Politics of archiving: hawkers and pavement dwellers in Calcutta

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Abstract In the last decade, several influential scholars have rigorously worked on the impact of neoliberal globalization on the poor in the cities of the South. But they have yet to provide a comprehensive account of how and why some groups in the margins are seen to successfully negotiate with the new modes of governing populations and increase their visibility as a "category," while some groups fail to do so. This paper seeks to bridge this research gap by comparing a successful and a failed mobilization in Calcutta. In both cases, use of the footpath has been central. The paper shows how the success of the hawkers in claiming the footpath is tied to the marginalization of the claims of the pavement dwellers that has (a) homogenized the representation of the footpath as only used by pedestrians and hawkers and (b) led to the elision of the pavement dwellers as a governmental category. The paper argues that by arrogating to themselves an archival function—which is conventionally associated with the governmental state—sections of population like the hawkers can become successful in their negotiations with the government.

Keywords Hawkers · Pavement dwellers · Footpath · Democracy · Archive · Informal economy · Governmentality

A number of influential theoretical positions such as Arjun Appadurai's "deep democracy" argument (Appadurai 2002), Partha Chatterjee's "political society" (Chatterjee 2004) argument, and Ananya Roy's powerful revisionism of Chatterjee and Appadurai that she calls the "politics of inclusion" (Roy 2009) have recently sought to understand the impact of neoliberal globalization on Indian cities. These

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scholars reflect primarily on two sets of questions: the capacities of the poor in relation to the character of mobilizations, and the state's responsiveness to such mobilizations. They are fundamentally engaged with questions of what it means to make claim on the state via technologies of governmentality. Building on this extremely impressive corpus of literature, the present paper reflects on the hawkers' question in Calcutta. The paper looks at the landscape of knowledge production in Calcutta surrounding the footpath hawkers—how surveys are conducted, how hawkers respond to them, how surveys are received by the state. I call this world of survey and other forms of documentations *archive*.

Michel Foucault's (1991) governmentality perspective has initiated scholars to peruse the ways in which political regimes since the seventeenth century have used enumerative techniques or censuses to count, classify and thereby govern populations. Constituting the core of the state archive, the census and surveys provide not only the key governmental machine of intervention, but also the state's ethical justification to have a certain kind of author-function.[1] Several scholars across the globe have considered how knowledge is consolidated and used in various ways to craft grids of intelligibility: how, for example, governmental programmes carefully select metrical patterns to ascribe value and meaning to their targets. This means that the calculus at play in any moment not only establishs the technical requirements of government, but also forms what Ghertner (2010, 186) has called "a calculative foundation of rule"—the epistemological basis on which assemblage of knowledge and verification of truths take place to "guide and manage a population's interests" (Ghertner 2010, 186–187). Various studies have also bolstered the methodological relevance of calculative politics within the exercise and execution of governmental power (see Elden 2007; Legg 2006). Several works on governmentality have also reflected on the ways in which "the terms of governmental practice can be turned around into forces of resistance" (Gordon 1991, 5). Ethnic groups, women, and minority groups have often used numbers and cadastral surveys to make themselves visible, articulate their "difference" from the mainstream, and to make claims upon the state and its services. Yet, these studies, as Ghertner (2010) rightly points out, examine governmental knowledge as

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[1] In this connection, it should be mentioned that scholarly discussions on archive and information in colonial and post-colonial situations embrace several ideological positions. If, for example, at one level, the recent spurt of literature on the nature of the colonial archive especially in South Asian historiography reflects the growing influence of Foucault's notion of the knowledge/power problematic, it is also a product of the "statist turn" in recent reflections on the South Asian past. This concern with the history of the state in South Asia has been driven by both the so-called Cambridge school and the Subaltern Studies collective, a common analytical interest shadowed by hostile polemical exchanges between the two "schools." Within the former cluster, scholars like Bayly (1996) have drawn intellectual trajectory from Castells's (1989) model of the 'informational city' and Harold Inn's (1950) classic work on 'social communication' to reflect on knowledge communities and communication networks. Bayly, in his influential work, *Empire and Information*, talks about the dynamics of information gathering and dissemination with the rise of the British power in South Asia. The Subaltern Studies group, influenced by Foucauldian and Saidian reflections on knowledge production, on the other hand, has provoked us to imagine archive not as a store of transparent sources but as a veritable site of power, a body of knowledge marked by the struggle and violence of the colonial past. As Spivak emphasized, the archive of colonialism was itself the product of the "commercial/territorial interest of the East India Company" (Spivak 1985).

something that the governed can strategically use to make claim on the state, the precondition of which is that the knowledge is to be established as the "truth". These studies thus preclude the possibilities of the counter-tactics developed by the governed altering, at least temporarily, the strategies of government. The counter-mapping literature on the other hand provides insight into how calculative practices can themselves become sites of struggle (Appadurai 2002; Ghertner 2010). Following this literature, one may seek to unravel the ways in which parties, movements and unions actively take part in the production, manipulation, classification, circulation and consumption of governmental knowledge and make claims on the state in an *archival* space. In doing so, one may remember Ananya Roy's skepticism about any uncritical celebration of what Appadurai calls "governmentality from below" as it generates consent from the poor in favour of massive urban renewals leading to the displacement of the poor. While Appadurai takes the resilience of grassroots organizations and non-state actors as a sign of "deep democracy," Roy hazards against any uncritical celebration of its strategies precisely because they are always already implicated in a "politics of inclusion." Thus, what Appadurai celebrates as the horizontal linking of NGO's to state and world institutions as a practice of deep democracy, Roy shows how this in fact points to potential sites of complicity and practices of compromise effected at the deeper structural changes for the urban poor.

