
Render Authenticity

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“When we build, let us think that we build forever. Let it not be for present delight nor for our use alone. Let it be such work as our descendants will look upon with praise and thanksgiving in their hearts.”

— John Ruskin

Ancient structures have gracefully made their places as some of the most robust structures to be built, but even those seem to wither away with neglect. In Third-World countries, like Bangladesh, trying to provide the basic needs, along with existing socio-economic issues and natural disasters, have always taken precedence over maintaining and preserving existing or historical structures. Shakhari Bazar is one of the prime examples of these issues in dire need of attention and help.

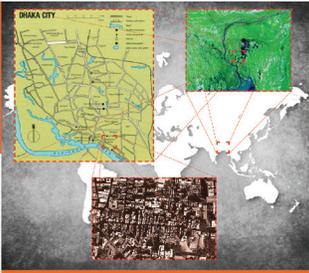
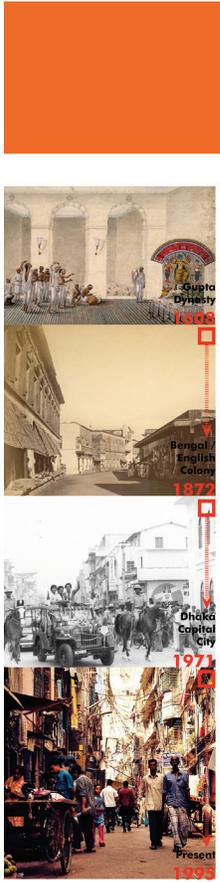
Shakhari Bazar in Old Dhaka, Bangladesh, is one of the first streets to be built in the region of South Asia, using the river network as major transportation route in the 17th century. It is a sanctuary to a special ethnic group, and the only known home to some unique artisans. The name Shakhari Bazar is derived from the name Shakha, which is a richly decorated bangle made out of slices of conch-shell, which hindu women wear as a symbol of marriage. There are various other unique crafted objects made from conch-shell. Therefore, this street is a rich treasure of ‘live heritage’ or ‘intangible heritage’, as UNESCO labels it. Unfortunately, the survival of these crafts is under threat, as the artisans seem to be deserting the streets or changing their livelihood.

For the past few decades, villagers from various parts of Bangladesh have migrated to Shakhari Bazar in search of better amenities and job. The houses on this street have remained mostly vacant since 1971 and therefore are being inhabited illegally by the migrants. These uncontrolled manipulations of the houses, by the migrants, are causing the street to lose its character. Old Dhaka is an area with buildings of architectural beauty, historical, religious and cultural significance. “They are eloquent testimony to the history, culture and tradition. In more ways than one these buildings are ‘images’ of the past with which people still identify Old Dhaka”. But sadly, most of these buildings are either ‘dying’ through ignorant renovation or collapsing due to neglect, resulting in hazardous living conditions for the unique artisans and the migrants. If the present condition persists it will not be long till many of these structures, along with the specific live heritages they house, will be lost forever.

Shakhari Bazar has great potential to reach a sustainable cultural and economic state. I strongly believe that an in-depth field research and a comprehensive plan to attack the problems from different aspects, including design implementation of heritage structures, and its surrounding infrastructure would encourage dialogue between various groups, and promote influx of both domestic and foreign customers. This financial boost along with Foreign Aid from UNESCO, and the

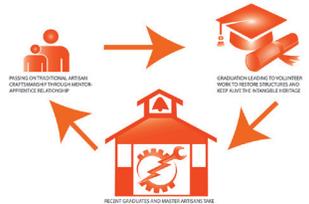
help of local artisans, could result in a sustainable micro economy that will refuse to accept uniformity and the disappearance of memory.

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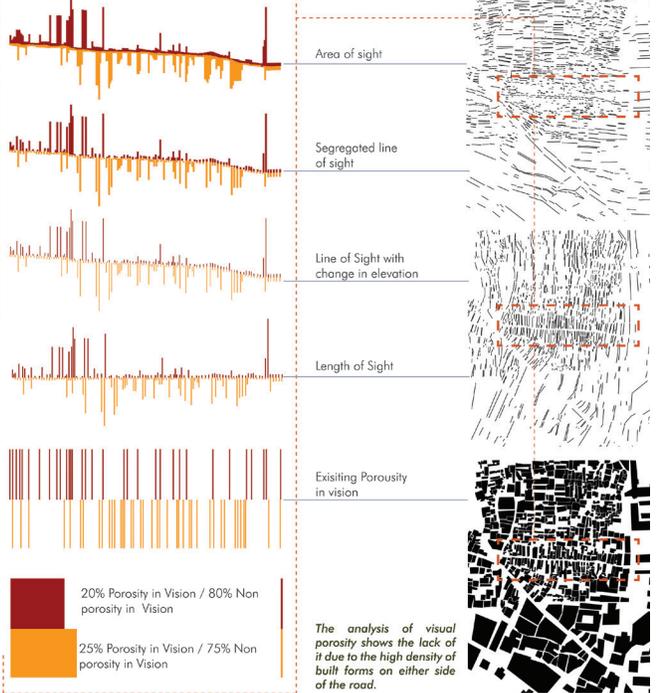
Shakhari Bazar went through enormous change since 1608, claiming itself as one of the oldest street in South Asia. Throughout these years, the street has moulded itself to function for the modern age.

This creates a loop of live heritage tradition being transferred from existing artisan to the new generation, creating fusion crafts that can cater to a bigger market (demand), while keeping the authenticity of the crafts.

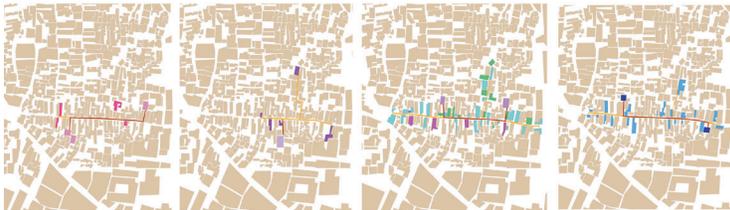


Shakhari Bazaar contains several unique artisans, including Sculptors, Goldsmiths, Traders and Shakhia Artisans. Shakhia craft is one of the 'Live Heritage' located in the area that is in danger of going extinct.

Both the vertical and horizontal grain diagrams show the potential of introducing the crafts/ trades school in the second layer



The analysis of visual porosity shows the lack of it due to the high density of built forms on either side of the road.



culpting Store Locations and potential School for Sculpture | Goldsmith Store Locations and potential School for jewellery making | General Store Locations and potential School for Trades School | Shakhia Crafting Store Locations and potential School for Shakhia Crafts

proposal to incorporate Trades/ Crafts schools in the second layer of the street infrastructure to instigate physical porosity through the first layer of built forms. This will reduce the traffic on the main street, and encourage people to discover the various 'layers' of the area.

