

# ICOA1602: EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF URBAN TRANSFORMATIONS ON TRADITIONAL CRAFTS AND SKILLS: CASE OF AMRITSAR'S HISTORIC CORE

## Subtheme 01: Integrating Heritage and Sustainable Urban Development by engaging diverse Communities for Heritage Management

**Session 3:** World Heritage, Regulations and Guidelines, Authenticity and Integrity

**Location:** Gulmohar Hall, India Habitat Centre

**Time:** December 14, 2017, 11:45 – 12:00

### Author: Niyati Jigyasu

*Niyati Jigyasu is an architect, currently Professor at Chitkara School of Planning and Architecture, Chitkara University, Punjab. Niyati has been practising and teaching in academic institutions since 1996. Her major area of interest is historic urban areas with special interest in community participation. She has also been active in organizing international workshops and has presented papers on her area of interest in national and international conferences. She is presently pursuing her doctoral study on "Examining the role of 'Traditional Economy' in Conservation of Historic Urban Areas".*

**Abstract:** Investing in the intangible heritage reflected in the oral traditions, social practices, rituals, festivals, and skills to produce traditional crafts contribute towards social and economic wellbeing of the communities and improvement in their overall quality of life. In the context of urbanization that is often uncontrolled, the historic areas undergo transformations that include destruction of built heritage as well as loss of social structure and traditional economic organization. While there is focus on the physical fabric, the present urban conservation processes in India place relatively lesser emphasis on retaining the communities who are the main casualty of these changes and whose sustainability often rests on traditional skill based livelihoods.

The historic area of Amritsar is an urban ensemble anchored around Sri Harmandir Sahib; the holiest shrine of Sikhs. The layout of the historic core and its built fabric, social organisation of the neighbourhoods, festivals and rituals, and various traditional crafts such as Phulkari, Jutti, metal work such as Thatera, Sikligar, Judau, Pottery, Terracotta, Durrie, Galeecha, Woolen Handloom and Accessories such as Paranda are rooted in the distinctive culture and milieu of the region.

Preliminary studies of the area show neglect of the built heritage, changing socio-cultural dynamics and vanishing traditional crafts and livelihoods. At times, only selective crafts having tourism potential get more prominence unlike those that are more intimately connected to various sections of the community. Though one can see some market demand of Phulkari embroidery owing to its popularity among tourists, lesser known craft traditions like utensil making by Thateras, weaponry by Sikligars, Durrie and Galeecha making, Nada making are declining.

The paper critically analyses the impact of the physical, social and economic transformation processes in the historic urban area of Amritsar on the community based crafts that have long contributed to their sustainability. Methodology of study would include analysis of empirical data on communities and their crafts at neighbourhood level, collected through semi structured interviews as well as participatory observations. Based on the research findings, various strategies for sustainable regeneration of historic urban areas will be suggested.

**Key words:** *sustainability, community, urban transformations*

## Literature Review

### Crafts

As Lewis Mumford states “The city in its complete sense is a geographic plexus, an economic organization, an institutional process, a theatre of social action and an aesthetic symbol of collective unity” (Mumford, 1937:185). The crafts, idiosyncratic in nature are a critical component of this complex system. Traditional crafts, coming under the umbrella of intangible heritage are part of this cultural and creative setup that uses endogenous community knowledge and can add to the economic empowerment. UNESCO in its creative economy report propagates the importance of creativity as an economic driver and traditional crafts being one of the subset (UNESCO, 2013). Considering that a majority of economy of India is based on local business and the vast heritage of artisanal skills prevalent, creative economy does not remain a matter of choice in India. Also, the scale of informality which is an essential characteristic of traditional economy, both in terms of enterprises and employment or occupations is very significant in India (UNESCO 2013).

### Historical narrative

The Indian economy before the 18<sup>th</sup> century was predominantly agriculture. Agriculture technology boasting of high level of development has been mentioned in the historical narratives. But yet, crafts and trade, concentrated within urban boundaries were also a critical determinant of a city's existence. While most cities boasted of a number of crafts, some cities had a specialisation in certain crafts, e.g Ahmedabad, Baroda, Lahore, Multan for Textiles, Srinagar, Sarkhej for dyes etc. The bazaar were nerve centres of every city, big or small; with cities like Delhi, Ahmedabad, Lahore having dozens of bazaars each specialising in a different kind of commodity (Vanina,2004).