I argue that the counter-mapping literature (Peluso 1995; Appadurai 2002) depicts negotiations between the government and the governed in an archival space, indicating a reversal of the process of archiving. This archival reversal enables us to re-view a few academically overworked categories such as "appropriation", "cooptation", and "resistance" as mutually constitutive modes of engagement that simultaneously occur and cross boundaries. I will show how such a politics of knowledge production and political use of knowledge by the sections of the governed are at the heart of the regimes of regulation and negotiation that I have elsewhere described as the "institutionalization of informality" through the formation of the "state-union complex" (Bandyopadhyay 2009b, c, 2010). What are the governable subjects and governable spaces produced by such archival negotiations? How do counter-archival drives influence public discourses on spaces, practices and populations? How are margins drawn and exclusions created in a counter-archive? Who is the *archon* of a counter-archive? What does it mean to address a counter-archiving project through ethnography? What happens when the counter-archive becomes the official archive of the state? The present paper seeks to address these questions by studying the archival function of a particular hawkers' union (the Hawker Sangram Committee), a particular space (the footpath) and two particular groups (hawkers[2] and pavement dwellers) in Calcutta. I will show how,

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[2] In literature, the term street vending appears more frequently than footpath hawking, as the former term has a kind of universal appeal. Commenting on the National Policy on Urban Street Vendors in India (Government of India 2004, 2009), Renana Jhabvala has recently said that "a consultation process was required to 'name' the street vendor. Should they be called hawkers? Or market traders? Or just vendors? Finally, the term street vendor was adopted by all, and has also been accepted internationally" (Jhavbala 2010, xv). I will replace the term street vendor by footpath hawker mainly because in Calcutta, (a) the term street vendor is rarely used, (b) hawkers themselves apply a special vernacular meaning to the term

by arrogating to themselves a certain archival function that have hitherto been associated with the state, sections of population such as hawkers might become successful in their endless negotiations and tussles with the state. The case of hawkers is then compared with the case of pavement dwellers, a band of urban poor who work in various sectors of urban informal economy and squat on the footpaths. Until the end of 1980s, the government had a good database on the pavement dwellers, and they figure significantly in various discussions of urban poverty, rural–urban migration and urban space. The paper shows that the success of the hawkers in asserting their existence on the footpath has led to the marginalization of the spatial claim of the pavement dwellers leading to a virtual elision of the pavement dweller as a governmental category. Thus, a reversal of archiving does not support the equation that if archiving from above is a tool of domination, then the reverse archive or the counter-archive should be a weapon of emancipation for all sections of the poor. The paper exemplifies how reverse archive produces new norms of citizenship and how it shapes its own forms of domination and coloniality in urban space, in relation to some other social groups.

The cases of hawkers and pavement dwellers have been chosen for comparison, for three reasons. First, the histories of hawking and pavement dwelling in Calcutta share some common themes of contemporary urban research, namely, rural–urban migration, partition,[3] problems of informal sector, unemployment, stagnation, and homelessness, spatial practices of the urban poor, urban planning, and restructuring of the urban space. Second, both hawkers and pavement dwellers use footpath and infrastructures of survival (water, toilets) from the same sources leading to conflicts and collaboration. Third, unlike the slum dwellers and squatter groups, hawkers and pavement dwellers are not *electorally* significant as they are dispersed through wide geographical areas within the city, and they are voters of different constituencies where their electoral behaviours are shaped by different sets of questions and different histories of political societies. So the story of popular mobilization that the paper seeks to introduce is not a part of the history of competitive electoral

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Footnote 2 continued

as linked with the Arabic word (used in Bengali) *haq* (phonetically nearly the same as the English word hawk) meaning just, correct and ethical stake (exceeding the Bengali terms *adhikar,* and *dabi,* for its ethical overtone) indicating the fact that the term gives meaning and sets goals to their *sangram* (struggle). One may claim that the term 'hawker' as used by hawkers in Calcutta is not just the English 'hawker'. Rather, it contains its own meanings and perhaps stands for a different imagination of urban space.

[3] The waves of refugee migration from the East Pakistan after 1947 changed the demographic features of Calcutta. The city footpath provided a site for the refugees to settle and start hawking. Management of hawking began to emerge as an important affair (involving eviction drives in select streets and rehabilitation) both for the state government and for the Corporation. As a part of the general politics that emerged with the post-partition rehabilitation and resettlement movements in the city and its suburbs, any eviction could spark strong public sentiment and political support in favour of the "victim", who could claim rehabilitation to the state by claiming his "refugee" identity. Hawking also appeared to the government as a prospective way to rehabilitate refugees. Several "refugee hawkers' corners" were subsequently opened by the government. Thus, replying to a question in the state assembly, the Chief Minister, Bidhan Roy, stated that "hawkers should be confined to certain parts of the city and to specified locations where there might be no interference with the normal flow of traffic. Roy also added that his government had constructed 384 stalls for the hawkers out of which 276 had so far been allotted to refugees (quoted in Calcutta Municipal Gazette, May 12, 1951).

mobilization of urban poor in post-colonial India, often vilified in media as the "politics of vote bank", where there is a clear distinction between the ruling party and the opposition.

What I would like to present to my readers through the case comparison is a certain understanding—however hazy and indeterminate it may be—of a world that is not familiar to many of us, though this is how millions of people across the globe engage with the governmental state. I do not claim any privileged insider's knowledge. I have been, for the most part, myself an observer from the outside. The paper is concerned with my positionality vis-à-vis what Partha Chatterjee (2004) calls *political society* in trying to explore what it means to be in the outside of political society while doing ethnographic research. In this sense, the paper is more about the limits of knowing the mobilized subjects from outside. I call my task the *ethnography in archive*. By this term, I mean reading the archive and archiving and grounding that reading with ethnography of the subject community (Merry 2002). This is how, I believe, record makes sense.

The "ethnography in archive" position seeks to contribute to the robust "informal economy" literature by bringing the archival/historical understanding to an already existing tradition of ethnographic/anthropological research on the politics of the informal economy. As Jonathan Anjaria has mentioned, in the past two decades scholars have shifted their attention from the *economics* of informal economy to the *politics* of the informal economy, unraveling the relationship between subaltern agency, public space and modes of resistance (Anjaria 2008). As a consequence, an interdisciplinary literature has emerged seeking to locate how local city governments undertake urban renewal projects targeting street hawkers. This literature also tells us how hawkers defend their livelihood in the face of this hostility (Cross 1998; Stoller 1996, 2002; Duneier 1999; Rajagopal 2001; Popke and Ballard 2004; Stillerman 2006; Donovan 2008). The "ethnography in archive" position is an attempt to bring ethnographic and archival/historical modes of knowing together by exploring the *limits* and mutual constitution of these two modes of *enquiry*.[4] If the shift from economics to politics signalled a disciplinary transition from economics to anthropology in addressing the informal economy, in the last couple of decades a certain understanding of the same in the interstices of ethnographic and archival research indicates how informal economy can be addressed from the perspective of historical anthropology.

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[4] Anthropology and history were long seen as compatible enquiries into discrete spheres of alterity (the past, elsewhere). As Lévi-Strauss assured us several decades ago, the anthropologist "conceives [history] as a study complementary to his own: one of them unfurls the range of human societies in time, the other in space" (1966: 256). But as Bernard Cohn cautions us, "it is relatively simple to suggest and explore subject matters which are of joint interest to historians and anthropologists. It is much more difficult to delineate a common epistemological space which can be termed historical anthropology" (quoted in Axel 2002, viii). Cohn's discerning of the limitations of interdisciplinarity has been shared by many subsequent works. As late as 1990 James Clifford could puzzle that "as yet no systematic analysis exists concerning the differences and similarities of [historical and anthropological] research *practice*, juxtaposing 'the archive' with 'the field'—seen both as textual, interpretive activities, as disciplinary conventions, and as strategic spatializations of overdetermined empirical data" (54–55).

