began during their time in India, and which they showcased along with their creative sector partners from the UK and India at the UnBox festival in Delhi in February 2013. This funding was intended to support the researchers to continue the innovative worked inspired by UnBox, to build on the valuable and creative networks initiated in India, and to explore research ideas that will have a tangible impact and would not otherwise have been possible.'

Images: Professor Jon Rogers, Professor Andrew Burton and Laura Bones