Punjab had always had a very advantageous physical and geographical position in terms of the agricultural and non-agricultural resources and had a direct passage to region of central Asia. By the late 19th Century, Amritsar was an important trade mart connected to Lahore, Karachi, Kashmir in the North-West and Bombay and Calcutta. Strategically located on the Silk Route, Amritsar traded Silks, shawls and copper ware from Kashmir in return for raw silk, gold, carpets and horses from Afghanistan and Central Asia including tea from the north east India.

### Crafts of Amritsar

Amritsar, being one of the most important cities of the Majha region of Punjab is a rich repository of heritage that has both spiritual as well as national values. The historic area is an urban ensemble anchored around Sri Harmandir Sahib; the holiest shrine of Sikhs boasting of more than one lakh tourist per day. The evolution of the town over the ages and its association with some of the greatest historical figures of the region, have given the town a particular ‘sacred and socio political geography’, typified by buildings and sites as well as routes and processional paths. The planning of Amritsar is organic with many lanes and by lanes enclosed within 12 gates<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>The gates built during various periods exist though the walls have disappeared long back.

The history of crafts here has a strong religious connotation. The evolution of the bazaars go back to the period when Guru Ram Das invited people, 52 types of artisans and craftsmen among them, to come and settle around the Amrit Sarovar<sup>2</sup>. Later on, when Amritsar was divided into Misls<sup>3</sup> and led by individual chieftains, craftsmen and traders were invited from all regions to come and set up business. The markets in the katras belonging to the more powerful misl chiefs, such as the katra Ahluwalian, katra Ramgarhia, and katra Kanhaiyan, developed into booming centres of commerce. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century when Ranjitsingh consolidated the Sikh Empire, his territory extended from Multan and Peshawar to Kashmir and Kangra. His rule was a period of prosperity for the entire state, and craftsmen and artisans from everywhere were encouraged to bring their practice to the city. Shawl-weavers from Kashmir and artists of the Kangra School of Art were among the most notable migrants. Some, like bazaar Paparan, bazaar Kathian, Kanak Mandi, bazaar Bansan, Namak Mandi, and Misri bazaar, were named for the product they offered. Others, like Majithmandi (a market of dyers), Mandi Ahan Faroshan (for sellers of iron and iron ware) and bazaar Kaserian (a market for utensils, first earthen and then metal) were named for the craftsmen and crafts to be found there. In 1833 A.D., a famine hit Kashmir led to the streets of Amritsar being flooded with refugees. With Maharaja Ranjit Singh opening the food depository to the masses, thousands settled here leading to becoming a production centre for Pashmina shawls. When the demand for Pashmina shawls fell, many of these looms were turned to the production of carpets, an industry that thrives to this day in Amritsar (CRCI, 2010).

Thus Amritsar with its historic core and its built fabric, social organisation of the neighbourhoods, festivals and rituals, was home to various traditional crafts such as Phulkari, Jutti, metalwork Sikligar, Judau, Pottery, Durrie, Galeecha, Woolen Handloom, and many food items that are traditional to the place and rooted in the distinctive culture and milieu of the region.

Today, most of them, within the historic areas are only as sold products with their production shifted to either on the outskirts or neighbouring villages. The thateras, jewellers, and many of the food products including the popular papadwadiyan are still in production in the by lanes of the walled city. Though the thateras and jewellers' work is declining, they are still found workings with the equipment from the 1900 are still in use by these craftsmen.

## **Transformations over the years**

The geographical and spiritual component that was the reason for success of Amritsar also became the cause for political happenings that resulted in much physical transformations especially around the vicinity of the Harmandir Saheb. It goes without saying that this physical transformations led to social, cultural and economic fragmentations over the years. From the time of India independence and subsequent partition, with Amritsar lying on the India-Pakistan; thousands of people fled from this city. Later on the blue star operation of 1984<sup>4</sup> and the tourism driven project of 2014<sup>5</sup> have changed the map around the temple complex. Post the blue star operation, attempts were made to de-congest the area

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<sup>2</sup> *Guru Ram das dug a artificial water tank and invited people to settle around it. The HarmandirSaheb was built in the middle of it.*