Blocking the gaze

I started my field research in 2005 in several intersections of Calcutta. As an initial ethnographic ritual, I prepared a questionnaire and tried to interview the hawkers. Many of the hawkers knew my face as a regular customer. But when they understood that I wanted to map out how the economy of the intersection works, they began to resist my ethnographic gaze. I was making no headway and felt increasingly frustrated. When, for example, I tried to interview Bikash, a garment seller in Gariahat with the response sheet in my hand, Bikash said that he was not bound to respond as he did not know how I would use the interview. Having examined my documents, he told me that he would support my work if I could manage to obtain permission from "Shakti-da" (the term *da* is the shorter version of the Bengali term *dada*, meaning elder brother. Calling somebody *da* carries the perception of closeness between two persons), the leader of the HSC. I began to realize that the hawkers were questioning the legitimacy of somebody not belonging to the community to create a database on the hawkers. The ethnographic field was thus far from being transparent to me, though I had been a local resident and a frequent visitor of many of the stalls as a customer. Without seeking to develop some more "scientific" and "effective" ways of ethnographic penetration to the subject's world, I began to address the *blockade* itself. What does this blockade say on the project of ethnographic representation?

Footpath hawking in Calcutta

This section presents some "facts" on footpath hawking in Calcutta, necessary to ground the enquiry. The facts have mostly been gathered by triangulating three sources: (a) contemporary newspaper reports, (b) "Daily Notes" of the Special Branch of Calcutta Police and (c) the field data that I could gather after the HSC affiliates began to trust me. Let me synoptically present a few interesting patterns in the history of footpath hawking in Calcutta. First, one may find it important to remember that there had been a phenomenal increase in the hawking units between 1966 and 1971. By 1981, it had spread to all parts of the city, irrespective of functional land use, with little available space for subsequent spatial expansion. Second, anti-street hawker drives are contingent to the operation of local economies and complex relationships between different economic and political actors. These drives are often manifestations of factional rivalry between different middle-to-low ranking regime functionaries of ruling parties and their personalized calculations. Third, the hawkers resist such operations by virtue of a complex patronage network involving the local state functionaries, ruling parties and the opposition, and these relationships can hardly be reduced to electoral calculations as street hawkers do not form a clustered urban vote bank like slum dwellers and squatter groups; fourth, in many cases, hawkers operate in a particular street on mutual agreement between the neighbourhood political actors and commercial interest groups. These agreements are often contextual and have nothing to do with another set of agreements on another street.

Just before the official declaration of Operation Sunshine, the non-CITU hawker unions (32 in number) decided to form an umbrella federation named Hawker *Sangram* (struggle) Committee (HSC). The HSC took a confrontational path. As the operation progressed, the HSC staged daily protests stopping traffic at key intersections, burning buses, 'gherao'ing police posts, blocking infrastructures of circulation and moving to the Court seeking redressal (HSC 2006: 1–7). The imagined dynamism of the world-class city, a space inserted into global circulations of capital, thus came to be "encircled" by protest. The world-class city that Operation Sunshine envisioned was made to stand still. Mobilized by opposition leaders like Mamata Banerjee, and front leaders like Ashoke Ghosh, its members also tried to return to the footpaths with baskets of goods.

Since then, HSC has been the largest and the most powerful hawker union in Calcutta. It has horizontal linkages with many movements in India like the National Alliance of Peoples' Movement (NAPM). The HSC has been the nodal organization of the National Movement for Retail Democracy (NMRD) that spearheaded massive protest against corporate retailing in Indian cities. The HSC, today, is to be kept in full confidence before implementing any regulation on hawkers. It enjoys enormous authority in managing the informal labour market and other informal transactions related to hawking and issues of governance. The HSC serves its members in various ways. It, for example, ensures credit for them from informal bankers, negotiates with the lower rung of bureaucracy, settles *hafta* (weekly bribe), settles conflicts among hawkers, controls the selling and buying of footpath plots, and regulates the number of hawkers in a particular area. However, it is important to note that the functions described above are not historically unique to the HSC. At least from the late 1960s various associations in the sector have been performing such operations on behalf of their clients. The difference that the HSC has made with the earlier organizations is that it has been able to hold together several associations over a decade by commemorating the Operation Sunshine throughout the year through a series of public events, and by emphasizing the fact that *Sangram* is a never-ending process. It collaborates with the government by regulating hawking and by inducing civic disciplines among the hawkers while projecting the state to its affiliates as eternally hostile to the hawkers. Its leader, Shaktiman Ghosh, has mastered the craft of operating to the governmental space as a mediator. To the hawkers affiliated to the HSC, many of whom gave me interviews; Shaktiman Ghosh had proved to be more adept in dealing with the state. As early in 1975, he joined the CPI. His CPI identity gave him the opportunity to negotiate with both the CPM leaders in the government and the opposition Congress leaders. In 1981, when the government sought to evict the Sealdah hawkers to construct a new flyover, Shaktiman floated a new Hawkers' Union named the "Calcutta Hawker Men's Union" and was able to resettle hawkers beneath the flyover. This act gave Shaktiman prestige in the eyes of the hawkers. As Shaktiman told me, he used his organizational experience and his repute as a *sangrami neta* (struggling leader), and as a result, The Calcutta Hawker Men's Union has been the major constituent if the HSC, which has roughly 30 thousand affiliates. Shaktiman's office maintains a complete digital and paper database on them.

The world of survey

In December 2005, The Calcutta Municipal Corporation (henceforth the Corporation) decided to "identify and quantify" hawkers on the streets and footpaths of Calcutta Municipal area. The idea was to locate hawkers who entered into the business after 1977, the year when the ruling left coalition came to power in West Bengal with a huge mandate. Citing a 1981 High Court ruling that declared all post-1977 encroachment on roads and footpaths as completely illegal, the Corporation now wanted to undertake a selective eviction drive to evict all post-1977 encroachers. Already in 1996, the State Government had declared 21 major city intersections as "non-vending zones". Between November 1996 and December 1997, in a well-planned and coordinated action euphemistically called *Operation Sunshine*, the Municipal authority and the state government evicted thousands of street side stalls to make the enlisted intersections congestion free. Soon the tide receded; the hawkers were seen to reclaim their lost spaces with baskets of goods, backed by various political parties including many of the constituting parties of the Left Front Government. In 2003, a middle-class environmental organization filed a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) in the High Court seeking the Court's intervention in the matter. The High Court, in November 2005, ordered the state government and the Corporation to make the intersections congestion free within a stipulated time. In such a situation, the Corporation undertook the survey. I accompanied the surveyors to see the making of the survey.

When the Corporation surveyors began the survey process, the HSC workers recognized that the categories for eligibility for the hawkers to continue business on the footpath would lead to the displacement of a significant number of hawkers without resettlement. The HSC made two significant interventions. First, its members began to follow the surveyors around and eventually challenged the accuracy of their assessment. If, for example, a stall was located vacant, and the Corporation surveyor was on the verge of omitting it from the survey register, HSC workers told them who the owner of the stall was and how long he had been trading there. The surveyor had to depend on the local knowledge to avoid the heightened administrative burden of the survey. The HSC ultimately questioned the legitimacy of the survey on the ground of inaccuracy and its alleged non-participative nature. Second, the HSC undertook a counter-survey, including a sample of 2,350 hawkers distributed along the 21 intersections. It also took technical input from two activist economists of the city. The preface of the survey writes:

> From the beginning of the study we have decided to involve expert academic skills with computerised data compiling and analysing system for the best survey result. In this we have the great opportunity to get help from Dr. Subhendu Dasgupta, Head of the Department, South and South East Asian Studies, CU, and Prof. Dipankar Dey (HSC 2007).

The HSC however remained the author and the patron of the survey. However, we come to know from the preface of the survey that Sujit Mukherjee, the Director of an NGO of social workers, "extended his kind infrastructural support to conduct the vast field survey". Sujit Mukherjee, popularly known as Naughty-da in

Kasba-Bosepukur region, had been a hawker in his early days. He is a member of the Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP), a constituent of the ruling Left Front and close to the Kshiti Goswami faction of the party which maintains a "rebel" image within the Left Front. Naughty-da is a distant nephew of the Mayor of the Corporation and a well-known figure in his office. He is known for his close relation with the HSC as well. Apart from conducting the field research, Naughty-da had mediated between the Mayor's office and the HSC. Without a Naughty-da, it was hardly possible to conduct the study. Naughty-da has a unique identity which made him a key person in the survey. He had been a hawker and is now a social worker, a Leftist but not a CPM. Yet he is close to the CPM Mayor, a Mayor who is not a prominent figure in the mainstream hierarchy of CPM.[5]

In 2007, the Corporation took the initiative of creating an official database on the hawkers operating in the public spaces of the city. But without taking much pain to search for any 'competent professional institution,' the Corporation outsourced the task to Naughty-da's NGO, Pratibandhi Udyog. Gariahat Road and Rashbehari Avenue had been chosen as a preliminary site for the pilot project (Pratibandhi Udyog 2007). In January 2008, the survey received the Corporation's sanction when the Mayor released the report to the public.

An analysis of the two aforementioned surveys shows that the latter survey was just a case sensitive application of the former survey. From the surveys, it can be inferred that hawking is (1) a full-time bread-earning profession undertaken by educated working persons aged between 18 and 60 years, (2) an employment generating sustainable economic activity, managed predominantly by local people with little involvement of their family members, and (3) self-financing and self-sustaining economic activity. The study also reveals that though the direct link between the hawkers and the manufacturers has become weak, hawkers still rely, to a great extent, on local supplies and cater to the needs of the poor and lower middle-class buyers by selling those goods at a considerably cheaper rate. The survey asserts that hawkers are microentrepreneurs who rely more on market forces than on the state. Since hawkers provide valuable service to the urban economy at low cost and give employment to many people, the government should allow hawkers to do their business in public spaces. In tune with the recommendations of the National Policy on Urban Street Vendors, the report emphasized that the Corporation should issue identity cards to the hawkers so that the legitimate hawkers can be identified easily. The report claimed that the hawkers who occupied the footpaths before 1999 should be given identity cards. It should be mentioned here that in the post-Operation Sunshine flashflood, the HSC gave the leadership and therefore it sought to safeguard its clients, i.e. those who lost their stalls during operation Sunshine. The HSC had adequate evidence in its archive that could prove the antiquity of its affiliates. Let me cite an example. In 2005, the Mayor formed a municipal consultative committee in which the HSC happened to be a participating organization. Between 2005 and 2009, the committee met five times in the chamber of the Mayor. If the Mayor put forward any proposal for eviction, Shaktiman

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[5] When I collected material and wrote the article, the Left Front was still in power in the Corporation. In 2010, the Trinamul Congress defeated the Front and assumed the governing power in the Corporation.

seemed to be ready with an alternative. When, for example, the Corporation decided to evict hawkers from the Park Street, Shaktiman presented a map showing the exact location of the HSC's affiliate hawkers on Park Street footpath and how they were observing the municipal "rules" by leaving three-fourths of the footpath for pedestrians. To prove that the HSC's affiliates had been operating in the said area since the 1980s, he presented the past eviction records attested by the Corporation, records of raid and confiscation of the hawkers' wares by the police. With such evidence in possession, Shaktiman argued that the new occupants did not belong to his union and demanded a selective eviction in Park Street based on the record. To the best of my knowledge, neither the Corporation, nor the Police Department has ever made any centralized documentation of each and every operation and raid. But individual hawkers preserve what they receive from the administration, be it an eviction certificate, or a release order of confiscated goods. The papers contain dates, signatures of officials and stamps. If necessary they also make use of blood donation certificates, subscription bills of *pujas* and so on. A hawker can mortgage these records and his stall to loan a large sum from informal bankers. Often these records change hands. I have elsewhere written on the social life of documents in the informal economy.

Ethnography in a private archive

I went to the office of the HSC at College Street for the first time in April 2007. It was extremely difficult to talk to Shaktiman as he was a busy person. He was an important leader of the National Alliance of People's Movements and an active participant in National Movement for Retail Democracy that successfully organized massive Anti-Wal-Mart Campaign in many Indian cities in the recent past. When I first visited the office of the HSC, Shaktiman was in Chile attending a conference. But two of his trusted lieutenants who actually managed the office, Sudipta Maitra and Murad Hussain, talked to me. Murad assured me that I would be able to see some of the documents. But the organization's confidential documents might not be disclosed to me as "they would expose the inner contradictions of the committee". Murad said that those documents could only be made public if they resolved to document *their* history in the future.