<sup>3</sup> *In the face of the imminent invasion by Ahmed Shah Abdali, in 1748 it was resolved to divide the Khalsa forces of Punjab into sixty-five jathas integrated into twelve misls.*

<sup>4</sup> *This was a military operation done by the Indian army under the government to remove terrorists within the temple*

<sup>5</sup> *A Tourism driven project initiated and undertaken by the Punjab government. It was finally inaugurated in 2016.*

in the periphery of the temple complex resulting into the galleria<sup>6</sup>. This led to removal of much of the bazaar area surrounding the temple complex. Some of the shops were given space in a shopping centre built nearby while rest were shifted near the bus stand, few kilometres away. In 2014, a major planning project was begun by the Punjab government. This majorly includes creation of a large scale plaza just outside the temple, and a large pedestrian pathway flanked by touristic shops leading to the temple from a multi level parking. Also, in name of conservation, the facades on both sides of the pathways have been treated uniformly. In fact few of the buildings have also reconstructed facades over the existing facades to merge with the surrounding. About 1 km of the area has been made pedestrian which added to the buildings and various sculptures around can be said to be a visual treat for a regular tourist.

Some of the lanes leading away from the temple are also part of these interventions, though here the interventions are restricted to uniformity in shop signage, colour of the facades and pavement. Also within the premises of the on-going HRIDAY project, conservation work is going on at some important sites in and around the core city area.

## Findings

Like other forms of intangible cultural heritage, globalization poses significant challenges to the survival of traditional forms of craftsmanship. Young people in communities find the sometimes lengthy apprenticeship necessary to learn many traditional forms of craft too demanding and instead seek work in factories or service industry where the work is less exacting and the pay often better. Many craft traditions involve ‘trade secrets’ that are not taught to outsiders and when family members or community members are not interested in learning it, the knowledge may disappear permanently (UNESCO, 2003).

<b>Need</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need for the product</li> <li>• Changed perception of the crafts</li> </ul>	Survey in the lanes of Amritsar also shows many concerns.
<b>Socio cultural issues</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recent social vices</li> <li>• Change in youth's aspirations</li> </ul>	<p><b>Need:</b> Products like chuddis, jootis and phulkaris are part of the clothing accessories and much liked by both the local as well as the tourist. Bridal accessories like chuddi of Amritsar are also considered more sacred due to the presence of the Harmandir sahib. On the other hand, the handcrafted utensils as done by the thateras have lost their need quotient with influx of stainless steel leading to its sharp decline over the years.</p>
<b>Institutional</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Political events</li> <li>• Government policies</li> <li>• Government interventions</li> </ul>	
<b>Modernization and Technological advancement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• change in manufacturing possibilities</li> <li>• Contemporary interpretations of the crafts</li> <li>• changed need in today's world with respect to scale and cost of the product</li> </ul>	
<b>Physical transformations and Urbanization</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basic issues of Urbanization</li> <li>• Physical transformations due to age</li> </ul>	

<sup>6</sup> After Operation Blue Star, a buffer zone was created immediately outside the Harimandir. This is known as the Galiara.



1	Crafts						
2	Jootis	yes	No		Patiala Abohar Pakistan	yes	YES
3	Parandah	yes	No	Neighbouring villages	Patiala	Yes but less	no
4	Metal work	yes	yes		no	no	no
5	Tillikoka jewelry	yes	yes		no	Yes but less	no
6	Phulkari	yes	No	Neighbouring villages	Patiala Kolkata	yes	yes
7	Pottery and terracotta	Yes	no	Outskirts of city	no	no	no
8	Durrie, Galleecha, carpets,	yes	No	Outskirts of city	no	yes	yes
9	Shawls	yes	No	Outskirts of city	Jammu, Kashmir	yes	yes
10	Sikligar	Yes	No				
11	Chuddi	Yes	No	Neighbouring villages	Parts of Rajasthan	Yes	yes
	Food items						
12	Wadiya, Papad	yes		Within walled area	No		
13	Pickles, squash	both		Some shops have manufacturing within the shop area	No	Both	Both
14	Almond essence	yes		Within the shop unit	No	Both	
15	Flavoured Itar/perfumes	yes		Within the shop unit	No	Both	

All these has further led to gradual deterioration of the built heritage, leading to social, cultural and economic fragmentation

## Conclusion

With crafts becoming the focus of livelihood, culture and tradition– it seeks to make people stakeholders in the sustained development and conservation of Heritage. We need to link traditional knowledge, culture, creativity and technology so that these become tools to generate and give rise to creative economy in a heritage city/town and will ultimately contribute in the sustainable management of that heritage city or town (Piplani, 2015;14). This will only be possible by placing crafts and crafts skills on the fore front of a city’s heritage agenda.