Though I was denied access to the secret documents of the HSC, the organization's ability to maintain archival secrecy helped me understand the archival field I was working with. Murad was acutely aware of the public nature of the act of writing history, and he was not willing to allow me authorship of the HSC story. His ability to mark the border between secrets and revelation sparked my imagination regarding the meaning of secrecy in the life of the record. The secret archive of the HSC can be constructed to stand beside or even compete with state archives, but it can also be a hiding space in which subversive memories are stored and preserved for possible future disclosure. It is also worth noticing that, when Murad denied my request to see the secret archive, he revealed a tension, a discomfort with those records (note the Marxist term "inner contradiction" in Murad's statement). Murad knew that those documents might contradict the official

position of the HSC. So, this secret archive is not only the strength of the HSC, it is also a constant source of discomfort, if not a threat. The HSC thus preserves the right to write its own history and to disclose its own "secrets". This archival closure has fundamental contradiction with the principle of public sphere that any writing of history presupposes. This principle requires open access to information and sources required to be exposed to a hypothetical other's examination and criticism. The truth claim of an ethnographer lies more on her ability to engage with the prevailing common sense. This is one of the reasons why I call my task "ethnography in a *private* archive".

The HSC's archival function, I argue, is a successful replication of the state's bureaucracy, and also its very own project of a "national history". Having its own historical project, however, the HSC becomes a major constituent of the techniques of the government. It makes the post-Operation Sunshine *Sangram* a public memory by repeated recollections, propaganda and myth-making. It civilizes hawkers, trains them to observe civic virtue and builds a populist infrastructure of *Sangram* which is entangled with techniques of governing.

At my first overnight discussion with Shaktiman, I had a sense that Shaktiman, for long, awaited a researcher who would write about him and the annals of the HSC in academic journals. He had received a lot of media coverage, but unlike his Mumbai and Delhi counterparts, Shaktiman and the HSC were still marginal in the academic world. Interestingly, my closeness to the HSC seriously disrupted my access to other unions that did not belong to the HSC. The CPM-dominated Calcutta Street Hawkers' Union, for example, did not give me access to its database owing to the "trust issue".

Pavement dwellers

Poverty and housing crisis in Calcutta became the subject matter of the Bengali literature (especially poetry) in post-partition years. The living city, "the footpath groaning under the tin and makeshift walls, the wailing children born on the streets, the refugees in a procession winding through the lanes are all images to be found in this literature" (Sengupta 2007). They are also the manifesto of a new group of left-wing poets who found their subject in the everyday city life and its mundane horror. In Buddhadev Bose's poem *Udvastu* (The Refugee), the writer-narrator goes for a walk on the Dhakuria lakes and notices a woman dying on the footpath. Her malnourished body partially hides a sleeping child and her wild staring eyes hold no pain, no prayer and no protest. The impotently watching narrator, suffering from a writer's block, remembers a scene from Dante's *Inferno* and realizes there is nothing anybody could do that could keep intact the dignity of the dying woman. "Let humans leave her/And let Nature take over" he states (Sengupta 2007). Calcutta, with her dying and homeless humanity, becomes a constant presence, a telos, a meaning beyond "the play of the merely accidental" (Roy 2002:156) in the poetry of a whole new generation of poets like Jibanananda Das, Samar Sen, Buddhadev Bose, Naresh Guha, Premendra Mitra, Nirendranath Chakraborty, Sunil Gangopadhyay, Bishnu Dey, Manindra Roy, Arun Mitra and Sankho Ghosh, some

of whom were also part of the burgeoning Left movements that articulated the rights of refugees. These early post-colonial writers, many of whom were associated with the left cultural movement in Calcutta, imagined the city space in general, and footpath in particular, as a heterogeneous space—a site of several activities, footpath hawking, footpath living, rallies, refugee claim-making and so forth. They did not use the term pavement dwellers to locate a particular group of people. The term came into being as a population category in anthropological studies on famine, rural–urban migration, refugee problem and poverty. In these works, the pavement dweller represented the destitute "migrant" who needed to be studied. In his path-breaking ethnography, titled *Bengal Famine 1943* that came out in 1949, Tarak Chandra Das wrote:

> Many of these families had a fixed place for passing the night. During day time the adult members moved individually, or with one or two children, in different parts of the city. But at night they all assembled at these fixed places in order to keep contact with one another. It was not unusual to find groups of twenty to thirty persons lying on the pavement, side by side, sleeping under the open sky… Even during day-time when rest was needed, to this corner they assembled. Often this place of refuge was nothing better than the pavement of the street. (Das 1949: 57).

"Beside the dwellers of the pavement", writes Das, there were others who occupied the "air-raid shelters and railway shades". Between 1975 and 1987, three massive socio-economic studies were undertaken on pavement dwellers by Calcutta Metropolitan Development Authority (CMDA) and Indian Statistical Institute (ISI). The first CMDA survey on pavement dwellers imagined the pavement dwellers as essentially labouring citizens living "under the shadow of the metropolis" (Mukherjee 1975). These surveys sought to define the pavement dweller. The survey of the ISI, for example, criticized the survey of CMDA as it incorporated slums and squatter settlements in the census. The survey of ISI only included those who "sleep on the pavements of the city" (1976, 2). In a similar fashion, the 1987 CMDA survey (Jagannathan and Halder 1988a, b, 1989) says that it would focus on the "truly shelterless pavement dwellers". Targeting the "truly shelterless" in the 1987 survey implies that the study even excluded those who had a "home" elsewhere but chose to live on the footpath.

CMDA's involvement in the surveys on pavement dwellers shows that the governmental stand with regard to this particular social group was welfarist. Releasing the 1975 survey, Bholanath Sen, the Public Works Department minister said that he would send the copies of the report to the UN to request for some money for the rehabilitation of pavement dwellers. We may remember that in 1975, this minister played a key role in conducting a massive hawker eviction drive at the wake of the Emergency. In 1975, then, pavement dwellers were largely viewed as the poor deserving state welfare, while hawkers were treated as illegitimate occupiers of public place.

Until 1980s, the pavement dweller was also a central object of Christian charity and poverty tourism—Mother Teresa in her white robes blessing the poor; Patrick Swayze as the saviour in the Hollywood film *City of Joy*. For poverty tourists, the

indigent body on the footpath was the much sought after visual proof of the post-colonial urban predicament.

A story of forgetting

But this trend would change course in 1990s, when the growing concern for the city's world-class appearance came to be expressed through an environmental discourse of cleanliness and pollution. This discourse ties deficiencies in environmental well-being and appearance to the presence of hawkers largely through the legal category of "nuisance" (Baviskar 2003; Fernandes 2008; Bhan 2009; Ghertner 2010). Operation Sunshine in 1996 was the first attempt by the Left Front Government to aggressively remake the city as a "world-class" urban environment. The discourses of sanitization of public space at the turn of the century targeted the hawkers and completely ignored the pavement dwellers as an impediment to the world-class image of the city. The publicity volume of Operation Sunshine (titled *Operation Sunshine*, edited by Saumitra Lahiri), for example, introduced itself as "an anthology of articles on the removal drive of the illegal encroachers from the pavements in Calcutta" (1997, see the blurb of the book *Operation Sunshine*). But the volume did not make a single reference to the existence of pavement dwellers.

The discursive invisibility of the pavement dwellers was also caused by the disappearance of the government funded socio-economic surveys on rural–urban migration in the early 1990s. Unlike in 1970s, pavement dwellers were no longer the subject of the state's welfare intervention in 1990s. As a result, they ceased to be a population group. Moreover, in accordance with the earlier studies, the socio-economic survey of the CMDA on Pavement Dwellers in 1987 established the fact that a majority of pavement dwellers were from West Bengal and that they were the landless groups in the Left-ruled *Sonar Bangla* (Golden Bengal). If this was the case, then the myth of the left exceptionalism would be in jeopardy as the study implicitly or unwittingly questioned the very success of the land reform programme. Since then in the official papers, the pavement dwellers are hardly recognized.

In the post-Operation Sunshine flashflood, when hawkers returned, they not only regained the lost land, but also freshly occupied some of the valuable sites where pavement dwellers used to live. The pavement dwellers also returned, but did not occupy the intersections. They occupied places in whose vicinity no vehicle is allowed to stop. Thus, there emerged an interesting spatial distribution of hawkers and pavement dwellers: hawkers in the busy intersections and pavement dwellers in the in-between spaces of the footpaths. I have elsewhere documented how Ratan Mandal, one of my first hawker-cum-pavement dweller informants experienced serial displacement as a pavement dweller, while his tea stall at Gariahat intersection remained in the same location from the last 30 years (Bandyopadhyay 2007).

The fate of pavement dwellers in Calcutta stands in striking opposition to what I have read about the collective action of pavement dwellers in Bombay, at the behest of a few powerful advocacy organizations forming a horizontal solidarity among themselves (the "Alliance" in Appadurai 2002). In 1986, the pavement dwellers were facilitated by the SPARK to produce survey on themselves—*We the Invisible*.

As the title of the document suggests, it was through this survey that they made themselves visible—visible in the state and in public discourse to earn an enrolment as a governmental category. Unlike HSC's deployment of bureaucratic language, as Appadurai informs us, the Alliance used the non-specialist knowledge of the community which gives an authenticity to the survey as revealing the "voice" of the subaltern. While Appadurai hails this as "deep democracy," Ananya Roy (2009) shows how the Alliance became a "native informant" of the international governing organizations and promoted embourgeoisment of the city by pacifying the poor and earning consent from them for urban renewal. But, overall, it should be accepted that pavement dwellers exist as a governmental category in Bombay, while in Calcutta they no longer surface in public discourse. Unlike Bombay, in Calcutta, collective action based on housing rights seems to be absent. This has been evident in Roy's earlier work on Calcutta (Roy 2004). Though Partha Chatterjee has talked at length about the political society in a particular squatter colony in Calcutta, ironically, the colony was demolished soon after Chatterjee's *Politics of the Governed* was published. Yet in Calcutta, hawkers are more successfully organized and more visible in the policy-making than any other city in India. In Jonathan Anjaria's thesis on street hawkers in Bombay (2008), I missed the presence of an organization like the HSC. I guess, this is not his failure to see the existence of strong unions in Bombay. Taken together, Anjaria's research and my intervention speak of the difference between two political fields. In Bombay, advocacy organizations are important political and policy actors. In Calcutta, political parties and their labour units are more hegemonic than NGOs.

From the mid-1990s, the "hawker problem" has become a prominent field of quotidian media coverage where the lines between the citizen and non-citizen, civic order and disorder, and the legitimate and the illegitimate are being continually (re)defined. The local English print media has often targeted hawkers invoking a liberal-democratic discourse of citizenship: the rights of the "common man" or the "pedestrian" to public space, the common man being a politically innocent, classless, neutral entity. The local press appears to be remarkably united in taking sides with the seemingly "class-less", "common-man"-pedestrian, who is the citizen and the "taxpayer" and has the legitimate claim over the public space of the pavement, as against the "hawker", epitomizing "illegality" and "disorder" (Dutta 2007). I argue that the representation of the hawkers in English language newspapers as disagreeable, extraneous agents always "choking" circulation comes from the middle-class apprehension of losing control over public space (Dutta 2007). What is relevant to my presentation is the fact that these representations cited the footpath as a space of contestation between the rightful pedestrian (the free, liberal citizen) and the contentious hawker. In a number of PILs filed by middle-class environmental organizations, the hawkers were held responsible for traffic congestion and pollution. These organizations even argued that hawking in general and food hawking in particular should be banned from the Central Business district for public health reasons and to make Calcutta presentable to the foreign investors and tourists.

As the previous section shows, the HSC was able to intervene into and disrupt such a citation of hawkers by intervening into the very production of the governmental knowledge on the hawkers. They would gather evidence to argue that

there was no tension between the rightful pedestrian and the "entrepreneurial hawker". They on their part would accept that their activities are often illegal and contrary to good civic behaviour. They would profess a readiness to observe civic regulations if the state implements any such things. But such an intervention would also imagine the footpath as used only by pedestrians and hawkers. This is what I mean by the discursive homogenization of urban space to the exclusion of other elements and practices.

The hawkers would also subscribe to the hegemonic icon of the world-class city. In 2002, for example, the HSC declared three model street-food corners in three major streets in Calcutta frequently visited by the foreigners: Park Street–Jawharlal Nehru Road intersection, Russell Street and Elgin Road. The Park Street–Jawharlal Nehru Road intersection is close to the Central Business District (CBD) and is at the heart of the heritage part of the city. In Both Russell Street and Park Street-Jawharlal Nehru Road, the city's major star hotels (linked to the international tourism industries), restaurants, banks, giant corporation offices (such as TATA centre, Reliance Industries) are located, while, Elgin Road has the pride of housing the city's one of the biggest multiplexes—the Forum. What are the rules and practices that distinguish the model zone from the rest of the street food corners? In model zones, it is mandatory for the hawkers to wear aprons and use gloves, to serve hygienic steamed food always preserved in covered containers, not to sell cut fruits and so on. In 2006, a DFID team visited the city as a part of its research on hygiene and public health issues in street food vending in several cities of the developing world. I accompanied the team. When the team approached to the HSC to guide them to see the scenario of the city, HSC arranged a "tour" for the white researchers and their native collaborators in these three model zones. When I asked some of the HSC leaders about why they selected the model zones for the team's rather ceremonial survey, they gave me a three-point reply: (1) "we don't want them to see the filth of the city and make recommendation to the government," (2) "we want to be world-class hawkers in a world-class city and we want to show that Calcutta can be made a world-class city without killing street food vending," (3) "we have heard that this team is going to prepare and promote a 'best practice' model in street food vending, we want to be an example before other cities." When I asked them how they were so confident that the team would not visit other parts of the city, they said that the native collaborators would also want to display the "models" and the Corporation officials would ensure that the team would visit only the selected sites.