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# ICOA1602: L'ÉTUDE DE L'IMPACT DES TRANSFORMATIONS URBAINES SUR LES ARTS ET LES SAVOIR-FAIRE TRADITIONNELS: LE CAS DU CENTRE HISTORIQUE D'AMRISTAR

## Sous-thème 01: Intégrer le patrimoine et le développement urbain durable en engageant Diverses communautés pour la gestion du patrimoine

**Session 3:** Patrimoine mondial, Réglementations et directives, Authenticité et intégrité

**Lieu:** Hall Gulmohur, India Habitat Centre

**Date et heure:** 14 Décembre, 2017, 11:45 – 12:00

### **Auteur: Niyati Jigyasu**

*Niyati Jigyasu est une architecte, professeure à l'École d'urbanisme et d'architecture de Chitkara, Université de Chitkara, Penjab. Niyati a exercé et enseigné dans diverses institutions académiques depuis 1996. Son sujet principal est l'étude des centres historiques urbains en portant un intérêt particulier à la participation de la communauté. Elle a aussi animé plusieurs ateliers internationaux et publié des articles sur ces sujets lors de conférences nationales et internationales. Elle poursuit actuellement son doctorat portant sur « le rôle de l'économie traditionnelle dans la conservation des zones historiques urbaines.*

**Résumé:** investir dans le patrimoine immatériel que représente la tradition orale, les pratiques sociales, les rituels, les festivals et les savoir-faire contribue au bien-être social et économique des communautés et, de manière générale, à leur qualité de vie. Dans le contexte d'une urbanisation qui est souvent incontrôlée, les secteurs historiques subissent des transformations qui comportent des destructions de patrimoine bâti mais aussi des pertes de structure sociale et d'organisation économique traditionnelle. Alors que l'attention est portée sur les ateliers de production, les actuels plans de conservation urbaine en Inde n'insistent pas assez sur le sort des communautés qui sont les principales victimes de ces changements et dont la durabilité repose souvent sur les revenus des techniques traditionnelles.

Le centre historique d'Amristar est un ensemble urbain attaché à Sri Harmandir Sahib, le plus sacré des sanctuaires Sikhs. Le plan du centre historique et de ses manufactures, l'organisation sociale de ses quartiers, les festivals et les rituels ainsi que l'artisanat traditionnel (Phulkari, Jutti), le travail du métal (Thatera, Sikligar, Judau), la poterie et le travail de la terre-cuite, le Durrie, le Galeecha, le travail de la laine et des accessoires comme le Paranda ; tout est lié à la culture spécifique et à l'ambiance de la région.

Les études préliminaires du secteur ont négligé à la fois le patrimoine bâti, les dynamiques de changement socio-culturel et la disparition des revenus de l'artisanat traditionnel. Parfois, seuls les produits à potentiel touristique ont été privilégiés au détriment d'autres, pourtant plus intimement liés à plusieurs secteurs de la communauté. Alors qu'on assiste à une demande croissante de la broderie de Phulkari, liée à son succès auprès des touristes, la production d'un artisanat traditionnel moins connu,

comme les ustensiles des Thateras, les armes des Sikligars, les productions Durrie, Galeecha et Nada, est en déclin.

Cet article propose une analyse critique de l'impact du processus de transformation économique, physique et sociale de la zone historique d'Amristar sur l'artisanat traditionnel local, qui avait longtemps contribué à sa durabilité. La méthodologie de l'étude inclue des analyses des données empiriques sur les communautés et leur artisanat au niveau des quartiers, recueillies au travers d'interviews semi-structurées ainsi qu'à des observations participatives. A partir des résultats de cette recherche, plusieurs stratégies de régénération durable des zones historiques urbaines seront suggérées.

***Mots-clés:*** durabilité, communauté, transformations urbaines