Entrepreneurial poor

On July 28, 1972, the Chowringhee Hawkers' Association affiliated to Congress-R released a public statement in a press conference where it demanded a rehabilitation of the hawkers belonging to the Association "in the West flank of the Jawharlal Nehru Road and the vacant plot facing the Maidan Market" (Statement made by the president and general secretary of the Chowringhee Hawkers' Association in a press conference at 2 Jawharlal Nehru Road, Calcutta 13 on July 28, 1972 at 5 pm, in connection with their impending fast unto death for the rehabilitation of

Chowringhee hawkers, reproduced in the Copy of the Secret Report Dated: 29.7.72, on WB Hawkers' Associations: 85). I located several such rehabilitation proposals submitted by different associations to the government in the form of letters, memoranda, and public statements. Bengal Hawkers' Association affiliated to the Forward Block, for example submitted a long letter to the Chief Minister on May 6, 1972, in which it reminded the Chief Minister of the fact that hawker eviction in Calcutta indicated a policy reversal of the government which had set its goal to eradicate poverty (*goribi hathao*), and proposed:

> If the government is determined in evicting them from foot-path, then from today, the state government shall have to take the entire responsibility to feed and to give shelter to all the affected hawkers including their families…. A temporary *dalla* or Tray System (3ft by 3 ft) should be introduced at once till the final arrangement of permanent economic settlement is made.
>
> In order to solve the problems of the hawkers in West Bengal especially in Calcutta, the representatives of different registered Hawkers' associations must be consulted and their opinions and collaborations must be sought in implementing the hawkers' settlement plans (i.e. their representatives should be included in project committees).

Documents submitted to the government by numerous hawkers' associations in the context of many such drives were always reflective of the bent to project the hawkers' problem as a manifestation of wider political and economic issues such as the refugee problem and the problem of unemployment. These issues were often presented in the documents in relation to the "honesty" of the "self-employed poor" who maintained their families and sustained a wider chain of small economies. Invoking contrast with the path of radical trade unionism, the Chowringhee Hawkers' Association, in its memorandum to the Chief Minister on March 23, 1972 wrote:

> Being democratic and nationally minded we do not believe in irresponsible mass action and are patiently waiting for the government's final disposal of the matter, whereby *bona fide* hawkers like us, who are facing starvation and suffering, will be ultimately rehabilitated to our normal vocations. We expect, the government will understand that we are self-employed, poor businessmen with very low overhead and capital base. But, in the days of stark poverty, we did not depend on the government, beg, or indulge in criminal activities. The only thing that we demand from the government is the security of our *enterprise* (emphasis is mine) on the footpath.

These documents also displayed how the associations had mastered the modern clerical and bureaucratic language (of the state) and technical economic terms to engage with the government. The associations hardly used any terms in their documents that could go against the constructive, argumentative and alternative-providing image of the "poor hawker". The aforementioned memorandum formed a moral critique of the state (which failed to look after its poor citizens) and justified the hawkers' trade on the footpath as an honest survival alternative in the condition of abject poverty without causing extra burden on the state. The only demand that it

made to the state was an allowance of toleration. The document also defines what it means to be a bona fide hawker: adequately poor, democratic and nationally minded, adequately old in profession. These early mobilizations anticipated the central argument of the state-union complex. The survey under discussion is the official statement of the state-union complex that has placed the argument to the policy table in a formal bureaucratic language. If the earlier statements described hawkers as "enterprising", this survey presented them as microentrepreneurs seeking some sort of tenurial security from the state.

Conclusion

To summarize, the paper enquires into the conditions whereby information accumulated by the poor comes to be recognized by the state as legitimate, and where archiving by the poor comes to be aligned alongside state-produced forms of knowledge as permissible for consideration by the agencies of the state. In so doing, the paper explains how battles over the politics of knowledge give rise to the outcome that collectives of poor people are able to define the terms by which the state recognizes them.

The case of pavement dwellers shows how such a politics of knowledge leads to the erasure of demographic categories from the living memory of the state and the public. The HSC has been able to continuously remember the *sangram* and create a powerful discourse on the hawker as the "entrepreneurial poor" deserving a stake in the city space. While projecting hawkers as honest, poor, and enterprising had been an old strategy deployed by several unions in the moment of eviction, the HSC transcended its precursors by making such projections part of an everyday propaganda of an unceasing *sangram* that gives the HSC the political legitimacy to act on behalf of the hawkers. The construction of the self as *entrepreneurial* shares a historical conjuncture with the contemporary discursive construction of the poor (thanks to the pervasive microcredit literature) as heroic entrepreneurs who serve the economy without adding the burden of unemployment to the government.[6] An entrepreneur rationalizes his/her whole life by submitting to the imperative of self-improvement. At the heart of this new subject modality that I call the *entrepreneurial subjectivity*, lay business ethics, individual responsibility and personal initiatives and perhaps, more importantly, a more powerful claim to the

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[6] Two recent Routledge books on street hawkers, namely *Street Entrepreneurs*, edited by Cross and Morales (2006) and *Street Vendors in Global Urban Economy*, edited by Bhawmik (2010), have closely drawn this global consensus on poor's entrepreneurialism to the particular sector of street hawking. Both *Street Vendors in Global Urban Economy* and *Street Entrepreneurs* acknowledge their intellectual debt to the work of the Peruvian economist and policy *guru* Hernando de Sotho. A decade ago, de Sotho wrote that the poor must be seen as "heroic entrepreneurs" who were part of solution rather than problem. Another important policy interlocutor, C.K. Prahalad (2004) finds a "fortune in bottom pyramid" and asserts that one should "stop thinking of poor as victim or as a burden and start recognizing them as resilient and creative entrepreneurs." At the heart of this new entrepreneurial subjectivity lie not only business ethics, but also an assignment to an ultimate economic value to a particular set of disciplinary technologies such as individual responsibility, personal initiative and autonomy. The self-sufficient, self-providing entrepreneurs are valorized as the ideal citizens who qualify for credit without asset.

city space not as the subjects of welfare but as active citizens. But this citizenship claim is not posited in the abstract, in the legal-juridical space. It is instead posited as a collective ethico-moral as well as empirical claim in the terrain of what Partha Chatterjee calls "popular politics". The entrepreneur (the hawker) is a more consummate claim-maker on the state than a recipient of welfare (the pavement dweller).

The hawkers' claim to, and command over, the archive challenge the accuracy and the very foundation of the state-led survey. As a matter of principle, if I am allowed to invoke a few important political theorists, any counter-archive is a *counter* to the middle-class cultural capital that establishes hegemony over the state by monopolizing the field of knowledge production. The counter-archive not only resisted the negative citations of the hawkers in the media, but also challenged the ethnographer's tendency to "speak in the name of the hawkers". When I make such a formulation, I do not necessarily assume that the middle class and hawkers are two opposing categories engaged in a class war over the urban space. Nor do I hold that the middle class in Calcutta is a homogenous block. There is evidence to show that both the lower and upper segments of the middle class engage with the hawkers in mutual dependence. Even during Operation Sunshine the hawkers at Gariahat and other places enjoyed strong neighbourhood support. Many of my respondents with *bhadralok* dispositions invoked a shared notion of territoriality, community and mutual dependence while talking of hawkers.

What happens when Pratibandhi Udyog makes a survey on hawkers in the name of the corporation using the HSC's archive? Is this a case of the state's cooptation of the movement? Or is it the movement's willingness to be appropriated in its own terms? If the first question is answered in the affirmative, then the HCS is just an example of a parastatal developed in the crucible of an entitlement movement. But if the second question yields an affirmative answer, then one can think of a space that can be called the "state-union complex"—an ensemble of administrative techniques in which one find a complex unity and overlap in the action of the state, the political NGO and the union. The survey of Pratibandhi Udyog is the prose of the state-union complex. The preceding discussion suggests that the state-union complex is a combination of three things: *sangram* (political legitimacy), *archive* (techniques of governing) and *entrepreneurialism* (claims of citizenship and civic responsibility).

I started the discussion by mentioning a few hegemonic theoretical positions on contemporary urban political formations in the cities of the global South. Each position is associated with a particular city: Appadurai's "deep democracy" with Millennial Mumbai, Holston's "insurgent citizenship" (2008) with Brasilia, Bayat's "encroachment" (Bayat 2000) perspective with Cairo and Partha Chatterjee's "political society" perspective with Calcutta. The significance of these positions lays in the fact that despite their strong association with particular cities, their appeal is *universalizable*. In a similar vein, the present paper argues that a re-conceptualization of archive might provide a useful way to comprehend the popular politics in Indian democracy. In this connection, I find it important also to specify the points where I have departed from the political society argument with which I share the empirical evidence, cultural proximity and theoretical unity.

The hallmark of Chatterjee's political society argument is that it *collectively* violates law and encroaches on infrastructure to survive. This collectivity in claim-making is the *community* in political society. And here lies its major difference with civil society in which one cannot find a community of those who violate law such as tax defaulters. In civil society, then, it is individual who violates law.[7] The recent managerial turn into the political society argument in Chatterjee's influential 2008 *Economic and Political Weekly article* frees political society from its transgressive aspects and argues that while civil society is the site of the management of profit-making corporate capital opening up new frontiers of Primitive Accumulation of Capital, political society offers a space for the management of non-corporate capital—the so-called informal sector (Chatterjee 2008). It is in the domain of the political society that new dispossessions are to be looked after by governmentality. This is what Kalyan Sanyal (2007) calls "decapitalization" or the "reversal of the effect of primitive accumulation of capital" through a reunification of the dispossessed labour with the means of production. If one goes by this new twist to the political society argument that has made the concept palatable to the liberal taste (Nigam 2008), then it can be argued that the HSC will still be a political society even after the legalization of footpath hawking as it will keep on managing the non-corporate capital of the hawkers. But, if for the sake of argumentation, we forget about the new turn and celebrate political society as a constitutive outside of both the state and the civil society whose hallmarks are population and paralegality, then the HSC's entrepreneurial discourse begins to trouble the distinction between civil society and political society and produces citizenship norms for the poor in the terrain of popular politics. Entrepreneurialism celebrates the self-employed and self-governed *individual* as the ideal citizen. The collective claim of the HSC thus slips into a claim for right-bearing entrepreneurs—a new qualifier for the poor to be citizens globally produced by international funding organizations, states, NGOs and unions like the HSC. An entrepreneur has a greater claim to being a rights-bearing citizen, rather than as a recipient of welfare. The pavement dwellers failed to make a transition from a population of welfare recipients to individual citizens with rights. The entrepreneurial discourse makes it possible for hawkers to successfully negotiate with the neoliberal state.

The operation of the HSC in the governmental space questions Chatterjee's rather decidedly un-Gramscian conception of civil society and un-Foucauldian conception of governmentality. He asserts that the landless poor of India lie outside of civil society, "because their claims are irreducibly political" (2004, 60), which assumes a model of civil society and politics as operating in two separate spheres, though his own examples of mobilizations show how urban poor operate in and through (unequal) social networks and strategies of which government officials, unions, and

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[7] This is not to deny the emerging trend in many Indian cities of elite neighbourhood associations coming together to go illegal in justifying elite informality or to wage violence on the poor (Baviskar 2003). I have even heard from my Bombay-based researcher friend at UC Berkeley, Namrata Kapoor, that these elite associations are very much active during corporation elections to favour particular candidates. The civil society associations act together to pressurize the Court and the municipal government to *legalize* their illegality and not to *tolerate* illegality for their survival. But civil society acting as a pressure group to justify illegality like tax evasion and corruption cannot be found.

political parties are a part (this is what I understand as the state-union complex). Chatterjee writes that the politics of the governed is a "strategic politics in political society," where Gramsci would argue that politics are always strategic—about constructing hegemony through the combination of coercion and consent. Moving onto Foucault, Chatterjee's conception of governmentality appears to impose a binary between those who *govern* and those who are *governed* that seems heavy handed in relation to Foucault's theorization which sees all of us as interpolated by these structures and rejects the idea of an outside from which to govern. In a more Foucauldian tone, the present paper conceives of the state-union complex as an intertwining of the "state-in-society" and the society-in-state. The paper thus does not recognize the state as a mode of being—an institution that stands above the society.

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